

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

NVDA Office | Zoom | January 22, 2026, 6:00 PM

Those attending:

Committee

Fred Saar
Cynthia Stuart
Michael Metcalf [Z]
Farley Brown [Z]

Michael Strait [Z]
Mark Whitworth
Paul Brouha

Staff

David Snedeker, Executive Director
Jennifer Burchel, Office Manager
Cathlin Driscoll, Town Planner
Liam Abbate, Town Planner [Z]

Guests

Ron Smith [Z]

The Meeting was called to order by Cynthia Stuart at 6:00 PM.

Updates to Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda as written was made by Fred Saar and seconded by Paul Brouha. The motion was approved unanimously on a voice vote.

Public Comments

None

Minutes

A motion to accept the minutes of the September 25, 2025 meeting as presented was made by Fred Saar and seconded by Mike Strait. The motion was approved unanimously on a voice vote.

Bylaws Changes Review

The organization bylaws require additional review and updates beyond previous work. NVDA staff will work on refining the bylaws with input from the Executive Committee before presenting them for review by the Full Board at the June meeting.

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The regional planning and development commission serving The Northeast Kingdom: Caledonia, Essex and Orleans Counties
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Executive Committee Meeting Schedule Update

The committee approved the following adjustments to their meeting schedule due to potential conflicts:

April Executive Committee Meeting: Rescheduled from school vacation week to April 16th at 5:00 PM.

May Executive Committee Meeting: Rescheduled from Thursday before Memorial Day to May 14th at 5:00 PM.

Meeting times were changed from 6:00 PM to 5:00 PM, with earlier times considered but not possible due to work conflicts.

March 26th Full Board Meeting: To be held at the Do North facility with a mixer.

Approval FY2025 Audit

Ron Smith of RHR Smith and Company presented an overview of the audit report results for FY2025. NVDA received an unmodified audit opinion, the highest possible, indicating financial soundness and compliance with federal requirements. No fraud, defalcation or disagreements with management were found. Financial equity had increased by approximately \$200,000 and reserves were solid with approximately \$800,000 set aside for regional development. A motion by Paul Brouha, seconded by Fred Saar, to approve the FY2025 Audit Report, carried unanimously on a voice vote.

Financials

The November 2025 Unaudited Financial Statements were presented. A motion to approve the financials subject to audit was made by Fred Saar and seconded by Paul Brouha. The motion was approved unanimously on a voice vote.

FLU Mapping Update

A memo containing clarifications on NVDA's regional Future Land Use maps was presented to the Executive Committee for review and discussion. A concern was raised regarding certain parcels of agricultural land appearing to be incorrectly labeled. NVDA staff explained that there were minor methodology differences between regions due to the varied landscape across Vermont, but that all rural areas were in Tier 2, meaning they were interchangeable and not intended to encourage or oppose development. An ensuing question opened discussion about classification of conserved lands. Staff further explained that the FLU map database included both publicly and privately owned lands designated for rural conservation, but that many landowners preferred being classified as Rural General due to perceived fewer restrictions. The importance of consistency across the regional plan regardless of specific classification was emphasized. Another concern was raised about using FLU maps to satisfy Act 59, but it was noted that legislature has not required this. Following acknowledgment and appreciation to the staff for the hundreds of hours of work they put into the FLU maps, it was agreed that the NVDA staff would internally review the methodology and how it was applied, conduct an internal review of Sutton's mapping, and spot-check other towns. Staff would also consult with other RPCs to see how they applied the FLU methodology, and how local zoning and conservation easements were incorporated. This would be reported back to the Executive Committee. NVDA staff intend to submit the regional plan and the FLU map to LURB in April.

