

Addison County Regional Planning Commission Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, October 11, 2000

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission Meeting on October 11, 2000 was held at the Vergennes Fire Station in Vergennes with Harvey Smith presiding.

ROLL CALL:

<i>Addison:</i>		<i>Orwell:</i>	
<i>Bridport:</i>	Ed Payne	<i>Panton:</i>	
<i>Bristol:</i>	Bill Sayre	<i>Ripton:</i>	
<i>Cornwall:</i>	Don Shall	<i>Salisbury:</i>	
<i>Ferrisburgh:</i>	Ted Ingraham	<i>Shoreham:</i>	
<i>Goshen:</i>		<i>Starksboro:</i>	
<i>Leicester:</i>		<i>Vergennes:</i>	Terry Faith-Weihs
<i>Lincoln:</i>	Rick Good	<i>Waltham:</i>	Tom Yager
<i>Middlebury:</i>	Fred Dunnington	<i>Weybridge:</i>	
	Karl Neuse	<i>Whiting:</i>	
<i>Monkton:</i>	Thea Gaudette		
<i>New Haven:</i>	Harvey Smith		
	Allen Karnatz		

CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:

<i>AC Chamber of Commerce:</i>	
<i>AC Community Action Group:</i>	Bob Bernstein
<i>Otter Creek Audubon Society:</i>	Judy Kowalczyk
<i>AC Economic Development Corp.:</i>	

STAFF: Adam Lougee

Business Meeting

Approval of Minutes: 9/13/00

Harvey asked for any omissions/amendments to the September meeting minutes. Tom Yager asked that his name be added to the attendance list.

Karl Neuse moved to approve the minutes of the monthly meeting on September 13, 2000, with the addition of Tom Yager to the roll call. Ed Payne seconded the motion. All approved, with Fred Dunnington and Ted Ingraham abstaining.

Treasurer's Report

Adam announced that the commission is on sound financial footing. The balances and accounts receivable are good.

Bob Bernstein moved to accept the Treasurer's Report. Bill Sayre seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

Act 250: Adam announced that the only active, disputed case at present involves the windmill in East Middlebury. Technically, this issue falls under Act 248, but the two are very similar. Adam attended the site meeting, but, as he found no significant impact upon the regional plan, he did not attend the next hearing. The committee just received a new application from Middlebury College for the new 200-space Kenyon Arena parking lot that has not yet been reviewed.

Transportation Advisory Committee: Rick announced that the committee went over the bike/ped program from the last meeting. Adam spoke to Dean Pierce, and the contract will now be extended a couple of months to allow for more public input as requested last month. The final draft will be available at next month's meeting. John Emerson and Dan Baker will be coming to the Executive Board meeting to discuss the bylaws of the committee. John Emerson has been voted the chair of this committee. Ed pointed out that construction began on Cider Mill Road to

lower the hill. Adam and Harvey pointed out that the ACRPC worked hard on this grade alignment project, and it is nice to see it being acted upon.

Joint Partners Report

Adam stated that Jamie Stewart attended the last Executive Board Meeting to discuss forming a “Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy” (“CEDS”) for the region. The CEDS will be formed for the purpose of accessing grants and loans from the Economic Development Agency of the federal government. The Executive Board asked a number of questions regarding the organization of a CEDS and the role of the joint partners.

Currently, ACRPC is helping the Regional Marketing Organization (Chamber) with web-based tourist information. The ACRPC is using the GIS system to create maps of lodging, dining, and attractions for the sites.

In addition, joint partners sponsored a telecommunications conference at the end of last month. The companies that supply telecommunications structures to Addison County as well as the businesses that utilize these services were invited.

Bob Bernstein asked about attendance. Adam responded that all the major suppliers were represented, including Verizon, Adelphia, Sovernet, and other local providers. Also, there were an estimated 20-30 interested businesses present.

Harvey pointed out that it was important to convert the discussion into layman’s terms, as even many of the users didn’t have the terminology.

