

Janet Hurley

Comments on the Lamoille County Regional Plan Amendment Preapplication

February 4, 2026

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- **This document does not constitute a Land Use Review Board preapplication response to the Lamoille County Planning Commission preapplication.**
- These comments on the draft Lamoille County Regional Plan amendment preapplication are offered by individual board member Janet Hurley.
- These comments are meant to offer **advisory recommendations** to the LCPC concerning the plan’s format, accessibility, and accuracy.
- These comments are presented in sequential order from a reading of the plan beginning on the title page and proceeding to the last page, Appendix C.
- **These comments do not reflect an assessment of whether the plan complies with statutory standards.**
- **These comments are not reflective of the board’s preapplication response.**
- The board will offer its preliminary assessment of statutory compliance in its forthcoming preapplication response.
- Insofar as the full board may consider and incorporate any of these comments, the board will articulate them separately in the board’s preapplication response.

Advisory Comments Offered by Janet Hurley

On pages 19-27 the plan includes an “implementation table” that might be better presented as numbered or bulleted lists under the different headings. The formatting of the table is irregular with arbitrary breaks in the table as well as within the text. The placement of this table in the introduction is confusing or premature and would be more effective if it were broken up and included within each chapter and then re-collated at the end of the plan narrative. In addition, an implementation matrix could also include how the RPC would accomplish the actions/tasks listed, with what partners, and providing what benefits and to whom. Finally, the timeframe for completing the tasks lacks an identified starting point. Because this plan is being presented as an amendment to the 2023 plan, is the beginning point 2023, and therefore items that have 2-year timeframes already accomplished? This could be clarified.

Also, on pages 40-44, the plan presents action items that seem redundant to the implementation table. Another argument for removing the table from this location in the plan.

On pages 27-28 there is a discussion of the Public Service Board (PSB) and due consideration under Section 248 reviews. This section needs updating. In 2017, the Public Service Board was renamed the Public Utility Commission (PUC). In addition to “due consideration,” regional plans with determinations of energy compliance (i.e., with enhanced energy plans) as determined by the Public Service Department receive “substantial deference” by the PUC in energy facility cases. The subsequent discussion of Act 250 and Section 248 reviews will need updating accordingly.

In the categorized bulleted lists defining substantial regional impact (pp. 29-30), the separate section on Housing is confusing because other housing triggers are included in the land use section. Maybe move the “10 affordable unit demolition” portion to the land use section instead.

One trigger for substantial regional impact is described on page 31: “A development in which off-site mitigation associated with the project, such as the acquisition of development rights or similar vehicles, may directly result in the reduction of the value of property(ies) on the grand list of a municipality other than the host municipality.” How would this reduction in value be determined/calculated before a project is realized?

On pages 32-34 the plan presents its compatibility analysis. The assessment of how growth and development in adjacent regions can affect each other is robust but dated. It could be updated to reflect current planning by adjacent regions – all of which are developing new Act 181-compliant regional FLU maps. Draft FLU maps for neighboring Chittenden and Franklin Counties are viewable on the Board’s map viewer for such an assessment.

Economic development is discussed on pages 35 through 44 in the introduction. Understanding this discussion is introductory to a strategy that is further discussed throughout most other sections of the plan, the discussion on pages 35 through 44 warrants its own chapter in the plan rather than being part of an introduction.

Economic objectives are listed on pages 35 through 37. These would benefit from being formatted as a numbered list. Economic policies and actions are listed from page 40 to 44 and numbered by policy. Maybe the objectives could be folded into this policy list? Furthermore, these action items should be worked into the implementation matrix described above. The master implementation matrix could include a column that identifies

a particular action as relevant to more than one policy area and appropriate cross references can be highlighted.

Page 53 presents Vermont population density by county for 2010 and 2020. However, there is a confusing note on page 52 suggesting the 2020 data is derived from estimates rather than the 2020 Census. In addition, this table, like the implementation table, is broken in the middle as though it is two separate tables when it is described in the narrative as a singular data set. Furthermore, the density cells lack unit references. Although, the units can be inferred from the data provided in other cells, it should be indicated that the units are people per square mile.

