



Project Review Committee Meeting Minutes

**Tuesday, February 3, 2026 at 3:00 PM
via Zoom**

Members present: Jim Pinkerton (Chair), Stephan Chait, Eric Stevens, Art Dufresne

Guests present: Fran Parisi (Vertex Towers), Dan Lerner (Windham Foundation)

Staff present: Alyssa Sabetto

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

1. **Introductions**

2. **Minutes**

Minutes of December 2025 meeting were approved with no changes on a motion from Stephan and a second from Eric. Approved by all.

3. **Public Comment Period**

No comments.

4. **Vertex Towers - Dummerston – 25-2621-AN**

Address: 3219 West River Road

Land Use District: Rural Residential, Productive Rural

Potential Policies (pages 12-51): Community Utilities, Facilities and Services 34, 35, 36

Background: The proposed project involves the construction of a 140-foot monopole-style telecommunications tower at 3219 West River Road, Dummerston, Vermont, on property owned by Sugar Mountain Holdings, LLC.

The applicant has not yet filed the full application, which had been expected prior to this meeting. Alyssa did let the Committee know that filing comments would need to wait until an open comment opportunity after the application filing with the PUC.

Mapping was reviewed to understand the access road, tower location and natural resources nearby. The access road is pre-existing until the proposed ‘button hook’ addition near the tower location. Deer wintering area is nearby to the site and the site does lie within a habitat block rate 6 on the Atlas. No other natural resource concerns are known based just on the ANR Atlas review. Fran brought up that their analysis did show some endangered species impacts with the access road, so the road design was tweaked to avoid them but they weren’t able to be completely avoided; therefore, the project would need to seek a ‘takings permit’ from ANR. They are also working with ANR to avoid wetlands. The preexisting ski operations and access driveway does limit new impact of this project.

Frans shared the site layout and the results of the visual analysis. All equipment is remotely monitored, there is no plowing of the access drive, and they wouldn’t access the tower site very often. The tower will be used by Verizon but they anticipate other providers wanting to collocate on the tower. The visibility

analysis was done through a balloon test. Alyssa had shared several locations for inclusion in the visibility analysis and they did include all of those sites that could be accessed by vehicle. Fran shared the results of the visibility analysis.

Fran shared the coverage change maps to show the impact of the change in coverage that the tower would provide. Cell coverage is currently difficult or nonexistent along the Route 30 corridor in this area and this tower will mitigate that for a stretch and into West Dummerston. Eric asked about power to the site and Fran responded that there would be overhead power installed that will need poles along the access road. The facility would have backup batteries for short term power loss and a generator for long term power outage. There will no lighting on the tower.

Alyssa asked about the end-of-life plan for the site and the tower. Fran responded that the town could request that the project post a removal bond that would cover costs to remove the project when it becomes obsolete or the agreement terminates (generally a 50-year agreement). The bond would outlast companies going out of business and would stay with the project. Fran said the bond would remove the above ground features at the site, but not anything underground or the utility poles/line to the site. The PUC does not require these bonds, they must be requested by either the town or the regional planning commission. Art asked if the site would be remediated/ replanted as part of the removal bond agreement, and Fran was not able to answer the question but did say that those choices would be the landowner's decision.

Stephan asked Alyssa about policies related to cell towers in the Regional Plan and Alyssa noted the three relevant policies and that the policies overall speak to weighing the balance between impacts and benefits of projects on an individual basis. Stephan asked how the town feels about the project and Fran said that he met with the town last week at a Selectboard meeting and that the project received favorable comments due to the current lack of cell coverage in this area being an impediment this project would alleviate. The town plans to hold one more meeting about the project after the application is filed to gather any public comments before filing anything with the PUC. Alyssa said she had emailed with Todd Davidson (Dummerston Selectboard Chair) and that he didn't express concerns. Art asked about wifi access with this tower and Fran responded that within the mapped 'high coverage' areas, this tower will provide better coverage wirelessly than one would receive with wired access. Fiber optics are brought to the tower.

Alyssa brought up options for the Committee to consider in terms of timing on decisions and action related to the project.

ACTION: Committee will await review of the full application for determination of regional significance and what comment to submit.

5. **Windham Foundation - Grafton – 2W0157-7**

Address: 783 Townshend Road

Land Use District: Productive Rural, Resource

Potential Policies (pages 12-51): Economic Dev 10, 14; Recreational 15

Background: An amendment to a permit that currently allows a maximum of three events to a maximum of 24 outdoor events on the field located in front of the Grafton Trails & Outdoor Center. Alyssa attended the hearing for this project on 1/29/26.

Alyssa explained the application and the project as background for the Committee. Eric said that the Grafton Planning Commission, which he is a member of, supports the project as long as the intended uses specified in the application are what is carried out and that there is economic impact expected to the town. There is no new parking or building proposed. Alyssa expressed continued confusion even following the hearing about several items. The application says the large events are 250 people, but she was told by the District Coordinator that at the hearing it was stated 650 people or more is considered a large event. There

was discussion about parking and at the hearing 150 parking spaces were discussed, but the site plan shows 103 spaces. Alyssa said that she left the hearing with questions about event size, parking and how parking adequacy was determined. There were abutters present at the hearing that expressed concern regarding noise impacts. Alyssa expressed uncertainty on how to approach commenting on the project when questions remain. The Regional Plan policies that relate to this project relate to tourism and economic development, but with questions still, she recommended that gathering more information could be beneficial in better understanding the project's impacts.

