

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

February 10,

2017

Issue 6

ejc Consulting
6147 VT RTE 116, Starksboro, VT 05487
ejcconsultingvt@gmail.com
802 233 9563

WEEK 6

WATER QUALITY

The House Natural Resources Fish and Wildlife committee continued with their discussion of water quality and funding opportunities this week. As I mentioned last week the four different per parcel options had a lot of interest. The challenge with this funding source is lack of LIDAR mapping until 2020 and how will the tax be imposed. The tax department testified that they did not have the capacity to undertake the per parcel funding option. They did say the towns would have the ability but would they be willing to take on this project. In the end the committee decided to look into creating an advisory committee to explore how to go forward with a per parcel funding source. The committee has also developed a **draft bill** with other options for funding water quality. To say that this bill is a “christmas tree” could be an understatement. The **draft bill** contains everything from increase in room and meals tax to fertilizer tax to a tax on limousine services and many more taxes. This is just a **draft bill**, as I said” and the committee will take the next several days to decide what they will send down to House Ways and Means. The House Ways and Means committee will be doing the heavy lifting as to what sources are actually going to fund water quality.

ATRAZINE

The House Agriculture and Forestry committee, the House Natural Resources Fish and Wildlife committee and the Senate Agriculture committee held a joint hearing Thursday to discuss Atrazine. There were over fourteen people that testified, those in favor of the use and those who would like to limit or ban the use of atrazine. The Agency of Agriculture has over 30 years of data on the use and where issues have been detected. There is rigorous over-site of atrazine with the Agency of Agriculture working closely with the Department of Health. I will continue to track this issue.

WATERSHED GROUPS TESTIFY

Members of the Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition, Connecticut River Watershed Farmers Alliance and Farmer Watershed Alliance testified Friday in the House and

Senate Agricultural committees. The committee members were very impressed with the positive work that these watershed groups have done over the years. The committees heard farming practices are changing and farmers are helping farmers utilize new methods and new technology to improve water quality but also improve bottom line.

AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE LISTENING TOUR

Under the direction of newly appointed Ag Secretary, Anson Tebbetts, and Deputy Secretary, Alyson Eastman, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets has announced plans to host a statewide listening tour throughout the month of February. The public meetings, which will be held in Lyndonville, St. Albans, Brattleboro, and Middlebury, are designed to open the lines of communication between the Agency, the farming community, and the public.

“I am inviting all farmers, and all Vermonters interested in agriculture, to attend these meetings, to share thoughts and ideas about the future of farming in our state,” said Tebbetts. “I want to learn about the issues that matter most to our farmers, and how the Agency can support them.”

The meetings will be held from 10 a.m. – noon in the following locations...

- Friday, Feb. 17 – Vermont Agricultural Business Education Center in Brattleboro
- Monday, Feb. 27 – Middlebury Parks & Recreation Gym
- Thursday, March 2 – St. Albans City Hall Auditorium

FROM THE LAKE CHAMPLAIN REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Commerce/Labor Merger Stalled

The Senate is expected to adopt a resolution disapproving of Governor Scott's proposal to create a new Agency of Economic Opportunity, combining much of the current Agency of Commerce and Community Development and the Department of Labor. The resolution states that "having one agency fulfill the dual roles of both promoting and regulating business will introduce a conflict between these two missions [and that] the fair adjudication and oversight of employees' rights and protections must be safeguarded such that any reorganization does not weaken the Department of Labor's regulatory and adjudicatory functions." In lieu of allowing the Governor's Executive Order to move forward, the Senate is expected to devote committee time to this issue.

ANR Listening Sessions

Secretary Of ANR, Julie Moore, invites business owners, planners, real estate agents and others with regular business before the Agency of Natural Resources to attend and share your experiences with the Agency. The Secretary wants to hear about opportunities to further improve the Agency's current permitting and regulatory systems to deliver better, more efficient business and organizational outcomes while protecting Vermont's natural resources. Below is a list of locations and dates where the listening sessions will occur.

St. Johnsbury: Thursday, February 23 from 4:00pm-5:00pm

Northeast Vermont Development Authority, 30 Eastern Avenue

Burlington: Friday, February 24 from 10:00am-11:00am

Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce, 60 Main Street

Rutland: Wednesday, March 1 from 9:00am-10:00am

Rutland Economic Development Corp., 67 Merchants Row, 3rd Floor

Brattleboro: Thursday, March 2 from 11:00am-12:00pm

Marlboro Graduate Center, 28 Vernon Street (Hosted by Brattleboro Development Credit Corp.)