On page 54, the narrative should indicate the 2020 Census as the source of the most recent population data. Throughout this section on demographics there is a lack of explicit reference to data years or time intervals. For example, saying “before 2010” instead of “from 1980 – 2010” or saying “over the past decade” instead of “from 2010 to 2020.” The section also refers to the “ACS” without explaining what the American Community Survey is.

Another broken table on page 55. This is a problem for accessibility to the blind and visually impaired using screen readers. Also, the formatting of the x-axis on the population chart is problematic. It looks like the label for the 60-64 yr bar is misplaced. The map on page 56 does not have a title and should be referenced in the narrative on page 54. **In general, the tables, figures and maps should be reformatted to be more accessible, including with the use of “alt text” so that screen readers can interpret them.**

On page 57, the use of the term “ethnic groups” should be replaced by “racial and ethnic diversity.” The ethnic population has not grown per se. What has grown is the diversity of the population. The term “ethnic” refers to groups that share culture and heritage. It could refer to white Vermonters as much as Hispanic Vermonters. Referring to people who are nonwhite as “ethnic” is culturally insensitive.

The x-axis for the town population charts on pages 58-63 would benefit from reformatting. None of the charts have a y-axis label, which should be “Number of Persons” or something equivalent. The y-axis for the Morristown chart should label only every 100, rather than every 50. It is too crowded. The bars for some of the younger age groups are problematic (fused) on the Stowe and Waterville charts.

The “Education” heading on page 63 should be changed to “College Educated” since discussion in that section is limited to college education.

Figures 2-17 and 2-18 on pages 65 and 66 are problematic. Presumably, the largest bar refers to the white non-Hispanic population, but it is not labeled. The charts should be reconceived to show just the minority populations. When they are shown with the predominant demographic on the same graph, one cannot interpret the relative sizes of the minority populations.

Page 68, wages by industry. Paragraph at top should be footnoted rather than formatted as if part of the plan narrative.

Page 69 Homestead Education Tax Rate by Town should be graphed in a chart and discussed in the plan narrative. There is no reference to or discussion of these different tax rates in the narrative.

On pages 71 and 73 the term “missing middle” is used without a description of what is meant by it.

On pages 72-73 Act 47 is referenced. Act 181 deserves similar reference here.

The chart on page 78 does not have adequate labeling. It could be inferred that these are total number of short-term rental units in each county but it is not explicitly clear. Furthermore, the date of the data is not indicated. The presentation might benefit from indicating what percentage of total housing units these STR numbers represent for each county.

The information presented on Page 79 could be part of the demographics chapter instead. Same with the information on pages 81 to 83 on household characteristics.

Second paragraph on page 85: confusing data presented as “seasonal housing stock” and “seasonal population.” Clarify.

Table 3-4 on page 88 is titled “Total Number of Dwelling Units in Lamoille County, 2010-2022.” Actually, the table shows the change in total dwelling units year by year for those years.

On page 92 there is a quote from a VTDigger article attributed to Windham and Windsor Housing Trust. The plan should reference the statewide housing needs assessment instead here, or at least provide more context to how adding this particular number of homes would address the affordability crisis. Also, in the third paragraph on this page, why report those spending over 35% instead of 30% of income on housing costs?

On Figure 3-8 on page 94 it is not clear what the greater than and less than 6 distinction is about. Number of bedrooms? Number of acres? Number of household members? Needs to be clarified.

Table on page 105: the table is not titled and it has formatting issues similar to those described for previous tables and charts.

There is undated reference to ARPA funding to pursue services for unhoused residents of the region, but it is not clear if there was any success or advancement on such goals. ARPA funding is likely unavailable for new programs now. On page 106 the plan reads: “As of the writing of this plan ...” but because this is an amended update to an existing plan, it is not clear when the writing of this plan is. The plan should be revised to clarify these kinds of time references.

On page 111, update the references to what is now called the Community Investment Program and relate the Act 250 exemptions to the FLU areas: downtown and village centers (designated centers) and planned growth and village areas (designated neighborhoods).

