

Steering Committee
Mad River Valley Planning District
Minutes
January 20, 2011

Present were:

Fayston: Chuck Martel, Planning Commissioner

Waitsfield: Steve Shea, Planning Commissioner

Warren: Bob Ackland, Selectman; Jim Sanford, Planning Commissioner

MRV Chamber of Commerce:

Sugarbush: Jason Lisai

CVRPC: Laurie Emery

MRVPD: Joshua Schwartz

Others: Jamey Wimble (Mad River Glen), Al Carr, Roger Maple, Howard Howe, Waitsfield

The minutes of the December 16, 2010 meeting were accepted as written.

Director's Report: *Mad River Valley Path Assn:* The Clay Brook bridge project is moving forward; updated trail maps are being printed, and among other things, the Path is applying to the New England Grass Roots Fund to implement interpretive signage. It should be noted that the Path Assn ended FY 2010 with 400 members donating \$18,000. *Transportation:* Contact with Senator Leahy's staff is ongoing regarding funding for the Sugarbush Access Road re-paving project. Discussions continue with VTrans ROW chief and the Attorney General regarding structures and signage in the State's ROW. *Valley Futures Network:* The Planning District's application to the E-Vermont Community Broadband project on behalf of the Town of Waitsfield was not funded. However, discussions continue on how to bring the Front Porch Forum to the Valley. The estimated cost is \$5,000. *Energy:* The Planning District will be submitting a grant application to the VT Energy & Climate Action Network (VECAN) to fund a series of energy presentations on topics such as solar, energy efficiency, etc. The Planning District applied to the Vermont Community Foundation's Energy Monitor Program to develop a Localvolt-led small business outreach program that would provide 3 months of monitoring of energy usage and follow up energy information visits to 12 local businesses. *Agriculture:* The Planning District applied for funding to implement a MRV food system mapping project to identify the Valley's assets, gaps, relationships, and provide a structure for enhancing the Valley's agricultural economy. J. Schwartz is participating in a group focused on developing a local food distribution system. The USDA ERS Food Environment Atlas has been released and provides 90 indicators of the nation's food environment. Users can query county information and see it mapped on the site. The Atlas is available at www.ers.usda.gov/foodatlas/atlas/. *Rural Resource Commission:* J. Schwartz is providing support on 3 Certified Local Government (CLG)/Rural Resource Commission grant applications; Mad River Glen historic district nomination, Warren Blair barn restoration/preservation project, and to update Warren's Historic District register to include the timber crib dam. *Waitsfield Infrastructure:* The wastewater committee will be presenting the report on decentralized wastewater February 1 at the Big Picture theatre. The study evaluated the needs and capacity for small pipe decentralized wastewater treatment options in Irasville and Waitsfield Village. Funding options are being explored to utilize State revolving loan funds and \$1 million in EPA funds for the creation of a decentralized wastewater system, develop a district for same, and start a demonstration program. *Recreation:* The MRV Trail Collaborative initiative's first meeting, funded by the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Technical Assistance program, is scheduled for January 25. The intent is to enhance networking and connections among MRV trail organizations. This work is in partnership with the Mad River

Path Assn. *Other*: J. Schwartz is assisting the Town of Warren with its town plan rewrite. Efficiency VT has started a new program entitled “Business Energy Ambassadors” which provides trained volunteers to conduct onsite business energy visits focusing on lighting.

MRV Data Update: A full report is nearly ready, but some data needs to still be updated. J. Schwartz provided a power point presentation reviewing the economic data and suggested that showing the impact of all growth, sales, etc on the Valley rather than just Sugarbush’s impact would be more informative. Additional analysis will be done and the report presented to the Steering Committee. At that point, options about data use and collection can be discussed further with the idea of continuing the 2009 data committee.

