



CCRPC Long Range Planning Energy Sub-Committee

DRAFT MINUTES

DATE: Tuesday, February 20 2018
TIME: 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 pm
PLACE: CCRPC Office, 110 West Canal Street, Suite 202, Winooski, VT.

Attendees:

Catherine McMains, Jericho (Chair)
Matt Burke, Charlotte Alternate
Will Dodge, Essex
Keith Epstein, South Burlington
Jeff Forward, Richmond

Regina Mahony, CCRPC Planning Program Manager
Melanie Needle, CCRPC Senior Planner
Emily Nosse-Leirer, CCRPC Planner

1. Review December 19, 2017 Minutes

No comments on the minutes. Jeff made a motion and Keith seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

2. Comments on the First Public Hearing of the ECOS Plan

The draft ECOS Plan is available here: <http://www.ecosproject.com/2018-ecos-plan/#plan>

- a. Vermont Gas provided comments on the ECOS Plan which are suggestions for addressing Vermont Gas's role in Chittenden County and the State's energy portfolio with the Plan (comments attached).
Melanie explained that staff had a meeting with Vermont Gas (VGS) a few weeks ago and they have submitted comments asking for more discussion of renewable natural gas (RNG) in the plan. Jeff expressed his concern with including a lot of encouragement for RNG in the plan. Most RNG is coming out of Ontario, and Vermont's potential for creating it in-state is quite limited. Jeff thinks that the main benefit from it is that it helps farmers manage manure on-site and get some benefit from it, not because it has a lot of potential to meet the energy goals.

Melanie summarized the comments from Vermont Gas (attached and below). The energy subcommittee made the following comments.

- Main Plan, Page 1, Consider adding to the end of the last paragraph "It is not intended to be a prescriptive planning tool supporting or opposing any specific projects and it is important for the Commission and its municipalities to maintain flexibility in their future planning initiatives: Melanie suggested that the first comment be forwarded to the Long-Range Planning Committee for discussion, because it goes beyond the energy section of the plan. Jeff mentioned that he hopes that the plan still not be a prescriptive process.
- Page 4, Goal 16, Add "energy systems" to the list of infrastructure facilities. Whether natural gas infrastructure or adequacy of the electric grid, specifically mentioning energy infrastructure will provide flexibility in addressing areas slated for growth.: Strategy 2, Action 2 will be revised to include energy

systems, instead of changing Goal 16. None of the other goals are being changed. Jeff asked if this means that energy infrastructure outside of the areas planned for growth will not be maintained. Regina explained that she thinks that we make that point elsewhere in the plan. Jeff said that he thinks we should draw a distinction here, because he thinks our policies should support connections to existing natural gas infrastructure, but not a new pipeline.

- Page 4, Goal 17, "Consider rephrasing from ""Transform Chittenden County's energy system to a cleaner ... "" to "Move Chittenden County's energy system toward a cleaner ... " This will allow room for cleaner fuels to replace dirtier fuels even if they are not yet renewable.": Keith said that he thinks that this proposed change really weakens the goal. Melanie said that CCRPC has very limited abilities to “transform” the energy sector, but we do have an ability to assist in “moving towards.” Will expressed that he thinks that the plan’s very declarative statements should be limited to things we really mean, based on his reading of the recent challenge to Bennington’s local energy plans. The committee agreed that it’s OK to weaken this statement to make sure that we’re saving regulatory power for when it really matters. This change will take place everywhere this language appears in the plan.
- Page 18, Action 2.4.a.ii, “add "renewable natural gas" to the list of examples for decreasing fossil fuel usage”: Jeff expressed that he thinks that there’s a big difference between biogas from in-state producers (local energy, helps manage local waste products) and renewable natural gas being imported from out-of-state producers without a strong regulatory process for designating it as renewable fuel. This gives the process credibility that it doesn’t deserve because of how new it is. The committee members agreed. The subcommittee decided not to include this example because the technology is still very new.
- Page 18-19, Action 2.4.a, "Add an additional bullet "Using existing energy infrastructure, including natural gas transmission and distribution infrastructure to advance the use of renewable fuels such as renewable natural gas that could be transported and delivered through existing infrastructure, so long as investments are made to keep this infrastructure modern, well-maintained, safe and reliable."": Jeff thinks that this suggestion conflates maintaining infrastructure for safety and reliability with advocating for renewable natural gas adoption. Will thought that the sentence was too complicated for it to have any legal bearing. The committee thought that it could be revised to say, “encourage the use of existing energy infrastructure for renewable fuels.” This could be added to the list of actions as Action IX. In the end, the committee agreed that this statement isn’t right for the plan because renewable natural gas is too new for the plan, and that the issue of infrastructure maintenance is included already. Jeff reiterated that he thinks the benefit of biogas is that it is possible to help deal with local waste and benefit the local economy, and that he thinks that this is a classic example of greenwashing. Will suggested that VGS should be listed as a partner in decreasing fossil fuel use for heating in 2.4.a.ii, and the committee agreed. The statement will be revised to say “encourage the use of existing energy infrastructure for renewable fuels.”
- Page 52, “second full paragraph: Add "investments in energy infrastructure" to the list of vital infrastructure”: The committee agreed with this change.
- Page 66, “Consider rephrasing the sentence under energy goals as follows: "To meet state energy goals, the region is planning for a major shift away from fossil fuels in the transportation and heating sector to renewable electric sources of energy, energy efficiency in all sectors, and an increase in in-state renewable energy generators." This will allow flexibility for the inclusion of out-of-state renewable natural gas for uses other than electric generation”: The committee agreed that the first strikeout is fine, but the second and third are not, because a major increase in in-state renewable energy generation is a key part of Vermont’s goals. This will be repeated everywhere else this language appears in the plan.
- Page 67, "first bullet: Add renewable natural gas to the list of options to be promoted in achieving goal.": The committee decided to keep “biogas” instead of changing it to “renewable natural gas.” Jeff suggested that the payback period for certain technology types is something that changes too fast to report in the plan. Sharon Murray also provided a comment via email about reporting the actual cost data for the different fuels. The committee suggested striking the last two sentences in this paragraph because the information becomes outdated quickly.
- Page 68/69, “Consider adding a new bullet stating: "Renewable natural gas will provide Chittenden County residents with an additional opportunity to increase the amount of renewable resources available.”: The committee suggested not adding this for the reasons discussed above.

