

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Full Commission Meeting

Wednesday, July 11, 2001

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission Meeting on July 11, 2001 was held at Kenyon Lounge at the Middlebury College Memorial Field House with Harvey Smith presiding.

ROLL CALL:

<i>Addison:</i>		<i>Monkton:</i>	Thea Gaudette
<i>Bridport:</i>			Charles Huizenga
<i>Bristol:</i>	William Sayre	<i>New Haven:</i>	Harvey Smith
	Jim Peabody	<i>Orwell:</i>	David King
	Peter Grant	<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>	
<i>Lincoln:</i>		<i>Waltham:</i>	
<i>Middlebury:</i>	Fred Dunnington	<i>Weybridge:</i>	Jan Albers
		<i>Whiting:</i>	

CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES

AC Chamber of Commerce:
AC Community Action Group:
Otter Creek Audubon Society:
AC Economic Development Corp:

STAFF:

Adam Lougee
Kevin Behm

Public Program

Jan Albers, ACRPC representative from Weybridge, will speak about the history of land use in Vermont and her book on the same subject, *Hands on the Land*.

Jan began by speaking of the history of a place as actually a history of what people have done and how they have used and impacted that particular place. The history of a place, then, is actually the history of all the decisions people have made, both individually and collectively. Jan stated that there is no greater symbol of human power than the landscape, while the irony is that humans feel powerless to change or merely preserve the landscape around them.

Jan spoke of the history of the "Vermont Village," which is an integral part of the working landscape beauty of Vermont. However, the Vermont Village is very different from the typical New England village, and Jan pointed out that these differences speak to the character of the state of Vermont. Vermont villages were built with materials

and resources from the actual building site. Vermont was settled 150 years after the colonial villages of New England. Jan referred to the Vermont as the first “Wild West” type of atmosphere in the country, as most settlers of Vermont abandoned the orderly, structured, puritanical lifestyle of the settlers for a free-for-all rush to claim land. In British settlements, as in Britain itself, villagers lived together in the village and left each day to farm their fields, which surrounded the village. When settlers arrived in Vermont, they built farmhouses right next to or in their fields, often with miles and miles between neighboring farms. The town centers and villages came later as the settlers desired a sense of community.

In 1794, Vermont’s first naturalist, Samuel Williams, noticed that the number of animals in Vermont were decreasing. While this observation was astute, the reasoning behind it was skewed, as Mr. Williams feared that the animals were purposely deserting the humans rather than being forced out by rampant habitat destruction. The mentality of this time did not allow for the idea that humans could destroy nature as man is the “King of Nature” and anything afflicted by man on the land can certainly be healed. Likewise, the general notion of “wilderness” was a terrifying idea to the settlers, as wilderness meant death to them. As a result, there were no regulations or restrictions to protect the environment.

Jan referred to another popular myth regarding the Vermont Village: the town green. She points out that the notion of common grazing land was long past when most of Vermont’s town greens were created. In fact, the early statehood years of Vermont were marked by this same lateness, as modes of transportation and technology seemed to arrive in Vermont after most other places.

In the 1800’s, nucleated communities, civic buildings, churches, schools, and shops began to appear in earnest, and with these new villages came new wealth to the communities. The economy began to shift (again, a bit later than other places) from a barter economy to a commercial economy. Farmers began to specialize in certain kinds of crops or animals, tourism and textile industries surfaced, and the younger generations began to make shocking changes from their parents’ and grandparents’ generations. For example, young people began to paint their homes white so they would stand out on the natural landscape rather than blending in as their parents’ dark colored homes did.

By the middle of the 19th century, the unregulated development began to take its toll on Vermont. While today the state is 80% forested, it was then more than 80% deforested. During this time, Vermont’s chief export was people, with one third of the native residents departing. Mountain tops were bare and dry, rivers were clogged with waste and logs, and the amount of land that could successfully be cultivated decreased dramatically. Many farms were abandoned by 1900. The exceptions to this scenario were the successful valley farms dominated by the dairy industry.

Once again, the onset of traffic jams, strip malls, and suburban sprawl came late to Vermont. Now, however, this is a purposeful delay of urbanization. The innovative Act 250, the Land Trust, and the billboard laws have helped, but the question remains: How do we retain Vermont’s landscape? Jan referred to a meeting recently held in which many different interest groups were asked what they wanted Vermont to look like 20 years from now. Almost all agreed on one united vision; however, the different ideas regarding how to get there varied greatly. Jan suggests a re-evaluation of the Vermont land ethic, placing more emphasis on land and energy sources rather than just trees and wildlife. Vermont has shown us that while progress cannot be stopped, it can be redefined and reprioritized in a way that does not sacrifice community. Preserving the character of the state has been the catalyst for a unique kind of growth and a new environmentalism. With the onset of the electronic age, any job can be done from Vermont, and only 4% of Vermonters now make their living from the land. Jan left her listeners with a final question to consider: If culture has transcended the geographic limitations which nature has placed on Vermonters, how will the delicate balance be preserved in the years to come?

