

ENERGY - MEETING MINUTES

Who: Addison County Regional Planning Commission - Energy Committee

When: April 21st, 2026; 5:00 to 6:30 PM, EST

1. **Call to Order** (5:00 PM)
 - a. The meeting was called to order at about 5:00 PM.
2. **Attending Members** (5:00)
 - a. Members and participants identified during the roll call and opening discussion included Jamie Dayton, Melanie Sims, Tom Perry, and ACRPC staff/participants in the room and online. Tom Perry joined shortly after the meeting began. The transcript also reflects in-room discussion captured by the shared microphone.
3. **Approval of Agenda** (5:00)
 - a. The agenda was reviewed. No suggestions or edits were offered, and the agenda was accepted as presented.
4. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes** (5:05 PM)
 - a. A motion was made by Jamie Dayton to approve the previous meeting minutes. Melanie seconded the motion. The committee reviewed the minutes and identified one typo in the roll call section, where a name appeared to have been incorrectly rendered and should be corrected to Jeremy.
 - b. The committee also discussed the desired level of detail in future minutes. Tom Perry observed that the previous minutes were useful but did not capture enough of the substantive discussion to help members later recall what was discussed. Other members noted that AI-generated transcripts and summaries can reduce the note-taking burden on meeting participants, but that future minutes may need to be tuned to better capture the essence of discussions without becoming overly detailed.
 - i. **Action:** The previous meeting minutes were approved with the identified typo correction. Future minutes should continue using transcript/video tools where useful, while including more thorough summaries of major issues discussed.
5. **Public Comment** (12:05)
 - a. No separate public comment was recorded before the committee moved into discussion of ongoing initiatives, projects, and policies.
6. **Discussion of On-going Initiatives, Projects, or Policies**
 - a. Update on Regional Energy Plan (5:15 PM)
 - i. PSD Plan Comments (5:15 PM)
 1. The committee reviewed the status of comments received from the Vermont Department of Public Service (PSD) on the Regional Energy Plan. Staff described a follow-up meeting with PSD representatives regarding several more difficult comments, including comments on interconnection costs, responsibility for cost burdens, and storage-ready project design. The discussion emphasized that many PSD comments appeared to be requests for clarification rather than direct objections.

2. The storage-ready recommendation was discussed in relation to both cost effectiveness and resilience. Staff noted that designing new generation to accommodate future storage, either on site or nearby, may avoid the higher costs associated with retrofitting later. PSD reportedly questioned whether storage needed to be close to generation to avoid efficiency losses. Staff responded that regional resilience, extreme weather preparedness, and energy security support the value of having storage capacity within the region, even apart from narrow efficiency considerations.
 3. Staff also reported responding to PSD comments requesting more evaluation of transportation, concentrated development, and the connection between land use and transportation goals. Staff pointed to existing evaluation language in the land use chapter, energy appendix, and transportation chapter to show that some of the requested analysis had already been included, although not necessarily in the location PSD expected.
 4. The committee discussed generation targets and technology neutrality. Staff explained that the region has already met its 2025 and 2035 generation targets, so the 2050 target is the primary remaining target of substance. Because of uncertainty regarding future technologies, cost, grid constraints, and the ultimate mix of solar, storage, and other resources, the plan is intended to remain relatively technology agnostic rather than pre-committing to a specific resource mix.
 5. Transmission planning was also discussed. Maddie was credited with helping shape comments that would respond to PSD while avoiding an automatic assumption that major transmission expansion is the only solution. The committee discussed the importance of acknowledging long-term transmission planning while also considering energy efficiency and thermal energy networks as strategies that could reduce or manage future electric demand growth.
- ii. The committee reviewed the regional plan schedule. Completed items included staff chapter comments due March 20, final Land Use Review Board comments due March 30, a substantive change log prepared by April 1, the first public hearing held April 8, and the close of public comments on April 20. Upcoming items included warning the second public hearing in the Addison Independent by April 30, completing and posting second-draft edits by April 30, holding the second public hearing on June 10, seeking adoption on July 8, and submitting the plan to the Land Use Review Board and PSD around July 23.
 - iii. The committee also discussed comments attributed to Alice White concerning natural gas and fossil-fuel infrastructure. The concern was that the plan should not appear to support new natural gas infrastructure, even while acknowledging existing infrastructure. The discussion also touched on renewable natural gas and the possibility that future renewable gas could be more expensive than current utility gas, raising questions about long-term infrastructure lock-in and cost implications. It was unclear whether Alice had submitted written comments, and follow-up was suggested.

