

MUNICIPAL PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE

December 20, 2023

In Attendance: Donna Boumil, Heidi Valenta, Sarah Hadd

Staff: Greta Brunswick, Luke Slomba

The Municipal Plan Review Committee held a remote meeting via Zoom on December 20, 2023. The meeting was opened by S. Hadd at 6:06pm

1. Adjustments to agenda - None

2. Draft changes to plan review guidance

The Committee reviewed the draft changes made to the Plan Review process, which included adding an opportunity for preliminary review. G. Brunswick noted that although the NRPC can make suggestions, a municipality is under no obligation to incorporate recommendations from a committee beyond those required for approval under statute.

G. Brunswick also noted that after preliminary review, staff would understand whether or not a plan has been substantially changed, and the final staff review may end up being no different than the preliminary staff review. Coordination with the chair's discretion will determine whether a second meeting is necessary after a public meeting.

G. Brunswick clarified that although timely regional approval is a practice that is encouraged, RPCs cannot require a town to seek regional approval at a certain time, and there are no penalties for municipalities.

The Committee questioned how often towns hire consultants or update plans themselves. Staff responded that municipalities often hire consultants for town plans, but plan updates done by towns themselves are infrequent with the exception of St Albans City.

H. Valenta motioned to recommend approval of the changes from the board, which was seconded by D. Boumil and passed.

3. Town of Montgomery Plan Preliminary Review

a. Staff Review, Implementation Assessment and Enhanced Energy Compliance

Staff reviewed each plan element as an opportunity for the Committee to give feedback.

b. Questions and comments

H. Valenta suggested edits to Page 27 and Page 28 for sentence clarity, and raised questions about the legibility and interpretability of the Lot Size table of Page 31.

H. Valenta expressed concern that the plan does not reflect Montgomery's unique resources and the urgency to protect them.

D. Boumil questioned the use of “prohibit” on Page 5 as possibly too forceful. G. Brunswick responded that this language is acceptable, and it is the choice of the community to include strong language that can lead to regulatory effects under Act 250 or town zoning bylaws.

D. Boumil questioned whether holding VMT levels to 2011 levels as stated on Page 10 is a common element for town plans to include in their energy goals, and why this specific metric was used.

S. Hadd suggested to show village designation on the land use map, and to include a trail map in the plan.

Overall, the Committee felt there was a disconnect between individual sections of the plan, and a lack of a unifying vision for the town.

Staff will summarize and send these comments, and clarify to the town that these friendly comments do not affect regional approval.

4. Town of Grand Isle Plan Amendment

a. Does the amendment constitute a material change to the plan that is beyond the scope of the current regional approval?

The Committee had no concerns regarding the scope of the amendment and its effect on regional approval. H. Valenta made a motion to state that the amendment does not constitute a material change to the plan that is beyond the scope of the current regional approval. It was seconded by S. Hadd and passed.

b. Questions and comments - None

5. Next steps and coordination

NRPC will move through planning commission and selectboard processes. Once a final hearing is on the horizon, Staff will monitor what changes have been made. The timeline for final regional approval will be in the February-March timeframe. The Committee will move expeditiously to have a combined meeting/hearing and submit recommendations to the board at the following meeting.

Staff noted that Sheldon, Alburgh, and other communities are currently working on plans, and schedules for these can be discussed at the next meeting.

6. Other business - None

7. Adjourn – 7:02pm