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Comments on “H.28. Outdoor Lighting. Presented to the Senate Institutions Committee—April 13, 2006

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on **H.28—Establishing guidelines for the use of outdoor lighting.**

The Vermont Planners Association (VPA) supports H.28 as passed by the House on 4/13/05. In general, VPA supports the:

- legislative purpose;
- establishment of an advisory board;
- development of suggested performance-based guidelines based on contemporary models;
- raising public awareness and increased professional development;
- assessment of our progress to implement good outdoor lighting designs;
- guidance for use of outdoor lighting in public facilities; and
- enabling legislation for inclusion in zoning and subdivisions bylaws.

Formation of a broad-based advisory board to develop and suggest performance-based standards for use of outdoor lighting for selected applications (including parking lots, signs, street lighting and security lighting) would help Vermonters conserve energy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect its valued natural resources including the night sky and night landscape.

Under Title 24, Chapter, 117, communities can control outdoor lighting plans, however, planners lack the appropriate performance-based standards and guidance for reviewing and recommending approval of lighting plans. Making informed decisions in the absence of clear performance-based guidelines makes the subject unclear to both developers and planners. The establishment of a broad-based advisory board is timely and appropriate as it will advance the discussion, awareness and solutions on how to avoid unnecessary and excessive lighting on Vermont’s landscape.

The results of the advisory board will be helpful and informative to the public as well as communities, architects, designers and developers. VPA is pleased to have a representative on the advisory board. We want to ensure that the lighting problems facing communities are heard and that we build upon the work of the 1996 Vermont Outdoor Lighting Manual. This grassroots community planning effort laid a good foundation for the future work of the advisory board. Vermonters, planners and business owners need clear direction on how to avoid poor lighting installations which wastes energy and can impact Vermont’s landscape adversely.

With the current energy crisis and unprecedented growth in greenhouse gas emissions, it is wise and sensible to advance H.28. Establishment of an advisory board represented by both public and private interests is an opportunity to advance cautiously on the escalating problem of excessive light pollution as well as provide the legislature with well thought-out performance-based guidelines for use by anyone interested in saving energy, reducing waste and protecting Vermont’s valued night landscape and night sky.

Again, the VPA supports H.28 and would like to help address any concerns in front

The Vermont Planners Association (VPA) is an organization representing citizen and professional planners, landscape architects, housing and economic development specialists, developers, and engineering consultants from throughout the state. VPA is committed to advancing the art and science of planning.