

Sarah Hadd

From: front porch <frontporch@GMAVT.NET>
Sent: Tuesday, January 12, 2016 11:24 AM
Subject: Legislative Update #1 [1.11.16]



VPA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE #1

January 11, 2016

Weekly Update

The 2016 session got off to a quick start last week, given it's the second in a two-part series. The start of the new year was overshadowed some by the Senate's quasi-impeachment proceedings for one of its own, and a much more entertaining BTV campaign stop by the Donald. Committees maintained full meeting schedules, getting summer updates from agency staff and Legislative Council. Several, including Senate Natural Resources and Energy (our current committee of interest) also took initial testimony on new bills coming out of the hopper. 145 bills have been introduced to date, with more on the way. The House deadline for drafting requests is Friday.

The Governor's Thursday [State of the State](#), while not exactly a swansong, focused more on past accomplishments than the session ahead. Highlights (from one planners' perspective):

- **"Flatlanders are now coming to Vermont to beer hunt."** New farming enterprises, and locally grown food, have created 4,400 jobs, and a "new generation of young farmers are competing for land and resources..." Announced \$175,000 in new money to the Working Lands Fund (\$25,000 Long Trail, \$50,000 Whistle Pig, \$100,000 from the Merinoffs of Townsend).
- **"Last year we passed the most ambitious, long-overdue clean water bill in Vermont's history."** No further insights regarding how this will be funded...
- **"Vermont should not wait to rid ourselves of ExxonMobil stock."** Some discussion of divestment (coal, ExxonMobil), following California's example; no mention of a carbon tax.
- **"We need more smartly-sited renewables to power Vermont."** In five years we've had a tenfold increase in the number of solar panels in the state, and "now have more clean energy jobs per capita than any other state in America." He supports "continuing to build renewables on a Vermont scale..." He does not support "mega solar projects that gobble up hundreds of acres..." nor does he support "anti-renewable extremists who would shut down renewables through moratoriums and other job-killing tactics..." **"Homegrown, not corporate grown, is Vermont's energy future."**
- In sum: **"..we should continue our commitments to clean jobs, clean water, clean energy, and a quality education system."**

A meatier budget address is scheduled for **Thursday, January 21st**.

VPA 2016 Legislative Priorities

Interested VPAers met on Friday, in our annual "Legislative Cracker Barrel," to identify and discuss our legislative priorities for the session upon us – the following is a short list of bills discussed. The Executive Committee on Friday also approved funding to once again share a legislative intern, to help us track bills in committee, with VNRC.

H.367 (VPA's 10-year Planning Bill). We'll be moving forward, in Senate Natural Resources and Energy, to incorporate recommendations from our summer/fall work sessions, under an amended version of the bill as passed by the House last year, e.g. to:

- Require a comprehensive plan update and adoption at least every 10 years.
- Require a plan review, implementation program update, and plan re-adoption under a simplified process, 5 years after adoption.

- Allow for plan amendments at any time (w/o extending the plan expiration date), under a simplified adoption process.
- Add a 20-year planning horizon for municipal (and regional?) plans.
- Clarify implementation program language under required plan elements (who, what, when...).
- Consolidate, clarify plan amendment provisions.
- Establish a simplified plan amendment/readoption process (e.g., limits required notice, hearings).

Anyone interested in working on this bill – especially to provide testimony— let me know ASAP...

H.249 (VAPDA’s Regional Council of Governments Bill). This bill, introduced last year and currently in House Government Ops, would provide for the voluntary creation of regional councils of government by member municipalities, to facilitate the development of inter-municipal services and facilities. An updated draft is expected shortly in committee.

S.230 (Solar Siting Task Force). Several new PSB/energy facility siting bills were introduced last week in the Senate (see below). S.230 was submitted by Senator Bray and others, in SNRE, specifically as a place holder for Solar Siting Task Force recommendations. VPA, VAPDA, VLCT and ASLA-VT are all represented on the task force, created under H.40/A.56 (renewable energy bill) passed in 2015. The final task force meeting is scheduled for Tuesday; a report/recommendations are due on Friday. This is priority legislation for Senate Natural Resources and Energy, which started taking testimony on new siting bills last week.