iv. Solar Canopy Maps and Generation Potential (5:30 PM)

1. The committee reviewed solar canopy mapping developed by UVM students. The map identifies impervious surfaces, with buildings removed, where solar canopies could theoretically be sited. The displayed map included potential canopy areas, solar radiation potential, parcel-level generation estimates, and Green Mountain Power circuit capacity information. The committee focused on examples in the Middlebury area, including large parking areas that could support canopy-style projects.
2. Staff described the map as intentionally maximalist. The purpose was to show broad theoretical potential at the outset rather than prematurely narrowing the universe of possible sites. Further refinement was anticipated before the map is incorporated into ACRPC's formal map style, including possible road buffering and related GIS review by Hannah. Hannah was credited with providing important feedback to the students during the semester.
3. The committee discussed the generation potential identified by the students. The total theoretical solar canopy potential was described as close to 700,000 MWh annually, which would be more than twice the region's projected 2050 electricity demand. Members discussed solar canopies as a promising strategy because they use already developed spaces, may avoid some siting conflicts associated with ground-mounted utility-scale solar, and may qualify as preferred locations under state and regional planning frameworks.
4. Tom Perry raised questions about solar overproduction, the economics of net metering, and the need to avoid producing power at times when it has low market value. Storage was discussed as part of the solution, along with the possibility that canopy projects may be especially useful where they offset on-site demand. Hydro-Quebec and pumped-storage-like regional balancing concepts were also mentioned as broader examples of storage or load-balancing approaches. Staff noted that PSD may raise similar questions during the students' upcoming presentation to other RPC energy planners and PSD representatives.
5. The committee also noted practical co-benefits of solar canopies, including snow management, shade, potential comfort benefits for parked vehicles, carports, and possible applications such as salt-storage areas.

v. Next Steps: Revisions Proposals (5:45 PM)

1. The next steps discussed for the Regional Energy Plan were to continue incorporating or responding to PSD comments, follow up on any written comments from Alice White, refine the solar canopy map and generation estimates, and prepare the second draft for posting and public hearing according to the schedule reviewed earlier in the meeting.

b. Regional Energy Fair Updates (5:50 PM)

- i. The committee discussed planning for the Regional Energy/Eco Fair. Vergennes and Weybridge have been working together to combine the Regional Energy Fair with the Weybridge Eco Fair. Weybridge is expected to bring electric vehicles, e-bikes, electric lawn equipment, seeds, and children's activities such as letters to the planet. The event will be co-hosted by Vergennes, Weybridge, and ACRPC. Bristol was contacted about co-hosting but indicated that it was too busy to take on that role, although the committee hoped Bristol might still participate with a booth.
- ii. The committee reviewed the event flyer and noted that it was nearly ready, subject to minor graphic cleanup where edited lettering had left visible blank or negative-space artifacts. The flyer should list the co-hosts and use the combined Energy/Eco Fair framing. Because vendor participation, music, and other details were not final, the flyer was kept relatively simple.
- iii. Outreach and publicity were discussed. The Addison Independent is prepared to include a short blurb, and the event can be included in the paper's summer guide and calendar if information is submitted by May 15. Efficiency Vermont was contacted and planned to add the event to its calendar while also considering whether it could provide a booth. Additional outreach may include the Chamber of Commerce newsletter, Front Porch Forum, ACRPC communications, printed posters, and direct vendor outreach.
- iv. Vendor coordination remains ongoing. The committee discussed expanding the vendor list beyond the prior year, with the understanding that vendors should fit within the energy or broader eco-fair purpose. Possible participants discussed included municipal energy committees, organizations connected to pollinator gardens or ecological work, and municipalities with relevant energy projects or MERP-related examples. The committee also discussed inviting or encouraging municipal energy committees to have booths, including Panton and Bristol, even if they are not formal co-hosts.
- v. Event logistics were reviewed. A park permit has been submitted, and an ADA-compliant portable toilet will be delivered the night before the event. The event will be rain or shine, and the vendor agreement should encourage or require participants to bring canopies. The event is expected to run from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM, with vendors able to arrive as early as 9:00 AM and take until 3:00 PM to break down.
- vi. Music was discussed as a way to make the event feel festive. The committee supported music in concept, but Tom Perry cautioned that music should remain quiet enough that vendors and attendees can communicate. Irish or French folk-style music was discussed as a possible fit, and the committee agreed that volume control should be considered.
- vii. The committee discussed additional support needs, including food vendors, raffle prizes, poster distribution, and day-of coordination. Potential raffle prize sources included restaurants, hardware stores, garden or landscaping businesses, and other local businesses. Members discussed coordinating outreach so that businesses are not contacted multiple times. Melanie and Tom offered to help as needed. The group also discussed potential day-of support, including

announcements, raffle coordination, and helping relieve the burden on those already representing other organizations at booths.

