

Mad River Valley Planning District
Steering Committee
May 18, 2017, 7:00 P.M.
General Wait House, Waitsfield

Present were:

Fayston: Jared Cadwell, Selectboard; Don Simonini, Planning Commission

Waitsfield: Kari Dolan, Selectboard; Steve Shea, Planning Commission

Warren: Bob Ackland, Selectboard; Jim Sanford, Planning Commission

Sugarbush: Margo Wade

MRVPD: Joshua Schwartz, Executive Director; Kristine Keeney, Community Planner

MRV Chamber of Commerce: Peter MacLaren

The meeting opened at 7:00 pm. Bob Ackland, Chair, brought the meeting to order.

I. Adjustments to the Agenda

- Joshua suggested adding Sugarbush's active Act 250 permits to New Business; Jared Cadwell provided the first motion and Peter MacLaren seconded.

II. Public Comment

- There were no public comments.

III. Accept Minutes of 4/20/2017 Steering Committee Meeting

Bob asked if there was a motion to accept the meeting minutes from the April 20, 2017 Steering Committee meeting. Joshua said that he had spoken to Peter MacLaren prior to the meeting to discuss an amendment to the meeting minutes. Joshua recommended language. Don Simonini also asked to have the spelling of his last name corrected. Peter MacLaren provided the first motion to accept the meeting minutes as amended and Steve Shea seconded.

IV. Executive Director's Highlights of Staff Report

Joshua provided an update to the Steering Committee on the various efforts and projects that staff have been working on over the last month. He highlighted projects related to economic development, flood resilience, transportation, housing, recreation, mapping, Sugarbush, historic preservation, energy, and municipal assistance.

Economic Development

- Warren Main Street Improvement Project
 - Four bids were received with Griffin & Griffin coming in with the lowest bid at \$248,027. The LPM has recommended that they be selected for the contract.
 - Town Administrator, Cindi Hartshorn-Jones, was able to secure an extension from 6/30 to 9/30/17 for project completion. The target start date is now 7/5/17.
 - The Town of Warren rehab the bridge over Freeman Brook on Main Street this construction season. Kristine is trying to discern how this will be coordinated with the Main Street Improvement Project. Kristine read Cindi Harshron-Jones' explanation of the project aloud. Jim Sanford asked if Cindi mentioned lights on the bridge and said the Warren Planning Commission would like to have four lights installed. Jim will follow up with Cindi.
- Waitsfield Pocket Park/Lovett Park Project
 - Contract has been awarded.

- Construction timeline is 6 weeks between May 22nd-June 30th.
- Joshua and Kristine are helping to develop an interpretive panel for the park. Kristine is assisting with the GIS work for the creation of a visitor map.
- Peter MacLaren asked what the impact would be to Bridge Street during construction? Josh said there is no anticipated road closure, but there could be instances where a one-lane closure could be necessary.
- MRV Economic Dashboard
 - This month was a transition period for data collection and reporting from MRVPD to MRVCC. Bob asked why the April Dashboard has not been published yet in the Valley Reporter? Kristine explained that Jasmine was on vacation in the middle of the month and she wanted to review the Dashboard before Stephanie submitted it to the paper for the first time. Kristine said she anticipates that the Dashboard would be submitted during the second week of the month again in the future.
- VT Smart Growth Summit – 6/16, hosted by AARP and VNRC. Joshua will be facilitating a small group focusing on Waitsfield (Lawson’s Finest Liquids brewery and shared wastewater) as an example smart growth project.

Flood Resilience/Water Quality/Climate Change

- The Ridge to River grant is closed out, but the group will still continue to meet to move the work forward.
- Joshua initiated a discussion with Chris Koliba UVM professor in the Public Administration, Public Policy & Governance Community Development & Applied Economics Department about the possibility of putting together a public event focused on results from recent climate change research (RACC & BREE) focused on the MRV. The intention is to hold such a community presentation in early fall. The goal is to get the info out of academia and into the community.
- The MRV libraries (Waitsfield, Warren & Moretown) received a competitive PLACE grant (Public Libraries Advancing Community Engagement: Environmental Literacy Through Climate Change Discussions). Kristine provided data to support their application.