S.237 (Forestry Bill). Introduced by Senator Bray and others, potentially also as a placeholder, this bill is also on SNRE’s priority list this session. VNRC is hosting a meeting on Friday to discuss forestry legislation in relation to land use planning, in response to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation’s [2015 Forest Fragmentation Report](#).

S.123 (DEC Permitting Bill). This legislation, introduced last year, represents DEC’s proposal to consolidate procedures for issuing DEC permits, and garnered some stiff opposition from the environmental community as introduced. It’s also on SNRE’s to do list this session—it’s been suggested by members that we also review and track this, and other permitting bills.

Bills

(Tracking: <http://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/search/2016>)

In addition to holdovers from last year, the following are new bills of interest that we will also be tracking this session:

- H.513 Repeal PSB authority over telecom facilities (Section 248a)
- H.517 Classification of state waters
- S.162 Public-private partnerships
- S.166 Development cabinet, cross promotion of state policies, incentives
- S.170 Open meeting law (along w/ S.114 from last year)
- S.191 Siting of wind generation facilities
- S.195 Study, solar on large buildings
- S.204 Siting renewable electric generation
- S.205 Renewable energy development, protecting ag, forestry soils
- S.210 Ban on industrial wind
- S.226 Energy facility siting
- S.229 State interchange development policies, guidance
- S.231 Immunity from liability for agritourism activities
- S.236 Solar ready roofs on new construction

Weekly Calendar Highlights (Subject to Change)

(Full committee schedule: <http://legislature.vermont.gov/committee/meetings/2016>)

Tuesday

- 9:30 Public Hearings: Budget Adjustments (Rm 42)
- 10:30 JT Meeting: Drinking Water, Water Pollution RLFs (Rm 10)
- 10:30 PSB: Review of Programs, (H. Commerce)
- 10:30 S.226: Energy Facility Siting (S. Natural Resources, Energy)**
- 1:15 2016/17 Capital Bill (S. Institutions)
- 2:15 H.517: Classification of state waters (H. Fish, Wildlife, Water)
- 2:30 Required Agricultural Practices, (H. Agriculture)
- 3:15 VT Local Roads Program Update (H. Transportation)

Wednesday

- 9:00 S.123: DEC Permitting Bill (H. Natural Resources, Energy)**
- 9:00 ACCD Updates (S. Econ Development)
- 9:00 S.230: Siting of Energy Projects (S. Natural Resources, Energy)**
- 10:00 H.249: Councils of Government—VAPDA (H. Government Ops)**
- 10:30 DHCD: Review of Programs (H. Commerce)
- 1:00 H.26: Endangered, threatened specifics (H. Fish, Wildlife, Water)
- 1:30 Public Hearings: Budget Adjustments (Rm 42)
- 2:00 2016/17 Capital Bill (S. Institutions)**

Thursday

- 9:00 **S.123: DEC Permitting Bill (S. Natural Resources, Energy)**
- 9:00 PSD: Review of Programs (H. Commerce)
- 10:30 H.26: Endangered, threatened specifics (H. Fish, Wildlife, Water)
- 11:30 H.517: Classification of state waters (H. Fish, Wildlife, Water)

Friday

- 9:00 **S.230: Siting of Energy Projects (S. Natural Resources, Energy)**
- 10:15 **S.123: DEC Permitting Bill (H. Natural Resources, Energy)**
- 11:00 Report: Shoreland Protection Program (H. Fish, Wildlife Water)

Deadlines

- Tuesday, 1/13 Public comments due: [PSB Revised Net-Metering Rule](#) (5.1)
- February 16 Public comments due: [Proposed Logging AMP Rule Change](#)

Legislative Reports

Will begin listing next week...

Let's put on our red shoes and dance the blues...
RIP Ziggy.

Sharon Murray ACIP

Legislative Liaison
Vermont Planners Association
802.434.4118 | frontporch@gmavt.net