

CCRPC Formal Staff & PAC Review – 2015 Underhill Town Plan
March 11, 2015 PAC Meeting

Staff Review of the 2015 Underhill Town Plan
Regina Mahony, CCRPC Senior Planner
March 6, 2015

The Town of Underhill has requested, per 24 V.S.A §4350, that the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (1) approve its 2015 Town Plan; and (2) confirm its planning process.

This draft 2015 Town Plan is an entire update of the Underhill Town Plan. CCRPC did an initial review before the Plan was updated (attached with annotations of what was completed) and then reviewed each draft chapter as it was being drafted over the last year and most of those recommendations were incorporated. Those that were not, are completely reasonable and not needed for our official approval and confirmation. Overall, this is an excellent Plan and they've done a great job at keeping the analysis clear and succinct. The Underhill Planning Commission public hearing will be held on March 18, 2015.

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 2015 Underhill 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, 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 2015 Underhill Town 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 2015 Underhill 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.
 - a. While Appendix A indicates that the Plan does not include a discussion on how growth may impact services and facilities (§4302(c)12) utilities, services and facilities are described in the land use, services and infrastructure chapters. These chapters indicate that existing services appear to be adequate for current needs and the future 5 years. In addition, the Plan indicates that future infrastructure projects will be directed to the village centers, and calls for a focus on maintaining existing infrastructure rather than expansion. Cell service in particular is identified as patchy throughout the Town.
3. The 2015 Underhill Town Plan contains the required elements of §4382. See the attached Appendix A submittal that describes compliance with these required elements.

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- a. **While the Plan includes an implementation element, the Plan could be strengthened by a identifying a timeframe associated with each strategy in the Implementation chapter (ongoing, short-term, long-term, etc.); as well as identifying a top 10 list of priority strategies to focus the implementation efforts for the coming 5 years.**
4. The 2015 Underhill 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 2015 Underhill Town Plan is compatible with the municipal plans for Bolton, Jericho, Essex, Westford, Cambridge, and Stowe. While the analysis contained in this section is brief, Jericho, Westford and Cambridge do all have similar goals and visions and the land use strategies on the borders are compatible. The connection with Stowe is the State Forest and Bolton is with the Firing Range and therefore compatible.
6. Underhill has a planning process in place that is likely to result in an approved plan. In addition Underhill has provided information about their planning budget and CCRPC finds that Underhill is maintaining its efforts to provide local funds for municipal and regional planning.

Additional Comments/Questions:

While, Staff does not find that any of the amendments below are necessary for approval and confirmation of the process by the CCRPC, we do have the following minor recommendations:

1. The floodplain and fluvial erosion hazard areas are described in the Natural Resource and Land Use sections. This may be an opportunity to delete some text and rely on referencing. Aside from that I recommend adding the following to the end of the last flood resiliency paragraph in Section 1.5 (top of page 10): "...and for State funding purposes as described in Section 3.8 of the Land Use Chapter."
2. Section 1.11 – Climate Change – I recommend adding a reference at the end of this section to the energy chapter where greenhouse gas emissions are described.
3. Section 9.3 – Greenhouse Gas Emissions Data – I recommend adding a statement at the end of this section: "...some of which are already identified in other sections of this Plan including the Transportation Chapter."
4. I recommend referencing the Maps throughout the text. Some of them are referenced, but more references would be helpful. For example, when reading the Energy chapter it would be great to be reminded to look at Map 7 which includes existing solar installations.

Proposed Motion & Next Steps:

PROPOSED MOTION: The PAC finds that the draft 2015 Underhill Town 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.