Formatting of Table 3-13 on pp. 127-128 is problematic. **The plan would benefit from a complete review and revision of all tables, charts, graphs to be more accessible to all readers/users (beyond addressing ADA standards).**

On page 168, second paragraph: Transportation energy burdens are discussed but it is not clear what the percentages reflect. Are they percent of total annual household costs?

Some of the ensuing discussion gets into topics already discussed in the transportation section of the plan. Given the length of this plan (over 500 pages), cross-referencing rather than repeating this content is advisable.

On page 174, a figure for county energy usage is provided in the first sentence but without referencing the relevant time period. One can read on and deduce that it is an annual measure. Nonetheless, the first sentence should include indication of the annual time period.

Page 184 table titled “Commercial Wood Energy Demand” – what are these percentages referencing? Number of establishments using wood relative to total number of commercial establishments?

The next two tables are presented without an explanation of what megawatt hours are (MWH/MWh). None of these target tables on pages 183 to 185 are numbered, whereas other tables are numbered sequentially by section number (i.e., 3-XX).

Pp 185-186 on Grid Limitations: limit the discussion to what the grid limitations are (that is, just the narrative on page 185). The rest of the narrative is included elsewhere in the plan and can be cross-referenced without repeating it in the energy section.

The grid limitations discussion is given a subheading. The next challenge discussed is identified with a subheading as weatherization. However, there is no subheading to identify the next challenges discussed. This leads to confusion. The next subsection should include a subheading: EV Uptake in Lamoille County.

This paragraph on EV uptake is followed by another paragraph on grid limitations. These paragraphs on grid load should be combined with the Grid Limitations paragraphs, moving the previous paragraphs to this later section.

Figure 3-17 needs more explanation. Only the plot for EV uptake is discussed in the narrative and the other plots are not explained. What are HP, PV, Net and Base? HP is likely heat pumps and PV is likely photovoltaics, but this should be explained.

On page 189, perhaps a new subheading should be provided: Integrated Resource Plans.

On page 196 a table is presented as Table 3-17, but there is already a Table 3-17. This table on page 196 needs to be renumbered accordingly.

On page 197 the issue of grid capacity is taken up again. Given the length of this plan, the three separate discussions on grid limitations and capacity could be consolidated into one section of the narrative.

On page 198, the narrative includes a link to the VELCO 2024 LRTP, but this is a link to a draft of the plan that includes a survey for public input. This link should be updated to the finalized plan: [101252_Velco_CC24_singles.pdf](#)

Page 207 – Eden bullet split into two. Fix this.

Also on page 207, there is an explanation of “secondary” and “prime” areas for the wind and solar resource maps. This was already explained on previous pages – page 200 for solar and 201 for wind. Given the length of this plan, consolidate this explanation within the narrative.

Page 208 references Act 171 without explaining what Act 171 is. One can glean from topic of the discussion that it is about forest blocks and habitat connectors, but it warrants explanation, nonetheless.

Could the regional constraints map (p. 211) information be included on the solar (p. 213) and wind (p. 212) maps as overlay? This would consolidate information onto just two maps as opposed to three.

On page 219 the LCPC commits to assisting municipal governments to implement best practices in maintaining websites, including ADA standards. Given the ADA inaccessibility of this draft regional plan, the LCPC needs to develop internal skills in this arena before it can make good on this promise.

Page 221 refers to the “Public Service Board.” Conduct a find and replace of “Public Service Board” to “Public Utility Commission.” Likewise “PSD” to “PUC.”

On page 222 the term “PEG” channel is used without explanation. Spell it out for first time use: Public, Education and Government access channel.

Page 223: explain Mbps and Gbps.

Discussion of wifi hotspots on page 224 seems dated. Update or provide date reference for the information.

On page 226, how the paragraph on high value-added professionals is relevant to communications is not explained. Lacks a sentence explaining the 21st Century communications needs of these professions.

On page 231 an explanation of the plan’s use of “Center Areas” is given twice in succession. It is repeated again on pages 233-234. Consolidate this explanation to shorten the narrative.

The first paragraph on page 233 includes a link to the LCPC webpage that describes the development and timeline for the draft regional plan amendment under consideration. On this webpage there is no town-level breakdown of the FLU map as promised in the narrative on page 233.

