

Steering Committee
Mad River Valley Planning District
Minutes
February 17, 2011

Present were:

Fayston: Jared Cadwell, Selectmen; Chuck Martel, Planning Commissioner
Waitsfield: Bill Parker, Selectmen; Steve Shea, Planning Commissioner
Warren: Bob Ackland, Selectman; Jim Sanford, Planning Commissioner
MRV Chamber of Commerce: Jim Halavonich
Sugarbush: Margo Wade
CVRPC: Laurie Emery
MRVPD: Joshua Schwartz
Others: Roger Maple, David Howe, Waitsfield; Kara Herlihy, Valley Reporter

The minutes of the January 20, 2011 meeting were accepted as corrected to reflect that the February 2011 meeting was scheduled for February 17 (and not January 20).

Director's Report: A few of the activities of the past month include: S. 27 in the Vermont Legislature would provide for towns to hold a public hearing on energy-related projects in their town needing a certificate of need from the Public Service Board. Currently, towns can comment on projects, but are not authorized to hold a public hearing. However, it doesn't look as if this bill will be considered during this session. Energy: MRVPD co-hosted a presentation on "Smart Grid" with Adam Greshin, submitted an application to the VT Energy & Climate Action Network to underwrite a series of 5 presentations on various energy topics, and received funding from the VT Community Foundation for energy monitors which will assist Localvolt with their small business energy outreach program. MRV Path: The Path Assoc applied to the New England Grassroots Fund to implement interpretive signage and MRVPD provided a letter of support. Transportation: MRVPD continued contact with Senator Leahy's staff regarding an earmark for the repaving of the Sugarbush Access Road. Unfortunately, earmarks are no longer being considered by Congress. Agriculture: MRVPD's application for \$12,000 to implement the food system mapping project was not funded. Rural Resource Commission: MRVPD received funding for 3 grants: Mad River Glen's historic district nomination, the Blair barn restoration project in the Town of Warren, and funds to update the Town of Warren's Historic District to include the timber crib dam. Recreation: The first meeting of the MRV trail collaborative steering committee was held and the group shortened the project list to 4: update and reprint the MRV trail map, inventory trail options, work with the MRV Chamber to update its trail webpage, and hold a meeting with Vermont Youth Conservation Corps to identify a trail project that could be done this summer. Other: The Planning District joined the *VT Council for Rural Development's* working landscape partnership to support local agriculture and forestry. The *U.S. Census Bureau* has released some Vermont data on State, counties, and communities—population, housing, and occupancy.

CCTA/GMTA: The General Manager of the Chittenden County Transit Authority, Chris Cole, has resigned and is taking a position with the State of Vermont Transportation Agency. M. Wade will keep us apprised of developments in the merger of CCTA and the Green Mountain Transit Agency (GMTA).

Energy Planning: R. Maple and D. Howe were present to share their concerns about the Valley not having a Valley-wide energy plan that could then be implemented by various entities. They believe that the Planning

District is the most appropriate entity to get this work accomplished and that the Planning District should make it its priority. It was explained that assisting as a resource for planning is one of the Planning District's priorities, including energy planning, but that developing a Valley-wide plan goes against the local independence of Vermont communities. In addition, a plan adopted by the Planning District would have no standing in regulatory settings since the Planning District is not a regulatory body and is not authorized by State Statute to be such. It is the individual towns that have this authority. The Steering Committee of the Planning District has instructed the Executive Director in the decision making of the Planning District's priorities and the Executive Director is to follow those directions. The Planning District is an information resource to support local planning efforts. Its functions are to facilitate and collaborate with the towns. Ultimately, it's the individual town residents that decide what they want their plan to say.

It was noted that the planning commissions are addressing energy issues through the development of the energy element of their municipal (town) plans. Local planning is driven through the local planning commissions and their work. When queried if there was any interest in a unified approach, it was suggested that on energy issues a unified policy may not be achievable among the 3 towns. The Planning District is a mechanism for the 3 towns to bring ideas to each other and collaborate on behalf of the towns. Planning is coordinated at the Planning District level, but strategies are developed at the local level.