Transportation

- Waitsfield West Sidewalk
 - Green Mountain Power installed new poles and relocated utilities ahead of the sidewalk project and the Village Grocery has completed the installation of a canopy and relocated their sign out of the ROW. This is a project that Joshua has been working on since 2010.
- The VT Art Council’s Animating Infrastructure Grant was not awarded to support the design and fabrication of an artist bike rack for Main Street in Warren. There was some discussion about other grant opportunities to help fund bicycle parking in Warren.
- Kristine has been working with local Waitsfield resident Dave Cain to publicize Bike to Work Day on 5/19 and organizing an event with Canteen Creemee Company to offer a discount for anyone who bikes there on Friday evening.
- VTrans announced the [2017 Bike and Ped Grant Program](#). Kristine explained that the Sugarbush Access Rd. Project is eligible. The application deadline is 1:00pm, Friday, July 14, 2017.
 - Bob said that the Town would not have the budget for the match to be able to apply for the grant this summer. Margo asked what the construction estimate was for Phase 1 of the project; Kristine confirmed the estimate of \$745,000 for the section of path between Sugarbush and Paradise Deli. Margo asked if we could apply for a grant just for the design, Kristine explained that VTran’s Bicycle and Pedestrian grant program has a Design/Construction Grant, which requires that the design and construction be completed in sequence.

Housing

- The Mad River Valley Housing Coalition met on 5/11, the discussion focused on a presentation from Kristine on an initiative to use tiny houses as a strategy to address affordable housing in the Valley.
 - Jim Sanford suggested that there was an interesting article in Fine Homebuilding Magazine about net zero housing, and suggested that Kristine look into a planned development in Vergennes that involves Vermod homes.
 - Don Simonini asked what is the definition of tiny houses?
 - Kristine explained that the definition of a tiny house can vary based on the context, meaning some people think tiny houses are only on wheels but they do not necessarily have to be. And if there are no explicit zoning bylaws in a town related to tiny houses, then it is up to the discretion of the Zoning Administrator.
 - Peter suggested referring to them as low square footage dwellings.
- Statewide Property Parcel Mapping Program
 - Kristine has reached out to the Town Administrators, Assessors and/or Listers in all three towns to gauge interest in participating and working together in the first year of the program and created a 1-pager to make the information about the program clear. Waitsfield has signed up to participate in the first year of the program. Warren and Fayston have decided to wait to participate in the second or third year of the program. Kristine also let the group know that Fayston is planning to develop an online parcel viewer similar to Warren's system.
 - Don Simonini asked how the data from this project will differ from the existing parcel layer available through BioFinder or the ANR Atlas. Kristine explained that the Statewide Parcel Mapping program would bring all towns' parcel data up to date and to a certain data quality standard. The issue is that some towns do not have any digital parcel data and others have not been updated on a regular basis.
 - Kari also added that VTrans was able to secure 80% of the program's budget from the federal government and that several state agencies are working together on this program.

Recreation

- Joshua will be presenting the MRV Moves Plan at the [VT Downtown and Historic Preservation Conference](#) focusing on economic development and trails.
- MRVPD and Mad River Path Association have been working closely together on a concept plan for upgrades to the existing Waitsfield Village Path in Irasville. Business owners in the area have expressed interest in an upgraded Mad River Path in this area. Kristine has done the GIS and mapping work to create concept plans to show to the MRPA Board and interested business owners.
- The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) awarded one of 14 Recreational Trails Grants across VT to VMBA/MRR for Blueberry Lake trail improvements – 1.4 miles of new mountain bike trails (Lookout Loop Trail) and 0.5 mile of trail improvements to the existing trail system. MRVPD assisted in the grant application and provided a letter of support.
- Jared brought up the issue of the anticipated purchase of the Mad River Park for recreation fields and need for the towns or the Rec District to purchase liability insurance.
 - Jared asked the group if it makes sense for an individual town or for the four towns (Waitsfield, Warren, Fayston, and Moretown) to have a shared policy?
 - The group consensus was the insurance for the fields should be a shared responsibility. Jared believes this is going to come before the selectboard in each town.
 - There was a discussion about whether or not the Recreation District would qualify for insurance through VLCT? Jared said that the Recreation District can join VLCT and the cost of membership is \$825 for the year.
 - Another option could be for the four towns to commit to applying their existing town policies to cover the fields and each town would be responsible for 25% of any claim.