True Temper Site Update

The Full Board previously authorized NVDA to move forward with the purchase of an 8-acre Brownfields site that has been vacant for 30 years in St. Johnsbury's downtown area for redevelopment, with conditions to keep NVDA safe from environmental liability and additional expense. To date, NVDA was accepted into the state's BRELLA program (a liability limitation program for Brownfields), completed a Phase 1 update to protect the organization from federal CERCLA liabilities, and prepared an EPA cleanup application due on January 28th. A Purchase and Sale Agreement was signed with the closing expected on January 26th. Should NVDA take ownership and not receive the EPA grant, there's an "unwind" provision where the property goes back to the current owner. The Town of St. Johnsbury and the housing developer have covered all transaction costs except the EPA application, which was paid with regular NVDA funds, while title insurance and liability insurance quotes are still being finalized. After cleanup, the property will be transferred to a housing developer and NVDA will recoup funds at the final sale.

Do North Update

NVDA is moving toward assuming management of the entire Do North Co-working facility from Vermont State University with a lease transfer planned for March 1st. The existing manager will leave the college and become an NVDA employee. NVDA has access to EDA grant funds to cover management and operations for 2 years after which the facility should be self-sustaining through revenue or NVDA can exit the project. The lease assignment agreement from the landlord was reviewed and approved and the primary remaining task is to transfer utilities. The auditor was consulted and advised that Do North funds remain separate from NVDA. Weekly meetings are ongoing to discuss the project.

Director's Report

Dave Snedeker presented an overview of his report to the Executive Committee. The report is attached to these minutes as an addendum.

Other Business

None

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:04 PM with a motion by Fred Saar and seconded by Paul Brouha. All were in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Burchell, Office Manager
Northeastern Vermont Development Association

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January 21, 2026 | MEMO



TO: NVDA Executive Committee

From: David Snedeker, Alison Low, Liam Abbate, Cathlin Driscoll, NVDA

Re: Clarifications on NVDA's regional future land use maps

We think it's important to understand that the primary intent of the Future Land Use map is to **identify Tier 1 and Tier 2 lands**. The Future Land Use map identifies downtown centers, village centers, planned growth areas, and village areas (also known as pink areas) that may be eligible for Tier 1 status under Act 250, as well as benefits from the State designations program. Any lands on this map not identified as Tier 1 fall under the Tier 2 classification, which is essentially "status quo" under Act 250, with the addition of the "Road Rule". This map does not identify additional restrictions beyond the Road Rule. For example, this map does not determine Tier 3 status, nor do the regional planning commissions participate in the Tier 3 rulemaking.

According to statute, there are three classifications of "Rural": Rural General, Rural Agriculture and Forestry, and Rural Conservation. On NVDA's future land use map, all three classifications fall under Tier 2. Although Rural Agriculture and Forestry is our predominant land use, covering 56.25% of the region, *whether a landowner falls into any three of these classifications neither restricts nor expands what they can do with their land*. None of these classifications imply a restriction on or a promotion of residential development. Whether a property can accommodate residential development depends on what the local zoning bylaws allow, or the presence of natural resource constraints that already fall under state regulation, such as wetlands and river corridors.

In our outreach to communities, a common request we have received is to move a property out of one Rural classification into another. It's almost always a request to move a property from Rural Agriculture and Forestry or Rural Conservation into Rural General, ostensibly because the two former classifications are perceived to be more restrictive of residential development. They are not. Whether or how a property can be developed will be determined by the municipality's zoning or the presence of existing physical constraints. We have not been able to honor such requests for re-classification – whether they are based on personal preferences or fears of what the legislature might do in the future – primarily because we are obligated to follow statutory guidance and map every property owner and every municipality in a consistent manner.

Based on our conversations with Paul Brouha, on Jan 16th, NVDA planners changed the description of rural general on the interactive FLU map from “largely rural residential” to “areas that are rural residential, isolated businesses, and any other rural lands that do not fit into any of the other land use categories”. We feel that this description is apt because it aligns with how we mapped rural general lands, as described below.