The Planning District's role on energy policy is to provide a mechanism for education on the issues. That is where the focus in the District's FY12 work plan is on the issue of energy, and as indicated by the 2 energy issue forums that have been held to date. R. Maple and D. Howe stated that they want the Planning District to develop or oversee the process of developing an energy plan and delegate to various organizations pieces of it. They want action to happen. It was explained that the Planning District will do its part to facilitate and coordinate, but the Planning District cannot focus only on one topic and only has one staff person to do the work. It was also noted that the 3 Towns' municipal (local) plans are very similar, but they are not co-joined. The Planning District will continue to coordinate energy forums to inform the public on the issues.

The MRVPD Executive Director has applied for funding to develop a Valley visioning process to include the Valley's current energy consumption, forums on different aspects of energy use and sources presented by experts in the field, analyzing what our threshold needs are, and developing strategies to meet those needs. The District has applied for \$10,000 to \$12,000, but as of yet has not received any funding. However, as a first step, the Planning District began the information process by holding 2 energy forums. The Executive Director would like to see the organization of a multi-stakeholder group that would look at the issues and work with a better-informed public to create a vision regarding energy. R. Maple and D. Howe stated they would like to see this happen, as well, and including conservation activities. It was queried whether the Planning District could put some of its fund balance toward this effort. The Planning District will give this some consideration, but the fund balance is used to fund the next year's budget and without a fund balance, towns and Sugarbush would have to provide additional funding to support the work of the Planning District.

Legislative Update: The Legislature and Administration want a statewide energy plan that is more encompassing than the existing plan and includes more strategies for implementation. The Governor wants sites identified that should *not* be developed as wind power sites. It was agreed to invite Adam Greshin to the next Steering Committee meeting to further discuss energy planning by the State.

MRV Data Report 2010: J. Schwartz has updated the 2010 Data Report and will have it available on the web site. The newly released 2010 Census data has been added to the report, as well as other data. The updates were reviewed and discussion ensued on the trends. More data will be added as it becomes available,

particularly as more of the 2010 U.S. Census data is released.

FY 12 Work Plan: In the continuing discussion of the FY 12 work plan, it was agreed by the Steering Committee members that J. Cadwell, C. Martel, and J. Halavonich will serve as the advisory committee for the Executive Director so he can have their input as needed between Steering Committee meetings.

Projects on the work plan have been listed in the order of most hours spent to least. J. Schwartz stated that he had more confidence with this work plan than with any previous one. It was queried whether Sugarbush has provided input into the work plan. It was noted that despite reviewing the work plan at Steering Committee meetings since November and providing copies, there has been very little comment from Sugarbush other than the comments provided by J. Lisai prior to the January meeting. M. Wade stated that as she understands it, Sugarbush's priorities regarding the Steering Committee work plan are: data, energy, education, transportation, and the MOU. Given that plenty of notice has been provided, it was agreed that the FY 12 work plan is done.

Steering Committee members have agreed to be responsible for attending meetings of the following groups: Jim Sanford, MRV Path; Chuck Martel, Mad River Byway; Jim Halavonich and Margo Wade, Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC); economic development data, Jim Halavonich, Bob. Ackland, Bill Parker, and the MRV Chamber; Localvolts, Bill Parker; Valley Futures Network, Jared Cadwell; Mad River Housing Coalition, Jared Cadwell.

It was further agreed that J. Schwartz coordinates with the various groups, but is not the leader of these groups. It was further agreed that the Steering Committee members attending the group meetings cannot speak on behalf of the Planning District without first having Steering Committee concurrence on the issue. The Planning District needs to not be pushed into a position before it's time to do so.

It was moved, seconded, and unanimously voted to accept the February 9, 2011 FY 12 work plan.

Next Meeting: The Steering Committee is scheduled to meet on March 17, 2011, although the date may be changed if it appears there will not be a quorum on that date.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Emery