Page 234-235 indicates the intersection of Rt 109 and 118 is depicted as a hamlet. This is not reflected on the digital map data submitted (i.e., no hamlet appears here, although the referenced transition/infill area is shown). Also, there is a portion of this

transition/infill area that falls within the flood overlay. This deserves explanation since these areas are put forth for housing growth to avoid flood hazards.

The land use section makes references to the LURB as the body making decisions on Act 250 applications for new development (see strip development discussion on page 238 for example, or the discussion of agricultural soils mitigation for new development subject to Act 250 on pages 233 and 235). These discussions should be carefully worded to reflect that the LURB is responsible for general Act 250 program policy and administration but that the district environmental commission (District 5 Environmental Commission in Lamoille County) is responsible for the initial permit review and decision for the proposed new jurisdictional development. The discussion on page 233 does the better job of making these distinctions clear. Another discussion on page 324 makes these distinctions clear (except that “District Commission” is not explained). Suggested fixes: On page 238, replace “by the LURB” with “under Act 250.” On page 235, replace “LURB” with “Act 250 program.” On page 233, replace “Land Use Review Board (LURB)” with “Act 250 program administered by the Land Use Review Board (LURB) and District Environmental Commissions.” On page 246, replace “Land Use Review Board” with “District Environmental Commission” or “Act 250 permit review.” On page 324 explain what the “District Commission” is.

Page 241 Transportation subsection: replace “working lands” with “conservation lands” to clarify the discussion is about the Rural Conservation FLU category.

Page 243. Action items. Present these as actions that LCPC will take rather than as policy statements. For example, the fourth and sixth bullets are policy statements, not action items. Others in the list are also not worded to be action items. This comment is relevant to various other sections within the plan that list actions. Also, some bullets contain more than one action item or policy statement. In these cases, they should be separately bulleted.

Pages 253-254 spell out gpd and MGD upon first use.

Statutory definition of “strip development” is provided on page 264. It was also provided on page 238. Given the length of this plan, consolidate and just provide once.

The Village and Downtown Designations section on page 266 should be updated to reflect the new Community Investment Board and program. The next page explains this transition. Consolidate the narrative to explain this change.

The statutory description included on page 267 should be clarified as the description for both downtown centers and village centers per 24 VSA 4348a(12)(A).

Page 267 refers to the “2025” plan amendment. This should be changed to refer to the “2026” plan amendment.

Page 267 lists some village centers, but there are others depicted on the FLU map. The narrative should refer to the other village centers shown on the map too.

Also pages 266-269 should be revised to reflect that there is no longer a distinction between the downtown and village center designations. Rather, there is now a 3-step program administered by the CIB that will differentiate types of designated centers. This section on village centers and downtown designation needs to be updated to reflect the new program parameters. Centers will be designated upon approval of the plan by the LURB regardless of whether they are village centers or downtown centers. It may likely be that downtown centers will be the only centers that attain step 3 status. The revisions could point out that legacy designations remain in effect until the new plan is approved by the LURB. So, some explanation of the legacy program is still relevant.

Eliminate the NDA paragraphs on page 269 since there are no NDAs in the county and the program will be replaced by the new neighborhood designation for planned growth areas and village areas depicted on the FLU map. Same for the Growth Center section that follows on pages 270-272.

On page 282 there is another link to what is described as a breakdown of the regional FLU map at the town level. However, as before on page 233, this link takes one to a webpage describing the process for developing this draft regional plan amendment. Fix this link.

On page 320, agricultural product values are reported, but no indication of the timeframe of these figures is given. Presumably it is an annual figure from 2017 as reflected in Figure 4-2, but this is not clear.

Page 322 reports the most recent farm census as from 2017. This is no longer true. The narrative should be revised to refer to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, or should be updated to reflect the 2022 Census of Agriculture. On the next page this census is referred to as the 2017 USDA Census. Use consistent terminology to refer to this census.

On page 326 there is a paragraph on old growth forests, but there is no indication as to whether or to what degree they exist in Lamoille County. Revise to provide this context.

