

Staff Review of the Village of Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan 2019-2027, including Enhanced Energy Plan Review

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Reviewed by the CCRPC Planning Advisory Committee on May 8, 2019 – Annotated for CCRPC Board Review at 9/18/2019 Meeting

The Village of Essex Junction has requested, per 24 V.S.A. §4350, that the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (1) approve its Village of Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan 2019-2027; and (2) confirm its planning process.

Additionally, the Village of Essex Junction has requested that the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission issue a determination of compliance with the enhanced energy planning standards set forth in 24 V.S.A. §4352 for the Village of Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan 2019-2027.

The draft Village of Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan 2019-2027 is an update and re-adoption of the 2014 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 Village Trustees. However, CCRPC staff understand that during the life of this plan, the Village of Essex Junction and Essex Town may move to adopt a new unified plan. CCRPC reviewed the 2014 plan in September 2017 as part of an informal review and consultation process. The draft Village of Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan 2019-2027 adds information to meet statutory requirements, provides updated data, addresses some recent changes in the community and incorporates an enhanced energy plan by reference. Staff have completed this formal review of the draft Village of Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan 2019-2027 and review of the draft Essex Community Enhanced Energy Plan against the Vermont Department of Public Service’s Energy Planning Standards for Municipal Plans in advance of the Planning Commission’s public hearing on May 23, 2019.

Confirming and Approving the Municipal Plan

Following the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission’s (CCRPC’s) *Guidelines and Standards for Confirmation of Municipal Planning Processes and Approval of Municipal Plans (2018)* and the statutory requirements of 24 V.S.A. Chapter 117, I have reviewed the draft Village of Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan 2019-2027 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 2018 Chittenden County Regional Plan, entitled the *2018 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 Village of Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan 2019-2027 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 Village of Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan 2019-2027 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 Village of Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan 2019-2027 contains the required elements of §4382. See the attached Appendix A submittal that describes how the Plan is consistent with these goals.
4. The Village of Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan 2019-2027 is generally compatible with the planning areas, goals and strategies of the 2018 Chittenden County Regional Plan, entitled the *2018 Chittenden County ECOS Plan*.
5. The Village of Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan 2019-2027 is compatible with the municipal plans for the Town of Essex, the City of South Burlington, and the Town of Williston.
6. Essex Junction has a planning process in place that is sufficient for an approved plan. In addition, Essex Junction has provided information about their planning budget and CCRPC finds that Essex Junction is maintaining its efforts to provide local funds for municipal and regional planning.

Comments/Questions:

No changes are necessary to meet statutory requirements. However, the following suggestions and questions may be useful to help clarify the plan as editing continues following the Planning Commission's public hearing.

All issues were clarified with edits to the text before adoption.

- The text on pg. 35 states that median household income in Essex Junction is higher than the county, but it appears the graph shows the opposite.
- Consider updating the data on broadband availability on pg. 69, as the definition of broadband has changed significantly since 2011.
- There is a discussion of significant wildlife habitat in the plan on pg. 50 and 53, but how exactly is the Village is defining significant wildlife habitat? Is it everything that's inventoried in Vermont Conservation Design? If yes, consider clarifying that.
- Does the Village have building codes or not? On pg. 76, Objective 4.3 implies no, but on pg. 87, Objective 1.2 implies yes.
- On pg. 89, the second paragraph seemed to say both that interconnected local streets are discouraged, but also that they are a central transportation policy for the village.

Enhanced Energy Plan Review

Following the statutory requirements of 24 V.S.A. §4352 and Vermont Department of Public Service's Energy Planning Standards for Municipal Plans, I have reviewed the draft Essex Community Enhanced Energy Plan to determine whether:

7. The Essex Community Enhanced Energy Plan includes an energy element that has the same components as described in 24 V.S.A. §4348a(a)(3) for a regional plan and is confirmed under the requirements of 24 V.S.A. §4350.
8. The Essex Community Enhanced Energy Plan is consistent with following State goals:
 - a. Vermont's greenhouse gas reduction goals under 10 V.S.A. § 578(a);
 - b. Vermont's 25 by 25 goal for renewable energy under 10 V.S.A. § 580;
 - c. Vermont's building efficiency goals under 10 V.S.A. § 581;

- d. State energy policy under 30 V.S.A. § 202a and the recommendations for regional and municipal energy planning pertaining to the efficient use of energy and the siting and development of renewable energy resources contained in the State energy plans adopted pursuant to 30 V.S.A. §§ 202 and 202b (State energy plans); and
 - e. The distributed renewable generation and energy transformation categories of resources to meet the requirements of the Renewable Energy Standard under 30 V.S.A. §§ 8004 and 8005.
9. The Essex Community Enhanced Energy Plan meets the standards for issuing a determination of energy compliance included in the State energy plans as developed by the Vermont Department of Public Service.

