

CHITTENDEN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC) - MINUTES

DATE: Thursday, November 15, 2023  
TIME: 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
PLACE: Virtual Meeting via Zoom with link as published on the agenda

<u>Members Present:</u> Joss Besse, Bolton Paul Conner, South Burlington Cathyann LaRose, Colchester Katherine Sonnicks, Essex Town Alex Weinhagen, Hinesburg Aaron DeNamur, Shelburne Eric Vorwald, Winooski Charles Dillard, Burlington Chris Yuen, Essex Junction Keith Osborne, Richmond Zachary Maia, Colchester Larry Lewack, Charlotte Matt Boulanger, Williston	<u>Staff:</u> Sarah Muskin, Planner Ann Janda, Senior Energy Planner Taylor Newton, Planning Program Manager Darren Schibler, Senior Planner Melanie Needle, Senior Planner Eleni Churchill, Transportation Program Manager Dan Albrecht, Senior Planner Bryan Davis, Senior Planner  <u>Guests</u> Yoshi Bird Jonathon Weber, Local Motion
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**1. Welcome and Introductions**

P. Conner called the meeting to order at 2:32 p.m. He shared that there will be an additional agenda item at the end to discuss in person gatherings.

**2. Approval of September 13, 2023 Minutes**

*E.Vorwald made a motion to approve the prior meeting's minutes. Seconded by A.Weinhagen. No further discussion. A.DeNamur abstained from voting, Otherwise the motion passed unanimously.*

**3. 2024 Jericho Town Plan Review**

D. Schibler reminded the PAC that last month Jericho had a full formal review and PAC identified a few things that Jericho needed to address before PAC could recommend Board approval. D.Schibler updated the status of the formal review memo and reviewed the three changes that Jericho made to get regional approval (need to update data for energy use and development constraints; earth resource extraction; and future land use map changes).

CCRPC staff recommended that the PAC find that the 2024 Jericho Town Plan meets requirements for regional planning and enhanced energy planning and send the plan for approval by the board.

J.Besse asked for clarification on how PAC wants to deal with changes to what areas are planned for growth. He asked if in this case Jericho had documented the need for an additional growth area. He stated that he hopes that municipalities don't expand areas planned for growth without demonstrated need. P.Conner responded that in this case that the area in question is already residential, so it is destined for infill.

P.Conner commented that the added paragraph includes some equivocating language. P.Conner questioned if this is informing a background plan without making a policy statement. D.Schibler responded that Jericho is looking to adopt zoning changes, but hasn't yet which is why some of the equivocating language exists.

J.Besse asked about the implementation schedule and where the zoning changes fall in that schedule. D.Schibler stated he believes it is within the 1-3 year timeframe. D.Schibler also clarified that some intent is to add infill housing to these areas to address a housing need in these areas (Jericho wants to reach their housing targets).

T.Newton clarified the convoluted process of when future land use maps and zoning maps get changed on the regional vs municipal level and in what order. He also summarized J.Besse's concern about backsliding into

1 sprawl, and P.Conner’s concern about equivocating language. He mentioned Jericho does have a need to meet  
 2 housing goals.

3  
 4 P.Conner summarized that the plan states this area is in an in-between area and Jericho wants to move it towards  
 5 being in a village. P.Conner asked how CCRPC and PAC should deal with the circular problems of maps relying  
 6 on each other that T.Newton raised above for the future. T.Newton stated he expects the legislature to change how  
 7 we conduct future land use planning at the regional level. P.Conner said that if the Regional FLU Map was a  
 8 stronger statement of regional policy, the municipality would need to advocate stronger to make changes as  
 9 opposed to how it currently stands.

10  
 11 A.Weinhagen described the specific area and suggested that if Jericho is going to encourage an area to grow, this  
 12 is the logical location to do so. D.Schibler shared the map. A.Weinhagen also stated that Jericho has a really good  
 13 natural resource overlay, so this seems to be a conscious choice, not accidental sprawl.

14  
 15 P.Conner requested that they change some of the equivocating language and add some more firm policy statement  
 16 of intent surrounding sewer service areas, etc. D.Schibler stated that some of these policy statements are already  
 17 in the plan in Volume 1. P.Conner suggested Jericho can better reference these policy statements.

18  
 19 C.LaRose suggested it is hard to have this conversation without Jericho being present and suggested we don’t  
 20 vote without them being present. D. Schibler clarified that Jericho’s first Selectboard public hearing will be  
 21 tomorrow, and the second hearing is scheduled for December 19<sup>th</sup>. A.Weinhagen stated he is more comfortable  
 22 with the plan than others are suggesting. P.Conner pointed out it is the sentence directly prior to the bullet points  
 23 that he wants changed before PAC recommendation.

24  
 25 T.Newton hopped off the call to see if L.Blasch could join. T.Newton was unable to reach her.

