

—Slug:.....COMM-0862.opin.view.carter  
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—For section.....Voices/Viewpoint  
—Format.....Opinions  
—Dateline.....Guilford  
—Article Number:.....43511



**Notes from editor (not for publication):**



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Act 250 looked at projects as they came along. Act 181  
2 looks at the map first.

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

3 The simple question is not whether Act 181 be reworked.  
4 It's how much it gets reworked.

####END SUBHED####

5 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

6 AS VERMONTERS rally and speak out about Act 181, to  
7 understand where things stand today, you have to go back — 50  
8 years, back to a time when Vermont was starting to feel the  
9 pressure of change.

10 In 1970, Act 250 was passed with a pretty simple idea  
11 behind it. Growth was coming — faster than many towns were

12 ready for — and there needed to be a way to make sure it didn't  
13 get out of hand.

14         Ski areas were expanding. Subdivisions were popping  
15 up. And there was a real concern that if nobody was paying  
16 attention, Vermont could start to lose the very things that made it  
17 Vermont.

18         So Act 250 was put in place as a kind of guardrail.

19         It didn't try to map the whole state. It didn't try to predict  
20 the future. It just looked at projects as they came along and asked  
21 a few basic questions: *Does this fit the land? Can the roads*  
22 *handle it? What does it do to the water? To the community?*

23         For a while, that worked.

24         But systems like that don't stay the same forever. Over  
25 time, more rules were added. More state agencies got involved.  
26 Regional planning started to carry more weight. Permits took  
27 longer. They cost more. They became harder to work through.

28         To be fair, each change had a reason. *Protect the water.*  
29 *Manage growth. Make sure infrastructure keeps up.*

30         But taken together, something else started to happen. The  
31 system got more complicated. More restrictive.

32         As Act 250 expanded, it got more expensive — and the  
33 ones who paid the price were Vermont landowners.

34         You didn't just walk into a process anymore. You needed  
35 planners. Engineers. Consultants. Sometimes lawyers.

36         Different state and regional groups had a bigger say in  
37 how things were interpreted and applied. At a certain point,  
38 complexity wasn't just part of the system. It was the system.

39         None of this happened overnight. It built up slowly. One  
40 change at a time. Until one day you could step back and see that  
41 what started in 1970 had become something very different.

42         And that's where the next chapter — Act 181 — begins.

43         \* \* \*

44         Now, ACT 181 didn't start from scratch. It builds on what  
45 came before. But it also changes how things work.

46            Instead of waiting for a project and then reviewing it, the  
47 system starts with the map. *Tier 1. Tier 2. Tier 3.* Places where  
48 development should go. Places where it shouldn't.

49            On paper, that sounds like clarity: *You look at a map,*  
50 *and you know what to expect.*

51            But in Vermont, land doesn't line up like that.

52            Here, land has been used the same way for generations.  
53 It isn't just lines on a map. It's shaped by roads that take a  
54 winding path up a hill. By terrain that doesn't cooperate. A parcel  
55 is one thing on paper and something else entirely in practice.

56            And that's where the friction starts: Act 181 depends on  
57 data that doesn't always match the details.

58            \* \* \*

59            TAKE THE road rule.

60            On paper, it makes sense. Long roads can mean  
61 development is pushing too far into places that were never meant  
62 to handle it — so someone draws a line.

63            But in Vermont, long roads aren't unusual. Sometimes  
64 they're the only way to get to a place where you can build.

65            So a rule meant to catch one kind of development ends  
66 up catching something else. And once again, it's Vermont  
67 landowners who feel it.

68            In Vermont, land isn't just a parcel. It is something that's  
69 been passed down. Worked over time. Built on slowly, when it  
70 made sense.

71            And when a system starts to limit how that land can be  
72 used — or even reached — it doesn't just affect a project. It starts  
73 to shape what the next generation can do with it.

74            That's a different kind of impact. And it points to a  
75 broader shift.

76            \* \* \*

77            ACT 250 LOOKED at projects as they came along. Act 181  
78 looks at the map first.

79            The goal was to simplify things. But in the process, lines  
80 were drawn and maps were laid out, often without the input of

81 the people who live on that land. That is leading to confusion,  
82 pushback, and growing evidence that major parts of the  
83 framework are simply not working for those who live on and  
84 work that land.

85 The simple question is not whether Act 181 be reworked.  
86 It's how much it gets reworked — and whether it brings the map  
87 any closer to the land.

88 Because a line on a map can detail a property — but it  
89 doesn't define the people who live on it.

90 And when Act 181 doesn't line up with the land — or  
91 those who live on it — that's the final Act.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

92 **CHIP CARTER**, a retired television anchor, moved in  
93 2016 to Guilford, where he volunteers with a number of  
94 community organizations and serves on the Selectboard.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

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