Full Commission Meeting  
January 31, 2017  
Townshend Town Hall

Commissioners Present: Jodi French, Chair, Jack Cunningham, Everett Wilson, Tim Arsenault, George Mora, Piet van Loon, Stephan Chait, Rod Francis, Jenepher Burnell, Roger Turner, Eric Stevens, Denis Pinkernell  
Citizen Interest Commissioners Present: Wendy Harrison, Greg Brown  
Guests Present: (none)  
Staff Present: Chris Campany, Marion Major, Jeff Nugent, Emily Davis  
Introductions: There was no quorum; with 10 towns present. 3 towns (Jamaica, Stratton, Winhall) had no appointed commissioners.

Convened: 6:00PM

Administrative Items & Reports:
Secretary’s Report: The minutes from the October 25, 2016 meeting were approved, but action was non-binding due to no quorum. Will ratify at next meeting.
Financial Report: The financial report of December 31, 2016 was approved unanimously, but action was also non-binding due to no quorum.

Regional Energy Plan Process Overview: Executive Director Chris Campany began the program by describing the Regional Energy Planning process. He provided a review of Act 174, its requirements, and how municipalities can use this process as an opportunity to develop robust and comprehensive plans. There was some discussion about “substantial deference” and Act 248. C. Campany also mentioned the opportunity to update the Windham Regional Plan following this Regional Energy Plan process, as the regional plan amendment process is the same as that required for a regional plan update and adoption. Planner Marion Major presented on the data and calculations used to estimate current energy use, projected use, and generation targets in the region that are being used to help inform policy decisions. Marion explained the LEAP model created by VEIC and used by the regional planning commissions, and what conditions are accounted for in that model. There was a discussion about the Windham Region’s energy generation targets for solar and wind
power, and how it compared to other regions in the state. It was noted that Windham Region is generally “ahead of the curve”, especially in regard to wind power generation. GIS Planner Jeff Nugent then discussed the process for mapping energy generation resources in the region that will be used as another tool to help inform comprehensive energy policy decisions. He showed an example of “raw” resource potential and how state-wide GIS data can be applied in the form of “constraints”, or mapped areas that are not suitable for development. There was a discussion of what these constraints were, how they were identified, and the process by which towns and regions can identify and map their own resource constraints.

Vermont Yankee Sale Overview: Executive Director Chris Campany provided an update on the sale of Vermont Yankee from Entergy to NorthStar. NorthStar has claimed that they can expedite the plant decommissioning and site restoration by contracting that work to other partners. While the WRC is in support of a prompt decommissioning, there are concerns about NorthStar’s proposed site restoration standards, decommissioning cost estimates, site characterization, and financial wherewithal to complete the work within their proposed timeframe. C. Campany explained that he will be attending a pre-hearing conference on February 1st where the petitioners and interveners will discuss docket scheduling. In this conference, C. Campany will proposed having two local hearings – one ahead of the filing of the first round of discovery and a second after all testimony and discovery has been filed but before technical hearings begin. The idea is to glean from public comments lines of questioning to be asked of the petitioners. Finally C. Campany also clarified that he is the lead staff person on this project, and will move it through the Project Review Committee and Executive Board as more developments occur.

Winhall Town Plan Approval: Piet van Loon updated the commission on the status of the Winhall Town Plan. He mentioned that the Selectboard had received feedback from the WRC, including advice regarding weak regulatory language in front of Act 250. P. van Loon moved to approve the town plan and confirm the planning process of Winhall, and the motion was approved by a unanimous vote. As no quorum was present the matter will be taken up by the Executive Board at its next meeting.

Release of Tri-State Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy: Executive Director Chris Campany explained the importance of this partnership project, as it was relevant to our region’s “job-shed,” and it compared/contrasted the economic development strategies of the tri-state area regions. He noted that working collaboratively across state lines may open up federal funding opportunities, but in the meantime, the region can pursue its own interests.

FERC Re-licensing of Connecticut River Dams Update: Executive Director Chris Campany updated the Commission on the relicensing TransCanada facilities at Wilder, Bellows Falls and Vernon. He explained that TransCanada has filed a preliminary license proposal which
supports a no-action scenario, meaning they propose no changes to the way the facilities or river are managed and operated. Chris is collaborating with the Two Rivers-Ottauaquechee Regional Commission and the Southern Windsor Regional Commission to sign on to a common position that opposes the no-action scenario and which asks the FERC to require TransCanada to take into account the policies and actions of the regional plans, especially as related to recreation.

**Executive Director's Report:** Executive Director Chris Campany noted that Katie Buckley, former commissioner for Guilford, has been recruited to serve as the Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Housing and Community Development. It is hoped that she can bring a small-town’s perspective to the agency, and C. Campany mentioned that he already noticed a change in how the group is working with its towns and RPC’s for the better. It was also noted that Alyssa Sabetto had her baby, and is officially on maternity leave. In her place, Chris Campany will pick up Emergency Planning and Project Review. Finally, C. Campany explained that the WRC office is fully-staffed, and “firing on all cylinders.”

**Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00PM**

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Campany