Historic Preservation

- The Preservation Trust of Vermont's latest [Vermont Restoration Directory](#) is now available. The Directory includes articles and resources for all areas of preservation work, as well as a thorough index of contractors, consultants and building suppliers.
 - Village designation tax credit program?

Energy

- The Central VT Regional Energy Committee recently met and discussed new implementation actions based on goals and policies in the 2016 Central Vermont Regional Plan. A first draft of the energy plan will be completed by May 30.
 - Bonnie explained that energy data that will be sent to local towns was developed using census data and CVRPC has done their best to make sense of statewide data for local planning purposes. The regional plan puts forward general ideas for the region, and they will hold public meetings to get feedback.
 - CVRPC has selected three pilot towns and they will have their draft energy plans completed by July 31st.
- Bonnie also explained that the region is looking at energy generation in terms of MWhs, not just type of generation, so towns can choose how they can reach their goal. She also said that any existing energy generation would count towards town energy generational goals.
 - Don asked if Fayston residents use a solar array in Waitsfield, does the town get credit for that? Bonnie said only the town in which the energy generation is located gets the credit.
- She suggested that people look at this effort not as a mandate, but instead as a proportionate share goal, that towns can decide which pathways to take in order to meet the goals.
- Kristine asked if it is still possible for the three MRVPD towns to work together and Bonnie said as long as the three towns can show their going to meet the energy goals then it should be fine to work together. She explained that Waterbury and Waterbury Center are going to do a joint plan.
- Don asked how the towns are expected to do this work because it sounds complicated. Bonnie said that most towns have covered a good amount of the policies, strategies, and actions in their existing towns plans but now they just need to work on the specifics in order to meet the threshold for an energy plan that will meet the standards for the PSB.
- Don asked what type of town officials from the three pilot towns are going to be participating in the energy planning?
 - Bonnie explained that they needed Selectboards to endorse participation, and then the planning is being done with Energy Commissions and Planning Commissions.

Other

- Yestermorrow is looking for a client for their [public interest design build](#) course this summer. They are looking for a project that can be designed and built in a two-week period that has some tangible benefit to the community. In the past they have done bus shelters, bridges, the Waitsfield bandstand, play structures, etc. They wouldn't charge for labor, but mark-up materials by 20%.
 - Josh asked the group if anyone had any ideas for the project? Kari Dolan suggested checking in with the Recreation District to see if there is anything for the rec fields that is needed.

V. New Business

- Resolution on Complying with Vermont Open Meeting Law
 - Jared made motion to approve the resolution, Peter MacLaren seconded it.
- CVRPC Admin & Staff Services
 - Bob gave an introduction saying that after Bonnie came on board, Josh and Bob met with her to talk about the relationship between CVRPC and MRVPD. At the moment CVRPC provides book keeping and administrative services to the MRVPD. CVRPC's Executive Committee does not want to continue sharing risk of being the employer of record for

several small organizations. We have reached the point of making some decisions about what MRVPD is going to do in the short term and/or long term.

- Bonnie said generally bookkeeping services were transparent (fee for service) but it took a while for CVRPC to figure out exactly what types of services were being offered and whether or not there were any agreements in place. They currently offer services to four small organizations in the region, however, all but MRVPD were not paying enough fees to cover the cost of service. She also said that the “risk of the least employee,” an employee CVRPC has little to no control over, could become a problem in the future. She said they are willing to help all of the organizations move their books over to digital.
- Bonnie also said that any agreement in the future between CVRPC and another organization would have to involve day to day oversight, and that a day could come when CVRPC would have to instruct an MRVPD employee, for example, to back off a project if it didn’t make sense for the region.
- There is an option to come to an interim agreement with CVRPC that would only apply for a few months with a cut off date of Dec. 31st.
- Bob said he recently began exploring options for the MRVPD to handle it’s own services. He said that insurance is the biggest issue because in order to get a tax deductible group plan, you have to have 2 people at all times.
 - Don asked if a staff member left the MRVPD, do insurance companies allow for lag time? Steve Shea said that it depends on whom you talk to at the insurance company as to what would happen.
- Bob said based on one quote for bookkeeping services of \$2,700, the MRVPD could save money on bookkeeping. Jared recommended getting additional quotes for bookkeeping as well.
- Bob said that the MRVPD would also have to open a local bank account and that he has not yet looked into getting workers comp insurance.
- Bob said that his preference is to get the MRVPD set up to handle all of the bookkeeping and services separate from CVRPC, instead of signing an interim agreement.
- Bonnie said that the MRVPD has until the end of July to sign an interim agreement and she will talk to the Executive Committee to let them know where the MRVPD stands and that we are working on it.
- CVRPC will continue to serve on the Steering Committee, and Margo pointed out that they could not end their participation due to the MRVPD MOU.