Also, on page 326 Lamoille County is identified as the second highest contributor of hardwood harvest in the state in 2019. This is not accurate. A review of the 2019 FPR harvest report indicates that Lamoille County is second to last of Vermont counties in hardwood harvest, with only Franklin County producing less. According to FPR's 2022 report, Lamoille County was 8th of Vermont's 11 counties in hardwood harvest. This paragraph should be revised to accurately reflect the data and it should reference the data source.

There is a reference to the "most recent recession" on page 327. This probably refers to the 2007-2009 recession although there was a short recession associated with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Clarify which recession is referred to here.

The key within Figure 4-5 on page 329 reads: "Lamoille County – Maple Sugar Taps 2017" and "Lamoille County – Maple Sugar Taps 2012." The "Lamoille County" references should be removed, as all Vermont counties are plotted on the graph.

On page 333 there is a link provided to a BEA report. This link leads to new 2023 data that show Vermont is now second for outdoor recreation economic contribution to state GDP. Update the narrative to reflect this. (Narrative reports 4th place presumably based on a previous BEA report.)

Consider revising the core habitat map on page 335 with the Lamoille County boundary outlined. Also, consider including a key within the figure rather than just explaining the map within the narrative on pages 335 and 336. Make all figures, tables, and maps accessible with Alt-Text and address these kinds of omissions.

The table of threatened species (Table 4-2) on page 338 needs more explanation. Also, on page 339 the reference to table 4-3 in the text should be relocated to the previous paragraph after the sentence declaring that Lamoille County hosts five fragile areas.

The water recreation section from page 358 to 360 should be relocated to the recreation chapter.

On page 368 spell out first use of Mgal/d.

The weblink on page 372 leads to a general Watershed Management Division page on DEC's website, not the specific "Assessment of the Condition of Vermont Waters" webpage as promised. Fix this link.

Page 372 includes an incomplete sentence at the end of the second “Stormwater” paragraph.

Last paragraph beginning on page 372 and continuing on page 373: The last sentence says that DEC must adopt a new rule for 3-acre sites, but the first sentence says DEC adopted a new rule in 2019. Explain or revise.

Add to action items on page 376: Educate municipalities and private property owners about the importance and benefits of protecting floodplain areas, river corridors, riparian areas, wetlands, and upland forest cover from development or other damage. The draft plan includes good explanations and strategies for protection of these resources (e.g., on pages 382, 385, 386, 388-391), but at near 500 pages, the LCPC cannot rely on this plan as a means of educating municipal officials and the public.

Action items on page 377: “Flood hazard mapping (Flood Insurance Rate Maps) should be updated.” How is LCPC going to work to get updated mapping?

The last policy statement on page 380 is listed as “Policy 8” and reference is made to “Policy 2 and 3” but the other policy statements are not numbered. Number the policy statements on pages 376 through 380. Make sure all of these Policy and Actions sections are formatted consistently for ease of use.

On page 387 in Table 4-7 presentation of data for the July 23 disaster is cumbersome. Maybe indicate that the county data is unavailable in a footnote instead of within the table.

Update and make the Act 121 link at the bottom of page 391 active: [The Flood Safety Act | Flood Ready](#).

A link to the LCPC website is provided on page 392 to access the region’s River Corridor Plans, but the linked webpage does not provide access to the promised plans. Update the link to this: [River Corridor Plans - Lamoille County Planning Commission](#)

The structures map referred to does not show the 4 different categories that are presented in the narrative on page 392. Rather the map shows structures within the SFHA in red and those presumably outside the SFHA but in the river corridor as blue. If the narrative refers to these 4 different categories, list the numbers of structures that fall within each category.

Furthermore, page 396 indicates how many of the total structures in the county fall in the SFHA. The plan should provide the number of structures that fall outside the SFHA but within the river corridors in the county because the narrative then says that most flood

related damage occurs to structures that fall outside the SFHA but within the river corridors.

It is interesting that Waterville does not participate in the NFIP because of perceived low risk. Has Waterville escaped damage from recent flooding events?

Numbered paragraph 1 on page 398 is missing the word “Rights” after “Transfer of Development” and before the TDR acronym.

On page 399, spell out first use of AAFM.

The DEC watershed management link on page 405 does not lead to a webpage (just get an error message). Update this link.

