

**Mad River Valley Planning
District Steering Committee
Meeting Minutes
July 20, 2017, 7:00 P.M.
General Wait House, Waitsfield**

Present were:

Fayston: Jared Cadwell, Selectboard; Don Simonini, Planning Commission
Waitsfield: Steve Shea, Planning Commission
Warren: Bob Ackland, Selectboard; Jim Sanford, Planning Commission
Sugarbush: Win Smith, Margo Wade
MRV Chamber of Commerce: Peter MacLaren
CVRPC: Eric Vorwald

The meeting opened at 7:02 pm. Bob Ackland, Chair, brought the meeting to order.

- I. Adjustments to the Agenda**
 - a. No adjustments were requested.
- II. Public Comment**
 - a. No public comments were made.
- III. Accept Minutes of 6/15/17 Steering Committee Meeting**
 - a. Jared moved to accept the minutes, and Peter seconded the motion.
- IV. Staff Report**
 - Economic Development**
 - a. **Warren Main Street Improvement Project:** completed on 7/14 and a final public meeting will be held on 7/24. Jim and Bob said there were no negative effects on the Fourth of July parade. Jim said once all of the details are completed and the project has had some time to grown in, he believes it will be a great addition to the town.
 - i. Jared asked what the timeline was from start to finish for the project and Josh explained that it was based on studies from decades ago, and following TS Irene in 2011 the CDBG-Disaster Relief grant funds became available. The Town received the funding in 2015, the Planning Commission held a charette, and the project was constructed in 3 weeks in 2017. The total amount of the grant was \$275,000.
 - b. **Waitsfield Pocket Park/Lovett Park Project:** Opened on 6/28 at the Round Up with approximately 20 people in attendance. The park's design was tested 3 days later when it filled with floodwaters; it survived relatively unscathed with only some mulch washed away and silt left behind. The project was completed on time and 45% under budget. A ribbon cutting will be held in August. The high water mark plaque was installed this week, and the final elements including an interpretive panel, benches, garbage cans, and railing will be installed in the next week or two.
 - c. **Economic Dashboard:** Peter said that the Dashboard reporting has been transitioning and evolving at the Chamber and they tried to work with the Valley Reporter to do something more graphically appealing but were denied. Therefore, last month they decided to take a more narrative approach to tell the story of the data by focusing on a single topic in the paper. He said the Chamber plans to have a more graphic representation of the data on their website in the future.
 - i. Bob said that he was disappointed that the Dashboard has not stayed on schedule but understands the challenges with the Valley Reporter. He said he would be happy to work

with the Chamber on this.

- ii. Peter said the Chamber is very open to suggestions and willing to work with MRVPD going forward.

Transportation

- d. **Mad Bus 2016/2017 Ridership:** Josh explained that ridership was 1.4% below the 10-year average, but was up substantially from the 2015/2016 season (although given the low snow year, 2015/2016 has basically been discounted). GMT is proposing to eliminate the Snowcap Commuter route (Montpelier to MRV) for next season.
 - i. GMT is exploring options to adjust the Valley Floor route because ridership continues to be on the edge of meeting VTrans standards. This adjustment would remove Rt. 17 and German Flats Rd from the route during the first three runs in the morning.
 - ii. Win Smith said that Sugarbush supports this route change because almost 30 employees will be living at the Christmas Tree Inn, so it is an important commuting route for them given they typically do not have vehicles.
- e. **Waitsfield West Sidewalk Project**
 - i. Crosswalk warrants were met and approved by VTrans for two crosswalks to be installed as part of the sidewalk project on Rt. 100 at the Village Grocery & Valley Players Theater. Kristine completed the counts in order to obtain the warrants last summer.
 - ii. VTrans has also issued the Letter of Intent for the State Highway Access Permit
 - iii. Bob asked if the project is still alive? Steve said that the Selectboard has not met about this project in a while, but it is his understanding that they plan to obtain bids, and then decide which elements of the project to complete.
- f. **Rt. 17 & Rt. 100 Bike Counters:** Kristine attended the installation of the first bike counters on a state highway in Vermont on Rt. 100 in Waitsfield and Rt. 17 in Fayston on 6/14 with VTrans. UVM also installed video equipment on Route 17 to confirm the accuracy of the new counters. Kristine fixed both counters when the tubes disconnected on separate occasions.

