

CCRPC Formal Staff & PAC Review and Hearing – 2018 Richmond Town Plan
June 13, 2018 PAC Meeting

Staff Review of the 2018 Richmond Town Plan

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June 5, 2018 – Annotated January 9, 2019

The Town of Richmond has requested, per 24 V.S.A. §4350, that the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (1) approve its 2018 Richmond Town Plan; and (2) confirm its planning process.

This draft 2018 Richmond Town Plan is an update and re-adoption of the 2013 Richmond Town Plan. In accordance with statute, re-adoption means that this is a fully compliant plan that will expire eight years after adoption by the Selectboard. The 2018 Richmond Town Plan is a complete rewrite with a new format, new priorities and new actions, as well as updated data. CCRPC's Planning Advisory Committee reviewed a previous draft of the plan in advance of the December 14, 2017 hearing, and CCRPC staff have reviewed individual sections since then. The PAC asked for changes to the plan in 2017, and the responses to those changes can be seen in the annotated memo (attached). Given the significant changes that have been made since the December 2017 review, another formal review is being conducted.

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 2018 Richmond Town 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 and the 2018 Chittenden County Regional Plan (anticipated adoption on June 20, 2018), entitled the *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 2018 Richmond Town Plan is consistent with the general goals of §4302. See the attached Appendix A submittal that describes how the Plan is consistent with these goals.
2. The 2018 Richmond Town Plan is consistent with the specific goals of §4302. See the attached Appendix A submittal that describes how the Plan is consistent with these goals.
3. The 2018 Richmond Town Plan contains the required elements of §4382. See the attached Appendix A submittal that describes how the Plan is consistent with these goals.
4. The 2018 Richmond Town 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 2018 Richmond Town Plan appears compatible with the municipal plans for Williston, Hinesburg, Huntington, Bolton, and Jericho, but more detail on this is necessary (see comment below). – **Fully addressed in final draft**

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June 13, 2018 PAC Meeting

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

Additional Comments/Questions:

Plan Strengths:

- The public engagement process for this plan was exceptional, and I hope the website at <http://richmondvtfuture.weebly.com> will stay up so it can be used as an example for other processes. It's useful that each technical plan identifies the ways in which the text addresses the plan's vision.
- In late 2017, the PAC raised concerns about the Future Land Use technical plan in the draft Richmond Town Plan. The section has since been completely rewritten using a robust community process, and the comments have been addressed.

Changes Needed to Meet Statutory Requirements

- The plan should have more detail on the plan's compatibility with adjoining municipal plans and the regional plan. The plan only briefly mentions some of its adjoining municipalities (Williston, Huntington, Hinesburg and Bolton) in "Current Land Use" on page 22. This discussion should be improved. This would be easily fixed by adding a few sentences in the plan stating that the plan is compatible with the land uses planned by adjoining municipalities and the ECOS Plan. The language on page 99 of the 2013 Richmond Town Plan is still accurate, except for some minor changes (Part of the border with Bolton is now a proposed West Bolton Hamlet district, Huntington has renamed their adjoining districts as Rural Residential and Flood Hazard Overlay, and Jericho has rezoned for Forestry, Agriculture, Rural Residential and Open Space). – Fully addressed in final draft

Suggested Edits (Not Required for CCRPC Approval and Confirmation):

- To improve readability, the plan should better define the difference between *river corridors* and *river corridor protection areas* in the Emergency Resilience and Natural Resources section. The Emergency Resilience section mentions River Corridor Protection Areas on page 16, but elsewhere, River Corridors are mapped and discussed, not RCPAs. The description of RCPAs is correct on page 16, but I think it will be confusing for the reader to discuss RCPAs in one section and then River Corridors everywhere else, especially since RCPAs aren't mapped. Consider adding something like the sentence below to clarify: "River corridor protection areas are the areas a river or stream naturally move through to establish equilibrium, and they do not necessarily align with floodplains, so current regulations do not necessarily prevent development in these critical areas. The Natural Resources Technical Plan calls for Richmond to regulate the river corridor (the river corridor protection area with an additional buffer to allow for water movement)."
- By the time this plan is adopted, the 2018 ECOS Plan should be adopted, so make sure to remove "Draft" from its name after the end of June.

Energy Planning Comments

- My understanding is that Richmond intends to seek a Determination of Energy Compliance after the planned adoption of the plan in November 2018. Although CCRPC cannot formally review the plan until after it is adopted and after the 2018 ECOS Plan receives its own Determination of Energy Compliance, I reviewed this draft against the Department of Public Service's Energy Planning Standards for Municipal Plans and suggest only one change necessary to meet the standards.

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- The energy data section includes references to “maps in this section,” but the maps are not included in the text. Please change it to refer to the map names/map numbers in the plan, and indicate page numbers or links.
- It’s not a change that needs to be made to gain a Determination of Energy Compliance, but the inclusion of “trails” in the list of local possible constraints is confusing. All other local constraints are supported by specific actions in the Natural Resources technical plan. It’s not clear what the town is hoping to avoid. Do you simply not want solar panels or wind turbines to be built directly on trails? Are there buffers around trails that you hope won’t be developed? For a policy that can be clearly applied during PUC proceedings, consider strengthening this policy in a future version of the plan.

Proposed Motion & Next Steps:

PROPOSED MOTION: The PAC finds that the draft 2018 Richmond Town Plan, as submitted and with the edit described above, 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.