

1 CHITTENDEN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
2 ENERGY SUB-COMMITTEE - MINUTES
3

4 DATE: Monday, July 24, 2023
5 TIME: 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
6 PLACE: Virtual Meeting via Zoom with link as published on the agenda
7

Members Present:

Daniel Parkins, Essex
Keith Epstein, South Burlington
Kevin Thorley, Williston
Jim Donovan, Charlotte
Dwight Decoster, Underhill
Henry Bonges, Milton
Jeff Forward, Richmond

Staff:

Taylor Newton, Planning Program Manager
Melanie Needle, Senior Planner
Darren Schibler, Senior Planner
Eleni Churchill, Transportation Program Manager

8 **1. Welcome and Introductions**

9 D. Parkins welcomed everyone at 6:03pm.

10 **2. Approve May 25, 2023 Minutes and July 10, 2023 Minutes**

11 H. Bonges made a motion, seconded by K. Epstein, to approve the minutes from May 25 and July 10 as warned. The
12 motion passed 6-0-1 (J. Forward abstained).

13 **3. Energy Planning Standards for Regional Plans**

14 M. Needle reviewed the checklist for regional enhanced energy plans as provided by the Vermont Department of
15 Public Service. CCRPC Energy Project Manager Ann Janda completed the review provided in the packet, finding
16 that the draft ECOS Plan meets all the required standards.
17

18 J. Forward asked if aviation fuels are included in the transportation targets. M. Needle and D. Schibler explained that
19 these are included in the non-road fuels category of the LEAP data, but this category is not included in the plan. J.
20 Forward felt that it was odd to include aviation fuel in the regional plan because it is federally regulated, and
21 municipalities and regional planning commissions do not have any control over it. However, J. Forward noted that
22 other non-road fuels such as those used lawnmowers, chainsaws, and other small motors have a huge impact on
23 greenhouse gas emissions and are not regulated in the same way as vehicles. He didn't ask for specific changes to the
24 plan.
25

26 D. Parkins asked whether the aviation fuel targets are assigned based on where they are produced or where they are
27 consumed. M. Needle noted that generally the LEAP data was regionalized based on population and commercial
28 square footage, but CCRPC was assigned most of the aviation fuel because of Burlington International Airport. J.
29 Forward noted that this should be incorporated into the whole state because the airport's impacts go beyond the
30 region.
31

32 J. Forward pointed out that the targets reference the use of kerosene, which likely would be primarily used in mobile
33 homes, and that this represents a big opportunity to transition to cold climate heat pumps and better achieve energy
34 equity. D. Decoster disagreed that cold climate heat pumps could be used for mobile homes because the technology
35 cannot provide water heating given the design of the homes. J. Forward also advocated for weatherization of mobile
36 homes. T. Newton said that the barriers to cold climate heat pumps in mobile homes and potential solutions could be
37 noted in the plan; alternatively, it could be discussed more generically that reaching the targets will require changes
38 to technology that don't exist yet. H. Bonges suggested that this be added as a footnote, along with other issues that
39 cannot be resolved. M. Needle noted that kerosene is modeled in the commercial and industrial sectors, but that the
40 Climate Action Plan scenario shows this decreasing to 0 by 2050.
41

1 **4. ECOS Plan Review**

2 Key Issues Section

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4 D. Schibler and M. Needle provided an overview of the changes from the prior version of the main plan. D. Schibler
5 highlighted the new discussion of the proposed district heating by Burlington’s McNeil plant and the biomass supply
6 analysis. J. Forward noted there is a workforce shortage in the forest management industry, and that the biomass
7 heating supply chain stretches beyond the county. D. Schibler acknowledged this and said that staff could not find
8 clear data pointing to the forestry workforce shortage. J. Forward suggested contacting Chittenden County Forester
9 Ethan Tapper about forestry workforce shortage issue; alternatively, this could be addressed in a generalized way.

