

1 CHITTENDEN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
2 LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE - MINUTES
3

4 DATE: Tuesday, August 8 2023
5 TIME: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
6 PLACE: Virtual Meeting via Zoom with link as published on the agenda
7

Members Present:	Staff:
Sandy Thibault, TAC Rep	Melanie Needle, Senior Planner
Tracy Delphia, Essex	Darren Schibler, Senior Planner
Eric Vorwald, PAC Rep	Eleni Churchill, Transportation Program Manager
Ben Bornstein, Westford Rep LRPC	Charlie Baker, Executive Director
Bob Henneberger, TAC Rep	Sarah Muskin, Planner
Dwight DeCoster, Underhill, Energy Subcommittee	
Henry Bonges, Milton, Energy Subcommittee	Public:
Daniel Parkins, Essex, Energy Subcommittee	Patty Davis

8
9 **1. Welcome and Introductions**

10 M. Needle welcomed everyone at 7:02pm.

11 **2. Approve July 11, 2023 Minutes**

12 E. Vorwald motioned to approve the July meeting minutes. T. Delphia seconded. All in favor.
13

14 **3. Energy Planning Standard for Regional Plans**

15 The draft enhanced energy plan has been reviewed according to the Public Service's Department energy planning
16 standards (checklist was included as an attachment).
17

18 M. Needle gave an overview of the energy sub-committee: there were a total of 5 meetings held over 5 months to
19 develop the enhanced energy plan for ECOS. Underhill, Richmond, S. Burlington, Essex, Charlotte, and Williston
20 were all represented on the committee. They voted to forward the enhanced energy plan draft onto the LRPC for
21 review.
22

23 M. Needle reviewed the enhanced energy planning processes:

- 24 • Began in 2017 with Act 174 with the intent to have regions and municipalities do upfront planning to
25 understand where renewable energy generation should be sited and avoided.
- 26 • The accompanying standards set criteria for regional and municipal plans.
- 27 • When plans get a determination of positive energy compliance (through enhanced energy planning),
28 municipalities' land conservation measures are given substantial deference in Public Utility Commission
29 (PUC) decision making.
- 30 • 2018 ECOS plan was the region's first enhanced energy plan – the current plan is being updated based on
31 some new standards
- 32 • The biggest changes include adding an equity discussion, and a new possible constraint (forest blocks)
33

34 Currently, the draft plan is being reviewed by the Public Service Department. Feedback is expected in September on
35 any major changes needed before final adoption of the plan and formal review by the Department.
36

37 The Planning standards:

- 38 1) Targets- LEAP (Low Emission Analysis Platform) model
- 39 a. Broken into total energy demand, transportation, and thermal (including residential, commercial, and
40 industrial sectors).

- 1 2) Pathways- implementation actions within the energy strategy that guide CCRPC's work
- 2 3) Mapping Standards- required to map areas that are suitable and not suitable for energy generation (maps of
- 3 high solar and wind potential, and known and possible constraints)

4. Review of DRAFT Enhanced Energy Plan

6 M. Needle provided an overview of the changes from the 2018 enhanced energy plan.

- 7 1. The old plan used a methodology of setting targets for local renewable energy generation that included low
- 8 and high scenarios, and now there is one target set by the state based on the region's share of population and
- 9 land area. The region is planning for an additional 348,000 megawatt hours (MWh) of generation added
- 10 between now and 2050 (total target is 994,833 MWh, which is based on state information). The state plans
- 11 for 50% of electricity demand to be met from in-state generation, and CCRPC is planning for 16% of that
- 12 generation.
- 13 2. Added policies related to renewable energy generation- 1) related to net metering and advocating for the
- 14 PUC changing the size of net metering projects to allow for greater participation and 2) opening the rule
- 15 making process to address sound levels from wind-generation with the intent to allow wind energy
- 16 generation (which is not feasible under the current rules).

17 B. Henneberger suggested that microgrids should be encouraged in policy. New builders should be encouraged to

18 include this as part of new developments. M. Needle suggested including this where the plan discusses energy and

19 weather resilience – CCRPC staff will pursue.

- 21 3. Equity Assessment was added acknowledging the potential impact energy generation could have on
- 22 marginalized communities. This piece exists in supplement 6.

23 Review of the main ECOS Plan document

24 M. Needle shared the energy goals and key issues. M. Needle began discussion on Weatherization and Energy

25 Efficiency, and Fuel Switching and Electrification.

- 27 • Page 31- E. Vorwald asked about a discrepancy in numbers (which may be an incorrectly formatted
- 28 footnote). He also mentioned that seeing some actual numbers of energy prices over time would be helpful as
- 29 benchmarks instead of just narrative and the chart. He also mentioned that the chart should more explicitly
- 30 and clearly say that it represents costs of fuel sources in comparable units.
- 31 • P. Davis requested that heavy duty vehicles be included in the goals on pg. 32 (in addition to light duty
- 32 vehicles). M. Needle says that this bullet references the state goals, which don't include heavy duty vehicles,
- 33 but CCRPC staff can explore adding some information about electrification and heavy-duty vehicles. E.
- 34 Churchill asked P. Davis to share any available info with staff.

