

**Mad River Valley Planning District
Steering Committee
July 21, 2016**

Present were:

Fayston: Carol Chamberlin, Planning Commissioner
Waitsfield: Kari Dolan, Selectboard; Steve Shea, Planning Commissioner
Warren: Bob Ackland, Selectboard; Jim Sanford, Planning Commissioner
CVRPC: Bonnie Waninger
Sugarbush: Margo Wade, Melissa Roberts, Adam Greshin
MRV Chamber of Commerce: Peter MacLaren
MRVPD: Joshua Schwartz; Kristine Keeney
Guests: Chris Keating, Jack Sharry, Patricia Floyd

The minutes of the June 16, 2016 Steering Committee were amended and then accepted with the following corrections:

- Sugarbush will be working in the river this summer to repair the concrete foundation that supports the temporary stop logs and stanchions that are used for snowmaking water withdrawal. The repair will take approximately 3 weeks.
- Sugarbush did need a stream alteration permit to conduct the repair. No other permitting was required since no changes are proposed for the structure at this time that would impact the parameters of existing permits.
- Once the repair is complete, Sugarbush will work with their regulating partners to get the necessary permits for a replacement weir but when that will happen is to be determined based on how long the repair lasts, cost, and the length of the permit review process.

Staff Report Highlights: J. Schwartz provided the Committee updates on several areas including economic development and transportation. Margo Wade also provided updates from Sugarbush.

Economic Development

Progress on Vermont Downtown Action Team (V-DAT)/CDBG-DR2 Implementation Grants:

- The Warren Main Street Improvement Project revamped design/engineering RFP received 5 responses. The project's Selection Committee will be meeting and interviewing consultants during the week of 7/25. Kristine will be serving on the Selection Committee.
- The Waitsfield Pocket Park Project received final signature on the landowner easement at the end of June. The Town is finalizing the grant agreement with the State. The Selectboard created a RFP Review Committee that includes Joshua. The Selectboard will be reviewing the preliminary site analysis at their 7/25 meeting and will be deciding if/how to move forward with the LPM RFP process. Because the easement process took longer than expected the project is currently 4 months behind and according to the grant agreement it must be completed by next June 2017, which is a going to be a tight timeline.

Transportation

Sugarbush Access Road Path Scoping Study kick-off meeting occurred on 7/7 with consultant team and the Advisory Committee that Kristine is serving on. The scope of work includes a path of some kind from the existing Sugarbush pedestrian path down the Access Rd to Eurich Pond Rd, but will look at a possible alignment continuing all the way down to Rt. 100. The first public meeting about this study will take place on 7/26 at 7:30pm at the Warren Town Offices during the Selectboard meeting.

The Waitsfield West Sidewalk Project is at the conceptual engineering phase; Vtrans and as well as Kristine have commented on the latest plans, particularly related to maintaining the existing bike lanes on Route 100 and the need to avoid adding traffic control devices that are not necessary and would detract from the character of Waitsfield Village. The project is currently on hold awaiting the outcome of a grant application for additional bike/ped grant money from Vtrans by the Town of Waitsfield.

The Waitsfield Bridge Replacement project (Waitsfield BRF 013-4(39) Bridge 177) is scheduled to reopen on Sunday, July 24th at 7:00 AM, which meets the estimated closure period duration of 35 days.

Sugarbush

Margo Wade, Sugarbush, presented their data report to the Committee after changes had been made recently in conjunction with the Steering Committee to the data reporting requirements in the MOU. It was discussed if Sugarbush still needs to complete Task 25 related to bus passengers, headcounts of skier visits per car, and parking lot counts on 8 days during the winter season. It was decided that MRVPD staff and Margo would subsequently meet to discuss how to proceed on this particular task.

Margo then explained how people should expect to see a spike in energy use this past season at Sugarbush due to the amount of snow they had to make due to low natural snowfall. It was suggested to put the water and energy usage graphs on the same page so it's easier to see the correlation between the two as it relates to snowmaking. Margo highlighted the fact that energy efficiency upgrades to snowmaking equipment has helped the resort reduce energy consumption, with a change of just over 18% from 2014 to 2015.

MRVPD Executive Committee Recommendation on Community Economic Development Committee (CEDC) Presentation: The discussion turned to the Executive Committee's recommendation on a potential way forward for the work of the Community Economic Development Committee (CEDC).

