



# CHITTENDEN COUNTY RPC

Communities Planning Together

## DRAFT Minutes

### CCRPC Long Range Planning Energy Sub-Committee

DATE: Tuesday, November 15, 2016

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

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

#### Attendees Present:

Matt Burke, Charlotte

Jim Donovan, Charlotte

Keith Epstein, South Burlington

Jeff Forward, Richmond

Robin Pierce, Essex Junction

Catherine McMains, Jericho

Sharon Murray, Bolton

Karen Purinton, Colchester

Irene Wrenner, Essex

#### Staff Present:

Charlie Baker, Executive Director

Marshall Distel, Transportation Planner

Regina Mahony, Planning Program Manager

Melanie Needle, Senior Planner

Emily Nosse-Leirer, Planner

#### 1. **Welcome + Introductions\*** (5 minutes)

No changes were made to the agenda and there was no public comment.

#### 2. **Review Minutes from the October 18, 2016 meeting\***

The minutes were approved.

#### 3. **Brief update on Department of Public Service's Energy Compliance Standards (5 minutes) \***

- Melanie summarized the comments submitted to the Department of Public Service by CCRPC regarding the Energy Planning Standards for Municipal Plans. Most of the committee had seen the comments already. Robin Pierce raised the concern that conserved land is a Level 2, or possible, constraint, rather than a Level 1, or definite, constraint. Melanie replied that determining the specific deed restrictions on individual parcels of conserved land is time prohibitive. Jeff Forward

asked whether the Energy Subcommittee or towns would be identifying preferred locations in addition to identifying constraints, and Melanie clarified that such a process would take place. Robin raised a concern that renewable energy development should be subject to the same state goal that all development is subject to – compact settlements surrounded by rural country side. Regina Mahony suggested that we save that for the local comments part of the agenda as we've received some conflicting comments. Catherine McMains made the point that fire departments face a steep learning curve in terms of dealing with rooftop solar during fires since they are always live.

**5. Review DRAFT FAQ\* (10 minutes)**

Staff has developed a FAQ for this project based on the questions that have come up at planning commission meetings. Many of questions still need to be answered, and the committee suggested other questions, such as defining what renewable energy credits are and how they work. RECs are a controversial issue, because many towns wish to retain the RECs for renewable energy development in their town. Karen Purinton suggested that clarifying what happens if a town disagrees with the regional energy plan would be a good FAQ.

**6. Presentation on Mapping Energy Resource Areas (20 minutes)**

Melanie gave a presentation on the process CCRPC is using to map local energy constraints. The presentation can be found here: [http://www.ccrpcvt.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/SouthBurlington\\_RegionalEnergyPlanningPresentation\\_20160831.pptx](http://www.ccrpcvt.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/SouthBurlington_RegionalEnergyPlanningPresentation_20160831.pptx) Questions arose about how biomass resources will be mapped. This is an ongoing issue. Jim Donovan raised the point that the regional energy plan needs to be clear that the maps may not capture “all” possible solar and wind generation areas and so the word should be removed from all future writing. Sharon Murray asked why ANR lands were not included as a Level 1 constraints and Melanie mentioned that the PSD decided to leave it as a Level 2 constraint because the policy of not allowing renewable development on ANR land is not allowed does not apply to every ANR parcel and the policy could be changed at any time as it is not law.

Sharon suggested that seeing topography would be helpful on the wind maps.

Jim was concerned that wetlands are much larger than shown on the maps, and Melanie and Regina confirmed that the maps and plan will be clear that the maps are a high-level representation of specific policies.

Multiple committee members raised the point that Deer Wintering Area maps are outdated and not an accurate representation of deer habitat.

Jeff Forward brought up whether the regional energy plan should take a position that solar projects that are compatible with farms are encouraged. Robin Pierce disagreed, saying that the Vermont brand would be harmed and that he disagrees with the Agency of Agriculture's determination that agricultural potential is not harmed by solar development. Matt Burke said that this is all a matter of scale. Sharon asked if there is the potential to be more restrictive for certain farms at the local level while not elevating all agricultural soils to a Level 1 constraint.

Jim brought up the question of whether there is an opportunity to reduce the level of constraints. Specifically, he said that many Class II wetlands are used as (poor quality) ag soils and perhaps it would be better to put solar panels in Class II wetland ag soils and leave prime ag soils alone.

The committee made the point that if it is possible in later iterations of data, it would be useful to see the scale of projects that are appropriate in each area. This would ideally take into account both

constraints and necessary infrastructure like 3-phase power.

Keith Epstein made the point that it might be useful to show more specificity on why certain areas are shown as not being solar or wind resources. Currently, a white area could be either a Level 1 constraint or no good for solar/wind and you can't tell.

7. **Update on municipal planning commission meetings and feedback on local constraints to date\***

As of 11/17, staff will have met with 14 municipalities, and conversations are ongoing. Many municipalities have offered additional local constraints, which are provided starting on page 12 of the meeting packet found [here](#).

The committee brought up again the issue of renewables not being appropriate development even in some places where development is encouraged, ex. village centers. Melanie mentioned that she has brought this question up with the DPS and the Bennington RPC. This might be resolved by having maps that show different scales/sizes of energy development that are appropriate in different places. This might be the second step of mapping. Some town comments might also be addressed by this.

The committee also raised concerns about whether the region will be able to meet its goals given all the constraints—they would like to see all these constraints mapped and to see how much energy generation space is left. This is CCRPC staff's next step.

Jeff raised the idea of a potential "bonus" criteria to encourage co-location of renewable energy generation in places where it should be encouraged.

8. **Next Steps (5 minutes)**

Draft Energy Resource Maps are due to DPS on December 15. Melanie will finish mapping all local constraints and bring the updated maps to the next Energy Subcommittee meeting on December 6 at 5pm in the CCRPC Main Conference Room.