

Mad River Valley Energy Series

Presented by the Mad River Valley Planning District with support from the Vermont Energy Climate Action Network

Part 1 of 5: Local Energy History and the Foundation for our Energy Future

September 12, 2011

Big Picture Theater, Waitsfield, VT

Summary by Vickie Trihy

Energy History and Renewable Options in the Mad River Valley, presented by Bill Maclay of Maclay Architects

It is useful to begin a discussion of the Valley's energy future by looking at how the way we use energy has shaped our lives in the past. Historically, the type of energy resources we use determined settlement patterns and lifestyles in the Mad River Valley. A series of slides indicates how our evolving use of various types of energy resources dictated where and how we lived—how much energy we used and produced, how closely or sparsely the land was developed, where we got our food, and how far our products and population traveled. In modern times the availability and relatively low cost of oil led to housing and businesses being dispersed across the landscape, and to increased reliance on energy and products from outside the Valley.

Oil is no longer the reliable and inexpensive energy resource it once was. We can expect continued unpredictability in oil production and higher prices for fossil fuels in the future, and renewable energy is expensive to produce. Therefore our energy future will need to focus not just on increasing the use of a mix of energy sources but also on reducing energy consumption. This could be achieved by building more energy-efficient structures, locating housing in village centers close to schools and businesses, and utilizing more mass transit and non-motorized transportation options, as well as powering buildings with renewable energy produced on-site. It is possible that the Valley could export more energy and food than it consumes.

Energy Planning and Implementation, presented by Brian Shupe, Deputy Director of Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC)

Vermont towns are not required to have municipal plans, but if they do, the plans must address specific energy issues. New materials are available for guiding towns in planning for their energy future, with an emphasis on utilizing clean energy. The *Energy Planning and Implementation Guidebook for Vermont Communities* outlines a process for preparing a plan, the required and suggested components of the plan, resources for data collection, and programs and tools for implementing the plan. A companion booklet focuses on specific case studies of towns that have successfully implemented various energy initiatives.

An energy plan must include an analysis of the town's current and future energy needs and resources, as well as policy statements regarding energy conservation, the development of renewable energy resources, and land use that fosters compact development for energy conservation. Town plans also must address energy in the transportation section of the plan.

Citizen participation in the process is essential, and energy committees and grassroots organizations should be included as well.

Energy Descent Action Plan presented by Carl Etnier of Transition Vermont

EDAP is an approach to energy planning that directly engages citizens in a process of envisioning goals in the form of milestones and benchmarks for attaining community resilience, sustainability and cooperation. EDAP is a technique of the Transition Town movement, outlined in *The Transition Town Handbook* by Rob Hopkins (2008). It calls for a two-year contingency plan that considers possible events that could suddenly impact the need for, availability of and cost of energy. It includes narrative examples of concrete steps communities have taken toward identified goals, and is intended to read like a road map of the future that will inspire individuals, businesses, and communities to take action.