

**Mad River Valley Planning District
Steering Committee Meeting
Draft Meeting Minutes for
January 21, 2016
7:00 PM
General Wait House**

Present:

Fayston: Jared Cadwell, Selectboard Member

Waitsfield: Steve Shea, Planning Commissioner; Kari Dolan, Selectboard Member

Warren: Bob Ackland, Selectboard Member; Jim Sanford, Planning Commissioner

Sugarbush: Margo Wade

MRV Chamber of Commerce: Peter MacLaren

CVRPC:

MRVPD: Joshua Schwartz, Dara Torre

Guests: Kelly Stoddard-Poor, AARP; Bob Cook; Serena Fox

Acceptance of the minutes of the November 19, 2015 meeting – minutes were approved.

AARP Age Friendly Community Presentation: Kelly Stoddard-Poor, AARP’s outreach director for Vermont, provided a presentation on AARP’s Age Friendly Community (AFC) program and recent survey data. She shared some demographic trends with the group, noting that 25% of Vermont’s population will be 65 and older in 2030. National survey data has highlighted some important similarities between Boomers and Millennials, and a preference for short commutes and access to public transportation. In Vermont, 20% of adults over 65 report no longer drive (census data). AARP provides advocacy for complete streets and Smartgrowth planning principles, defining livability in terms of development that works for “8 to 80”, or the full age spectrum. Vermont has one Age Friendly Community so far (Newport), and AARP will be soliciting proposals in the spring for a pilot community demonstration pilot called “The Better Block”. Participation in the AFC program provides a five-year planning and implementation process that includes support and resources from AARP, including funding for community surveys. Engagement is a major part of the process, which also involves planning and evaluation. Kelly described the Livability Index community scoring tool available online, as well as a number of community datasets, which she offered to share with the group.

MOU Clarification on Data Report: Joshua distributed a summary of the items suggested by a committee in 2009 (Center for Rural Studies staff reviewed the data report and suggested edits and additional data points). Some of those items were followed up on, others were not. Because of the large number of items, the group asked for a further rundown on the important issues, and ultimately requested more time to review the items before voting. Discussion of the data report generally ensued, with questions about when it’s used (during town plan revisions, e.g.). Kari suggested adding some measures (like Vermont’s Genuine Progress Indicator), and wondered how to use local data to derive our own measure (perhaps through a grant or graduate student project). Other new data suggested included EV charging station data. The group agreed to review the recommendations for the next meeting. Beyond its implications for the data report, Bob added that the MOU structure and agreement would be studied and revised this year.

Director's Report: Joshua reviewed the latest Director's Report, which included updates on the Warren Main Street project. A local committee that includes Warren Planning Commissioners will provide a local focus with strong community input on the design. The committee expects to recommend a Local Project Manager from among the applicants by next week. Joshua said that the Waitsfield Pocket Park project is also moving along, having received approval from the selectboard (4 to 1) to proceed with design. Kari noted that the current design would require significant alterations to meet the floodplain regulations. Joshua clarified that the design will evolve specifically to meet the limits imposed by permitting, and that the conceptual images seen to date are just a starting point for design. The next step for that project is to form a project committee. Joshua described some next steps after the Economic Summit, including a meeting of the MRV Transportation Advisory Committee. A new EV charging grant is available for designated village centers (Waitsfield and Warren). Bob added that Warren recently explored an offering from Green Mountain Power for a charging station at the town's park and ride. The Middlesex park and ride will be receiving a Phase 2 charger soon from VTrans. Peter noted that the Valley needs Phase 2 chargers. Regarding housing, Joshua described a productive MRV Housing Coalition meeting, which included participation from Downstreet Housing's Executive Director, Eileen Peltier, who strongly supports a rewrite of the 2006 housing study. She is excited about the interest and awareness in the Valley right now around affordable housing, and is particularly supportive of exploring new opportunities for additional workforce housing opportunities in the Valley (incomes at 100 to 120% of area median income). Kari asked the group for clarification on the recreation district's request, and suggested that the annual reports from area nonprofits be available before the Valley Town Leadership in the future as better context for selectboard members when receiving budget requests.

Vision & Vitality Update: Joshua provided a quick recap of the Economic Summit, which had over 250 participants. Work is underway in the identified asset groups – Food, Innovation, Recreation and Wellness, with group meetings already taking place and long and short-term projects in development. The Planning District will focus on the three identified issue areas – Housing, Transportation and Downtowns (with a focus on Irasville). Peter provided an update regarding the Economic Dashboard, now being coordinated by Patricia Floyd. The first version of the Dashboard appeared in the Valley Reporter this week, with plans to have it appear monthly and also exist on the Planning District website (to which the Chamber website will link). Margo provided some feedback on the Dashboard, suggesting that skier visits include percentages for easier comparison between seasons. Peter will share that feedback with Patricia, and noted that the Dashboard is a good start but remains a work in progress. He noted that Jack Sharry, an active member of the Economic Vitality Series, is now the chair of the Chamber's marketing committee. The Vision & Vitality steering committee is evolving post-summit, with some new members and a focus on funding options.

Workplan & Staffing: With the additional town funding that will support two full-time staff expected to become effective in March, there's an accelerated timeline for the new hire, and the need to devote time to specifying the additional work load and job description. To start the discussion, Joshua distributed an updated workplan by hours (dated 1/21/16), showing some edits since the last iteration, which showed 365 hours in excess. He edited the workplan to reflect new priorities - decreasing time on economic development, increasing transportation, decreasing placemaking, and doubling flood

resilience, with a reduction in the excess hours to 125. Fifty (50) hours were included for revising the MOU payment terms. The search for the new hire will begin in February, and a subgroup of members will develop the job description (Joshua, Bob and Jim). They will share the job description with the larger group via email, with a goal of starting to advertise in February.

Marketing and Outreach: Joshua has been researching a new website for the Planning District. Peter suggested reaching out to the new Chamber marketing committee chair, Jack Sharry. Due to time constraints, the group deferred the website and branding discussion to next month's meeting.

Sugarbush Update: Margo provided an update on the December holiday period, reporting skier visits down 50% over last year, with lodging down 17%. She said the number and variety of off-snow events was successful, including the popular Snow Dance. Overall activity in the Valley seemed high, with the Big Picture reporting record-breaking sales in December. The three-day MLK holiday weekend was robust and the resort is now 100% open. Snowmaking is starting to slow down. For President's Week, lodging reservations are very strong for Clay Brook and the Sugarbush condos. Regarding the Gadd Brook project, Margo reported that the roof is on and most of the windows have been installed. The resort is looking forward to hosting the Vermont Mountain Bike Association festival on July 22-24 and is pursuing a special event permit from Fayston, including a camping request. Over 400 people are expected each weekend day of the event.

The meeting adjourned at 9:29PM.

Next Meeting: February 18 at 7PM. The group will focus on the job description for the new planner and a discussion of a new website and branding process for the Planning District.

*Respectfully submitted,
Dara Torre*