

Addison County Regional Planning Commission Full Commission Meeting

Wednesday, January 10, 2001

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission Meeting on January 10, 2001 was held at the Kirk Alumni Center at Middlebury College with Harvey Smith presiding.

ROLL CALL:

<i>Addison:</i>		<i>New Haven:</i>	Harvey Smith
<i>Bridport:</i>	Ed Payne		Allen Karnatz
<i>Bristol:</i>	Bill Sayre	<i>Orwell:</i>	
	Jim Peabody	<i>Panton:</i>	
<i>Cornwall:</i>	Don Shall	<i>Ripton:</i>	
	Bill McQuillan	<i>Salisbury:</i>	
<i>Ferrisburgh:</i>		<i>Shoreham:</i>	
<i>Goshen:</i>		<i>Starksboro:</i>	
<i>Leicester:</i>	Joan Witteman	<i>Vergennes:</i>	Randy Friday
<i>Lincoln:</i>			John Emerson
<i>Middlebury:</i>	Fred Dunnington	<i>Waltham:</i>	
	Karl Neuse	<i>Weybridge:</i>	Jan Albers
<i>Monkton:</i>	Thea Gaudette	<i>Whiting:</i>	Ellen Kurrelmeyer

CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:

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

STAFF: Kevin Behm
Brandy Saxton

Public Program

Andrea Morgante of the Lewis Creek Association and Kevin Behm of the ACRPC shared a demonstration of the uses of GIS systems in planning within the watershed. Andrea attended a previous Regional Planning Commission meeting looking for support for this project. Through funding from the USDA, which senator Leahy was instrumental in acquiring, the Lewis Creek Association has been able to explore the possible ways in which GIS technology can be used by local communities. Two projects were undertaken using this grant, which amounted to \$51,000.

Andrea outlined the value of analyzing data using GIS to understand dynamic information, not solely to make maps. The Lewis Creek Association wanted to look at this information from a watershed prospective to help make local decisions which take into account the impact on other town plans and conservation issues.

Why use this technology to project impact upon the watershed? Andrea pointed out several important areas of interest in watersheds, such as environmental conservation, historical activity (such as historical land use patterns and the ways they are affected by the economy), political concerns, and common social interests like clean water.

Where is the Lewis Creek Watershed? There are parts of the Lewis Creek Watershed in the Addison County towns of Bristol, Ferrisburgh, Monkton, and Starksboro. The area is 51, 899 acres, with 1698 residents and a population of 4550.

What does the Lewis Creek Association do? The Lewis Creek Association promotes education programs in schools, road crossings for animals, wildlife tracking, streambank restoration, and water quality monitoring at local swimming holes. The Association is action oriented, and they want all citizens to take an interest in these issues as they effect us all.

Andrea identified her hope that the Regional Planning Commission will help the Lewis Creek Association to get the word out and assist in communication with other planning and conservation groups. They are hoping to gather more data about water quality and wildlife habitat. This is the kind of information that needed to be pulled together. In addition, a better understanding of historic land use patterns can enable the Planning Commission to better manage existing land use policies and see possible outcomes and perspectives on the computer.

Andrea and Kevin identifies some of the pieces of the projects undertaken with the USDA grant.

1. Data Development and Correction to update the soil maps of the towns and the surface water maps, as this information changes over the years.

2. Road Ditch Erosion to determine the impact on water quality, the sources of sedimentation, and nutrient increases in soil. This information can then be used to effectively lobby for improvements to these roads.

3. Detailed Land Cover Types: Maps of land cover types can be overlaid with associated species lists of animals that thrive in these various types of habitats. These maps can then be used to identify possible areas for tracking projects.

4. Watershed Municipal Zoning and Town Plan Review : an intern at the ACRPC developed a matrix that shows the language in the various town plans and the intentions of the towns communicated in their plans. This can be used to compare plans and perhaps help towns to reach more of a consensus on inter-related issues.

5. Historic Built-up Land: Comparison of the structures existing along major roadways from maps in 1962, 1977, 1992, and 1996. The criteria for built-up land is five structures within a half mile on one side of the road or a quarter mile on both sides of road. In the example Kevin showed of this technology, the comparison indicates that build-up has occurred less along major highways and more within the surrounding landscape. Another example compared the growth patterns on Monkton from 1869, 1942, 1962, 1977, 1992, and 1995.