FY2012 Work Plan: In reviewing the work plan draft and the number of projects and organizations with which the Planning District is involved, it was suggested that work done needs to be of priority and kept within the realm of being do-able based on the available time of one person. Anything that is changed on the work plan needs to accommodate objectives of the District and commitments already made. It was discussed that much of the focus should be on building leadership and providing co-sponsorship to build leadership and not be the Planning District who the actual projects. Review of individual tasks on the work plan included:

- ▶ MOU/Data Report: This is accurate and helpful information, but it might be better to have a committee of the Planning District to provide guidance on the data development and analysis and assist with gathering the data. For economic development data, we could also appoint an economic development committee, including the Chamber, which would help develop leadership throughout the Valley by engaging the business community. This Committee could build the groundwork for consideration of a local options tax.

- ▶ Town Plan Assistance: The Planning District, Central VT Regional Planning, and the VT League of Cities and Towns are all resources for this work and town officials should be guided to whichever is the most appropriate depending on the topic and the time availability of staff.

- ▶ Energy: The Planning District should provide coordination for groups, and support for grants. J. Schwartz hopes to find funding to develop a Valley energy vision that would include what our consumption is, what other sources are available for energy, and how to get them in the mix.

- ▶ Transportation: The Planning District should assist with enhancing the MRV Transportation Advisory Committee and funding for public transit, development of leadership, and recognition that public transit services benefit the entire Valley.

Further discussion highlighted the need for each Steering Committee member to be responsible for MRVPD representation on an organization, such as J, Sanford is on the MR Path. This would help build leadership and keep the Planning District involved in outreach that can’t be done by just one person. This representation would be beneficial on the MR Byway, Valley TAC, and energy projects. Steering Committee members are asked to volunteer to serve as the Planning District liaison on a group. It was further discussed that the Steering Committee members can’t commit the Planning District, or its staff, to anything that hasn’t been discussed and agreed upon at the full Steering Committee level.

It was queried whether the Planning District’s role was to present the pro’s and con’s on a topic, such as energy. It was responded that the point of seeking funding to develop an energy vision is to engage the public (the broader community) in becoming better informed about the energy choices and developing an energy vision for the Valley as a result of these discussions.

It was asked if we should develop a work plan from scratch using the topic areas of: energy, transportation, agriculture, economy, and recreation and identify what needs to happen in each area or has Valley-wide impact. It was stated that the Planning District spent time identifying the priorities before J. Schwartz was hired. The 5

areas listed on the work plan encompass those priorities, but flexibility is provided for the Executive Director to move among them to provide information and perspective on the Valley-wide broader picture.

Getting back to energy, the Planning District could provide direction through oversight rather than being too involved in individual projects. The projects should be parceled out to other groups to implement. Energy grant writing assistance from the Planning District is so funds can be secured to implement projects.

The Executive Director has assisted with grants that raised \$6 million with \$5.5 million being the Waitsfield Telecom project. Grant writing takes about 20% of the ED's time.

It was discussed that the first responsibilities should include: Data and MOU, Towns and Sugarbush support, and indirectly transportation, energy, and Path Assn.

The Planning District is a planning and coordination entity and not actually an entity to spear head projects. We need to be able to provide the Valley-wide perspective. The agriculture/farm to plate initiative includes a planning element (food system and distribution) and a coordination element (keeping the dialog going).

Most grants are available only to 501©3 organizations, such as the Planning District; most of the organizations seeking grants are not 501©3's. It was recommended that nothing on the work plan be changed, and that the Executive Director be encouraged to decide what is important when.

J. Schwartz commented that the input he is seeking is to make sure that the work he is doing is what the Steering Committee wants him to do. He sees his work as helping with seeking grant funding, but not taking the lead on energy vision planning right now. Data, the MOU, and municipal support are the most important areas. J. Schwartz can streamline the list details and present the revision at the February meeting of the Steering Committee.

After further discussion, it was agreed that J. Schwartz will prioritize the work plan into deliverables and the Steering Committee will finalize the discussion at the February meeting. It was stated that the Planning District should provide oversight on the fringe and not be too involved in the projects outside the priorities and have Steering Committee members be more involved in some of the organizations.

Next Meeting: The Steering Committee will meet again January 20, 2011.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Emery