



Bennington County Regional Commission | Regional Development Review Committee

MINUTES

January 19, 2022 at 1pm

Meeting held virtually through Zoom platform

Present: Paul Carroccio, Jason Dolmetsch, Bruce Lierman, Catherine Bryars (BCRC staff)
Absent: Charlie Rockwell

1. **Welcome** – Meeting commenced at 1:07pm.

2. **Approval of December 10, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

No discussion. B. Lierman moved. J. Dolmetsch seconded. All approved.

3. **Green Mountain Reserve Development Proposal – Status Update and Draft HRO2 Response**

C. Bryars reviewed the GMR Act 250 application timeline and explained that the review process was stalled since summer 2021 as applicant awaited final permits. C. Bryars summarized BCRC testimony to date and described the purpose of the present BCRC response to HRO2, which is for the final round of testimony and is in response to other evidence submitted since July 2021. In preparation for this meeting, C. Bryars spoke with C. Rockwell who could not attend and who supports the BCRC testimony as drafted.

4. **Discussion**

Input that the draft comments could be more specific in stating why the project does not comply with regional plan policies. For example, the site plan for the project makes it appear that impacts are minimal when in fact they sprawl extensively across the site.

Observation that there are examples of this kind of intensive, clustered, rural development working in other areas of the state. Question of whether there is room to revise regional plan policies in the future to provide more allowance for some rural destination development.

All agreed that the GMR application must be reviewed in light of existing Regional Plan policies alone.

Takeaways bear summarizing at the end of the document. Clarify that these comments reflect the consensus determination of the DRC.

Regional Plan will be updated in a couple of years, so there will be a formal opportunity to review development policies and further clarify what is restricted in rural areas or introduce more flexibility for desired uses not currently contemplated in the Regional Plan, if that is supported by the Commissioners.

5. Consensus Recommendations

C. Bryars will make revisions, share with group for any revisions, and copy to all members upon submitting to Act 250 District Environmental Commission.

6. Act 250 Development Review Guidelines

C. Bryars reminded the group that in summer 2021 the Town of Manchester reached out to BCRC staff to discuss its review of the GMR Act 250 application. Manchester leadership was surprised that the BCRC did not defer to their municipal approval of the project. At a meeting, BCRC and Town of Manchester staff discussed the town's concerns, the nature of BCRC's policies, and whether or not the BCRC can defer to municipal preferences when they conflict with the Regional Plan policies. One outcome of these exchanges was a request to formally document BCRC's Act 250 and Section 248 review procedures in a policy document. A procedure document was drafted and adopted by the BCRC Executive Committee in 2021. This was circulated with this committee prior to meeting.

Discussion of how BCRC weighs in on environmental criteria. Policy states that BCRC will generally defer to permitting entities who are designated to determine compliance. Committee members recognized that substantial regional impact criteria implicate the entirety of Regional Plan policies including impacts to natural resources, so BCRC may weigh in on Act 250 applications with related information and relevant policies.

C. Bryars will circulate the policy again to all members.

7. Adjournment – Meeting of the Development Review Committee adjourned by 1:50pm.