\* \* \* Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone \* \* \*

Sec. F.2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE

(a) The General Assembly finds:

(1) the Agency of Commerce and Community Development projects

that the 44 Vermont towns served by the two most Southern regional

development corporations and regional planning commissions in Vermont will

lose 3.5 percent of their population by 2030 and that the total population of

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individuals over 65 years of age in this combined region will increase from

17 percent in 2010 to 30 percent in 2030;

(2) the number of visitors to the Southern Vermont visitor center has

decreased 25 percent since 2006;

(3) since 2006, growth in the region’s rooms and meals tax is

10 percent, as compared to 25 percent in the Chittenden County region;

(4) the rate of residential construction in the region is currently half of

the prerecession level;

(5) the two Southern Vermont regions have collaborated on business

recovery programming after Tropical Storm Irene, including development of

individualized downtown and village revitalization plans and development of

the Southern Vermont Sustainable Marketing program; and

(6) the two regions, having also worked together on some workforce

development and internship initiatives, are seeking to establish a more formal

structure for their workforce and recruitment efforts.

(b) The purposes of Secs. F.3 and F.4 of this act are:

(1) to establish officially a Southern Vermont Economic Development

Zone comprising of the geographic areas served by the Brattleboro

Development Credit Corporation and the Bennington County Industrial

Corporation; and

(2) to establish a study committee that will assist the General Assembly,

the Governor, and partners within the Zone in establishing a replicable

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framework for regional cooperation by and between public sector and private

sector partners concerning economic development initiatives; workforce

training, retention, and recruitment; and sustainable business investment.

(c)(1) The General Assembly acknowledges the challenges in Southern

Vermont and intends for this formal designation to accelerate economic

development initiatives that are underway or are needed in the future.

(2) The General Assembly does not intend that the Zone in current or

future years will be a recipient of General Fund appropriations. Rather, the

intent of the Zone is to coordinate targeted investment through public-private

partnerships from other funding sources if available and to facilitate economic

growth through regional cooperation.

Sec. F.3. 10 V.S.A. chapter 1 is amended to read:

CHAPTER 1: THE FUTURE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

\* \* \*

Subchapter 1: The Vermont Business Recruitment Partnership

§ 8. SOUTHERN VERMONT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ZONE

There is created the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone,

comprising of the geographic areas served by the Brattleboro Development

Credit Corporation and the Bennington County Industrial Corporation.

\* \* \*

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Sec. F.4. SOUTHERN VERMONT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ZONE; STUDY COMMITTEE; REPORT

(a) There is created the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone

Study Committee the purpose of which shall be to reverse the decline in the

workforce from 2000–2014 and to revitalize economic growth within the

Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone created in 10 V.S.A. § 8.

(b) The Study Committee shall consist of the following members:

(A) five members who represent the interests of the private sector

and represent a balance of geographic interests within the Zone:

(i) one member appointed by the Governor;

(ii) two members appointed by the Speaker of the House of

Representatives; and

(iii) two members appointed by the Senate Committee on

Committees;

(B) one member each from the Brattleboro Development Credit

Corporation and the Bennington County Industrial Corporation; and

(C) one member each from the Windham Regional Commission and

the Bennington County Regional Commission.

(c) On or before December 1, 2015, the Committee shall submit a report to

the Secretary of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the

House Committee on Commerce and Community Development, and the

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Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs

that includes proposals:

(1) to establish an integrated investment strategy for retaining businesses

within and recruiting business to the Zone;

(2) to establish an implementation plan for the Southern Vermont

Sustainable Recruitment and Marketing Project created in 2014 and contained

in the Windham Region’s federally recognized Comprehensive Economic

Development Strategy;

(3) to outline the benefits and obstacles within the Zone involved in

integrating internship and career exposure programs, workforce development

programs, and young professional activities;

(4) to propose an organizational and operational structure of a

public-private partnership with the mission of aggregating capital and

coordinating investment in small- and medium-size businesses located within

the Zone; and

(5) to recommend whether and in what configuration the Study

Committee or other group should continue and its mission.

(d) Meetings.

(1) The members of the Committee who represent the regional

development corporations shall jointly call the first meeting, to occur on or

before August 1, 2015.

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(2) The Committee shall select a chair from among the private sector

members at the first meeting.

(3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

(4) The Committee shall cease to exist on July 1, 2016.