Housing

- g. A group from the MRV Housing Coalition took a tour of a tiny house currently under construction in Waterbury Center on 7/19 by a new company called Tiny House of Vermont.
- h. MRVPD and Downstreet Housing & Community Development supported a grant application (TD Bank Charitable Foundation) by Norwich University to finance the completion of a tiny house for transport and installation at Vermont Mobile Home Park in Waitsfield. If awarded, the construction and installation would occur during spring & summer 2018.

Recreation

- i. MRPA has submitted an application to the Waitsfield DRB and met with the Waitsfield Selectboard about the proposed upgrades. MRPA will seek ROW use approval and apply for a stop sign at the corner of Slow Rd and Post Office Rd during the 7/24 selectboard meeting and the DRB hearing will be held on 7/25.
 - i. Joshua explained that the MRPA didn't explicitly ask for a Letter of Support (LOS) but they did include Kristine on an email, as a member of the of the Irasville sub-committee, asking for supporters of the project to reply with a few words of support to be included with the DRB packet. Joshua asked the Steering Committee for feedback and direction on MRVPD staff providing a Letter of Support for a local permit.
 - ii. Bob said that the MRVPD did not submit a negative letter about Sugarbush Grand Summit, even though the MRVPD had reservations about it. But if the MRVPD supports something that has a community wide benefit, we should consider formally supporting it.
 - iii. Josh said if MRVPD were to provide a LOS, we would highlight how the project supports the goals of the Waitsfield Town Plan and MRV Moves Plan.
 - iv. Peter and Don both said that the MRPA initiative in Irasville is a piece of the larger Mad River Valley-wide goal of a continuous path with a Valley-wide benefit, so the MRVPD

- should be able to support it.
- v. Jared said he also supports providing a LOS and that MRVPD has supported the MRPA initiatives for as long as he can remember.
 - vi. Jared made a motion to have Joshua as Executive Director write a Letter of Support for the Mad River Path Associations permit application for Irasville Path upgrades to the Waitsfield DRB. Peter seconded, and all were in favor.
 - j. Kristine has been supporting the MRPA to undertake a signage inventory for a future unified signage project in the MRV.
 - k. Don asked if the MRPA has circled back around to landowners that have withdrawn access in the past? Jim said they are working on it and that they have the whole picture in mind.

Historic Preservation

- l. Joshua responded to a request for grant funding for Don Spaulding's barn project by providing Historic District forms and funding sources.

Energy

- m. The draft Central Vermont Regional Energy Plan was released on 6/19 and submitted to the Department of Public Service for their initial review. CVRPC is going to start rolling it out for public comment before finalizing document by the end of the year.
- n. Don asked where do things stand with the 3 pilot towns that are working on energy planning to receive deference from the Public Service Board (PSB)? Eric explained that the draft plans are due at the end of the month and will become public. The intention is for the towns to incorporate the plan into the energy element in their town plan.
- o. Don asked if it is still possible that the three towns can work together on energy planning? Bob said that the two towns are working on their town plans, but neither is working on energy elements. Eric said it is possible in Warren's case that they have met most of the standards and just need to see what's missing and fill in the gaps in order to have an energy element that will receive deference at the Public Service Board. The one thing that towns usually don't have is the mapping, and CVRPC can provide that information.

Other

- p. The MRV Chamber moved out of the Gen. Wait House and into the Waitsfield House (corner of Bridge and Main St) on 7/1. Historical Society has moved downstairs. It is not clear yet how access will be managed in the future.

