

Vermont House Natural Resources and Energy Committee

Cover sheet for testimony on H. 367

Re: Changing the requirement for adoption of municipal plans from 5 to 10 years

Submitted by: Phil Dechert, Director of Planning & Zoning, Norwich, VT

Date: March 17, 2015

As Planner and Zoning Administrator in the Town of Norwich (pop. 3414) for 24 years and a member of the Planning Commission in Town of Pomfret (pop. 904) for 26 years, I am both a professional land use planner and a citizen planner.

Based on my experience in both Norwich and Pomfret with the ongoing preparation of new town plans and updating of existing town plans to comply with required plan elements, there is a lack of adequate time for effective and comprehensive implementation of these town plans before they are required to be either updated or replaced. The proposal in H.367 to change town plan expiration date from 5 years to 10 years with the ability to amend the plan in the interim to accommodate changing conditions, and for a 5 year review of the town's implementation progress will greatly improve the effectiveness of the municipal planning process.

Placing a nearly completed zoning document "on the shelf" while a 5 ½ year old town plan is updated by the planning commission, subjected to two or more town hearings, and RPC approval is frustrating for the planning commission and the planner. A 5 year review of the town's implementation progress will instead provide encouragement to the planners to keep the process moving.

Witness documents submitted by Sharon Murray of the Vermont Planners Association and Dana Hanley, Town of Essex Community Development Director, explain in greater detail the issues with current planning cycles and the advantages of the H.367 proposed changes. I fully support both these documents.