

**Mad River Valley Planning District
Director's Report
July 2011**

Municipal

- Waitsfield's new Zoning Administrator, Susan Senning is currently transitioning into the office and will start full time August 1st.
- The Town of Warren is applying for a Transportation Enhancement Grant to cover engineering of a covered bridge abutment replacement project. It has been requested that MRVPD provide a letter of support.
- The Department of Economic, Housing & Community Development has announced the next round of Municipal Planning Grants (MPGs). This grant program funds planning and implementation projects aimed at revitalizing communities and guiding future development. Priority will be given to projects that further smart growth principles and town plan projects that address the new economic development element as passed by the legislature this year as [Act 52](#). MPG funding for fiscal year 2012 was allocated at approximately the same \$400,000 level as last year. A cash match is now required for grant requests between \$8,000-\$15,000. Joshua is in conversations with the towns about a potential consortium application focusing on the new requirement for town plans to include an economic development chapter. Applications due 9/30. Additional info available here: <http://www.dhca.state.vt.us/Planning/GMS/OnlineApplication2012.htm>.
- CVRPC is communicating with all three MRV towns regarding the opportunity to purchase current and high-resolution aerial photos (30 cm ADS40 image resolution). The proposed "buy-up option" will increase resolution from existing 50 cm sets, allowing better delineation of building edges and features. Contact Dan Currier for more info (229-0389).

Energy

- Joshua is working with the Valley's Energy Coordinators to develop the series of 5 energy presentations as funded through VECAN's grant program entitled *Building the Power of Vermont Communities to Increase Energy Efficiency and Reduce Climate Change Impacts*. The presentations begin on 8/30 with an overview of energy planning in the MRV and will continue through December. Additional topics include Residential & Community PV, Efficient Heating without Fossil Fuels, Efficiency/Renewable Financing & Weatherization.
- Localvolts have undertaken its energy-monitoring program, entitled MRV Unplugged, recently funded through the Vermont Community Foundation. The project is developing a Localvolt led small business outreach program that will provide three month of monitoring and follow-up energy information visits to 12 local businesses. The Warren Store is the first customer. Contact Chris Badger if you know of a business interested in participating in the project: csbadger@gmail.com.

Agriculture

- Provided grant assistance and letters of support for six grant applications to support

Mad River Food Hub applications. Success has been sought through the following programs:

- \$10k from the Vt Housing & Conservation Board's Farm Viability Enhancement Program for processing equipment,
- \$7.5k from the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund for strategic planning
- Application to the USDA's Rural Business Enterprise Grant Program was one of three supported by the state and forwarded to DC.
- Awaiting word on the Agency of Ag's Agricultural Innovation Center Infrastructure Development Program for an apprentice training program and market viability assessment for a distribution program.
- Awaiting word on the Agency of Agriculture's VT Specialty Crop Block Grant Program for the purchase of a flash freezing unit

Mad River Valley Path Association

- The new bridge across the Clay Brook opened on 7/6, connecting Riverside Park with Kingsbury Farm.
- MRPA will be presenting the latest version of the Open Space Tax Stabilization Agreement.
- MRPA has submitted a letter of intent to apply for easement funds via the Transportation Enhancement Grant Program.
- MRPA is partnering with VT Land Trust and Friends of the Mad River on a Transportation Enhancement Grant funded scenic easement on the 398 acre Sainsbury farm in Moretown.
- Joshua has been attending MRPA Land Owner Committee meetings to discuss various topics of interest. Joshua is attending future meetings for the time being.

Transportation

- MRV Transportation Advisory Committee is focusing on increasing outreach and ridership for the Mad Bus, whose routes are at risk of being reduced due to low ridership. Letters have been sent to MRV lodges and restaurants located on the route requesting financial support based on a fair-share quota. Joshua and representatives from GMTA attended the 7/20 meeting of the MRV Chamber's Lodging Committee to illicit support and hear ways that the bus may serve existing needs.
- Joshua attended the 6/24 MR Byway Committee meeting. Joshua is working on the Byway web committee to increase presence on the MR Chamber's website.
- Plans are being finalized for the Waitsfield Safe Routes to School project to narrow Old County Rd. and put in a permanent crosswalk across Rt. 100. Selectboard approval will be sought on 7/25 along with alternatives for the west side sidewalks. In the short term, the Safe Routes to School Committee is working on a temporary crosswalk across Rt. 100 at the Health Center (to be removed once the permanent one is in place).
- The Mad River Scenic Byway I-89 sign is currently under design by VTrans.

Forests, Wildlife, Communities Project

- Joshua presented results from a FWC funded build-out analysis to the Fayston PC on 7/5 along with Jens Hilke of ANR and Jamey Fidel of VNRC. Conversations will continue to identify opportunities for further collaboration and technical support. A similar meeting has been had with the Waitsfield PC (5/3) and scheduled with the Warren PC (8/22).
- MRVPD served as a host site for a 7/5 webinar entitled *Deer Wintering Areas* and 7/18 webinar focusing on *Town Plans for Natural Resource Protections*, presented by the VT Fish & Wildlife Dept. Seven MRV individuals representing the three towns attended the events.
- Joshua is overseeing development of the FWC web presence, which will be hosted on the mrvpd.org site.
- The FWC met on 6/16 to finalize conservation maps and work on the future website.

Waitsfield Infrastructure

- Joshua has continued discussions with the Waitsfield PC Wastewater Committee regarding next steps. A request for a development proposal is currently under review.
- Continuing to explore options to utilize SRF (State Revolving Funds) and \$1 million in EPA State & Tribal Assistance Grants) STAG to fund the creation of a decentralized wastewater system, develop a Wastewater Management District, and start a demonstration program. Continuing conversations with VT DEC, EPA Reg. 1, and DHCA. Additional funding opportunities may be had through the VT Community Development Program.
- Exploring the potential of submitting an application to the US Economic Development Administration's Economic Development Assistance Program to support construction of a decentralized wastewater system. The proposal is for a co-application with Lowndes County, AL via Wastewater Education. Pre-application deadline is the end of July.

Recreation

- The MRV Trail Collaborative 's initial trail inventory has been created and an associated letter and questionnaire has been sent to all MRVTC organizations. A Trail Summit is being scheduled for 10/19 at Sugarbush and will focus on trail projects and opportunities for trail enhancement work during the Summer 2012.
- The next MRVTC SC meeting is scheduled for 8/3.

Valley Futures Network

- The third installment of the *Local Community Initiatives* course scheduled for this fall has been canceled due to the departure of the instructor.

Economic Development

- Joshua, Jim Halavonich, Bob Ackland, Bill Parker, and Susan Klein gathered on 7/6 as the third MRVPD Economic Development sub-committee meeting. The meeting consisted of a discussion of existing and potential data for inventorying the economic health of the MRV and the potential of applying for a Municipal Planning

Grant to assist the MRV towns in meeting the newly required Economic Development Town Plan goals. The next meeting is scheduled for August 2nd.

- The sub-committee recommends MRVPD purchase “local living” economic-development calculator.

Rural Resource Commission

- Mad River Glen’s CLG funded historic designation project is moving forward. A contractor has been selected and work will be done through the summer and fall. Ellen Strauss and Joshua are administering this grant.
- Working on the Warren Dam CLG funded historic designation project. Ellen Strauss is administering this grant.