V. New Business

Sugarbush Data Report Presentation (Margo Wade)

- a. Energy- Margo highlighted the 26% reduction in energy consumption since 2013. Win explained that snowmaking technology has improved drastically and in FY18 they expect consumption to continue decreasing because of a recent change in the type of air compressor in use at Lincoln Peak.
- b. Housing- A graph of year-round and seasonal employee residences showed a drop in the number of year-round employees living in the three towns. Win said that the availability and cost of housing in the MRV is forcing people to look elsewhere. Bob asked how housing issues are affecting staffing?
 - i. Win said there is a labor shortage at Sugarbush; it been difficult to hire people for housekeeping and F&B in particular. Sugarbush is going to hire more J1 workers, which then necessitates the need for more housing. He said they would likely have to either identify existing housing or build additional units for employees going forward. He said his preference is to build because they have available property.
 - ii. He said they are also transporting people from Montpelier and Barre with a van, and looking into an additional van from Burlington this season.
 - iii. He also said it has accelerated the rate at which they are installing RFID gates because

they will need 15 fewer ticket scanners and can hire people as lift operators, which are more skilled and higher paying jobs.

- iv. Don asked about whether Sugarbush plans to implement the Tenants for Turns program? Win said it has worked well at other resorts out West and they are developing the program at Sugarbush. He also said he is looking at tiny homes like Aspen did for their employees.
- c. Comfortable Carrying Capacity (CCC)- Margo explained that the installation of two new lifts this summer would adjust the CCC to 8,690 (CCC is a combination of uphill and downhill capacity and informs what services are needed like parking, lockers, bathrooms, etc). Win said that parking is not the pinch point; rather it is a lack of capacity at base lodges at lunch time.
- d. Win said the CCC calculation is a tradition in the industry, but it doesn't take into consideration certain improvement like the new Valley House lift that has made wait times shorter in the base area at Lincoln Peak.
- e. Snowfall and Snowmaking- Win explained that more natural snow doesn't always mean less snowmaking because you have to lay down a base, and then the amount of natural snow after that is what it is unless they have to refresh the base after a warm up.
- f. Environmental initiatives- Margo explained that Sugarbush has an array of environmental initiatives and now they are trying to make sure people know about them. See their website for more details: <http://www.sugarbush.com/discover/environment/>

2017 Legislative Revisions to VT's Planning & Development Act, the Downtown Development Act and Act 250

g. Economic Development Potpourri (S.135)

- i. Provides for the formation of special municipal districts to install, finance, own, maintain, and dispose of infrastructure that offers economic development opportunities in rural and under-resourced areas such as high-speed internet service, water, or sewer treatment capacity.
- ii. Defines income eligibility limits for affordable housing by increasing the limits from 80 percent of the county median income and 30 percent of a household's gross annual income to 120 percent of the county median income. This change will ensure that more projects meet the criteria for priority projects and more people will qualify for assistance with buying or renting, which in turn should increase the number of affordable houses for middle income workers and their families.
- iii. The bill would increase thresholds for Act 250 jurisdiction over priority housing projects and subject the projects to Act 250 if there are: 25 or more units in a municipality whose population is below 3,000 and so on.
- iv. A priority housing project consists of mixed income or mixed use housing, entirely within a designated downtown, new town center, growth center, or village center that is also a designated neighborhood development area. The definitions of affordable housing under Act 250 incorporate the amended income definitions in the bill and increases the total amount of downtown and affordable housing tax credits.
- v. 6 new districts will be allowed, with no more than two per county and none in a municipality with an already active TIF district.
- vi. See https://vlct.org/sites/default/files/2017_wrapup_web.pdf for more details.

VI. Old Business -MRVPD Administrative Update

- MRVPD will be separated from CVRPC by 8/1; MRVPD now has a bank account, accounting system, payroll, health insurance, retirement accounts, and joined VLCT. Workers Comp insurance is the last piece Bob is working on.
- Bob said he had hoped MRVPD would actually save money in the transition, but due to the limited options for liability insurance, it is going to end up being neutral in terms of cost.

- Peter asked about the status of trying to identify an alternative funding source for the MRVPD. Bob said he isn't sure what the path forward should be other than an LOT or Moretown becoming an active member in the MRVPD. He said he would welcome any other ideas. He understands Sugarbush's concern about being the only business contributing. He said CVP is at a standstill at the moment because he has been unable to reconcile with the MRVRD despite reaching out several times. Don asked if there was something that the Fayston Selectboard members could do to alleviate the roadblock between the MRVPD and RD. Jared said the selectboard brought in their MRVRD representatives not long ago, but may need to do that again in the near future.

VII. Next Meeting – September 21, 2017

- a. The Committee is taking the month of August off

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristine Keeney