



CCRPC Long Range Planning Energy Sub -Committee

Meeting Summary

DATE: Tuesday, October 17, 2017
TIME: 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 pm
PLACE: CCRPC Office, 110 West Canal Street, Suite 202, Winooski, VT.

Attendees:

Jeff Forward, Richmond
Catherine McMains, Jericho
Will Dodge, Essex
Keith Epstein, South Burlington
Melanie Needle, CCRPC Senior Planner
Regina Mahony, CCRPC Planning Program Manager
Emily Nosse-Leirer, CCRPC Planner

1. Review September 19, 2017 Minutes

Jeff asked if all the language tweaks from last meeting made it into the latest draft. Melanie confirmed that they did. Will moved to accept the minutes, Keith seconded and the minutes were accepted unanimously.

2. Discussion of Siting Policy Statements

Melanie stated that the latest draft shows what was discussed at our last meeting, as well as comments and concerns from the board.

- The Department of Public Service appeared to find our action item of establishing a consistent energy code confusing. We will clarify this policy to communicate its intent, which is to standardize the application of stretch codes across development, not just for Act 250 projects or municipalities that have adopted the stretch code for all development. The committee discussed various ways that stretch codes can be implemented, either through Act 250, through municipal adoption of codes, or through linking the stretch codes with certificates of occupancy.
 - The committee discussed the difficulties of enforcing the stretch codes. Who completes the blow door test to make sure the codes are being met? Jeff said that in Richmond, there have been discussions about encouraging people to participate in Efficiency Vermont programs, which incentivize weatherization, instead of requiring codes at the municipal level. Efficiency Vermont also trains contractors very well.
 - Will suggested framing it as “In the absence of universal stretch energy codes...” we will work with municipalities.
 - Keith made the point that “consistent energy code” makes it sound like we would be happy with no energy codes across the board, so we need to clarify that we want a consistent and high level of energy code, or something similar. He also suggested stating the disincentives first.
 - Jeff suggested that we want to go beyond the statewide energy code with all our municipalities.
 - The issue of disincentivizing infill development is a separate issue that wanting all buildings to be high quality and energy efficient.

- The group discussed the policy stating, “encourage renewable energy generation to support publicly owned buildings.”
 - The question was raised as to why this only refers to publicly owned buildings.
 - Melanie explained that the point of this policy is to talk about how renewable energy is a smart fiscal move, and that there are policies explicitly encouraging rooftop solar later in this section.
- The group discussed the policy stating “Support in-place upgrades to existing facilities...”
 - Jeff asked whether we’re only supporting upgrades of existing facilities, or whether we support upgrades to the grid in general, even if that means new transmission lines. Could we say, “support upgrades to existing generation, storage, transmission, and distribution infrastructure” instead? For example, if a solar farm can expand its capacity within its existing footprint, then we would want to support that.
 - Keith mentioned that there is a problem being caused by recent changes to the net metering rules, because people who have existing net metered systems may want to upgrade, but if their rates have been grandfathered at a higher rate, they may end up losing money due to their expansion because they will get the new rates.
 - We may also add storage to our policy on supporting a wide variety of generation. Melanie mentioned that there will be guidance on planning for energy storage coming out from DPS soon that we can draw from.
- The committee agreed that this plan should not discuss policies on renewable energy credits and where they are sold or retired.
- Melanie explained that the introduction to the suitability policies and the suitability policies themselves have been edited to clarify how the policies relate to each other, and how they relate to one another. Will suggested that we use the word “preclude,” and say “inability to meet these guidelines does not preclude the ability to develop renewable energy generation.”
- The committee discussed how to frame policies around what types of wind energy we want in growth centers and areas planned for growth and discussed whether to express the hub height restrictions in meters or feet.
- Jeff raised concerns about whether saying that “field verified” constraints have to be avoided would increase the permitting barriers to small projects.
 - An applicant does not have to interact with the regional planning commission for anything under 15 kW.
 - We definitely don’t want our policies to require field verification if it doesn’t seem like a development will be affecting a constraint
 - The committee discussed whether this policy should be limited to applications that require review, for example under 15 kW under current rules.
 - Regina made the point that municipalities expect that the constraints they’ve added as local constraints will apply to all scales.
 - This problem may be fixed by describing these as “state and local constraints that have been field verified.”
- Melanie and Regina mentioned that we will be working on our policies for how we determine what to comment on, and this will be discussed in the future.

3. Review Municipal Comments

Melanie explained the various municipal comments that we have received from municipalities thus far.

- Hinesburg is seeking a finer level of detail in terms of renewable energy siting, but the committee agreed that these issues are better addressed at a local level.
- The committee decided that local preferred sites should not be specifically identified in the regional plan, because these issues are better addressed at a local level.
- The committee discussed steep slope regulations, and how large a road is needed to build and maintain a wind turbine. Melanie explained that the Bolton Planning Commission wants to keep constraints as known constraints, while staff feel that the constraints are possible constraints. The committee discussed that ski lifts are allowed on their steep slope areas, and these are significant pieces of machinery. Catherine made the point

that we can't have different standards of review for different municipalities, and steep slopes likely are only possible constraints. But Bolton's surface water setbacks are likely known constraints.

- Williston prohibits development on 30% slopes, but there is a variance procedure. The committee thought that this constraint was better suited to the local plan, but should be a possible constraint in the regional plan. Will made the point that the PUC has traditionally seen variances in constrained areas as a reason not to apply those constraints.

4. Generation Targets

- The table will be edited to make sure all the columns were added together appropriately.
- The committee requested that decimal points be eliminated.

5. Review Energy Summary

- Energy will be the first topic that we 'launch' for public outreach and feedback. Staff has summarized the energy planning work into a concise document that we'll use to garner feedback.
- The committee is fine with the draft plan being distributed to the public for comment.

6. Next Steps

- The next meeting will be November 28.