Bob Ackland, Warren Select Board, presented the recommendation that a sub-committee of the MRVPD Steering Committee is created, possibly with the name Community Vitality Project. The Steering Committee would write the charge for the sub-committee with specific tasks and a timeline to accomplish them by. Bob explained that the Executive Committee is recommending a list of provisions in order to move forward with the project:

- Broaden scope beyond just economic development, which might cause a modification to proposed budgetary considerations
- More accurately define economic contributors with available data
- Maintain the MRV Vision Statement from December 2015
- Research a funding scenario similar to the one presented with a focus on a Local Options Tax (LOT) on retail sales in place of property tax
- Develop a factual explanation of what the impacts are of moving forward and not moving forward
- Gather what the vital community looks like to the MRV Community
- Name a new subcommittee under MRVPD SC made up of volunteers, however, any expansion of the MRVPD would require additional elected officials to serve on a board
- Expand community engagement efforts in order to gain diverse membership on the sub-committee that can include MRVCC and CEDC members

Bob highlighted the fact that it is unclear the Valley's dependency in factual terms on tourism, particularly what is the impact of the amount of available lodging beds or significant changes in skier visits on the local economy. He reiterated that he thinks there needs to be more supporting data to justify

putting resources into tourism marketing - and that any type of Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) should be something that is carried forward by the MRVCC.

Peter MacLaren, Chamber Board, highlighted the fact that the CEDC presentation intentionally left the “Community Development” part of their presentation vague so there would be some leeway for the entity that moves this process forward to expand their scope of work. Peter also mentioned that CEDC had suggested pursuing a Rooms, Meals, and Alcohol LOT at least at first instead of retail sales and brought up the possibility of utilizing the property tax as there’s already a mechanism in place to do so.

Peter MacLaren also expressed his concerns as to whether volunteers alone would be able to accomplish this work and Adam Greshin, Sugarbush, was also concerned about getting people to commit to the sub-committee. Kari Dolan, Waitsfield Selectboard, suggested talking to a graduate program about helping out. Bonnie said this could work for a potential municipal planning grant.

Bob tasked the Steering Committee to send him six names for membership on the sub-committee by July 29th 2016, and suggested it should be between 10 and 12 people total, with a focus on people that bring diverse perspectives and have the skills to accomplish certain tasks. Bob suggested forming the sub-committee and writing its “charge” electronically so that it can be up and running by 9/1.

If the sub-committee is successful in its work, the Steering Committee could work with a lawyer to draft a charter for an LOT. The goal would be to have the charter submitted to the three towns and the Legislature by January. The Legislature drafts the charter in bill form and if passed, it enables the municipalities to pursue an LOT if they vote to do so at Town Meeting.

The discussion turned to the issue of maintaining authenticity when there’s an affordability issue in the Valley.

Jim Sanford, Warren Planning Commission, said that he believes many other communities are struggling with the same affordability issues but no matter what we do we are never going to “solve” these issues. But he believes it is a noble goal that is worth working on.

Patricia Floyd, CEDC, highlighted the fact that authenticity means different things to different people but during the Vision and Vitality series the Committee heard loud and clear that this is an important community consideration.

Jack Sharry, CEDC, said he was also representing second homeowners in the meeting and he’s also concerned about the authenticity of the Valley and the ability for future generations to afford to live here. He is concerned that if things stay the way they are economically the Valley won’t be able to maintain what is so great about this place into the future.

Bonnie Waninger, CVRPC, followed Jack’s comments to remind the group to think 15 to 20 years out in terms of planning not just the immediate 5 to 10 years. If the State’s declining population projections are right there might be other problems that are not being considered in the present. She suggested we might need to work on strategies that are working now just to stay stable in the coming years.

2016 Legislative Revisions to Vermont’s Planning & Development Act: Kristine briefly discussed 2016 legislative updates that would be of interest to local municipalities. This included changes to the Open Meeting Law, renewable energy facilities and municipal/regional plans, and the State’s plan to do a housing study among others. Bonnie Waninger, CVRPC, provided a more in-depth explanation regarding energy and municipal plans, explaining that if a municipality develops an energy plan that follow the guidelines and it is confirmed by either the RPC and/or the Public Service Board (PSB) then the PSB will give the town substantial

deference in PSB proceedings-a say that municipalities currently do not have now in energy siting decisions. The PSB guidelines should be published this fall and the MRVPD should be able to plan together if they want to.

Adam Greshin also wanted to make sure the Steering Committee was aware of the issue regarding Mad River Park- the owners have declined to renew their lease with the Town and are looking to sell the property. The Recreation District is engaging in a conversation about the fields and doing research on the variety of fields that exist/could serve this role. Adam stated that this is a very important community topic and should have the engagement of the MRVPD SC. There was a suggestion that since the Mad River Park is one of the places that large businesses can locate in town, maybe the field relocation would be appropriate.

The Old Business item of completing the MRVPD Identity & Outreach exercise will be discussed at the next Steering Committee meeting in September, which will take place at the new Waitsfield Town Office.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristine Keeney