While it is true that a municipality’s zoning informed the Future Land Use map, it was only in a limited sense. When mapping the pink areas, we reviewed zoning districts to identify areas that allowed densities and a mix of uses. In the case of the Rural classifications, however, zoning was not particularly helpful. We opted to not include all of Sutton’s working lands overlay nor all Peacham’s agricultural overlay in the rural ag/forestry category. Rather, we based the mapping of rural ag/forestry vs rural general predominantly on the existing land use patterns. Nevertheless, whatever the Rural Classification, there is no inherent restriction or loosening of restrictions.

NVDA planners have asked towns to identify land used for agricultural purposes that were not captured in our method of identifying farmland (land both categorized as farms in tax/parcel data AND enrolled in current use). It is hard to identify agricultural fields from other fields (large lawns) from satellite imagery, so when in doubt about whether a field is cultivated, we mapped it as rural general, assuming it is not in a highest priority habitat block (we did not map highest priority habitat block as rural general. Rather, they are all mapped as rural conservation or rural ag/forestry). Statute obligates NVDA to map the future land use patterns of our 50 towns consistently.

We have not mapped conservation easements as a specific rural category. We have excluded conservation easements from the pink areas. Rural conservation is intended primarily to include lands with natural development constraints – wetlands, mountains, floodplains, etc. – rather than human development constraints such as easements. Regardless, none of our mapping included adding all conservation easements as rural conservation, particularly because we want to show the underlying use of the land that the easement is supposed to protect. Many easements exist to ensure ongoing working lands uses, so those are included in the Rural Agriculture and Forestry classification. Most conservation easements are to protect agricultural or forestry uses, so they belong in rural ag/forestry. However, there are also some conservation easements that have been mapped as rural general if it does not appear to be 20+ acres of agriculture.

Our mapping of the Northeast Kingdom has been based on a consensus that NVDA’s planners reached on how to interpret VT Association of Planning and Development

Agencies' (VAPDA) future land use (FLU) mapping methodology to suit our region. While the VAPDA methodology is an advisory only methodology, it still is a methodology NVDA is obligated to follow, as the Land Use Review Board (LURB) will be looking at our FLU map through the lens of the VAPDA methodology.

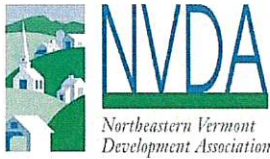
We have met internally every week since early January 2025, and those discussions have determined how we have arrived at many of the decisions that we have outlined in this memo. Additionally, NVDA planners have attended ongoing meetings with other regional planning commissions (RPCs) across Vermont. A number of these meetings have also included Land Use Review Board (LURB) chair Janet Hurley, who helped RPC planners understand how the LURB is approaching the regional plan approval process.

Finally, there is a concern that we need to get this map right "the first time." The only land use classifications of consequence are the pink areas. There is no consequence to being mapped as rural general vs. rural ag/forestry vs. rural conservation. FLU Map amendments will be for changes of more than 10 acres of land. However, these amendments will not change the fact that all rural lands will be Tier 2, unless they are ultimately determined by the Land Use Review Board to be Tier 3 lands.

We have adopted a timeline of regional plan adoption that includes closing comments on the interactive map on Feb 18th, completing a draft of all regional plan content including chapters, FLU map, list of Tier 1B towns, public comments sent to NVDA, and appended materials. This will allow David Snedeker and Cynthia Stuart to review the regional plan content before the full NVDA board's comment period of 3/10-3/20. Then on 3/26/26, the full NVDA board will vote on the regional plan content. If the NVDA board votes to approve, we will submit the regional plan content to the LURB in early April. This allows time for the 6–8-month application period and lets us to meet the deadline of 12/31/26 for the LURB's final approval of the plan.

If we miss this deadline of 12/31/26, all legacy NEK village/downtown center designations will expire and no longer qualify for much of the state funding for planning and economic development projects. In this scenario, current Act 250 exemptions, which will expire on January 1, 2027, will not be replaced by the Tier 1B exemptions we have identified on the Future Land Use map. Among the projects that will be jeopardized by this delay are the True Temper project for St. Johnsbury, which is on your agenda for discussion.