26  
 27 J.Besse proposed that if a major change is going to be proposed that the municipality proposing the change should  
 28 be more clear from the start of the process of plan re adoption.

29  
 30 P.Conner asked if generally the PAC was leaning to: 1) approve 2) approve with removing the word “Proposed”  
 31 3) not approve yet. Most members in the “approved in some camp.” C.LaRose wanted to have a dialogue with  
 32 Jericho.

33  
 34 **A. Weinhagen made a motion that:**

35  
 36 *The PAC finds that the draft 2024 Jericho Town Plan and the municipality’s planning process meet all statutory*  
 37 *requirements for CCRPC regional approval. With additional verbiage as per page 3 in D.Schibler’s memo, and*  
 38 *with the proviso that the “potential” and “proposed” verbiage be changed to be more definitive. The PAC also*  
 39 *finds that the draft 2024 Jericho Town Plan will meet the requirements of the enhanced energy planning*  
 40 *standards (“determination”) set forth in 24 V.S.A. §4352. Upon notification that the Plan has been adopted by*  
 41 *the municipality, CCRPC staff will review the plan, and any information relevant to the confirmation process. If*  
 42 *staff determines that substantive changes have been made, the materials will be forwarded to the PAC for review.*  
 43 *Otherwise the PAC recommends that the Plan, and the municipal planning process, should be forwarded to the*  
 44 *CCRPC Board for approval, confirmation, and an affirmative determination of energy compliance.*

45  
 46 **E. Vorwald seconded. All in favor.**

47  
 48 P.Conner requested T.Newton and D.Schibler follow up with Jericho about the contents of this meeting.

49

1 **4. 2024 Essex Town Plan Review**

2 *a. Review Staff Summary*

3 S.Muskin provided an overview of the staff memo. Recommended changes include addressing the HOME Act  
 4 and compatibility with adjacent towns. She also noted that there are some proposed changes, all within the Town  
 5 Center, to the future land use map that don't fully align with the current ECOS Future Land Use Map boundaries;  
 6 however, the Essex Town Plan does address conformance with the ECOS Plan due to these changes on page 5.

7  
 8 K.Sonnick stated that this plan does NOT include an enhanced energy plan since the prior plan was shared with  
 9 Essex Junction, which is not possible now due to the separation of the municipalities, but the Town expects to  
 10 return with amendment once it has completed a separate enhanced energy plan.

11  
 12 *b. Open the Public Hearing*

13 **P.Conner made a motion, seconded by J.Besse, to open the public hearing. The motion passed**  
 14 **unanimously.**

15  
 16 *c. Accept Public Comment*

17 There were no public comments.

18  
 19 *d. Close the Public Hearing*

20 **P.Conner made a motion, seconded by J.Besse, to close the public hearing. The motion passed**  
 21 **unanimously.**

22  
 23 *e. Questions and Comments*

24 A.Weinhagen noted he did not have time to fully review the plan, and asked K.Sonnick whether there are any  
 25 significant policy changes besides the separation of the Town and City. K.Sonnick said there are not, but  
 26 acknowledged that the major policy within the plan is to further develop the Essex Town Center Master Plan  
 27 (ETC|NEXT), including higher density and pursuit of state planning designations. She also noted that they heard  
 28 a lot from the community about connections, both physical (bicycle-pedestrian) as well as programmatic  
 29 connections.

30  
 31 P.Conner asked whether the passage of Act 47 has led to Essex Town having to change its thought process  
 32 regarding suburban areas of the community. K.Sonnick said that the Town generally wants to see growth within  
 33 its sewer service core, particularly the Essex Town Center and the Susie Wilson Road corridor. There is no desire  
 34 to expand development outside the sewer core, and even some areas within that will not be developed due to  
 35 capacity constraints.

36  
 37 E.Vorwald asked whether the joint Town-Village enhanced energy plan is usable at all for the Town. K. Sonnick  
 38 responded that the issue is that the energy data was not specific to the Town vs. Village, so this will need to be  
 39 developed. M.Needle noted that when CCRPC originally completed the joint enhanced energy plan, the Village  
 40 adopted it as part of their 2019 comprehensive plan, but the Town did not since it didn't want to open the Town  
 41 Plan for an amendment until the 2024 plan was up for readoption. In addition, the Department of Public Service  
 42 now requires that updated enhanced energy plans must use the latest available statewide and regional LEAP data,  
 43 which was just published this year. CCRPC plans to municipalize the LEAP data, which provides analysis and  
 44 targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions, by late winter 2023 / early spring 2024. T.Newton added that  
 45 CCRPC is expecting funding from the Vermont Climate Action Office to help Essex Town write its own  
 46 enhanced energy plan this spring, along with several other municipalities.