10
11 D. Parkins noted that biomass may be necessary to meeting our energy targets, which was discussed at the last
12 meeting. K. Thorley clarified that the Committee discussed how the City of Burlington has been deemed to meet its
13 targets due to the McNeil Plant, but most of the biomass supply comes from outside the City and there are questions
14 about whether biomass is considered renewable or whether its emissions can be considered net-zero. In this vein, the
15 Committee had also discussed current efforts to decommission McNeil; J. Forward recommended not discussing this
16 in the current plan since it is unresolved and politically sensitive. Furthermore, K. Thorley clarified that the plan
17 discusses biomass for heating differently than for electricity generation. K. Epstein noted that the biomass for heating
18 section should also reference cordwood in addition to pellets and wood chips.

19
20 Moving on, M. Needle and D. Schibler noted that the Renewable Electricity section includes strengthened language
21 around peak loads, community solar, and the barriers for Vermont Electric Power Company’s planning for capital
22 costs of long-range transmission. J. Donovan asked to add a definition for “community solar.”

23
24 K. Epstein noted several changes:

- 25 • The first sentence of the Renewable Electricity Generation section should read, “Chittenden County
26 generates 606,554 MWh **annually** (a 19% **increase**)...”
- 27 • Under Equitable Access to Renewables, the language stating that community solar provides zero up-front
28 cost language is not fully accurate, since some arrangements may include up-front costs. Ultimately, the
29 issue is more about increasing access to small-scale solar for those who do not own a site that can
30 accommodate it. K. Epstein suggested stating that the benefit is that “energy generated at one site can be
31 shared with many people who may not own a suitable site for solar.”
- 32 • Under Renewable Electricity Standard, there is a missing word after “Green Mountain Power’s supply is
33 now 100% carbon free post...” M. Needle clarified that this should read “post-REC” or post Renewable
34 Energy Credits.
- 35 • In the third bullet, fifth sentence under “Electricity Generation Targets,” there is an extra apostrophe after
36 “communities.” Also, remove the word “However” at the start of this bullet.

37
38 J. Donovan noted several changes:

- 39 • Clarify under Weatherization and Energy Efficiency as well as Fuel Switching and Electrification – Heating
40 that the Affordable Heat Act is only a study and does not implement changes to the heating sector.
- 41 • Clarify language under Energy Analysis and targets that thermal energy use will decrease – it may be clearer
42 to say “**The use of energy for heating** in Chittenden County homes is projected to decrease...”

43
44 J. Forward commented that the energy generation targets on p. 40 are encouraging that we’re 2/3 of the way to
45 meeting our targets. He also appreciated discussion that the major barrier to wind generation is the sound rule.

46 Strategies Section

- 47 • J. Donovan noted that under Strategy 2, Action 4(a), the language on participating **in** the Commission on Act
48 250 should be updated.