Update link on page 407: [Green Infrastructure | Department of Environmental Conservation](#)

On page 414, an action item under the “Ensure an efficient, coordinated regional response network exists during emergencies.” policy statement reads: “LCPC staff are an integral part of the Incident Command Team ... and state wide capability.” This “action” seems more relevant to the policy at the bottom of the page: “LCPC will provide staffing and assistance to ... in the wake of regional or statewide emergencies.”

General comment: Look for redundancies between these lists of policies and actions throughout the plan and consolidate where possible. A master implementation matrix could provide such accommodation with a column that indicates actions fulfilling multiple policies or strategies.

Given the length of this plan, consider removing much of the detail about individual emergency response and rescue organizations and operations throughout the county (pp. 420-425) and refer to local hazard mitigation plans and emergency management plans instead. Focus on the areas that address LCPC policy and actions like the one on page 425 about dry hydrants.

Page 433; Support efforts to create and expand access to mental health and substance prevention,....” Add the word “misuse” after “substance.”

The health equity toolkit link on page 437 leads to “file not found” and needs to be updated.

No need to include the last sentence and link on page 437 because there is a separate subsection on Vermont 211 on the next page. Given the length of this plan, remove the reference to the program on page 437.

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The United Way Of Lamoille County link on page 438 needs to be updated to: [Lamoille County Resources : Community Resources : United Way of Lamoille County](#)

Could not find information on the Lamoille County Collaborative on the Lamoille Health Partners website. Rework the relevant narrative and link on pages 438-439.

Page 439 – replace “municipalities” with “municipality’s” in last sentence of Youth Wellness paragraph.

Spell out GMTCC on page 441.

Both links on page 443 lead to the same webpage. Omit one of them from the narrative.

Page 444 includes this sentence: “The current estimate for a family of four is \$226 a week.” Presumably this refers to the weekly cost for food for such a family. Clarify – just add “food costs” before the word “estimate.” Also, provide the year that this estimate was made.

The link on page 446 leads to a general webpage for Healthy Lamoille Valley rather than the webpage devoted to resources for retailers as promised. Update the link to: [Strategies and Tips for Retailers | Healthy Lamoille Valley](#)

General Comment: There are several sections within the narrative of the plan that include lists of local organizations, establishments or programs that are present in the region. Consider making these bulleted lists outside of the plan narrative so that users can opt not to read these lists that don’t advance the policy narrative. Examples: childcare programs page 440, lists of schools pages 454-456 and 460-463.

Table 5-4 showing enrollment trends is relevant to education policy and should be discussed within the narrative flow of the plan.

On page 455, it is commendable to commit to this role: “Ensuring the systems, partnerships, and support networks are in place for a coordinated and appropriate education system across the county is one of the roles of LCPC.” However, the ensuing narrative does not indicate where and how the LCPC inserts itself into the various educational programs and institutions identified in the region. Consider reworking the narrative to indicate what the LCPC’s roles and actions will be in this arena.

Page 458 states: “Each Vermont town is a school district with a governing school board.” This is no longer the case and has not been the case for several years after consolidations in response to Act 46 of 2015. This paragraph should be updated. Reference is made to act

46 two pages later. This information can be consolidated into the previous paragraph on page 458.

The DEC link on page 468 does not lead to information on composting. Replace it with this updated link: [State Law Bans Food Scraps from the Trash | Department of Environmental Conservation](#).

The Farm to Plate link on page 470 needs updated along with the narrative reference to it. Is this the correct updated URL? [Vermont Agriculture & Food System Plan 2021-2030 | VT Farm to Plate](#)

Appendix A is unnecessary to include as an appendix. The draft Regional Plan Checklist is a required separate submission for a preapplication and the final checklist will be a required separate submission for an adopted plan application. Including it as an appendix encumbers the PDF unnecessarily slowing its loading or processing for users/readers of the plan.

Appendix C consists of a single table that would be better incorporated within the Energy Plan portion of the narrative. That is, it is too limited in scope to warrant an appendix of its own.

In general, the plan is too encumbered with maps and length to load efficiently. Consider reformatting to address this after consultation with a document design professional.