



CCRPC Long Range Planning Energy Sub -Committee

Minutes

DATE: Tuesday, September 19, 2017

TIME: 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 pm

PLACE: CCRPC Office, 110 West Canal Street, Suite 202, Winooski, VT

Attendees:

- Catherine McMains, Jericho (Chair)
- Karen Adams, Colchester
- Matt Burke, Charlotte alternate
- Keith Epstein, South Burlington
- Jeff Forward, Richmond
- Will Dodge, Essex

Staff:

- Melanie Needle, Senior Planner
- Regina Mahony, Planning Program Manager
- Emily Nosse-Leirer, Planner

1. Review August 15, 2017 Minutes

Karen Adams made a motion to approve the minutes as drafted. Keith Epstein seconded the motion. The committee voted unanimously.

2. Discussion of Siting Policy Statements*

Melanie explained that staff has edited and reorganized the energy siting policies based on discussion with the Board, the Executive Committee, the PAC, the LRPC and the Energy Subcommittee. The constraints on energy development are now described in Strategies 3.2.3 and 3.2.4, which currently discuss natural resources preservation. Strategy 3.2.2.4 still includes energy plan actions and policies. Siting policies are now split into two sections: "Constraint Policies" and "Suitability Policies".

"Constraint Policies" place limits on renewable energy generation development.

Keith asked why the constraint policies include state regulations. Staff explained that it is intended to be education for readers. The committee discussed whether more explanation would be useful, and whether policy ii belongs at all. Melanie suggested making it an action to work with municipalities on screening. Karen suggested just adding explanatory language about the fact that the policies here apply to municipal standards that must be adopted in accordance with state statute.

Melanie explained that “Suitability Policies” provide a list of desirable characteristics for energy facilities on unconstrained lands, which are considered guidelines rather than regulations. The committee expressed their desire for a different numbering system that doesn’t include Roman numerals.

Jeff asked that “disturbed portion” be removed in relation to gravel pits. The committee discussed the fact that permitted gravel pits often have reclamation plans that can impact solar development. These projects will probably always have to go through Act 250 because of these plans. Fontaine Solar in Williston is an example of a project that faced this issue.

Matt asked whether we needed to include a definition of infill development for Policy iv to make it clear that infill development does not include solar development. Jeff expressed concern with this policy, siting several places in areas planned for growth that have solar developments proposed or would be good sites for solar, so saying “provided infill development is not precluded” is unclear. Karen thinks that ground mounted solar always precludes infill development and also expressed her concerns about who determines when infill development is precluded. Jeff suggested striking the “precluded” clause. Catherine McMains suggested replacing it with “where possible.” Melanie wondered if this policy should be that we support colocation with load in areas planned for growth outside of designated centers. Will suggested that all the policies on ground mounted facilities could be replaced by saying that sites should be identified in joint letters. The committee decided against this approach. Staff will continue this discussion at the board meeting tomorrow. The committee said that it is necessary to have language that explicitly states the intention of this policy, which is that load and generation should be located close to each other wherever possible to minimize distribution and transmission lines, minimize working landscape fragmentation and balance growth with energy development in areas planned for growth. Co-locate is likely not the correct term. Whatever language we come up with must be consistent with the policies in Section A of this chapter as well.

Keith asked why these policies only address wind and solar. Regina explained that staff have only been able to facilitate discussions on a limited number of technologies so far; some of these may be relevant to all technologies. We will look into this further.

Keith suggested that we change policy iii to say “on or near” existing structures, rather than just on structures.

The committee discussed the issue of 3-phase power. The committee decided to change “within 1000 feet” to something like “proximate to” since we’re not able to reasonably decide a distance.

Keith mentioned that he doesn’t like the word “alternative” forms of heating, since we’re hoping to make these methods the mainstream. Maybe “sustainable” is the right choice.

Jeff expressed his support for the fact that the constraints are not just decisions that CCRPC made unilaterally, but instead represent restrictions that are already in place at the state and local level.

Jeff asked about the difference between what municipalities can plan for and what the regional plan says regarding energy beyond siting. Melanie clarified that the regional plan does discuss issues like conservation and efficiency, but that municipalities have more information in their plans on these issues because they have different authority and influence than the RPCs. Committee members expressed enthusiasm for the greater ability of municipalities to enact specific policies.

Karen stated that she appreciated that the policy focus is not on mandating things for municipalities, but gives the option for each municipality to do what works for them in most cases.

3. Update

a. Generation Targets

At a prior meeting, the committee discussed the fact that the amount of energy generation reported by the Vermont Energy Atlas plus Burlington Electric Department and the Department of Public Service is different, with the former being a smaller amount. Melanie explained that these two numbers are closer now, but the number from the energy atlas and BED is still about 50,000 mWh lower than the DPS number. She also explained that DPS confirmed that we can use the lower number if we are more comfortable with the data, as long as we explain that there is a difference.

b. DPS Comments*

Melanie explained that staff have received comments from the Department of Public Service, which were generally positive. The committee agreed that wherever possible, the more specific actions are, the better. Specifically, the committee asked that we get more specific in response to this DPS comment "The plan states support for an EV charging network and natural gas and biodiesel HDVs, but does not include any implementation actions." Melanie provided what we do on this front, and we can make the actions more specific.

4. Next Steps (5 minutes)

The next meeting will take place on October 17, 2017.