



Many small towns don't have zoning, which addresses what kind of building you can put where; and towns don't have a consistent process of promoting and enforcing building codes, which are intended to guide the practices, materials, energy standards, and permits are involved when people build new structures. Matt says that the newly updated Vermont building code is really good (<https://up.codes/codes/vermont-or-2020-VT-Residential-Energy-Code.pdf>), but its principles aren't well understood or applied on the local level. Among the challenges is improving education of town building inspectors.

Forest planning was another high priority in the IREC discussion, but not agreed upon by one of the highest.

There was discussion of mass transit, but David feels this isn't a viable, high-impact option for small rural towns very spaced out. Jim reported seeing many Advance Transit bus stops today, each time with numerous people waiting in them, and reminded committee members that through Tri-Valley Transit (formerly ACTR and Stagecoach) there is now bus service to Strafford and Sharon, currently free of charge.

The IREC priorities don't need to limit our own initiatives, but these are the areas where we'd benefit by working together.

### 3.

**The revised Current Use (Use Value Appraisal Program) law passed the legislature and has now been signed by the governor.** Among other updates, H. 697 enables forest conservation for wildlife and climate-change forest mitigation practices in addition to forestry activities and harvesting. Dorian said that this new bill is not perfect, but definitely a huge start! Read more here: <https://vtdigger.org/2022/05/27/with-scotts-signature-current-use-program-will-get-a-new-reserved-forestland-category/>.

Jenevra sent the committee a summary of the new Current Use plan and a link to a commentary by Michael Snyder, commissioner of Forests, Parks, and Recreation:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2022/WorkGroups/House%20Natural/Use%20Value%20in%20Vermont/W~Michael%20Snyder~Vermont%20Department%20of%20Forests,%20Parks,%20and%20Recreation%20Report%20-%20Considerations%20for%20a%20Reserve%20Forestland%20Subcategory%20in%20Vermont's%20Use%20Value%20Appraisal%20Program~1-19-2022.pdf>

\* Significant and sensitive conditions will be defined by the Commissioner of the Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation. Though they aren't finalized, they will generally consist of Ecologically Significant Treatment Areas (ESTAs), steep slopes (>35%), site IV lands, and special places and sensitive sites.

\* Landowners will not be able to submit applications for enrollment of land in this new category until July 1, 2023.

\* Reserve Forestland is not a "do nothing" enrollment option. While the requirements for the category are not finalized, if a property is eligible, restorative management for old forest values and functions will be required under certain but somewhat common conditions [including] invasive plant control and restoration of hydrologic function, or others. Where restorative management for old forest values and functions is not required, passive management will be eligible.

### 4.

**Discussion of activities by subcommittee area:**

\* **Transportation:** Jim asked if the E-Bike Library will be coming to town this summer. David said that there are many more towns doing this now, and it's a bunch of work to organize. Jim suggested we invite people to bring their e-bikes to the July 2 parade and come to the Energy Committee tent to visit and answer questions after. **ACTION ITEM:** David will post on the list-serve an invitation to Strafford folks to bring e-bikes to the parade and come to the Energy and Climate Committee table afterward to answer questions about their experience with these bikes.

\* **Community Solar/renewables:** David reported that the Alger Brook array has 67% commitment. [Update from Doc on 6/18: "We now have an 81.8% commitment on SCS, LLC ! Still waiting on a few deposit checks, but they are from folks wanting to increase the size of their system after committing to the project. This means Catamount Solar will start procuring product for the project and setting up an installation schedule."]

David will bring the sign-up sheet for our July 2 information table. David spoke with Energy Sage about listing this array with them, since people can participate anywhere in the state; if a sign-up comes through Energy Sage, they get a percentage. David is now feeling that community solar is the best option for our community, unless you're doing it yourself (always the least expensive); a tracker now costs \$29–30,000 and takes 15 years to pay off; this community solar investment would pay off in 13 years.

\* **State Legislature:** Susan provided this report: the session is over, and we are headed to primaries in early August, and elections in the fall. Tim Briglin is not running again. There are three democrats in the primary (you get to vote for 2) Dee Gish of Sharon, Rebecca Holcomb of Norwich, and Jim Masland of Thetford.

The Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) has posted an wrap-up piece at:

[https://www.vlct.org/2022-legislative-wrap?utm\\_source=WLR&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=2022+wrapup](https://www.vlct.org/2022-legislative-wrap?utm_source=WLR&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2022+wrapup)

Susan highlighted the following;

**H.518.** The Department of Buildings and General Services: in consultation with Efficiency Vermont, VLCT, regional planning commissions, and experts in the field of thermal enclosure, energy efficiency, and renewable building space systems is directed to design the Municipal Energy Resiliency Program that includes a streamlined application process for a municipality to apply to the Department of Buildings and General Services or with the assistance of a regional planning commission."

\* **WindowDressers:** Jim reported that the Vershire/Corinth/Chelsea community-build will produce some inserts for Strafford's United Church.

\* **Forestry:** Dorian circulated links with forest-related resources. Susan T. has been talking with David Paganelli about the Ashley Forest and debates about management. In Thetford there is strong debate about whether the Treasure Island area should have trails or not. Forestry is going to continue being an important part of our discussions because forests are so connected with ecological health. Yet in our country, including in Vermont, forest trees are considered a commodity; and wildlife policy and practices is to an extreme degree focused on deer, because of the hunting contingent.

## 5. Other updates:

\* Gus Speth will be doing a presentation at the Unitarian Church on June 28.

\* The organization Standing Trees is organizing action to protest logging on Camel's Hump.

**Adjourned: 8:20 pm Next Meeting:** July 12, 2022, 7 pm via ZOOM

Enthusiastically submitted by Jim Schley, Recording Secretary