



# CHITTENDEN COUNTY RPC

*Communities Planning Together*

## CCRPC Long Range Planning Energy Sub -Committee

### Meeting Summary March 21, 2017

#### Attendance

Karen Purinton, Colchester	Irene Wrenner, Essex	Catherine McMains, Chair, Jericho	Robin Pierce, Essex Junction
Sharon Murray, Bolton	Keith Epstein, South Burlington	Jeff Forward, Richmond	Jim Donovan, Charlotte
Melanie Needle, CCRPC	Emily Nosse-Leier, CCRPC	Regina Mahony, CCRPC	Marshall Distel, CCRPC

#### **1. Welcome + Introductions**

#### **2. Review Minutes**

The January 31<sup>st</sup> minutes were revised based on a committee members feedback. The Committee reviewed these changes and approved them. Everyone voted yes except Jim Donovan, who abstained as he was not present. The Committee will also review the February 21<sup>st</sup> minutes and approved them. Everyone voted yes except Jim and Sharon, who abstained because they were absent.

#### **3. Presentation on New Public Service Department Guidance for Writing Enhanced Energy Plans**

##### **Utility-scale wind targets**

Jeff asked if the region would still have to meet the same MW target. Melanie confirmed that we would. Sharon said that it makes sense to leave wind targets at the regional level but not to break them down to the local level. Melanie showed a map (see corresponding slide). The committee discussed the fact that not splitting the wind targets up by town might mean that it is hard to see whether each town is meeting its energy targets. Would they have to meet it all through solar? Or would there only be region-level wind generation targets, and towns would only have to make as much energy as they could make in solar? What about those towns with wind potential in the regional plan? The committee asked staff to look into the best way to deal with this issue and report back.

Jeff also made the point that the regional plan will hold in Section 248 proceedings so if there is a conflict between the regional and town plan it's important for the regional plan to be in agreement with what the towns want here.

Robin Pierce raised a concern that the plan discusses energy generation too much, and should discuss conservation more. Melanie clarified that the generation targets included here do reflect the 1/3

reduction in energy usage by 2050.

Sharon asked if the plan can have a statement to the effect of deferring to local policies. Melanie made the point that the policies used to make the map are all local policies. Karen mentioned that towns need to be very involved in the process of splitting up wind power if it's not going to be split evenly through the county. The committee agreed, and thought that affected towns should have serious talks with their residents, possibly by hosting specific forums on these issues. Could the town planners in affected communities be the point people for these discussions? The committee agreed that these are discussions that the state needs to have, but that they will be hard discussions to have.

Jeff suggested, and Catherine agreed, that discussing wind energy footprints in terms of turbines rather than acreage might be helpful for communicating the needs of the region.

Staff mentioned that they will have preliminary results of energy consumption per sectors by town at the next meeting.

### **Acreage Changes**

Previously, staff have been using DPS guidance that 1 MW of solar = 8 acres of panels. New DPS guidance suggests that using an overestimation of 60 acres per 1 MW would be better to ensure that we're able to meet the guidance.

Keith suggested that maybe it would be better to list this as a "contingency factor," ex. 1 of every 4 property owners would likely be able to develop as appropriate. Or say that XX acres is the amount of land that is needed physically, but that it's likely that only XX% of properties will be able to make it work.

Discussion continued on whether inflating the number of acres that towns should plan for is appropriate or not. Perhaps the solution is having a paragraph that states that only a certain percentage of prime acres will be developed, and so towns should be cognizant of that.

Keith suggested that dividing the number of acres needed to make a target MW by the number of total prime acreage will give us a percentage showing the town's likely ability to make its targets.

See also the relevant slides in the presentation.

The committee was pleased to learn that a significant portion of the region's solar could likely be met through rooftop systems. Staff will continue to revise these targets.

### **Defining preferred locations for generation**

Preferred locations allow net metering systems to be up to 500 kW in size, rather than the 150 kW caps for non-preferred locations.

Net metering rules that are still being discussed allow for preferred locations to be defined as "a specific location that is identified in a joint letter of support from the municipal legislative body and municipal and regional planning commissions in the community where the net-metering system will be located."

Karen asked if CCRPC will be willing to write supporting letters for issues like this. Regina said that we don't have a policy yet, but likely would not if the town wasn't already fully in support of the project.

Keith suggested that the RPC might want to facilitate a public process for municipalities to come up with preferred sites.

#### **4. Regional Solar + Wind Targets, Solar Town Targets**

Based on committee feedback, Melanie analyzed the differences in electricity use per capita between towns, but the committee agreed that it didn't make sense to factor this in.

Melanie also showed the differences between two different methods to split up energy generation targets per town. Method 1 averaged population share and resource share per town, and Method 2 included those and the town's share of electricity consumption. Most towns had a slight reduction in target MW with Method 2, but South Burlington and Burlington had increases. The committee agreed that Method 2 would be the best. Regina asked if this method was anti-smart growth because it means that, for example, Burlington's population growing would mean that their solar targets would grow as well, and it might be impossible for the city to make this amount of energy. Staff will move forward on Method 2.

Melanie informed the committee that all the towns that have provided local constraints can meet their solar targets with the local constraints factored in.

Sharon asked if the state's draft sound standards for wind will be incorporated into the maps. Melanie said she will examine the draft rules for buffers for wind turbines from residential areas. It's unclear when the rules will be adopted. Staff will examine this further.

#### **5. Update on LEAP modeling**

Melanie reminded the committee of the discussion that took place with David Roberts at the last subcommittee meeting. David presented several options for future Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) to be incorporated into the LEAP model. Staff recommends that the Long-range Energy Alternative Plan (LEAP) model use 9,269 miles as a base VMT per capita number for the model. Melanie clarified that the LEAP model will also consider CCRPC's VMT reduction strategies included in the planning scenarios from the ECOS plan. The committee asked if their local data analysis can include more accurate local data. The answer is yes, but there might not be better data for every analysis option.

LEAP will be revised with CCRPC's population projection model that is in the process of being approved by the board now.

CCRPC staff has spoken with VT Gas staff about the phase out of natural gas use in the LEAP model. This is obviously outside of VT Gas's business plan. The best option going forward is for the plan to include "real world" language saying that the 90X250 scenario is aspirational and that there are a lot of factors in play like cost that are not considered in the technical model and do not consider the likelihood of electrifying the heating sector given these factors.

#### **6. Next Steps**

The meeting adjourned at 7:04pm. The next meeting will be on April 18.