

**NVDA Town Plan Review Committee Hearing Minutes  
Regional Approval of UTG and Guildhall Town Plans  
February 17, 2015 5 PM  
The Guild Hall, Guildhall, Vermont**

From Town Plan Review Committee: Kim Fried, Newark; Sten Lium, Concord; Mike Metcalf, Greensboro

NVDA Staff: Irene Nagle

Representing UTG: Craig Nolan and Barbara Nolan, Board of Governors and Planning Commission

Representing Guildhall: Patricia Rogers, Zoning Administrator; and Dennis Bacon and Eileen Thietten, Planning Commission

Also in attendance, George Blakeslee, resident of Guildhall.

Prior to the opening of the hearing, the committee voted to have Kim Fried act as Chair. The hearing opened at 5:12 p.m.

Irene Nagle explained the purpose of regional approval of local plans as per 24 V.S.A. §4350. She mentioned that both Plans contained all the required elements and were consistent with the State planning goals.

**First was the review of the UTG Town Plan.**

Craig Nolan spoke on behalf of the UTG. He noted that the natural resources section of the plan was updated with the assistance of Jens Hilke of the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife. Section 9 of the plan “energy” was also updated to take a firm position on industrial-scale wind, and a new section on flood resilience (Section 10) was added. Craig explained that a non-binding vote was held in January 2014 to determine the community’s stance on industrial-scale wind. Both year-round residents and seasonal residents were included in the vote. A majority were opposed to industrial wind, and the UTG wanted this to be reflected in the Town Plan, and to note support of the NVDA’s recommended moratorium on industrial wind development in the Northeast Kingdom. Section 10, “flood resilience” was added with the assistance of NVDA staff and provided the basis for updates to the UTG flood hazard regulations.

Kim Fried noted that the UTG Plan was very well-written. He mentioned that his town of Newark had hired a consulting ecologist to undertake a natural resources inventory in the town, with the assistance of a Municipal Planning Grant. He noted that in many cases the State is unaware of the extent of resources within a town, and a high level of detail is useful when development projects are being reviewed under Act 250 and by the Public Service Board.

Mike Metcalf also stated that the UTG plan was well-written. He asked whether the UTG posts roads in mud-season, and Craig said they do. Craig noted that much of the land area in the UTG is controlled by the State or federal government, through ownership or easements on timber company land. The only large parcel that was not encumbered by an easement had been proposed for industrial wind. Mike Metcalf noted that second home owners were an important and involved constituency. Craig noted that part-time residents also take an active roles in local government. Sten noted that like the UTG, large areas of Concord are also covered by conservation easements, and the Town’s role in shaping development is limited. Craig noted that those limited areas in the UTG that are not encumbered by easements face increased development pressure.

Mike Metcalf moved to recommend approval of the UTG Plan, and Sten Lium seconded the motion. All voted in favor of recommending approval and the motion was passed.

### **Next on the agenda was the Town of Guildhall**

Pat Rogers spoke on behalf of Guildhall. She explained that the Town wanted to update the Plan in order to be able to update the bylaws. She noted that among the sections updated was that on education. Grade 6 and up are now tuitioned to area schools. She noted that Guildhall is becoming more of a retirement community. There is only one dairy farm left, there is no longer a general store. The Town has smaller “hobby” farms now.

Kim Fried mentioned that the Alternative Energy and Forestry Conservation Lands may direct wind and alternative energy developments to this district. There was a discussion of small scale versus industrial-scale wind.

Pat Rogers noted that much land in Guildhall is enrolled in “current use.” She noted that if a property is proposed to be acquired by the Land Trust, the Town is notified. She said that one of the reasons that Guildhall was seeking regional approval was to strengthen its grant application status. The municipal building needs a new roof and other structural work.

Pat Rogers mentioned that the town contracts with Lancaster for EMS services, and most children attend school in Lancaster or Groveton for school after the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. A discussion of school choice ensued. Guildhall lets parents decide where to send their children to school.

Sten mentioned the strong focus on historic resources in the Plan, noting the high level of detail. Pat Rogers said the Church had undergone restoration work in the late 1990s.

Kim Fried made a motion to recommend the Guildhall Town Plan for regional approval, which was seconded by Sten Lium. All voted in favor and the motion was passed.

A motion to adjourn the hearing was passed and the hearing was adjourned at about 6:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Irene Nagle