Dan said that the project's current permit limits their activity to 3 events, of which they only do 1 annual event on July 4th with the Vermont Symphony Orchestra and fireworks, and that the project has received a support letter from the town in addition to a couple of others. The events that are listed in the Database are examples of what the events could be and details about the events, but these could change. The discussion at the hearing led to the events being instead categorical based on size and number of events being: small (10), medium (20), and large (4). Two of the large events are not ticketed. At the hearing was also discussed whether each event day is an event versus a recurring event being one event. Dan said that the Grafton Town Plan supports these types of activities and uses. Dan expressed his feeling that the project is good for the community and that permits need to evolve with changing desires and needs of the community. The list of potential events is meant to be illustrative examples of what they would hope to hold.

Dan anticipates that the District Commission will ask for more information on traffic, transportation or noise and that if asked they would be more than happy to provide that. Stephan asked if there has been any traffic analysis. There has not been anything formal. Dan clarified that the large event size is over 250, and he's not sure where 650 came from. He also said that some of the events are predicted to be those that people would come and go and not be there all at once. He's also anticipating that people would not drive alone to events. Dan reiterated that the large events are very few and parking would be managed for large events. Alyssa said that pointing to data about expected people per vehicle for events and parking needs for the facility cited from zoning standards would be helpful in understanding the project versus relying on only on the applicant's experience in hosting one large event per year. Stephan said that what Alyssa is describing would be part of a traffic analysis, and it would look at the impact of modeled traffic on nearby roads and intersections to show impact data. Dan said that the District Commission may ask for that, but thanked Stephan for the suggestion. Stephan said that he believes regional significance will be driven somewhat by traffic. Eric said that he's experienced the Vermont Symphony events and that all the traffic clears out in about 15 minutes and that he doesn't see a traffic impact beyond locally, and that he doesn't place a lot of value on a traffic analysis. Alyssa asked what is the maximum parking spaces (103 or 150?) and Dan could not answer that question. Art said he has yet to experience a crowd issue with attending events in the region.

Jim asked Alyssa about commenting. She said that the Committee does need to comment because this project is a Major, and could comment more than once if desired. Eric said that he doesn't see regional significance in the project. Alyssa asked Eric for clarity on how the town views the traffic. Eric said that noise and traffic were not discussed by the Planning Commission, but that his experience is the traffic is temporary and local and he doesn't personally see those as problems, but he can't speak for the town. Alyssa asked the Committee for clarity on regional significance and what comment to file at this time. Jim suggested the project is not regionally significant. Stephan said he doesn't disagree with that, but the traffic comments have been all anecdotal and that a traffic study would provide data to the traffic impact questions. Without data it is hard to determine regional significance. Jim said that if traffic had been a concern thus far, the town would have raised concerns. Dan clarified that the Committee should keep in mind that most of the events are small and medium. Alyssa said that the project would be a big change for those local to the facility. Art said that he sees the traffic and 'nuisance factor' as local and if the town is okay with the project, he doesn't see a regional issue. Jim proposed that the project is not regionally significant. Alyssa asked Dan how they can know that the site capacity won't be overwhelmed by un-

ticketed large events. Dan responded that some of the answer is based on their experience with the annual Symphony event and that some of it will be ‘trial and error’. Dan again expressed his feeling that it is unlikely that attendees would all be at an event at the same time and that the project impacts are local versus regional.

Alyssa said that she still has questions that don’t have clear data driven answers from the applicant, but she understands that the concerns seem local. She said that the Committee could raise items for the town to consider and ask for items such as a traffic study so that there was data for the town. Jim said that the project does seem somewhat unpredictable and he agreed that there is a lack of information, but he also sees the town in favor of the project, and without regional significance it’s hard to request more data of the applicant. Stephan agreed and understands both that Grafton is interested in the economic benefit of the events and that the traffic impact is not documented, but that the concerns do seem local. Stephan motioned that the project is not regionally significant, but there are several issues, particularly traffic and noise, that could be better defined with data in order for the impacts of the project to be fully understood by all parties. This response is not intended to be against the project, and that we understand the town supports the project. Art seconded the motion. All approved.

ACTION: Stephan motioned that the project is not regionally significant, but there are several issues, particularly traffic and noise, that could be better defined with data in order for the impacts of the project to be fully understood by all parties. This response is not intended to be against the project, and that we understand the town supports the project. Art seconded the motion. All approved. Alyssa will draft and submit the letter, reserving the right to comment again in the future if additional information is provided.

6. Recent Decisions and Updates

- Tamarack triple lift replacement at Stratton Resort – 2W0240-28A – permitted 1/21/2026

7. Next meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting is Tuesday, March 3rd. Determination of a need to hold the meeting will be made closer to that date and the Committee will be informed either way.

8. Adjourned at 4:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Alyssa Sabetto, Senior Planner