c. Municipal Energy Planning Updates (6:10 PM)

- i. Staff reported continued work with Leicester on its energy plan. Leicester had asked about proposed updates and the difference between an energy chapter and an enhanced energy plan. The committee discussed the recurring need to explain the value of substantial deference and why a municipality might choose to pursue an enhanced energy plan rather than only an energy chapter.
- ii. The committee discussed organizing a training or presentation on substantial deference and enhanced energy planning. Staff reported outreach to Vermont Law School and Panton's attorney. ACRPC is willing to offer an honorarium to support a speaker's time. Jamie Dayton agreed to follow up with Panton's attorney if staff send him the prior communications. The committee noted that a recorded training could help answer repeated municipal questions and reduce the need to revisit the same issue separately with each municipality.
- iii. Leicester and New Haven were identified as near-term planning efforts. Both are attempting to move their energy planning work forward in time for regional review before ACRPC's own plan approval process proceeds. Middlebury was also discussed. Although Middlebury had previously slowed its process to focus on community engagement, it now appears to be accelerating because of municipal plan timing and grant-related needs. A meeting is being arranged among Middlebury representatives and ACRPC staff to discuss the path forward.
- iv. Panton and Vergennes were also mentioned as upcoming or later-stage municipal planning efforts. Panton is expected to receive an energy plan update later in the year. Vergennes is in a light kickoff phase, with more detailed work expected after the Energy/Eco Fair.
- v. Starksboro was discussed in more detail. Starksboro did not receive the same EECBG funding as some other municipalities, so another funding source, such as a Municipal Planning Grant, may be needed for full enhanced energy plan assistance. The Energy Committee may be interested in pursuing an enhanced energy plan, while the Planning Commission may have concerns or skepticism. Tom Perry suggested speaking with Richard Faesy, chair of the Starksboro Energy Committee, and setting up a meeting with staff to clarify what would be needed and what work ACRPC may already be able to provide, such as data and mapping.

d. Memo Supporting Vergennes Battery Storage Project (6:20 PM)

- i. The committee reviewed the memorandum concerning support for a proposed battery energy storage system project in Vergennes. The project was described as controversial locally, with active discussion and opposition appearing on Front Porch Forum. The Vergennes Energy Committee had previously supported the project, and the City Council had requested thoughts on the proposal. The committee had reviewed the memorandum at the prior meeting but did not approve it then because quorum was lost before the end of the meeting. Staff

noted that Adam had reviewed the memorandum more extensively since then.

- ii. Jamie Dayton reported that he had reviewed the memorandum in depth and supported both the memorandum and the recommended action. He noted that public concerns appeared to focus on malfunction or fire risk, but his own review suggested that such events are rare and that the level of risk may be overstated in public discussion. He emphasized that battery storage is important if the region is going to scale renewable resources, especially solar.
- iii. The committee discussed public-safety review. It was reported that the Vergennes Fire Chief had met with Lightshift and city representatives by Chairperson Brinkman and had that the Fire Chief had given the project a favorable review. Members noted that this information should be communicated more prominently to the public, and that an informational meeting with the city manager and fire department may help residents hear the fire department's perspective directly.
- iv. Staff noted that an RPC position can be important in the Certificate of Public Good process. The memorandum would provide a clear statement of ACRPC's position on this specific project, in addition to the general policies in the Regional Energy Plan. The preferred position was described as qualified project support, rather than blanket support, because the project should still be expected to meet applicable standards.
- v. **Motion:** Jamie Dayton moved to support the memorandum regarding the Vergennes battery energy storage project. Tom Perry seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- vi. **Action:** Staff should ensure that the final memorandum is available to committee members, including anyone who had difficulty locating it in the meeting packet attachments.

7. **New Business** (6:28)

a. Other new business?

- i. The committee briefly noted that Vergennes would have a MERP status update meeting with BGS regarding local MERP work, including the Bixby Library. Participants indicated that they planned to attend or may attend in person or virtually. No other new business was raised.

8. **Adjournment.** (6:30)

- a. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned. The next regular meeting was confirmed for May 19, 2026, from 5:00 to 6:30 PM.