Staff Review Findings and Comments

Consistency with the requirements above is evaluated through the Vermont Department of Public Service’s Vermont Department of Public Service’s Energy Planning Standards for Municipal Plans, which is attached to this document and briefly summarized below.

Standard	Met	Not Met	N/A
1. Plan duly adopted and approved	<u>Met after PAC review</u>	Necessary for final determination	
2. Submit a copy of the adopted plan	<u>Met after PAC review</u>	Necessary for final determination	
3. Plan contains an energy element	X		
4. Analysis of resources, needs, scarcities, costs and problems in the municipality across all energy sectors	X		
5.a. Report Current energy use for heating, electricity, and transportation	X		
5.b. Report 2025, 2035 and 2050 targets for energy use	X		
5.c. Evaluation of thermal-sector energy use changes	X		
5.d. Evaluation of transportation-sector energy use changes	X		
5.e. Evaluation of electric-sector energy use changes	X		
6.a. Encourage conservation by individuals and organizations	X		
6.b. Promote efficient buildings	X		
6.c. Promote decreased use of fossil fuels for heat	X		
6.d. Demonstrate municipal leadership re: efficiency of municipal buildings?	X		
7.a. Encourage increased public transit use	X		
7.b. Promote shift away from single-occupancy vehicle trips	X		
7.d. Promote shift from gas/diesel to non-fossil fuel vehicles?	X		
7.e. Demonstrate municipal leadership re: efficiency of municipal transportation?	X		
8.a. Promote Smart growth land use policies	X		
8.b. Strongly prioritize development in compact, mixed use centers	X		
9.a. Report existing renewable energy generation	X		
9.b. Analyze generation potential	X		
9.c. Identify sufficient land to meet the 2050 generation targets	X		

9.d. Ensure that local constraints do not prevent the generation targets from being met	X		
9.e. Include policy statements on siting energy generation	X		
9.f. Maximize potential for generation on preferred sites	X		
9.g. Demonstrate municipal leadership re: deploying renewable energy	X		
10. Include maps provided by CCRPC	X		

Comments/Questions:

No changes are necessary to meet the enhanced energy planning standards. However, the following suggestions and questions may be useful to help clarify the plan as the editing process continues following the Planning Commission’s public hearing.

Edits were made to clarify these issues before adoption.

- Between Figure 4 and Figure 5 of this plan, the paragraph about electric generation refers to tables 12 and 13, but these should be renumbered. In this same paragraph, there is a clear explanation about the generation potential of base solar and how it can help Essex meet their low target. Consider adding a note about this to Table 9’s discussion of base solar generation, to clarify the fact that the text contains important extra information about the data in Table 9.
- Siting policy 3 says “development of renewable energy generation facilities shall not take place in areas with known constraints,” but below Table 10, the text says “Renewable energy generation facilities should be carefully designed to avoid undue adverse impacts to known constraints” instead. Consider using the same language in both places to avoid any confusion.

Staff finds that the draft Village of Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan 2019-2027 meets the requirements of the enhanced energy planning standards (“determination”) set forth in 24 V.S.A. §4352.

Proposed Motion & Next Steps:

PROPOSED MOTION: The PAC finds that the draft Village of Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan 2019-2027 meets all statutory requirements for CCRPC approval, and that the municipality's planning process meets all statutory requirements for CCRPC confirmation.

The PAC also finds that the draft Village of Essex Junction Comprehensive Plan 2019-2027 meets the requirements of the enhanced energy planning standards (“determination”) set forth in 24 V.S.A. §4352.

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. If staff determines that the required data and reference have not been added, or that substantive changes have been made, the materials 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, confirmation, and an affirmative determination of energy compliance.