Adam stated that there would be more discussion regarding the glitches and difficulties with rural areas, specifically. They are also investigating the possibility of applying for a rural telecommunications grant to match the funds that have been expended privately.

Karl asked if the end result will be that we would ultimately have the infrastructure that we need in place. Harvey replied that much of the infrastructure presently exists in the current lines. Adelphia, for example, has been laying a tremendous amount of fiber-optic lines with a capacity beyond what was originally thought.

Rick voiced his concern that none of these fiber-optic lines were laid in Lincoln, and he is certain there are many businesses there that would benefit from better and faster connections.

Harvey pointed out that the problem with the outlying areas is that there are more possibilities for obstructions on lines that are three miles or more away from the carrier.

Rick asked if there were minutes taken and, if so, if he could obtain a copy. Adam responded that he could, and he pointed out that the Middlebury Cable Channel filmed the meeting as well.

Harvey noted that many of the attendees were beginners without any on-line experience, while others were experts. All benefited from the discussion, despite their relative level of experience.

Rick reiterated that his main concern is the smaller communities.

Delegate/Staff Recognition

Adam recognized Stacy Johnson for taking the minutes at the ACRPC meetings.

Old Business

Distribution of Workplan and Budget for Commissioners: Adam distributed the budget and Workplan. Fred asked if this was what was voted on in July, and Adam answered that it was. He recommended that the delegates place this copy in their member packets, and he asked that they call with any questions or comments.

Personnel: There are two new employees of the ACRPC staff. Brandy Saxton started last Monday as the new planner/grant writer. She has a master's degree in landscape architecture and public administration, as well as planning experience in several small towns in New York. She has good computer skills, good personal skills, and is currently putting together a synopsis of Jeff Carr's housing study. Jeff will be the speaker at next month's Public Program to discuss his study of housing in Vermont. The other new employee is Garrett Dague who begins on October 16 as the new transportation planner. His credentials include a masters in urban and regional planning, planning experience in Norwich, New York, and experience with the New York department of transportation as an engineer.

Allen asked if there was a good applicant pool. Adam responded that there were more applicants for the planner/grant writer position than for the transportation position. However, there were several qualified candidates for both positions and that he was happy with the response and with the candidates selected.

Adam also noted that Brandy and Garrett would attend the next meeting for introductions.

Other: none

New Business

Approval of New Haven Town Plan and Confirmation of Planning Efforts Under 24 V.S.A. 4350 of the Town of New Haven: Thea announced that the public hearing was held last week. The committee recommends approval and confirmation of the plan. Fred asked if there was anything available in writing regarding their plan. Thea responded that the Local Government Committee has the written plan, but because of the quick turn-around, it isn't available at the moment. Thea mentioned that the plan included some special needs along route 7 and an emphasis on maintaining the rural and agricultural nature of the town.

Karl asked what was included regarding route 7. Allen replied that there are some zoning changes near the old Sugarhouse restaurant. A piece of land including a portion of the old driving range will now be zoned for commercial development. Bob asked how many people had been involved in writing that revision. Harvey responded that it has been a rather lengthy process, with many meetings and much public input.

Terry asked if the Regional Planning Commission has ever rejected a town plan. Thea responded that this had not happened because the committee and the commission are not responsible for reviewing the content of the plan. Rather, they are empowered to make sure the planning process is followed correctly and the plan contains all the necessary elements. The review is technical.

Karl asked if the committee checks for any inconsistencies within the plan, or between the new plan and the plans of surrounding towns. Thea answered that, yes, they did examine these aspects.

Terry stated that she feels it would be very beneficial for all towns affected by an issue, such as route 7, to get together and discuss the impact on everyone, rather than one single town.

Harvey pointed out that it is also the responsibility of the committee to write out a review of the plan to find weaknesses, places for changes, or suggestions.