47  
 48 *f. Recommendation to the CCRPC Board*

49  
 50 **E. Vorwald made the motion as written in the staff memo included below, seconded by C. Yuen. The**  
 51 **motion passed unanimously (K. Sonnick abstained).**

52

1 *The PAC finds that the draft 2024 Essex Town Plan meets all statutory requirements for CCRPC regional*  
 2 *approval and that the municipality's planning process meets all statutory requirements for CCRPC confirmation.*  
 3 *Upon notification that the Plan has been adopted by the municipality, CCRPC staff will review the plan, and any*  
 4 *information relevant to the confirmation process. If staff determines that substantive changes have been made, the*  
 5 *materials will be forwarded to the PAC for review. Otherwise, the PAC recommends that the Plan, and the*  
 6 *municipal planning process, should be forwarded to the CCRPC Board for approval, confirmation, and an*  
 7 *affirmative determination of energy compliance.*

8  
 9 **5. Chittenden County Active Transportation Survey Presentation**

10  
 11 B.Davis introduced Jonathon Weber with Local Motion. J.Weber thanked CCRPC and Bryan. Local Motion is  
 12 Vermont’s advocacy group for walking, biking, etc. They provide technical assistance, support for local  
 13 bike/walk groups, and help connect communities to funding opportunities.

14  
 15 J.Weber reviewed the data Local Motion gathered to capture insights on public opinions to inform decisions  
 16 walk/bike policies, conditions, and improvements:

- 17 • Most people in Chittenden County are car-dependent
- 18 • Many more people walk in Burlington compared to other towns
- 19 • Secondary modes of transportation: walking (50%), none (26%), bike (21%)
  - 20 ○ 22% of POC report using GMT as secondary; some low-income groups use ridesharing more
  - 21 than in other income groups (possibly due to not having another option, or younger people using
  - 22 it to get home safely after drinking).
- 23 • Barriers to biking: 1) destinations are too far away, 2) lack of bike ownership, 3) lack of safe bike  
 24 infrastructure
  - 25 ○ Burlington is an outlier again
- 26 • E-bikes: overall only 6% e-bike ownership- there is a gap in interest and ownership- due primarily to  
 27 cost. Other barriers include distance to destination, weather, infrastructure, etc.
- 28 • 50% of the population would bike in the winter IF the streets had safe and well-maintained bike  
 29 infrastructure

30  
 31 Key points in summary:

- 32 • Most Chittenden County residents are car dependent, but less so in Burlington.
- 33 • Marginalized communities are more likely to rely on non-driving transportation options.
- 34 • Changes to land use that increase access to bikes are key.

35  
 36 A.Weinhagen asked if the survey addressed bike theft, which is a real issue in Burlington. J.Weber didn’t think it  
 37 was asked and wasn’t mentioned much in the “other” responses. However, this was a question for e-bike  
 38 ownership.

39  
 40 C.Dillard asked if information on where people live was collected. J.Weber responded that only Burlington as a  
 41 whole was split out from the rest of the data.

42  
 43 P.Conner asked how transportation was defined for respondents or asked about in the survey. J.Weber said that  
 44 the survey did not define transportation for the respondents.

45  
 46 J.Weber proceeded to present results around Active Mobility Perspectives:

- 47 • Support for investment in walking/biking infrastructure was very high among people of color (82%), as  
 48 well as Burlington residents, women, and low-income respondents.
- 49 • People understand the connection between walk/bike and the vitality of businesses on the street
- 50 • Respondents were asked to rank priorities for street design; the overall results are as follows:
  - 51 ○ Safety
  - 52 ○ Sense of place

- 1           ○ Cost
- 2           ○ Parking
- 3           ○ Reduced driving delay
- 4           ○ Reduced walking delay
- 5           ○ Bike parking
- 6       • 66% overall support for protected bike lanes, but this flipped when people were asked about adding
- 7           protected bike lanes to key roads if doing so reduced parking/travel lanes

8

9 A.Janda asked about NIMBY-ism in the field of walk/bike in Shelburne specifically, where residents opposed a

10 project because it would bring “those people” into their community. J.Weber said the survey didn’t really allow

11 space for reasons to be against bike infrastructure. He also added that those who are most polarized show up at

12 meetings. J.Weber also pointed out that major roads like Route 7 still don’t have bike/ped infrastructure and that

13 there really needs to be better bike/ped connection between municipalities. Right now people aren’t feeling the true

14 benefit of having bike/ped infrastructure on local streets due to the lack of connection to a regional network.

15

16 P.Conner requested the full results be shared with PAC to distribute.

17

18 **6. Vermont Zoning Atlas**

19 P.Conner announced that this presentation will happen at the next meeting. He also announced that A.Weinhagen

20 will take over as chair for the remainder of the meeting.

