



## **Project Review Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, February 4, 2025 at 3:00 PM  
via Zoom**

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*Members present:* Jack Cunningham (Chair), Bob Bois, Stephan Chait, Jim Pinkerton

*Guests present:* Jeff Cavagnino (Stratton Resort); Krista Reinhart Clark, B. Freyer, Brandon Kibbe, Leah Bellus, Nils Behn (Great River Hydro Solar); Norma Harding (Vernon Conservation Commission Chair)

*Staff present:* Alyssa Sabetto

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Called to order at 3:00pm with a quorum present and chaired by Jack Cunningham.

1. **Welcome**

2. **Minutes**

Minutes of December 2024 meeting were approved with no changes on a motion from Bob and a second from Jim. All approved.

3. **Public Comment Period**

No comments were made during this opportunity for members of the public to comment on non-agenda items.

4. **Stratton Resort Master Plan update – Stratton - 2W0519-10F**

Address: 5 Village Lodge Road

Land Use District: Resort Center, Resource

Potential Policies (pages 12-51): Land Use 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 15; Energy 7; Economy 3, 9; Natural Resources 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 30, 33, 34, 35; Housing 2, 3, 5, 9; Educational, Cultural 1, 16; Utilities, Facilities 1, 4, 10, 19, 24, 29

Background: Renewal and refresh of the current Partial Findings of Fact and Conclusion of Law and Order # 2W0519-10E, dated January 9, 2020, for the Stratton Mountain Resort Master Plan which includes base area, ski operations, housing, natural resource protection, guest amenities, and resort operational infrastructure improvements.

Jeff Cavagnino provided an overview of what the current Master Plan update is looking to do and where the development is in their overall plans. He shared a detailed map and table (exhibit 004 on the Act 250 Database) which lays out the timing for each Plan element.

Original Stratton Master Plan is from 1996. The District Environmental Commission asked Stratton to update certain documents and ensure that the vision aligns with the current master plan. Jeff said that 45% of the original plan is built and done. Wildlife Habitat Management Plan is now updated. Buffer Management Plan is new. Stratton is seeking a 10-year renewal with this update.

Skier visits are very flat and consistent over time. Stratton did not see a huge influx with joining the Icon Pass. They are not looking to increase skier visits on the weekends, but are hoping to increase visitor

draw for mid-week and off-peak season visits by diversifying their offerings and amenities. Stephan asked if there was data for projected trips/visits to the Resort with the buildout of the Master Plan. Jeff said they don't have specifics because details are not known for each project. They are still working within the max visits from the 1996 master plan. Aim is to diversify their visit options and diversify the options for off-season use. Off-season growth also increases year-round employment possibilities.

All projects within the Master Plan will still need an individual permit. They are seeking full findings on a couple of items. The updated vision is still within the 30-year vision for build-out.

Alyssa said that there has been no feedback on the Master Plan update application yet from the District Commission. She asked that Committee members review the Plan materials in preparation for a future discussion after there has been more time for review.

**ACTION:** None. Please review materials on the Act 250 database.

5. **Great River Hydro 4.2 Megawatt Solar – Vernon - 24-3714-AN**

Address: land between Fort Bridgeman Road and Governor Hunt Road in Vernon

Land Use District: Productive Rural

Potential Policies (pages 12-51): Energy 1, 3, 11, 14, 15

Background: 4.2 MW AC solar electric generation facility that proposes to occupy 14.46 acres ( $\pm$ ) on a parcel of land which totals 31.6 acres ( $\pm$ ), located off Governor Hunt Rd. in Vernon. The project will be interconnected to Great River Hydro's existing hydro facility located in Vernon. From there the electricity will be transmitted to the regional high voltage electric transmission system. Although it would be possible for the project to sell its output to any wholesale load customer in the region, it is anticipated that all of the electricity and environmental attributes generated from the Project will be sold to a local Vermont-based utility under a long-term agreement.

Consultants with the applicant team walked the Committee through the project and the group looked at the site plan together. The site is owned by the Applicant. It has been leased for hay production. Fencing and setback from the riparian area were the areas of most discussion. The project will be reviewed locally by the Town in upcoming meetings and Jim will share that feedback with Alyssa. Norma asked for a 50' buffer from the wetland (that may be adjusted on-site with ANR in an upcoming planned visit). Applicant said that there is at least a 25' buffer on top of the ravine. Stephan asked about the impact of the fencing on wildlife movement patterns. The fencing is a combination of stockade and agricultural fencing. There is a 6" gap under the fence and cut 1' square holes to allow small animals to pass throughout the array.

There are expected 100 truckloads over the span of about 9 months for the build phase. The panels are pile driven. Some prime ag soil will be stripped and stored. There will be an erosion and sedimentation control plan because of the size of the array. DEC considers the entire array as the size, even if pile driven. Life span of the project is 30 years. Decommissioning plan is required and involves removal of panels. Alyssa asked about chemical leeching into soil. Applicant responded that materials sourcing and panel components meet all federal standards; chemical leeching is not thought to be a future issue. The project will be connected into the Great River Hydro system at the Vernon Dam and co-mingle with the hydropower and feed into the grid.

Jack suggested regional significance and Stephan and Bob agreed. The project does not require a preferred site support letter because it is not net-metered. The Committee does not see issues at a regional level and the project is consistent with the Regional Plan, but the Town may have local concerns. Jack proposed Alyssa withhold submitting a letter until Jim lets her know the outcome of the local discussions. Alyssa will draft a letter that states the regional position, supports locally raised concerns, and reserves the right to comment further during the application phase.

**ACTION:** Project determined to be regionally significant. Alyssa will draft a comment letter after Jim communicates the outcomes of local discussions.

**6. Recent Decisions and Updates**

- None

**7. Next meeting**

The next regularly scheduled meeting is Tuesday, March 4. Determination of a need to hold a March meeting will be made closer to that date and the Committee will be informed either way.

**8. Adjourned at 4:54.**

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Respectfully Submitted, Alyssa Sabetto, Senior Planner