Terry clarified that her comment was not directed specifically at New Haven, but at the planning process in general. Rick commented that this is what committees like the TAC are for. Terry stated that the issue is land use rather than transportation. Judy agreed that the plan would be more cohesive if these issues were planned together. Terry said that the communities together could make a bigger impact than individually. She suggested that the Regional Planning Commission come together and make recommendations as a whole. Thea pointed out that the problem with this arrangement is that each town is in a different stage of their plan. While this is a good suggestion for the committee as a whole, it is not within the local government committee's parameters.

Terry commented that Vergennes is greatly affected by the Ferrisburgh or New Haven town plans regarding, for example, route 7 and route 22A. At the moment, we only come together for issues like crisis management, when we could work towards coming to a consensus on other issues that effect multiple towns.

Fred likened the towns to children at various levels of development. It is conceivable to have standards through the regional plan, but it is a very delicate issue once the regional commission begins to dictate policies to the towns. He pointed out that this is an issue the next generation of regional planners can review again, but it will be very difficult to get all towns to the exact same place.

Terry responded that just because it is a delicate issue doesn't mean it should be deliberately avoided. The commission can act as a forum for discussion without making decisions for the towns.

Don suggested that the commission provide an alert service to the towns to inform them of what the others are doing with regard to specifically cross-town issues.

Fred pointed out the benefits of creating a build-out analysis of the town plans to illustrate the possible long-term effects on things like traffic and industry.

Harvey reminded the group that there is a motion on the floor.

Bill wished to elaborate on the notion of "delicate issues." He commented that once the commission decides that people outside of a town have the right to decide what happens within that town, the lines get blurred. Discussion and exchange of ideas are positive, but the region as a whole will never agree. For example, if the commission decided that transportation of goods is a vital priority in Vermont, and the big trucks must therefore move through Vergennes, this decision would be problematic for the town. Traditionally, the towns have been given as much leeway as possible in deciding these affairs.

Terry asserted that we must agree to disagree as a commission.

Bob clarified that the citizen interest group members present don't vote on this type of issue.

Allen Karnatz moved to approve and confirm the New Haven Town Plan, and Bill Sayre seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Lewis Creek Association Project, Build-Out Analysis: Adam informed the Commission that Kevin Behm was at Champlain Valley Union High School making a presentation regarding a project that utilized technology in planning. The focus of the project is on mapping using GIS-based technology. A wildlife analysis and an historical analysis of build-outs using aerial photos to show town development are also included. This information is to be shared with all of the towns in the watershed. Kevin assisted in the creation of a build-out analysis based upon three layers of data: existing zoning information, 911 points, and parcel information. Town planners using the build out software are allowed to change the zoning information to, for example, increase the density in a village area and see the possible consequences. Instead of guessing at the outcome of various zoning scenarios, this technology gives a simple prediction based on pre-existing data.

Municipal Planning Grant Applications: Applications are due by October 20 for towns with approved and confirmed plans. Adam is expecting applications from Middlebury, New Haven, Addison, Panton, Leicester, and Lincoln. Adam reminded delegates that the ACRPC staff can assist in the grant writing application process.

Ted asked about the life of a plan once approved. Harvey responded that it was a 5-year life.

Adam stated that there is \$50,000 in planning grant money to be split amongst the towns of Addison County. There is a maximum of \$15,000 per town. Last year, four towns were funded, and one was asked to take slightly less than initially applied for.

Allen asked if the \$50,000 was fixed. Adam replied that it was, unless other towns in other regions of the state don't use all of their respective allocations.

Other: none

Member's Concerns/Information

Comments from the Delegates: Ed commented that the Addison County Solid Waste District declined to participate in a flyover to enforce regulations. The flyovers are a collaboration of the Agency of Natural Resources, the Civil Air Patrol, and the Addison County Sheriff.

Comments from the Chair: none

Adjournment:

Karl Neuse moved to adjourn the meeting. Tom Yager seconded the motion. The motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Submitted by: Stacy Johnson