

February 27, 2019

From: David Snedeker, Executive Director
Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA)

To: VT Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs

RE: Act 194 Report on Rural Industrial Parks

Hon. Chair Sirotkin, Vice-chair Clarkson, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you very much for your interest in the Act 194 Report on Rural Industrial Parks and allowing our testimony today. Industrial development remains a key part of rural economies in Vermont, providing significant, high-paying employment and strengthening the communities where they reside. When communities desire to cluster businesses and/or land uses of a similar nature through their planning, industrial parks are an important way to meet that need. Providing incentives for businesses to locate in locally designated areas are appropriate be it through permit relief, fee reductions, affordable capital, or other incentives. This is a way to assist communities to meet economic goals and local and state planning goals of keeping development in concentrated centers while preserving open lands for farming, forestry, recreation, and conservation uses.

NVDA, the regional planning and economic development corporation for the Northeast Kingdom region of VT, is the owner of three industrial parks located in Hardwick, Orleans (Barton), and St. Johnsbury-Lyndon. All of the NVDA parks are all partially developed and served by water, sewer, 3-phase power, and road infrastructure where NVDA has made investments to make it easier for businesses to locate in these areas. Despite the investments in providing infrastructure needed for businesses, it remains challenging to attract new business to locate in these parks. Reasons may be: land costs in parks are slightly higher than other areas due to the costs of infrastructure investments; permitting requirements are the same for sites in and out of the park; communities allow for similar uses in other areas outside of the designated industrial park; or, a lack of incentives – local or state.

NVDA supports the recommendations of the Act 194 study committee. The combined master plan permit benefit for existing industrial parks, pre-development cost funding through VEDA, and the reduced permit fees for a master plan permit application would be significant enough for our organization to consider moving forward with additional permitting to hopefully make it easier for business development in our industrial parks.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David Snedeker, Executive Director
Northeastern Vermont Development Association