6. Future Build-out Tool: We can then use the Historic Build-up and extend it into the future using current zoning statistics, the capacities of various housing areas, existing town GIS maps, tax parcels, and E911 structures. The methodology consists of creating a table of each parcel's acreage by zoning district, determining existing parcels that are fully developed, and calculating potential new development allowed. The resulting summary table tracks the actions taken to create the build-out, so the work can be retraced. It is possible to add variables, such as a change in the minimum lot size from 10 acres to 5 acres, then rerun the program.

Andrea then identified the next steps for the Lewis Creek Association. They hope to assist local communities in using these new tools to rewrite their town plans and zoning regulations. They would like to work with a diverse variety of groups to assess various goals and understand the natural resources within different communities and customize planning to fit the needs of each community. They would like to provide ongoing support for towns and assist in keeping decision making at the local level.

Finally, Andrea thanked the USDA, Senator Leahy, and the various town boards and commissions in each community that assisted the Lewis Creek Association in these endeavors.

Question: Is the Lewis Creek Association a volunteer program?

Answer: Yes, it is made up of volunteers from all six towns within the watershed.

Question: Is there a policy in place to protect the privacy of landowners in the gathering of information of this type? Much of this information is not in the public domain. Are the landowners protected?

Answer: The policy is to get permission before entering private property along the streambank.

Question: Is the information subject to review by the landowner before it enters public domain?

Answer: This information is already in the domain and does not require actual passage onto landowners' property.

Question: What exactly was Lewis Creek's role in this project? Was the goal to compile this information and create maps from it?

Answer: The purpose of tonight's presentation was to show the data sets gathered and how they can be used to the benefit of different groups. But the project is not yet completed. Now, they hope to go to each planning commission and plug their data sets into the program to view the results of various scenarios.

Question: Have you done many build-out analyses yet?

Answer: Only the portions of the towns which are within the watershed have been analyzed, but the program can still be used for the rest of the towns. The programs can be run anywhere where the required data sets are available.

Question: How do we get the money to do this?

Answer: There are currently two \$11,000 grants from the Center for Rural Studies to create town build-outs. The deadline is January 15th to send them a letter of intent if interested.

Question: If the data sets already exist, how long does it take to learn to use the program?

Answer: It will only take a couple of meetings to train individuals in the usage of the program. It is very simple and user-friendly.

Question: Are topographical maps usable for data sets as an overlay?

Answer: The maps would have to be formatted, but there are definitely ways to insert this information

Question: If we are interested, what should we do now?

Kevin: There are 7 or 8 planning grants in the county, and several of them have some build-out piece in them.

In addition, Kevin and Andrea are going to put the program on CD-ROM, create a manual on the usage of it, and make it available to the general public after testing it in these planning communities.

Business Meeting

Approval of Minutes: 12/13/00

Thea moved to approve the minutes of the monthly meeting on December 13, 2000. Allen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Kevin distributed the treasurer's report. This report is substantially different from the one which was mailed out, as the money for the Joint Partners was given to the Regional Planning Commission to be doled out to the other partners.

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

Committee Reports

Transportation Advisory Committee: John will speak about the Deputy Secretary of Transportation's visit to the region later in the meeting.

Act 250: Fred announced that the committee has received several notices of new applications, but the committee has not felt the need to meet or take action on any of these.

Joint Partners Report

George announced that the partners are applying for a grant funded by the EDA. They will be speaking to the executive board prior to this, and he hopes it will go through. There are still some questions that need to be answered by the executive board before it will come to the full commission.

Delegate/Staff Recognition

none

Old Business

Distribution of E-mail lists electronically: Adam emailed the email list to the members prior to the meeting. If anyone did not receive it, call the office.

Review of Deputy Secretary of Transportation Glitman's visit to the Region: John reported that the Deputy Secretary of Transportation toured four Addison County highway projects that are top priorities in the county. She reported that she would take the concerns of the commission and the TAC back to her office. The commission followed up her visit with a letter reiterating the concerns of the community. The committee was discouraged to learn from her that the AOT is not looking for any new projects that aren't in the books right now. With inflation and the increase in the cost of executing current projects, the funds will be consumed.

Harvey added that Glitman was disappointed with the results of the improvements made to the Cider Mill intersection, and the individuals present made it quite clear to her how concerned citizens are about this area.

Fred added that although some improvements were made at Cider Mill, they were not as much as we had hoped for. There was not enough funding to really do the job right and remain within the budget.

