



Bennington County Regional Commission

Minutes

Thursday, November 21, 2024

5:30 PM

Park House, Manchester, VT and via Zoom

Present: Sheila Kearns, John LaVecchia, Andrew McKeever, Dan Monks, Nick Zaiac, Gordon Black, David McAneny, Dana Rozycki, Liz Ruffa, Daniel Potvin Mark Rondeau, Beth Thomas, Pam Tworig, Jedidiah Gramlin, Thomas West

BCRC Staff: Bill Colvin, Jonathan Cooper, Callie Fishburn, Scott Grimm-Lyon, Jim Henderson, Janet Hurley, Samantha Page

Janet Hurley called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Public Hearing #2 - Bennington Regional Plan

David McAneny moved to open hearing. John LaVecchia seconded the motion. Approved. Janet Hurley presented on the regional plan update and explained that the current *Bennington Regional Plan* is due to expire in March 2025. This is meant to be a quick update that precedes a more substantial update that will be Act 181-compliant. This version of the regional plan updates census data, energy data, and economic development data, among other areas. It also includes new maps throughout. There is an implementation matrix at the end of the plan to outline specific policies, responsibilities, potential partners, and potential funding sources. The Future Land Use map included in the plan is updated, but not yet compliant with Act 181.

This plan is HOME Act-compliant, which means it includes housing targets for municipalities that are based on statewide housing needs assessment. The target range for the Bennington Region (BCRC service area) is around 852-1,413 new housing units. BCRC staff asked municipalities for their average annual housing permits from past the 5 years, and also factored in the availability of water and wastewater infrastructure and the potential for infill development. The plan's housing targets include a breakdown of housing types by number of units, number of bedrooms, and type of tenure.

Callie Fishburn presented on the Bennington Regional Energy Plan, a chapter within the overall regional plan. This plan has also been verified to meet Act 174 standards and is consistent with state energy policies. This updated version is shorter than the current energy plan and uses new data, renewable energy generation targets and siting maps, and includes an emphasis on equity.

Public comments regarding the housing targets, wood as a renewable energy source, proposed wind power sites in Stamford and the change of the residential buffer around wind projects were received and addressed by Hurley, Fishburn and Bill Colvin.

Gordon Black moved to close the hearing. Seconded by Nick Zaiac. Approved. Colvin requested votes from any commissioners who had not yet voted and said vote results would be announced later in the meeting.

Minutes of September 19, 2024, and October 24, 2024

David McAneny moved to approve the minutes of September 19, 2024 and October 24, 2024. John LaVecchia seconded. Approved.

Proposed BCRC Bylaw Amendments - Intermunicipal Service Agreements

Colvin provided an overview of the proposed amendments to the BCRC Bylaws to facilitate the BCRC to participate in intermunicipal service agreements. He also summarized the process BCRC has followed in compliance with 24 VSA Section 4345b which governs bylaw changes related to intermunicipal agreements. He then asked for votes from any BCRC commissioners who had not yet voted and said vote results would be announced later in the meeting.

Manchester Village Land Use Regulations

Samantha Page reviewed the work the BCRC has done with the Village of Manchester to update the village's land use regulations. She discussed the substantial amount of community outreach and participation and highlighted some of the major adjustments made such as improved consistency, consolidation of multiple ordinances, enhanced definitions section, addressing climate and housing challenges and bringing bylaws into compliance with new statutory requirements.

Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (SoVT CEDS) Review and Proposed BCRC Consent to Submit to the EDA

Jonathan Cooper shared the draft of the *2024 Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (SoVT CEDS)*. Cooper updated the group on the purpose of a CEDS, the process followed including the work of the project consultant and steering committee members and significant public outreach. He noted the four major goals of the new *SoVT CEDS* are addressing critical population needs, empowering businesses to thrive long-term, fostering resilient, adaptable communities and promoting greater economic development alignment. Cooper said that the BCRC, Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation and Windham Regional Commission are soliciting consent from their respective boards to submit the *2024 SoVT CEDS* to the United States Economic Development Administration (US EDA). Nick Zaiac moved that the BCRC consent to submission of the *2024 SoVT CEDS* to the US EDA. Seconded by Gordon Black. Approved.

Vote results for ballot on Bennington Regional Plan

Colvin announced the vote results. There were seventeen (17) total ballots cast, including proxy ballots submitted, all affirmative. Fourteen (14) of the ballots were cast by municipal commissioners from fourteen (14) unique municipalities; Two (2) were cast by alternate commissioners from municipalities; and one (1) was cast by a special purpose commissioner. Approval of the regional plan requires sixty percent (60%) of municipal commissioners to vote in the

affirmative. The fourteen municipal votes to approve represent eighty-two percent (82%) of the regional municipalities. The *Bennington Regional Plan* is adopted.

Vote results for ballot on BCRC Bylaw Amendment to allow Intermunicipal Service Agreements

Colvin announced the vote results. There were seventeen (17) total ballots cast, including proxy ballots submitted, all affirmative. Fourteen (14) of the ballots were cast by municipal commissioners from fourteen (14) unique municipalities; Two (2) were cast by alternate commissioners from municipalities; and one (1) was cast by a special purpose commissioner. Pursuant to 24 VSA Section 4345b, approval of bylaw amendments regarding intermunicipal service agreements requires sixty-seven percent (67%) of municipal commissioners to vote in the affirmative. The fourteen municipal votes to approve represent eighty-two percent (82%) of the regional municipalities. The amendments to the BCRC Bylaws regarding intermunicipal service agreements are approved.

Respectfully submitted,

William Colvin

Director