- 1 • Under Strategy 4, Action 7(h) J. Forward recommended allowing schools and other public buildings to site
2 renewable electricity generation even within designated centers. D. Schibler suggested this might be captured
3 under Action 7(g). Bonges questioned whether there was value in these statements at all, since simple
4 economics should lead a developer to the highest and best use of a site in areas planned for growth, so why
5 prevent generation? T. Newton, J. Donovan, and D. Parkins disagreed, noting examples of ground-mounted
6 solar projects in areas planned for growth where other land uses would be more appropriate; in addition,
7 Action 7(h) is consistent with other CCRPC land use policies. J. Forward continued to advocate strongly for
8 small-scale ground-mounted solar for infill locations even within designated areas. Language was suggested,
9 but ultimately the Committee agreed there is enough flexibility provided in Action 7(d) and discretion by
10 CCRPC’s Executive Committee to support sites that don’t strictly meet the siting policies.
- 11 • K. Epstein suggested that Strategy 4, Action 1(c) should reference county energy targets rather than state. M.
12 Needle clarified that this section discusses the statewide comprehensive energy plan and greenhouse gas
13 reduction goals.
- 14 • K. Epstein noted that Strategy 4, Action 1(e) should read, “In the transportation sector, **meet** 10% of energy
15 needs...”
- 16 • In Action 4(b), J. Donovan felt it was confusing to say CCRPC will decrease fossil fuel consumption by
17 working with utility who are already almost 100% renewable? M. Needle and D. Schibler clarified that this
18 should be reframed to focus on increasing electrification of the thermal sector, rather than increasing the
19 renewable portfolio of electricity.
- 20 • Under Action 4(d), J. Donovan noted concern about recommending state enforcement of energy codes,
21 which may increase cost of building housing – we should not recommend this until the impacts are known.
22 There are studies ongoing to review the enforcement of energy codes. T. Newton recommended referencing
23 the studies, participating, and following the recommendations.
- 24 • For Action 7, J. Donovan suggested general cleanup of language referencing suitability and siting policies.
- 25 • In Action 6(b), J. Donovan wanted to ensure that the current proposed net-metering rules allow for net-
26 metering. To broaden access to the program, the minimum size of net-metered projects should be decreased
27 in addition to increasing the minimum size. M. Needle agreed and also noted that there is a limitation where
28 the customer for a net-metered project must use 50% or more of the power from a site. M. Needle provided
29 suggested language to address this. Discussion followed. T. Newton clarified that there are no minimum size
30 or off-taker limitations on group net-metering, which resolves this issue.
- 31 • J. Donovan requested to spell out LEAP the first time it’s mentioned.

32 Supplement 6

- 33 • M. Needle noted that on P. 4, a sentence was removed about performing equity assessments as part of
34 CCRPC’s review of Section 248 projects. D. Parkins agreed and noted that without clear guidelines on how
35 to do this, it just becomes another barrier to renewables development.
- 36 • On P. 11, K. Epstein asked whether the Residential Cold Climate Heat Pump figures are cumulative, or new
37 as of the writing of the plan. The Committee agreed that this should be cumulative and to remove the word
38 “new.”
- 39 • Under Table 7, K. Epstein noted inconsistencies in the total energy (MWh) figures for solar and wind. D.
40 Schibler will review these again.
- 41 • Under Table 21, K. Epstein asked to double check the numbers calculations based on changes to the total
42 energy figures in Table 7.
- 43 • M. Needle noted an edit on p. 23 that prime areas are areas without possible constraints as well as known
44 constraints.

45 Moving back to the main ECOS Plan, Key Issues, Energy goal: K. Epstein suggested changing “economic
46 development” to “economic prosperity” to emphasize that this is the ultimate intent, not simply growth or
47 development. M. Needle suggested simply “benefit...the economy.” D. Parkins suggested “economic stability.” J.
48 Donovan suggested “economic vitality,” which is consistent with Strategy 4, to which the Committee agreed.
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1 **5. Motion to approve the ECOS Plan energy sections to the Long-Range Planning Committee**

2 J. Forward made a motion, seconded by J. Donovan, to approve the document as modified throughout the meeting.
3 The motion passed unanimously.

4 **6. Next Steps**

5 a. Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) Meeting August 8, 2023

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7 M. Needle noted that the LRPC will be reviewing and providing edits to the energy sections of the ECOS plan at
8 their upcoming meeting and invited the Energy Subcommittee to participate.

9
10 K. Thorley asked about additional efforts in which the Energy Subcommittee could participate regarding regional
11 energy planning. M. Needle suggested the VTrans Transportation Equity Framework, and E. Churchill noted that the
12 public meeting on this was postponed to August 2nd; staff will send out the updated invitation to the Committee.

13 **7. Adjourn**

14 M. Needle thanked the Committee for their work and attention to this effort and congratulated everybody on
15 finishing the work in 5 meetings as planned. The Committee expressed appreciation to staff for their behind-the-
16 scenes work.

17
18 M. Needle adjourned the meeting at 8:12pm.

19
20 Respectfully submitted, Darren Schibler and Melanie Needle.