The NVDA staff would like to thank the NVDA Board and our member municipalities for their interest in this endeavor.



January 22, 2026

To: NVDA Executive Committee

From: David Snedeker, Executive Director

Re: NVDA Director Updates through January 22, 2026

Thank you once again for your leadership and participation in the NVDA organization.

Brownfields: NVDA continued with the implementation of the \$1.2M EPA Brownfield Assessment grant we received in 2025. We are currently conducting Phase 1 and 2 Site Assessments in St. Johnsbury, Newport, Barton, Orleans, East Hardwick, and Glover. We still have \$1M in EPA brownfield revolving loan funds, but are planning to make our first loan in East Harwick.

Regional Plan and Mapping: NVDA staff continues our work with SE Group on the rewriting of the NVDA Regional Plan. Staff have completed the mapping of the Future Land Use areas (required for all RPCs due to Act 181) for all of the municipalities in the region. This included direct outreach to local officials and staff have met with all towns, but one. Public engagement for Regional Plan input continues to occur through in-person events and online webinars. Related to the regional plan is the assignment of housing targets to each town. There is an upcoming webinar on those targets on Monday, January 26th. We are intending to submit the full draft regional plan to the LURB for their review.

NVDA has added a list of Frequently Asked Question and webinars to our web page to learn more: <https://www.nvda.net/act181.php> (See Act 181 under the Land Use tab).

Municipal Energy Resiliency Program (MERP): NVDA staff are actively assisting the 39 municipalities that were awarded implementation grant funding from BGS to complete the energy efficiency work. Implementation has been going smoothly for those towns who have started their work.

Municipal Water Systems Inventory: The VT Bond Bank has engaged with NVDA and the other regional planning commissions to inventory municipal water systems in the respective regions. There are 34 such systems in the NVDA region, including fire districts. Project goals include gathering information on the extent (area) of each system, age and condition (if possible), # of connections, user rates and budgets, and system manager(s) or operator(s).

Industrial Park activity: Vermont Renewable Gas continues to pursue a 2.2MW renewable generation project in NVDA's Lyndon industrial park. The developer is in contact with LED and VPPSA for a Rule 4.100 opportunity. VRG will also need an Act 250 permit for the development. NVDA is assisting a new business looking to locate at 1227 Industrial Parkway (former BHS Composites) in St. Johnsbury. We have conducted the Phase 1 Site Assessment and connected the business to the VEGI (growth incentive

program). NVDA completed an appraisal of its 1713 Industrial Parkway property and is talking with existing tenants about a possible purchase.

Transportation work: NVDA staff and consultants completed a Newport/Derby Bike & Pedestrian feasibility study that will be presented to the public in February. NVDA assisted the Town of Lunenburg with a Better Connections grant for the Gilman Village Revitalization Plan.

True Temper Brownfield Redevelopment Opportunity: NVDA continues working with the Town of St. Johnsbury, a local landowner, and a housing developer toward a brownfield redevelopment project in the community. NVDA will be moving into an ownership role later this month and then applying for an EPA Cleanup Grant for the property. Once clean, the property will be transferred to a housing developer to build market rate housing for the community.

Do North Co-working update: NVDA continues working with VT State University – Lyndon to assume the management of the co-working space in Lyndonville. NVDA staff and board members have been meeting regularly to discuss a lease transfer, project staffing, and management of the space. The expected date of transfer is now March 1, 2026. NVDA has sufficient grant funds to manage the project for two years as they work to grow the memberships.

The above list of projects highlights just some of our work. Staff are also working in the areas of emergency management, water quality planning, transportation, mapping, and many other projects related to community and economic development in the Northeast Kingdom. Please contact me at dsnedeker@nvda.net if you have any questions. The support of the NVDA Board and our communities is greatly appreciated!

Thank you,

David Snedeker
Executive Director