21

22 **7. Members Items Open Forum**

23 L.Lewack noted that the cannabis business standards to the Charlotte land use regulations have passed. Charlotte

24 is the first community to adopt specific cannabis standards and he will make the standards available to anyone

25 who wants to review.

26

27 C.Yuen stated that Essex Junction is talking to state legislators about cannabis legislation and municipal control.

28 Essex Jct. is advocating that municipalities can control outdoor cannabis use in areas served by water and sewer.

29 He acknowledged that this seems to be an Essex Junction specific problem due to a case that will be seen by the

30 Vermont Supreme Court soon.

31

32 A.Weinhagen verbalized the need to give CCRPC staff a heads-up for Act 250 projects on the horizon.

33

34 **8. Other Business**

35 T.Newton walked through the following list for PAC:

- 36 1. **ECOS Plan Update.** CCRPC has delayed adoption of ECOS Plan until June 2025. CCRPC staff will spend
- 37 early 2024 doing engagement specifically with underrepresented communities on the draft ECOS Plan. Staff
- 38 will also spend the first half of 2024 working on developing municipal housing targets and updates to the
- 39 regional future land use maps.
- 40 2. **HOME Act Studies.** The HOME Act required the development of several studies that are due to the
- 41 legislature in mid or late December. Drafts of the Regional Future Land Use Map study, the Designation
- 42 Study, the Act 250 Delegation study, and the Act 250 Location-Based Jurisdiction Study have all been
- 43 released or will be released imminently. Copies of the Regional Future Land Use Map study and the Act 250
- 44 Delegation study have been provided to PAC via email. Please contact Charlie and/or Taylor by Friday,
- 45 December 1<sup>st</sup> if you have specific feedback on the Regional Future Land Use Map study or the Act 250
- 46 Delegation study.
- 47 3. **Updated Regional and Municipal Energy Data and Maps.** CCRPC will municipalize regional energy data
- 48 and maps towards the end of 2023 or beginning of 2024.
- 49 4. **FEMA Flood Map and Bylaw Updates.** RPCs have will enter into a second contract with VT DEC to
- 50 support NFIP map and bylaw updates in municipalities in FY24. Please let RPCs staff know if your
- 51 municipality is interested in assistance. In addition, CCRPC understands that the release of the draft NFIP
- 52 Work Map for Chittenden County has been scheduled for release in February or March 2024.

- 1 5. **Housing Dashboard and BHT Dashboard.** Both the [CCRPC Housing Dashboard](#) and the [Building Homes](#)  
 2 [Together Dashboards](#) have been updated to include 2022 housing information.
- 3 6. **UPWP Solicitation.** CCRPC will solicit for FY25 UPWP projects in late November 2023. If you have  
 4 questions about potential projects, please reach out to CCRPC staff. Initial applications will be due in Mid-  
 5 January
- 6
- 7 S. Muskin reminded the PAC that they had wanted to discuss meeting format (in-person vs. virtual).
- 8
- 9 A. Weinhagen suggested using virtual / hybrid model for regular meetings, and then meet in person for the off-  
 10 month time to discuss special topics or compare notes. L.Lewack agrees that in person meetings have benefits to  
 11 have more in-depth conversations and also to develop relationships.
- 12
- 13 E.Vorwald would be in favor of going back in person for PAC meetings. However, he expressed concern for  
 14 “open” in person meetings every other month. He suggested that if they were topic specific that would be helpful  
 15 and that it is important to consider what meeting every month would entail.
- 16
- 17 M.Boulanger and C.Dillard supported being in person every so often. C.Dillard suggested maybe every other  
 18 meeting. E.Vorwald advocated for every other PAC meeting in person, but suggested that PAC avoid hybrid  
 19 meetings.
- 20
- 21 D.Schibler raised the question of the statutory requirement for public hearings needing to have an in-person  
 22 option. This will go back into effect in January 2024.
- 23
- 24 A.Weinhagen asked if it would be possible to map the meetings out for the year, or if the schedule would need to  
 25 be responsive to municipality needs. T.Newton asked what members would prefer. A.Weinhagen said to book  
 26 meeting on the calendar regardless.
- 27
- 28 A.Weinhagen asked if we should just go back in person entirely? C.Yuen suggested maintaining a hybrid option,  
 29 but strongly discourage folks from using it.
- 30
- 31 J.Besse asked if CCRPC could set up a poll for what topics the PAC could discuss. T.Newton will follow up.
- 32
- 33 A.Weinhagen asked if anyone is opposed to in-person meetings. C.LaRose appreciates the flexibility because  
 34 sometimes she needs the time that otherwise would be spent commuting to work.
- 35
- 36 Consensus: PAC will try to get back to in-person, but maintain a hybrid option for extenuating circumstances.
- 37
- 38 A.Weinhagen adjourned the meeting at 4:04pm.
- 39
- 40 Respectfully submitted, Sarah Muskin & Darren Schibler