White River Junction: Thursday, March 2 from 2:00pm-3:00pm

Hotel Coolidge, 39 S. Main Street (Hosted by Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission)

No RSVP is required to participate in a discussion.

BILLS

H-205 An act relating to certain business tax provisions

- This bill proposes to
- reduce the return fee for local option filings,
- repeal the electrical energy tax,
- increase the research and development income tax credit,
- extend the sales and use tax exemption for airplanes and parts,
- eliminate the sunset on the Vermont Enterprise Fund, and
- provide a tax holiday for the sale of hybrid vehicles, electric vehicles, and energy-efficient products.

H-209 An act relating to land use and environmental permit processing

This bill proposes to reform various land use and environmental permit processes.

H-210 An act relating to eligibility for an antlerless deer permit when land is posted as open to hunting or fishing by permission only

This bill proposes to authorize the award of an antlerless deer permit to a landowner who posts his or her land as open to hunting or fishing by permission only.

H-211 An act relating to the water resources and water supplies of the State

This bill proposes to require public water systems to provide notice of drinking water quality violations. The bill also requires monitoring of cyanobacteria outbreaks in the State to be conducted between June 1 and November 1 annually. The bill requires pollution abatement facilities to implement electronic or automatic reporting. In addition,

the bill would require the Secretary of Natural Resources to submit to the General Assembly a strategy for reducing the land application of septage and sludge in the State.

H-229 An act relating to the water resources and water supplies of the State

This bill proposes to require the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets to adopt by rule best management practices, standards, procedures, and requirements relating to the sale, use, storage, or disposal of treated articles that will have a hazardous or long-term deleterious effect on the environment, present a likely risk to human health, or are dangerous. The bill would require that the rules be based, in part, on the recommendation of the State Pollinator Protection Committee.

H-231 An act relating to authorizing municipalities to prohibit through traffic by heavy vehicles

This bill proposes to authorize a municipality, in its discretion, to adopt regulations to prohibit motor vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating of 10,001 pounds or more from operating on class 3 and class 4 town highways located entirely within the municipality, as long as the regulations allow such vehicles to make local stops.

H-233 An act relating to protecting working forests and habitat

This bill proposes to amend the criteria and jurisdiction of the State land use law, known as Act 250, to protect forest resources in order to support the forest economy, water quality, and habitat.

H-242 An act relating to tile drains

This bill proposes to require the Secretary of Natural Resources and the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets to conduct an inventory and create a map of tile drain systems in the State; to require farms certified under 6 V.S.A. chapter 215 to adopt best management practices for tile drainage; and to expand water quality training or programs to include information concerning tile drainage. The bill would also establish minimum installation requirements for tile drain systems.

S-75 An act relating to aquatic nuisance species control

This bill would prohibit the transport of additional aquatic plants and aquatic nuisance species to or from waters of the State. The bill also would require visual inspection of vehicles, vessels, personal watercraft, seaplanes, trailers, and other equipment for aquatic plants and aquatic nuisance species when leaving a water of the State. The bill also would require a boat or personal watercraft to be cleaned in a boat wash prior to launching in a lake or pond if a public boat wash facility is located at the lake or pond and the boat or personal watercraft is being transported from another water. The bill would allow for enforcement of the prohibition on transport of aquatic plants and aquatic nuisance species in both the Judicial Bureau and the Environmental Division of the Superior Court.

S-76 An act relating to property tax appeals

This bill proposes to require the State to compensate cities and towns for property tax overpayments resulting from a State board or court decision. This bill also proposes to divide equitably litigation expenses and attorney's fees incurred in property tax appeals between towns and the State.

Below is the link to the Vermont Legislative website
Legislature.vermont.gov

EVENTS OF INTEREST

18th Annual Vermont Dairy Producers Conference
Tuesday February 21, 2017
8:00 to 4:00

Sheraton Burlington Hotel and Conference Center
Register online at **vermontdairyproducers.com**

20th Anniversary of the 2 + 2 Program
Dairy Reception
Thursday March 30th, 2017
4:00 to 6:00
Cedar Creek Room
At the Statehouse

ejc Consulting

A Legislative Concierge Service

Providing Information, Education and Communication

- A weekly newsletter of legislative happenings
- Monitor bills and committee meetings
- Legislative Issue Alerts
- Schedule meetings with legislators and regulatory leaders
- Facilitate meetings with other organizations
- Assist in developing and recommending strategies to move your issues forward
- Provide training sessions to help you maneuver the legislative process
- An annual “Day at the Statehouse”

Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, staying together is success”

– Henry Ford

6147 VT RTE 116, Starksboro, VT 05487

ejcconsultingvt@gmail.com

802 233 9563