Jan has copies of her book *Hands on the Land* available for purchase after the meeting.

Business Meeting

Approval of Minutes: June 13, 2001

Fred Dunnington clarified that he did not move to approve the Middlebury Town Plan as indicated in the New Business section of the minutes from June 13. Bill Sayre moved to approve the Middlebury Town Plan.

Peter Grant moved to approve the minutes from June 13, 2001, with the correction that Bill Sayre, not Fred Dunnington, moved to approve the Middlebury Town Plan. Fred Dunnington seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Adam distributed the treasurer's report and announced that the commission is in good shape. **Peter Grant moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Thea Gaudette seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Committee Reports

TAC: Adam reported that the TAC will be voting on their budget next week. They are allotted \$50,000 each year to conduct studies relating to transportation. Some of the projects which will likely be budgeted in for the coming year are culvert inventories, a Bristol traffic and parking study, and the expanding railway infrastructure.

Local Government: Five towns are currently working on their plans: Panton, Bristol, Orwell, Waltham, and Whiting.

Act 250: Fred reviewed the current applications, none of which have been recommended for review by the Act 250 committee, including a storage unit off of Route 116 in Bristol, the relocation of electrical wiring along Route 22A, a storage unit on Route 7 in New Haven, Country Home Products in Vergennes, and the Middlebury College Library. There will be a public hearing regarding the new library on July 18 at 9:30 AM in the town offices.

Housing: Peter reported that there will be a meeting next month to finalize the housing section of the regional plan. It will then be submitted to the commission in September to be voted on in October. Adam will provide copies of the draft for anyone who would like one.

Joint Partners Report

Adam is currently working with Linda Stearns and Jamie Stewart on the year-end report.

Staff and Delegate Recognition

Harvey recognized David King, the newest commission member from Orwell. Adam announced that he will be nominating Kevin Behm for a planning award regarding his work with build-out analysis this year.

Old Business

Discussion relating to CEDS: Harvey reported that the executive boards of the four organizations (ACRPC, ACCC, ACEDC, WIB) are finalizing the sixteen nominations for the steering committee, with the idea of insuring that all interest areas are represented. The steering committee should be operational by next month. In addition, Marcy Wheeler has been hired to consolidate some of the economic development information into the database.

Project Impact Update: Adam reported that the signing ceremony with FEMA is tentatively scheduled for the third week in August, coinciding with the Bristol Park dedication. There has been a good response to the list of projects approved during the last meeting, and the final approval from Washington should arrive by the end of the month.

Reminder Concerning Committee Assignments: Adam distributed a list of last year's committee assignments, asking commission members to make note of any changes they would like to make on the sheet or to speak with an executive board member. The executive board will finalize committee assignments in August and announce them during the meeting in September. The committees are: Housing and Economic Development, Act 250, Transportation, Local Government, and Natural Resources.

Adam informed the commission that planner/grant writer Brandy Saxton sent a letter to each town's planning commission offering to present the relevant census data to the organizations.

New Business

Joint Partners Year End Report: This item is postponed until the report is completed.

Phosphorus TMDL/Growth Centers: Adam informed the commission that there will be a presentation in Kirk Alumni Center on the Middlebury College campus Tuesday, September 11 at 7:00 PM regarding the current phosphorus levels in Lake Champlain, action plans for the reduction of phosphorus in the future, and a discussion of the impact on municipalities and farmers. The report is available at the ACRPC office, and a summary of the information will be forthcoming. Adam also distributed a white paper from the Agency of Natural Resources concerning growth centers and a proposal for amendments to the DHCA plan.

Other: Bill McQuillan asked about the nature of the Housing Committee's work, and Adam responded that the housing committee has been working on re-writing the housing section of the regional plan, as well as holding the housing summit and gathering/analyzing census and tax department data relating to housing.

Jim Peabody commented that he was distressed to read of another corporation leaving Vermont as a result of the state's reputation for being unfriendly to business. He suggests that this would be an issue for the CEDS steering committee to look at.

Members Concerns/Information

Adam reminded commission members that there would not be a meeting in August. Tanya Kennedy of the Vermont Electric Corporation will speak at the September meeting.

Adjournment

Peter Grant moved to adjourn. Fred Dunnington seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 PM.

Submitted by Stacy Johnson