35 M. Needle continued the conversation about renewable electricity generation, energy land-use planning, energy

36 analysis and targets, and key indicators (CCRPC staff will fix links for indicators)

- 37 • S. Thibault mentioned that the date associated with the renewable energy standard benchmarks was
- 38 confusing under renewable energy standard heading. M. Needle clarified that the associated law was passed
- 39 before 2017, and CCRPC staff will address this.
- 40 • E. Vorwald asked about the table on page 40 (also repeated in supplement 6) and mentioned it is important to
- 41 acknowledge that electricity is more expensive than other energy sources right now. This gap is a barrier to
- 42 goal achievement. M. Needle says it is acknowledged earlier in the section. B. Henneberger mentions that

1 there are subsidies for things like heat pumps, but nothing for energy bills except for low-income households.
2 D. Parkins mentions these goals are targets to be obtained, not forced on anyone. Also mentions that it is
3 important to have high targets to avoid much larger costs associated with climate change (it doesn't matter
4 how expensive your energy bill is if your house is underwater).

5 Strategy section review:

- 6 • B. Bornstein asked about the basis for establishing planning areas and how the rural planning area relates to
7 Westford's Rural-10 zoning district. M. Needle explained that the planning areas are established from
8 municipal zoning districts. The rural planning area is the planning area with the least density development
9 and also includes natural areas and working landscapes. These are addressed in other sections of the ECOS
10 Plan.
- 11 • E. Vorwald thinks there should be some sort of discussion about how permitting happening at the state level
12 is hampering growth in areas planned for growth under strategy 2, #4. He suggested adding discussion about
13 how state and local policy should be more in line with focusing growth in areas planned for growth. He also
14 mentioned that local regulations include many conditional uses, and this can cause a slowdown of growth in
15 growth areas. CCRPC will look to add discussion.
- 16 • E. Vorwald commented on bike/ped infrastructure during Act 250 discussion, raising the point that Act 250
17 might not apply to some areas especially under reforms currently being contemplated – so it might be worth
18 rewording the bullet on pg. 13. Eleni says this has already been addressed in a new iteration of the
19 Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

20 Review of Maps – LRPC members did not have any comments on the maps.

21
22 Review of Supplement 6: Contains equity assessment, energy targets,

- 23 • E. Vorwald suggested adding an example of energy efficiency measures on page 6 such as windows replaced
24 or heat pumps installed.
- 25 • E. Vorwald asked if Table 6 on page 7 could include what percent of the state's electricity consumption is
26 attributed to Chittenden County.
- 27 • E. Vorwald mentioned that basing targets (page 15) on the regional share of land area is not always the best
28 metric to reflect where energy generation should be located, even though locating generation close to
29 population centers makes sense to reduce transmission. D. Schibler responded that we were given these
30 targets and associated methodology by the state. E. Vorwald asked if targets are based off resource
31 availability or total land available? Not at the state level since there isn't fully reliable data right now;
32 however, the translation of regional to municipal targets accounts for suitability of land for renewables. D.
33 Parkins suggests consumption might be a good metric to inform the targets. He also suggested that targets
34 shouldn't be punishments, but goals instead. M. Needle asked if we want to add language about the targets as
35 directions, but not enforcement, and how Chittenden County is a population center so we should be going
36 beyond our targets in Chittenden County? Committee agrees. E. Vorwald says it is important we exceed
37 targets so that we don't need to transmit energy across the state. B. Henneberger suggests framing the target
38 as state-mandated – CCRPC staff will talk more about the methodology of how the targets are generated and
39 their intended use.

- 1 • E. Vorwald mentions that table 18 is misleading, because it doesn't account for changes in target generation
2 into the future. D. Schibler suggested that "existing renewable" say "2021 renewable" instead? E. Vorwald
3 agreed.
- 4 • On Page 26, E. Vorwald asked why solar has different per-acre rate of prime and base, but wind has the same
5 rate for prime and base on the methodology page. M. Needle explained that the Public Service Department
6 guidance and data allowed for flexibility in setting the conversion from acres to MW for prime solar and base
7 solar. Wind has the same conversion factor for both prime and base because of lack of data for wind projects
8 and the vertical nature of wind projects compared to solar arrays.
- 9 Renewable Energy Targets: D. Schibler reviewed the process for establishing municipal targets.
- 10 • D. Parkins asked if CCRPC staff could link the methodology or source to the table so that people can
11 understand the chart. Without the explanation, people may misconstrue the info, especially if people go only
12 to the tables. CCRPC staff will try to add a note into the table.
- 13 Total Energy Potential by Technology - D. Schibler reviewed Table 21 and mentioned that as a region we are in a
14 good position for meeting our targets across various technology types.
- 15 • P. Davis asked how microgrids might play a role in this section. D. Schibler says micro grids are more about
16 resilience, not about additional energy generation.

17 D Parkins commented that he likes the Forest Block Map. M. Needle reiterated that known AND possible constraints
18 are included on this map. She also mentioned that solar and wind maps are not siting maps, so they cannot totally be
19 used to preclude development.

20
21 E. Vorwald noticed that the city of Essex Junction is missing in table 22. CCRPC staff to address.

22 23 **5. ECOS Plan Website Update**

24 M. Needle updated the LRPC that an RFP has been released to turn the ECOS plan into a website. A consultant will
25 be selected around 9/8/23. The purpose of the web-based plan is to incorporate all the components of the plan in an
26 accessible platform. The idea is to go live with the website in June 2024.

27 28 **6. Adjourn**

29 *E. Vorwald made a motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:57 pm.*

30
31 Respectfully submitted, Sarah Muskin