

The Purpose of Enhanced Consultation

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission's contract with the Department of Economic, Housing, and Community Development (Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development), and Vermont Statutes require the Commission to carry out consultation meetings with all of the towns in the region. The goals are to develop a more consistent and meaningful relationship between the RPC and the Municipality, and to improve the effectiveness of municipal and regional plans, and planning programs by achieving the goals of Title 24, §4302.

Outcome of Consultation

Through this consultation process we hope to better understand the needs of our communities and to have our communities understand how we can work together to advance better planning. Consultations will involve the discussion of important local and regional issues, local planning and training needs, new statutory requirements, planning programs and opportunities available through the TRORC, and importantly, consideration of how effectively the municipal plan addresses Vermont's statutory planning goals.

This consideration will include a qualitative review of the municipal plan, with suggestions as to how the plan might be improved to more effectively satisfy the statutory goals referenced above. Specific findings are reported on each of the following questions:

1. Which parts of the plan are particularly effective in implementing the statewide goals?
2. In which areas do we believe the plan falls short in advancing those statewide goals?
3. What specific opportunities exist to improve the town plan so that it more effectively addresses the statewide goals?

This consultation and plan review is separate and distinct from the formal municipal plan approval process carried out pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §4350, but it does contribute to the municipal confirmation action specified under that section of the Planning and Development Act.

Enhanced Consultation Agenda Items for Thursday, March 14th, 2013

- Important local & Regional issues
- Local planning and training needs
- New statutory requirements
- Planning programs and opportunities
- TRORC services
- Qualitative review of Municipal Plan

Randolph Town Plan Review

The Randolph Town Plan was adopted February 16, 2010. The Plan was revised with assistance from the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission which was funded by a Municipal Planning Grant.

Required Elements

1. **Statement of Objectives, Policies, and Programs:** The Plan contains well stated goals, policies and recommendations. Recommendations are specific, assigning responsibility to particular AMPs whenever appropriate.
2. **Land Use Plan:** The Plan identifies prospective location of development, but speaks of amount, intensity and character of uses in fairly general terms. Greater specificity, particularly with the types of commercial development allowed in each land use area is needed.
3. **Transportation Plan:** The present-day road system is discussed, as well multi-modal transportation and public transit. Access management is not discussed.
4. **Utility and Facility Plan:** The Utilities and Facilities plan is only a general inventory. It does not contain any information regarding future needs of facilities, potential costs of maintenance or upgrades and potential financing methods as is required by statute.
5. **Natural Areas, Scenic and Historic Features:** While rare and irreplaceable areas are discussed clearly in the Plan, scenic and historic features are only addressed in a minimal fashion.
6. **Educational Facilities Plan:** Education is adequately addressed.
7. **Implementation Plan:** The Plan does not contain a formal implementation element. However, the extensive collection of recommendations for action could form the basis for a program for implementation.
8. **Relationship to adjacent towns and the region:** The Plan does not adequately evaluate compatibility with neighboring plans or the Regional Plan.
9. **Energy Plan:** The Plan contains a very brief section on energy resources. It does not discuss the energy needs of the community, scarcities or costs of energy. Policies on the conservation of energy and renewable energy are included.
10. **Housing Element:** The Plan discusses affordable housing in a minimal fashion.
11. **Economic Development Plan (new):** The Plan contains an economic development chapter which effectively proposes programs that will encourage economic development. However, there is limited discussion with regard to the location, type and scale of economic development in either the economic development chapter or the land use chapter. This information is required by statute.

Statewide Planning Goals

1. **Land Use:** The Land Use areas outlined in the Plan lack sufficient specificity to determine the types of commercial developments proposed for each land use area. While the Plan clearly states that strip development is discouraged in certain areas, the lack of specificity with regard to types of commercial uses makes it possible that allowed uses could have the opposite effect.

2. **Economic Development:** Randolph's vision to encourage economic growth is very clearly stated.
3. **Transportation:** The Plan adequately addresses transportation, although more could be stated with regard to whether or not the town is seeking to expand the existing road system.
4. **Natural, Scenic, and Historic Resources:** The Plan effectively identifies natural areas and water resources. However, it addresses scenic and historic resources in a very limited fashion. The acknowledgement that Randolph's current zoning ordinance is not successfully implementing the plan is excellent.
5. **Air, Water, Wildlife, and Land Resources:** The Plan includes narrative and policy which indicates how it would effectively preserve or protect these resources.
6. **Energy:** Energy efficiency and renewable energy are addressed in limited fashion.
7. **Recreation:** There is no recreation chapter in the Randolph Town Plan.
8. **Agriculture and Forestry:** Agriculture and forestry are adequately discussed.
9. **Efficient use of natural resources/extraction and restoration of earth resources:** Mineral resources are minimally addressed.
10. **Safe and affordable housing:** The housing chapter does discuss the location of multi-family housing and accessory apartments.
11. **Community Facilities and Services:** The Plan seeks to maintain a pattern of growth that does not exceed the community's ability to provide services.
12. **Child Care:** Child care is minimally addressed.

Regional Plan

The Randolph Plan is clearly attempting to support the core state planning goal of "compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside." However, the lack of specificity with regard to types of economic development, and use of general terms such as "commercial", make it challenging to identify potential conflicts with the Regional Plan.

If, for example, primary retail development is allowed within the gateway commercial area or the Interchange Area, then a conflict between the Regional Plan and the Randolph Town Plan would exist. This conflict would substantially reduce the likelihood that the board of the Regional Planning Commission would vote for approval of the Randolph Town Plan if asked to approve by the Town.

Additionally, a conflict of this nature could create conflicts in the context of an Act 250 permit request. The Regional Plan has very specific language regarding principle retail establishments and the need to locate them within villages and downtowns. The District Environmental recently based two permit denials based on this language.

Summary

Strengths

- The Plan contains well stated goals, policies and recommendations. Recommendations are specific, assigning responsibility to particular AMPs whenever appropriate.
- Rare and irreplaceable areas are discussed clearly in the Plan.
- The Plan contains an economic development chapter which effectively proposes programs that will encourage economic development.

Weaknesses

- There is limited discussion with regard to the location, type and scale of economic development in either the economic development chapter or the land use chapter. The Plan contains a very brief section on energy resources. It does not discuss the energy needs of the community, scarcities or costs of energy.
- The Utilities and Facilities plan is only a general inventory. It does not contain any information regarding future needs of facilities, potential costs of maintenance or upgrades and potential financing methods as is required by statute.
- The Plan contains a very brief section on energy resources. It does not discuss the energy needs of the community, scarcities or costs of energy.

Opportunities

- Work with the Regional Planning Commission to meet the requirements of state statute.
- Collect information regarding community facilities from the Selectboard to provide further detail to Utilities/Facilities chapter.
- Utilize TRORC energy chapter template to draft an energy chapter that meets state planning requirements.