

**Staff Review of the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan**

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**October 7, 2016 – *Marked up 9/1/2017***

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The Town of Williston has requested, per 24 V.S.A §4350, that the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (1) approve its 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan; and (2) confirm its planning process.

This draft 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan is an update and re-adoption of the 2011-2016 Williston Comprehensive Plan. In accordance with statute, re-adoption means a fully compliant plan. CCRPC reviewed the 2011-2016 plan in 2013 as part of an Enhanced Consultation process. The 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan has added several new required elements, including flood resilience and economic development. The addition of these sections ensures that the plan meets statutory guidelines. Town staff has indicated that this plan is in draft format and that some “quality control” issues remain.

CCRPC staff completed a formal review of the 2016-2014 Williston Comprehensive Plan in advance of any public hearings on the plan. The Williston Planning Commission’s public hearing on the plan has been warned and will be held on November 15, 2016.

Following the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission’s (CCRPC’s) *Guidelines and Standards for Confirmation of Municipal Planning Processes and Approval of Municipal Plans (2013)* and the statutory requirements of 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117, I have reviewed the draft 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan to determine whether it is:

- Consistent with the general goals of §4302;
- Consistent with the specific goals of §4302;
- Contains the required elements of §4382;
- Compatible with the 2013 Chittenden County Regional Plan, entitled the *2013 Chittenden County ECOS Plan* (per §4350); and
- Compatible with approved plans of other municipalities (per §4350).

Additionally, I have reviewed the planning process requirements of §4350.

Staff Review Findings and Comments

1. The 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan is consistent with all of the general goals of §4302. See the attached Appendix A submittal that describes how the Plan is consistent with these goals.
2. The 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan is consistent with the specific goals of §4302. See Table 1A on Page 2 of the Plan that describes how the Plan is consistent with these goals.
3. The 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan contains the required elements of §4382. See Table 1A on Page 2 of the Plan that describes compliance with these required elements.
4. The 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan is generally compatible with the planning areas, goals and strategies of the 2013 Chittenden County Regional Plan, entitled the *2013 Chittenden County ECOS Plan*.
5. The 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan **appears to be** compatible with the municipal plans for South Burlington, Essex Junction, Essex, St. George, Shelburne, Richmond and Jericho.

- a. **While there are some references to cooperation between Williston and adjoining municipalities, and the land use and uses proposed in the 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan appear not to conflict with any neighboring municipalities, the plan does not include the required “statement indicating how the plan relates to the development trends and plans of adjacent municipalities, areas and the region developed under this title” (24 VSA §4382 (a) (8)).** Town staff have indicated that they are aware of the need to add this section.

*Added in Chapter 14 of the final plan.*

6. Williston has a planning process in place that is sufficient for an approved plan. In addition, Williston has provided information about their planning budget and CCRPC finds that Williston is maintaining its efforts to provide local funds for municipal and regional planning.

Additional Comments/Questions:

In September 2015, CCRPC staff completed an initial review of the 2011-2016 Williston Comprehensive Plan, which included a discussion of several new required sections that needed to be added to the 2016-2024 plan, as well as a number of suggestions for changes intended to improve the next draft of the plan. The required additions (flood resilience, water quality and economic development) were all incorporated, as discussed briefly below. Although the suggestions were not required changes, most of them were incorporated. The status of the suggestions can be found in the annotated 2015 memorandum, attached.

1. Flood Resilience: The 2016-2024 Plan discusses flood resilience in objective 12.8, part of the Watershed Health chapter.
2. Water Quality: The 2016-2024 Plan has an extensive discussion of water quality in Chapter 12: Watershed Health.
3. Economic Development: The 2016-2024 Plan describes past and future economic growth in the Town, and connects future economic growth with the land use and transportation goals of the Plan.

CCRPC staff understands that this plan is in draft form, and town staff has stated that some “quality control” issues (ex. typos, map mis-numbering) remain. CCRPC staff have marked-up the draft plan to indicate these changes. **While Staff does not find that any changes are necessary for approval and confirmation of the process by the CCRPC, the following recommendations and clarifying questions are offered to improve the plan:**

1. It appears that parts of the implementation table have not been updated and are still from the 2011-2016 version. *Updated*
2. The Williston Annex of the All Hazards Mitigation Plan is discussed briefly in reference to flood resilience. I recommend a policy related to completing the actions included in the AHMP by the town and/or updating the AHMP as necessary. *Completed*
3. On page 91, Table 1 includes good language explaining erosion and river related jargon. To align with State of Vermont language on this topic and make the issue more understandable to readers, I suggest naming the second item under Flood Protection “River Corridor Protection Area” instead of “Fluvial Erosion Hazard Area,” and labeling the River Corridor Protection Area on the graphic on page 92. *Completed*
4. Policy 8.3.3 mentions studying ways to improve dispatch. Is the Town involved in the regional dispatch study being conducted by CCRPC? If yes, mentioning this may be a good policy addition. *Not added, but not a requirement, just a question for discussion.*
5. The plan has a great energy discussion in Chapter 11 that mentions creating a “Town Energy Plan.” A map showing existing generation and the site of 3-phase power could be helpful. Does the town intend

CCRPC Formal Staff & PAC Review – 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan  
October 12, 2016 PAC Meeting – *Marked Up 9/1/2017*

to seek a certificate of energy compliance and associated substantial deference related to energy facility siting for this effort, or to contribute development constraints for consideration as part of the CCRPC Regional Energy Plan maps? If yes, mentioning this may be a good policy addition. *Included*

6. Policy 6.7, which discusses Regional Transportation Planning, mentions that “Williston will advocate a new formula that reflects traffic volumes, employment, or other indicators that better reflect jurisdictions’ relative needs for transportation improvements.” Does this refer to the number of votes given to each municipality during votes on MPO business, or to the formula used to prioritize transportation projects? *Policy has been removed.*

Proposed Motion & Next Steps:

PROPOSED MOTION: The PAC finds that the draft 2016-2024 Williston Comprehensive Plan, as submitted, meets all statutory requirements for CCRPC approval, and that the municipality’s planning process meets all statutory requirements for CCRPC confirmation.

Upon notification that the Plan has been adopted by the municipality, CCRPC staff will review the plan, and any information relevant to the confirmation process, for changes. If staff determines that changes are substantive, those changes will be forwarded to the PAC for review. Otherwise the PAC recommends that the Plan, and the municipal planning process, should be forwarded to the CCRPC Board for approval.