



TWO RIVERS-OTTAUQUECHEE

William B. Emmons, III, Chairman
Peter G. Gregory, AICP, Executive Director

REGIONAL COMMISSION

TRORC Board Meeting

TRORC Offices, The King Farm
Woodstock, VT
October 26, 2011

Meeting Minutes

- Attendance:** Bill Emmons - Pomfret, Jerry Fredrickson - Barnard, Jaime Hess - Norwich, Paul Haskell - Sharon, Steve Campbell – Strafford, Nancy Jones – Bradford, Skip Brown – West Fairlee, Charles Wilson – Woodstock, Charles Jeffries –Hartland, Michael Sacca – Tunbridge, David Brandau – Royalton.
Staff: Peter Gregory, Dee Gish, Kevin Geiger, Chris Sargent
Guest: Sarah Hofmann, Deputy Commissioner, Vermont Department of Public Service

- Call To Order:**

Chairperson Emmons convened the meeting at 7:10 p.m. A quorum was declared.

- Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan presentation by Sarah Hofmann:**

Ms. Hofmann presented the highlights of the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP). Public comments on the CEP are due by November 4th. After reviewing the public comments and making edits to the plan, the final CEP is scheduled for release on December 5th and will be presented to the legislature in January, 2012. The CEP is mandated by the state and issues policy recommendations for five energy sectors: efficiency, electricity, thermal energy, transportation and land use. Some of the findings contained in the CEP include:

- Current energy use in VT = 33% Transportation, 29% Residential, 37% Commercial/Industrial
- Energy use in VT has increased dramatically since the 1960's especially in transportation and electricity.
- Greenhouse gas emissions in VT have declined from their peak in 2004, but not enough to reach the reduction goals of the CEP which are:
 - 50% reduction by 2028 and 75% reduction by 2050
- Renewable energy in VT = 23% of total energy used, 48% of which is renewable electricity and 5% of which is renewable transportation
- Electricity in VT is the highest price energy source, but electric rates in VT are lower than other New England states and not as volatile
- Vermonters spend more on transportation fuels than other energy sources
- Efficiency is the least costly way to reduce energy use: \$1 investment in efficiency = \$4.60 of net present value to the state

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- VT efficiency goal is to improve 800,000 homes by 2020, or 8,200 homes per year weatherized
- To yield a 25% energy savings, homeowners would have to spend an average of \$7,500 per home for weatherization
- Vermonters spend more than the national average on transportation and transportation is the single biggest source of greenhouse gas in VT

The long range goal of the CEP is to increase renewable energy use in Vermont from the current 23% of all energy use to 90% by 2050. To reach this goal, Vermont must reduce energy used in each of the five sectors. The CEP hopes to improve efficiency through a whole building approach by the end of 2012 and by doubling the number of energy star new construction by 2020. For electricity, the CEP goal is to reach 75% renewable electricity by 2032 through increasing standard offers, using market based pricing mechanisms, and increasing financing through the CEDF and other sources. The CEP hopes to improve thermal efficiency programs and increase the amount of biomass, biofuels and natural gas used to heat homes. Transportation in Vermont is the biggest challenge. The CEP goals include greater access to commuter facilities, reducing the number of single commuters, and tripling the park & ride spaces. Vermont's land use goals include preserving Vermont's rural character and conserving resources, while reducing energy. The CEP includes stipulations for RPC's to be reviewed for conformance with the CEP by July 2012. Ideas are welcome for how to coordinate Regional Plans with the CEP. Ideas contained in the CEP also include an increase in farm energy, including methane digesters, creating a telecommuting policy for the state and reducing state building energy use by 5%.

Following the presentation, Ms. Hofmann took questions which included the following:

- Peter Gregory: Did the CEP go through the Governor's review and will the Department of Public Service consider major changes to the CEP? Answer: Yes to both.
- Jamie Hess: Are other states planning equally ambitious plans? Answer: Energy plans from other states were reviewed, but Vermont is definitely in the forefront.
- Jamie Hess: The Standard Offer was over-subscribed for solar. Can Vermont accept more solar projects? Answer: Maybe - Changes to the distribution of the Standard Offer, the offer for kWh and market mechanisms including auctions are being considered.
- Steve Campbell: Does the CEP include any tools to make homeowners more aware of energy use, like an energy use comparison with neighboring homes included on the utility bill? Answer: No, but that is a good idea and worthy of consideration.
- David Brandau: I was formerly part of weatherization crews in Vermont. What else can we do to increase weatherization? Answer: Part of the solution includes providing landlords more incentives to weatherize their rental properties.
- Jerry Frederickson: Transportation, as mentioned, is our greatest challenge. How do we address it? Answer: Plug-in electric vehicles using renewable energy. Public transportation is difficult in our rural culture. Ride shares need to increase.
- Jerry Frederickson: What about the telecommuting policy? Answer: State standards are needed for telecommuting, along with the necessary infrastructure to support it. Union contracts, etc., need to include potential for telecommuting.
- Paul Haskell: We need policies that support telecommunication infrastructure. Answer: Vermont has a goal of 100% broadband by 2013.

