

Vermont Planners Association (VPA) Legislative Report – January 17, 2023

Senate Bills

Reported by Kati Gallagher and Kerry Brosnan

S.1 - Act 250 jurisdiction over aircraft hangars - Exempts state-owned aircraft hangars from Act 250.

S.5 - Clean Heat Standard - Would establish the Clean Heat Standard to reduce Vermont's greenhouse gas emissions from the thermal sector through a tradeable credit system. One of the key climate action bills this session.

House Bills

Reported by Alex Weinhagen and Kerry Brosnan

H.2 – Act 250 aircraft hangar exemption – This bill proposes exempt from Act 250 review the construction of aircraft hangars up to 120'x120' at State-owned airports.

H.5 – Planning study and future land use maps – This bill would charge VAPDA with reporting on ways to improve coordination between municipal, regional, statewide planning. Requires a report with recommendations by December 2023 on a laundry list of topics: aligning planning policies (municipal, regional, state); advancing energy plans; improving and implementing future land use maps; aligning State investments and policy with local and regional plans; use of future land use maps in Act 250 and Section 248 review.

H.6 – Act 250 stream and elevation jurisdiction – This bill would increase Act 250 jurisdiction: within 100 feet of streams above 1500 feet; any subdivision above 2000 feet.

H.15 – Golf course green space & park protection – This bill would designate golf courses as protected green space with limited development. Allocates funds to purchase and convert golf courses to State Parks.

H.16 – Rail service expansion study – This bill charges VTrans with studying expansion of passenger and freight rail service in Vermont and the region.

H.29 – River Corridors, State jurisdiction – This bill would require a State permit for all development in river corridors by 2025, with an allowance for municipal delegation.

H.30 – Wetlands, net gain policy/permitting – This bill would update State wetland policy & permitting to require a net gain in wetlands when wetland permits are issued. Also requires updating/improvement of State wetland mapping.

H.31 – Aquatic nuisance control moratorium and study – This bill would place a one-year moratorium on the use of pesticides to control aquatic nuisances (e.g. milfoil) to allow for study of alternatives.

H.36 – Forest block planning exemption – This bill would exempt small municipalities from the existing requirement to address forest blocks and habitat connectors in municipal plans.

H.42 - Public meetings, extending flexibility – This bill would extend covid-era public meeting allowances until July 1, 2024 – e.g., annual meeting scheduling, remote participation, fully remote public meetings, etc.

Updates on planning bills

Housing Bill – Bongartz & Ram Hinsdale – Representative Bongartz and Senator Ram Hinsdale have been working on a bill to increase housing supply. The version we've seen includes limited municipal permitting reform and pre-emption of some zoning practices and development review. VPA's Legislative Committee is working on providing feedback on this. We anticipate this bill will be blended with other more general housing provisions as part of a larger housing omnibus bill to be introduced by Senator Ram Hinsdale in the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs. Stay tuned. More information once the bill is introduced or taken up in committee.

Online Resources: [Bill, Act and Resolution search page](#), past [VPA Legislative Reports](#), upcoming [House / Senate Committee Meetings](#), and the weekly [VLCT legislative report](#).