Randy commented that perhaps we should get a quote from a contractor and tell the AOT that we could do it ourselves for a quarter of the cost of the estimates. Perhaps our new legislators would be interested in this approach.

Other: none

New Business

Joint Partners Mid-Year Report: Kevin stated that the Regional Planning Commission is the fiscal administrator this year with the Joint Partners. Some of the projects the Joint Partners have worked on in the past six months are: identifying economic development sites and creating a resource database, cross-marketing a database of tourism sites, hosting a meeting regarding the telecommunications infrastructures in the county, and working on the current comprehensive economic development strategy with Jamie Stewart.

Throughout the rest of the year, the Joint Partners hope to work together to increase their collective leverage within the community.

Other: none

Member's Concerns/Information

Comments from the Delegates: On January 29, Jan Albers will lecture on the Myths and Realities about the History of Land Use in Vermont.

The next meeting will be on February 14.

Comments from the Chair: none

Adjournment:

Allen moved to adjourn the meeting. Thea seconded the motion. The motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Submitted by: Stacy Johnson

Jan 2000 188 units for sale

Feb 2001 140 units for sale

Very low

However, numbers indicate that markets are relatively balanced in that median income can purchase the median priced home. Sales in that range generally are going to people having to maximize their leverage and have trouble raising down payment. VHFA money is generally not used in Addison county because of the down payment requirements.

Housing is generally more affordable in southern Addison county. Tom recited sales figures for last year supporting this conclusion.

Market appears to be slowing down. Pending sales are down 20% from previous year. Affordable housing even more difficult. Affordable as per formula can afford an \$89,000 house. 83 sales in that range this year, so some, but not a lot.

Solutions: Provide for more inventory. Use more manufactured homes. Eliminate ten acre exemption if we allow for clusters and economies on community systems. Low interest loans or tax credits for builders would work to encourage building by private sector. Allow

substandard housing to be fixed up. Those are very hard to finance in today's banking climate.

Q: Is banker here? Can you speak to financing in secondary market?

No septic ordinance helps save money.

Can buy lot in Orwell for 25,000. Town water helps. Northern county lots are closer to \$40,000. Septic system will elevate that by \$15,000.

Jeanne Montrose – ACCAG

We deal with lower income folks. Ownership is generally beyond their reach. Do not want to push market to far.

Regulations for renters make fixer uppers very high cost. Also, funding sources have different priorities, reporting requirements, building requirements makes it very hard to put new housing together. ACCAG has 103 units, has waiting list of 45 families for their 3 br inventory. Shelter occupancy is up 25% this year over last and that was up 45% over last year.

Solutions: Interested in working with towns on zoning and

Housing databank and referral resource for affordable housing. Emergency Housing, need larger shelter and more than one. Single room housing as transition is a priority. Accessory appts and infill around town are a priority. Parking and infrastructure are a problem.

Joe Sinagra

7,400 units short in six counties. 18,000 additional units by 2010 under average growth scenario. IBM having problems with employees. Has a lot of folks traveling a large distance to get to work.

The solution is more units. Higher densities are needed in Town Plans and zoning.

Problems to many regulations. Builders can afford to build in Addison County, but cannot afford to live their.

Polly Nichol

Statewide perspective. Chittenden County pressuring surrounding counties. Population in counties grew by 16,000. Addison county grew almost twice as much as the rest of the state. 44,000 new jobs over ten years. Must do better than average or will have a significant housing gap. Household size decreasing also putting pressure on market causing low vacancy rates. Addison County typically has low vacancy , now even more acute.

State housing authority sees demand for 2&3 BR units, more than one and two units. Addison County has older units. Rutland county has an active revolving fund for Home ownership. Addison Doesn't.

Q: How did Rutland establish its revolving loan fund?

Solutions: VHCB providing funds for low-end housing. New construction is needed, but everyone needs to support infill development. Allow for more density in Town Plans and Zoning. Inclusionary zoning generally 15% must be low income. Replacement housing ordinance requiring replacement of inventory lost. Building codes are strict, increase costs but elevate safety.

Get Montpelier's reform docs.

Jamie Stewart – Addison County Economic Development

Econ Dev. Sees problem in midrange housing. New lots are being developed for big houses. Middle income is going to low stock and fixing it up. Builders can't afford to build in \$120,000 range.

Solutions: Meaningful permit reform. Predictability 3 – month process.

Harry Arnold President of BF Goodrich can't hire engineers because of housing. On-site reform necessary.