- Nancy Jones: What about alternative fuels, can we use different farm products for energy? Answer: Vermont is doing some already with methane digesters. There are also pilot projects for electricity and heating with wood and grass pellets.
- Chris Sargent: Something that is not included in the CEP is a consideration of the amount of energy used in conventional agriculture. There is a need for smaller digesters for small farms. Answer: Yes, there is a need, and pilot projects may be in order.
- Kevin Geiger: The CEP would also benefit from more projections on energy use going forward and for consideration of future energy sources and cost projections. Answer: Yes, more projections are needed, but projections are difficult to make.
- Jamie Hess: If we are successful in reducing gasoline use, then gas tax revenues will decrease. How will the state make up the lost revenue? Answer: The Department of Public Service is strategizing with the tax department, but this is not considered in the CEP.
- Nancy Jones: Is methane capture from sewage treatment plants or solid waste considered in the plan? Answer: No, these are not contained in the CEP.
- Peter Gregory: What is the legislative role in the CEP? Does the legislature have to approve the plan? Answer: No, the Department of Public Service approves the final plan, while the legislature must drive parts of the plan. The Climate Cabinet will likely implement the CEP.

4. Chairman Bill Emmons called for a 10 minute break at 8:15 pm.

5. Approval of September Minutes:

Following the recess, the September 28, 2011 Meeting Minutes were approved on a motion made by Jerry Frederickson and seconded by Paul Haskell.

6. Approval of September Financial Reports:

The September Financial Reports were approved, as amended, on a motion made by Paul Haskell and seconded by Nancy Jones. Peter Gregory noted a correction to TRORC's expenses: For Health and Dental Insurance, the employee paid portion of the expense had not previously been deducted from the Income and Expense Summary Report. The reporting is now correct.

7. Irene Recovery Update:

Peter reported that TRORC's focus has changed from flood emergency assistance to selected efforts by staff. Kevin Geiger is focusing on home buyouts and hazard mitigation plans. Rita Seto is working with towns and FEMA on project worksheets. TRORC is also assisting with long term recovery including housing – working with HUD – and other state funds. Chris Sargent reported that it will likely be at least six months until towns will see funding for flood recovery projects. Vermont is trying to get federal moneys for highway emergency funds. Pete Fellows is working on a river impacts inventory with ANR.

Kevin Geiger reported that letters of interest by towns for HMGP buyouts are due in late December. The buyouts are available for homeowners and businesses that received at least 50% damage to their structure. Homeowners and businesses need to go through their towns to apply for the buyouts. There is the potential to recover 70-75% of the pre-flood value of the property. The towns file the grant application and the town will then

purchase the property with funding from FEMA. Kevin estimated there are about 30 - 40 properties in the region that will take part in the buyouts.

Questions followed including:

Charles Wilson: Regarding the mobile home park in Woodstock, do they need written permission to do river work? Answer: Yes. The verbal permission they received directly after the storm is not enough. The permission must be in writing.

Michael Sacca: Thank you to TRORC for the helpful information.

Jamie Hess: Is Dead River intending to rebuild with propane tanks on the river bank?

Answer from Charles Wilson: Woodstock wants legislation to secure tanks. Chris

Sargent: The town can make sure tanks are secured through town regulations.

Jamie Hess: Aren't flood plain maps re-drawn following flooding? Answer: No, not automatically. "Rivers move a lot faster than FEMA does," noted Chris Sargent.

TRORC will have more discussion at a later date on flood plain issues.

8. Commissioner and Director Updates:

Peter Gregory reported that TRORC is in the final stages of hiring the new planner. There are two candidates being considered, with an offer being made by the end of the week. Peter also reported that the Executive Committee will begin work on the Strategic Planning Process that will reaffirm or make changes to the work of TRORC. Peter distributed a NADO news bulletin, and will welcome any questions.

9. A Motion was made by David Brandau and seconded by Charles Wilson to adjourn. The Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Next Board meeting will be held Wednesday, December 14th at the Apple Butter Inn. Details to follow.

Minutes Prepared By Dee Gish
October 27, 2011