

VPA Legislative Report #10 [3/28/11]

Weekly Update

House capital spending and transportation bills are out of committee this week – and scheduled to take up most of Thursday and Friday's floor time. Senate committees will be considering the following, as passed by the House last week. ***Senate Natural Resources & Energy will be holding a public hearing this Wednesday, Room 11, 6:00-8:00 pm, regarding the state's comprehensive energy plan.***

FY12 Budget (H.441). After long sessions on Thursday and Friday, the House passed its version of the FY12 budget, largely along party lines (95-34). The \$4.69 billion package holds to that proposed by the Administration. Several attempts to amend the budget – on the left to raise revenues for human services, and on the right to divert funding from the Housing Conservation Trust Fund – were defeated. A VCGI study was added under floor amendments. Highlights:

- B.801 DEHCD \$21,189,308
- B.803 Community Development Block Grants \$8,046,530
- B.804 Downtown Fund \$383,966
- B.810 VT Housing Conservation Board \$21,612,916
- B.906 Transportation–Planning \$10,039,294
- B.1103 One-time Appropriations:
 - ACCD –historic resources digital database \$150,000
- D.100 Property Transfer Tax:
 - Municipal and Regional Planning Fund: \$3,295,476 (RPCs: \$2,508,076, MPGs: \$408,700)
 - Housing Conservation Trust Fund: \$8,047,500
 - VT Center for Geographic Information \$378,700
- E.122 VCGI study to reduce redundant, duplicative mapping services, due January 2012
- E.803 Community Development Block Grant program priorities (including smart growth language)
- F.101 Three debt service funds established (general, transportation bonds, other)

Misc. Tax Bill (H.436). The House last week also passed the miscellaneous tax bill – not to be confused with H.243, their tax restructuring bill. As passed, H.436 includes a one cent increase in state education property tax rates, \$210,000 for another study of the state's education financing system, and some current use program reforms. Highlights:

- S.8 Evaluation of the state's education financing system under Acts 60, 68,
- S.12 Study of property taxation of renewable energy plants,
- S.33 Repeals preferential property transfer tax (PTT) for land enrolled in current use,
- S.34 Allocates 2% of PTT for admin, up to 50% to used to electronically administer current use,
- S.15,16 TIF District financing changes specific to Colchester, Burlington,

Transportation Bill (H.443). House Transportation finished its work on the Transportation Bill (T-Bill) which is scheduled for introduction on the House floor this week. It does not address complete streets. Highlights:

- S.3, S.7 Western rail corridor project added (inter-city passenger rail); grant application, bonding,
- S.16 Town highway programs level funded, consistent with Governor's recommendations,
- S.17 New "Municipal Sidewalks Program" (\$200,000, match) for sidewalks on Class 1, 2 and 3 highways,
- S. 6 List of cancelled, lower priority projects – not completed, may no longer have federal funding,
- S.18–21 Reconstitutes Scenery Preservation Council (as Byways Advisory Council), deletes reference to state planning office; adopts Vermont Design Standards (roads) and FHA's MUTCD (signs) for rehab or reconstruction of state and municipal scenic roads,

- S.25 Adds certain message signs to list of exemptions (birthdays, time, temperature), redefines electronic and animated signs to exclude those that change every five minutes or more – Jericho sign issues,
- S. 31 Adds VTrans to PSB notification list for siting of temporary meteorological stations.

Open Meeting Law (S.67). The Senate passed a strike-all version of S.67 amendments to Vermont's open meeting law on Thursday (27-0) to go in effect as of July 1st. As passed, the bill:

- S.1 Defines "meeting" to exclude written, electronic communications re scheduling, agendas, etc. if available for public inspection, copying,
- S.2 Clarifies requirements for meeting participation by electronic or other means of communication,
- S.2 Requires agendas for regular and special meetings to be posted on a website if it exists, in or near the municipal office, and at least two other places in the municipality,
- S.3 Clarifies purposes, procedures for executive sessions (does not address deliberative sessions),
- S.4 Provides for local consideration (within 21 days), cure (within 14 days) of alleged violations prior to court proceedings.

House, Senate – Listen Live (when in session)

VPR: http://www.vpr.net/news/vermont_legislature/

Committee Schedules (subject to change)

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/CommitteeMain.cfm>

H. Agriculture	S.99 Ag development (T); USDA (W); H.409 Invasives (W)
H. Appropriations	H. 443 Transportation Bill (T); Capital Bill (T)
H. Fish, Wildlife, Water Resources	H.407 Groundwater royalties (T,F); Water Management Typing Program – RPCs (T) , Vermont Yankee (W)
H. Judiciary	H.433 T-Bill (T, W); H.258 Environmental enforcement (W)
H. Natural Resources, Energy	Not available
H. Ways & Means	H.56 Energy Bill (T,W)
S. Agriculture	Dairy bill (T); H.287 Jobs Bill (T)
S. Appropriations	H.441 FY12 Budget (T, Th, F)
S. Economic Development	Not available
S. Finance	H.138 Executive branch fees (T); S.78 Telecom (W)
S. Government Operations	Not available
S. Institutions	Capital Bill (Th)
S. Natural Resources, Energy	S.78 Telecom (T); H.26 Fertilizer (W)
	Public Hearing – Comprehensive Energy Planning (W)
S. Transportation	Necessity summer study (T)

Scheduled Public Hearings

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/Committee01.cfm?Page=C> (and calendars)

- 3/30 Senate Natural Resources & Energy, Room 11, 6:00 - 8:00 pm
Energy Planning**
- 3/31 Senate Health and Welfare , House Chamber, 6:00 - 8:00 pm
H.202 Health Care Reform – consumer community
- 4/7 Senate Health and Welfare, Room 11, 6:00-8:00 pm
H.202 Health reform bill – provider community

Bills on the Move (Abbreviated VPA Tracking List)

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/Research01.cfm?Session=2012>

Note: See prior reports for previously introduced bills

H.26	Fertilizer Bill	S. Natural Resource, Energy
H.56	Energy Bill	H. Ways & Means
H.258	Environmental enforcement, public participation	H. Judiciary
H.287	Jobs bill (neighborhoods, development cabinet, 117)	S. Economic Development
H.332	VT Environmental Commission for 21st Century	H. Natural Resources, Energy
H.411	Act 250, agricultural fairground exemptions	S. Agriculture
H.436	FY12 Misc Tax Bill	S. Finance
H.441	FY12 Budget Bill	Passed House 3/25
H.443	Transportation Bill	Scheduled for introduction
S.8	Commercial on-farm composting (\$4413 exemption)	S. Agriculture (may be attached)
S.67	Open meeting law	Passed Senate 3/24
S.77	Private well testing	S. Action Calendar 3/29
S.78	Telecom bill	S. Finance
S.99	Agricultural economic development– VSJF, F2P	S. Economic Development, Housing, General

Legislative Reports (selected)

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/reports/externalreports.cfm>

No new reports.

Sharon Murray, AICP

VPA Legislative Liaison
frontporch@gmavt.net