- Supplement 3, Page 2, “Add the following to the end of the first full paragraph under ECOS Plans Policies and Maps. “For clarity, this Plan is not intended to require the Regional Planning Commission, or any individual municipality, to support or oppose any specific development proposal based on any particular goal or objective of this Plan.”: This will be discussed further with the LRPC at their next meeting.
- Supplement 6, Page 1 (labeled as page 6 in the comments) “Consider adding “balancing other critical factors such as economic vitality and affordability” to the end of the last sentence. This will help convey/remind that there are numerous factors to be considered,” AND “Consider adding to the following sentence to the end of the paragraph: “As noted above, in practice this will require balancing of several objectives and it is critical that flexibility in planning be maintained”: Melanie explained that staff think that this misrepresents the LEAP model, which does not take in to account affordability or any other factors. The concept of balancing affordability and economic development objectives makes sense and action 2.4 will be revised to include this.
- Page 1 and Page 35, “Please add “or renewable natural gas” to the list of various renewable energy technologies”: The committee suggested not adding renewable natural gas discussion to this list because of the reasons discussed above.

b. To date, 5 other comments have been submitted on the energy sections. See attached.

- 2030 District Folks in Burlington requested that the 2018 ECOS plan acknowledge the formation of Burlington’s District 2030 as a way to draw attention and give credibility to their efforts: This project will be added to the CEDS list instead of the energy plan.
- Dean Pierce asked for clarification about what qualifies as a “Closed Landfill,” since these features are preferred sites. The map shows two in Shelburne, and I question whether any should be shown. I have no idea what the one close to Route 7 is about. The one between Thompson Road and Spear Street is indeed an old town dump. But since these aren’t capped landfills of the type that might be attractive as ‘cheap space’ in more modern times, does it actually make sense to portray them?: Melanie confirmed that for a landfill to be a preferred site, it has to have post-closure certification, so this will be reflected in the plan’s maps of preferred sites. This also needs to be reflected in Action 2.4.b.iii on Page 20 of the main document.
- Will Dodge asked for additional clarification about what the LEAP model is and whether it is based on realistic predictions or only based on meet state goals: Staff informed the committee of the intended purpose of LEAP. It is only one possible scenario for achieving the state’s energy goals.
- Sarah Hadd expressed that she thinks that the process for determining constraints may lead to Colchester having a very high percentage of renewable resources: No changes were requested.

3. Updated Energy Data Guides

For your information, Staff refreshed all the municipal energy data guides and are available here:

<https://www.ccrpcvt.org/our-work/our-plans/regional-energy-plan/>. These guides contain the data, targets and maps for municipalities to meet a portion of the Act 174 energy planning standards.

4. Next Steps

Catherine announced several Jericho Energy Committee events.

The next meeting is scheduled tentatively for 3/6/2018.