▪ **Sugarbush Update**

- Margo provided an update on Sugarbush; they currently have three active Act 250 permit applications:
- Friendly Gathering: recently had a hearing and received no negative comments. Margo thanked Fayston for participating. She said she hopes Act 250 will respond before the event is scheduled to start; but if they choose to hold the event before the 30 day appeal period runs out, there’s a risk if an abutter has an issue.
 - Village Double & Sunshine Chair Lift Replacements: Margo explained that the resort anticipates an increase of just 300 people a day across the 2 mountains based on calculations of Comfortable Carrying Capacity (CCC). The resort does not expect increased traffic on the surrounding roads. Thus far, Act 250 has asked for additional information but not called for a hearing.
 - The USFS approved a CCC of 8,730 in the past and that approval was based on upgrading existing lifts, no new lifts or trail pods; these lift replacements are just bringing Sugarbush up to industry standards.
 - The Warren Selectboard gave verbal approval for the Village Double Lift

- Replacement during their 5/2 meeting. Sugarbush will be meeting with the Fayston Selectboard on 5/30 about the Sunshine Lift Replacement.
 - Margo suggested a Letter of Support for the two lift projects from the MRVPD would be helpful.
 - Josh presented a draft letter to the group for their review. Jared made a motion to approve the letter and Kari seconded it.
- Margo said that Kristine had reached out about employee housing initiatives, including the development of a Tenants for Turns program at Sugarbush.
 - Margo passed the idea onto the Human Resources department and it received a favorable reception. Kristine and Margo will set up a meeting to discuss moving forward.
 - Margo explained that Sugarbush had a hard time filling positions this past season and they had less than 20 employees who were here on J1 visas. She anticipates more J1s workers next season that they will have to house.
 - Don asked how many rooms have Tenants for Turns programs at other resorts opened up for employees?
 - Kristine looked up the information after the meeting and confirmed that the program at Stevens Pass has been operating at least since 2012 and over the years they have built a list of approximately 100 landlords who have expressed interest in the program at one time or another. During the 2015/2016 season, they placed 43 employees in housing in local and nearby towns.

VI. Old Business

- Community Vitality Project Update
 - Bob updated the group on efforts of CVP to support recreation in the MRV. They invited the Recreation District to attend the meeting; only two representatives were able to attend due to conflicts.
 - Trey Martin (last Secretary of Administration under Shumlin and currently handling Stowe sale to Vail Resorts) attended the meeting and agreed that it is important for the MRV to focus on recreation. He said the biggest challenge is one of governance and pulling all of the parties together. He said one place in New England has the opportunity to be a recreational mecca, and it could be Vermont.
 - Bob has suggested the group develop a strategic plan using Killington as a model. Bob said it is important to consider how we want recreation to look here and then take it to the towns to get buy-in.
 - Peter said Killington is a good model to use and he thinks it is important to consider a governance model with paid staff. Bob said he believes the public sector needs to invest more in recreation, but Steve Shea said there will be naysayers.
 - Margo Wade said that CVP has strayed from the initial goal of helping to find an alternative funding source for the MRVPD to “relieve the burden on Sugarbush,” although she acknowledged the permit condition that requires that they pay into the MRVPD.

Bob said the next meeting of the MRVPD Steering Committee will be on 6/15, and the discussion will focus on the Municipal Roads General Permit and VLCT will be in attendance. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristine Keeney