

For Immediate Release

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MEDIA RELEASE

Vermont Department of Public Service Issues Draft Energy Planning Standards

Montpelier, Vermont – The Department of Public Service today released a public review draft of the energy planning determination standards and recommendations called for in Act 174, the Energy Development Improvement Act. The draft standards and recommendations, along with an overview, can be found here – <http://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/act-174-recommendations-and-determination-standards>. The Department is due to issue final standards and recommendations by November 1. The public is encouraged to review and comment on the draft standards and recommendations through October 20. In addition, the Department will host a public hearing to present the draft standards and gather feedback in Randolph on October 11.

Once finalized, these standards and recommendations will be used by the Department and regional planning commissions to make determinations as to whether regional and municipal plans are consistent with state energy policy. Plans that receive an affirmative determination will receive substantial deference for their land conservation measures and specific policies when the Public Service Board considers orderly development in its review of siting applications. Act 174 details a set of planning requirements to receive a determination, including consistency with Vermont's energy and climate goals and the inclusion of energy analysis across the building, transportation, and electrical sectors.

The draft standards published today consist of a checklist of required analyses, goals, and actions. The Department hopes that this checklist approach will enable municipal and regional planners to conduct planning with a determination of energy compliance in mind.

Act 174 establishes three pathways for a plan to receive a determination of energy compliance: 1) regional plans will be evaluated by the Department; 2) once their region's plan has received an affirmative determination, municipal plans will be evaluated by their regional commission; and 3) until July 1, 2018, a municipality in a region that has not received a determination may apply to the Department for evaluation.

"Achieving Vermont's renewable energy and greenhouse gas reduction goals is going to require an all-hands-on-deck approach at the local, regional, and statewide level," noted Department of Public Service Deputy Commissioner Jon Copans. "We are hopeful that these standards and the planning process envisioned in Act 174 will inspire Vermonters to work collaboratively at the local level to plan for the energy transformation necessary to continue to make progress towards our goals."

"In many ways, the constructive conversations we have had with interested stakeholders as we worked on these standards mirror the dialogue we believe will happen at the local and regional level as we all do our part to fight climate change and achieve greater energy independence," continued Copans. "I want

to thank the hundreds of interested Vermonters who have engaged with the Department as we worked to craft this initial draft of the standards, and encourage all to remain involved and share feedback as we continue to make improvements.”

To inform development of the draft standards, the Department conducted substantial public and stakeholder outreach. This included a half-day public forum on August 30, several topical stakeholder focus groups, and an online survey (which received nearly 150 responses), as well as numerous meetings with individual stakeholders and organizations.

“Act 174 requires the Department to develop standards and recommendations. We appreciate Department's extensive efforts to reach out to our members and to understand the context of plan development at the local level. We strongly encourage towns to review the draft determination standards and help the Department to continue their development,” noted Karen Horn, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy at Vermont League of Cities and Towns.

“These proposed standards show how the Department has learned from the energy planning work and input of our region and others. We look forward to reviewing the draft determination standards and providing additional feedback, and encourage others to do the same,” added Catherine Dimitruk, Director of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission.

The Department will hold a public hearing to gather feedback on the draft determination standards in the Chandler Music Hall Upper Gallery Space at 71-73 Main Street in Randolph on Tuesday, October 11, 5:30-7:30 p.m. The hearing will include a presentation of the draft standards and provide an opportunity for members of the public to comment. Persons requiring special accommodations should call (802) 828-2811 at least five business days prior to the event to make arrangements.

Written comments may be submitted to PSD.PlanningStandards@vermont.gov through October 20.
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The Department of Public Service is an agency within the executive branch of Vermont state government. Its charge is to represent the public interest in matters regarding energy, telecommunications, water and wastewater.

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