Eugene Charlebios- EC Construction.

Build manufactured homes. Steel frame manufactured housing will depreciate. Wood framed housing will appreciate even if it is modular housing. WW disposal is the biggest problem we are facing. In favor of cluster housing. Attempted 9 lots on 10 acres last year. Up hill fight right away. \$200,000 borrowed for a project at 10% will sink a lot of good projects if your neighbors don't like it.

Archeological resources in the county are a big problem. Will hold up a project like nothing else. Expensive and time consuming. He will get out of manufactured housing if he can't turn a profit this year. Lots are expensive can't make margins at the current price.

Solutions: If govt. going to get involved they should make low interest loans to qualified builders in the private sector. Manufactured homes have good R-values.

Fred Dunnington:

Only 14 new permits this year. Relatively low. Middlebury has allowed accessory units. Have tried inclusionary zone. Have not had many takers.

Many lots are permitted, but warehoused. A Johnson has 43 lots permitted but has not moved forward. 17 units on Chipman Hill currently permitted but not built. 28 units in stonegate. 14 built, 14 combined, not selling well. Middle Road growth area zoning for 145 units. Has started in the permit process, currently not moving forward.

Great demand for elderly assisted living projects in the area. Project developers interested, but nothing moving forward.

Solutions: Keep infrastructure demands low, curbing for example. Zoning supply in Middlebury nearly 1,000 acres available at 8 units per acre. However, market has not embraced these concepts.

Eugene praised Middlebury's policies.

Neighborhood opposition is a huge problem. Scary for developers. Zoning is not the solution to this problem.

Issue: Elementary school capacity is not a limiting factor on development any longer. Phasing no longer a priority.

Woodbridge Park, Pine Meadow gift of land, good financing, etc. wanted to meet low income need. Now about half of that housing is housing refugees from Bosnia.

Q; Peter: Solution : Create incentives from state and towns to builders to build good affordable housing.

Jamie Hutchins – Builder Granville 5 lot and 7 lots in Salisbury. CVPS have paid over \$6,000 for power and 34% tax on transmission lines. Would help to alleviate infrastructure costs. Not in my backyard makes people not build to maximum capacity of zoning. Also, people scared of suburban density.

Ed Payne: On-site most important. No incentive for engineers to promote creative systems when they are liable for failures. Alternatives will be expensive.

Tax Rates are causing costs to rise.

Megan Sutton: Used onsite program to design – engineer systems for \$150. That program has since gone away maybe they should reinstate it. Middlebury College has put a lot of pressure on the market by buying properties through their expansion. Is the College doing anything to help with the housing situation in Middlebury?

Fred Dunnington responded that the College has pledged to house all but 100 students on campus to alleviate pressure. College bought a large portion of the bonds for the interfaith housing project.

Megan Sutton: Vermont Association of Conservation Districts on-site program was beneficial. Maybe we should think about reviving it.

Harvey Smith spoke about the legislature's efforts to support alternative septic systems. He is optimistic that the legislature will be able to move forward this year. Consulting Engineers support creating alternative systems within a clear body of rules.

Jamie Stewart stated that new technologies are only "new" to Vermont. They have been used successfully elsewhere for up to 20 years.

Harvey mentioned that we had sponsored alternative systems 5 years ago. All other New England states are members of a consortium which permits alternative systems.

Fran White. Spoke about the alternative system being used in the Mountain View mobile home park in Hinesburg. The system is expensive, but works well.

Jeanne Montrose: VHCB may want to split funds for housing and conservation. It's important that we don't split them, they are both important to Vermont.

Harvey Smith responded that he does not believe they will be split.

Ed Payne sold two 10 acre lots. Would much rather have sold 4 acres, but could not. Concerned about financing fixer uppers. No programs available.

Bill Sayre: Lots of things driving up costs decreasing affordability. Title insurance and fees have gone up for closing. Permitting costs must be reduced. Act 250 needs to be reformed. Changes before legislature needs to be implemented.

Stormwater discharge permits are also a problem. Only 2 people in Dept. It is becoming a bottleneck. ANR needs more money to hire more people in this department.

Harvey ANR supervisors are more a problem.

Rob Rieber: Where do Community loan programs come from?

Jamie Stewart: Block grant from CDBG. Rural Development may also have some funds. Are actively funding folks in Addison County. Nat Bank of Middlebury has a lot of investment in low income housing. Preserving a lot of units.