

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Full Commission Meeting

Wednesday, January 09, 2002

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission Meeting was held on January 9, 2002 at Kenyon Lounge at Middlebury College with Harvey Smith presiding.

ROLL CALL:

<i>Addison:</i>		<i>Orwell:</i>	
<i>Bridport:</i>	Edward Payne	<i>Panton:</i>	David Raphael
	Kent Wright		
<i>Bristol:</i>	Peter Grant	<i>Ripton:</i>	
	Bill Sayre		
	Jim Peabody		
<i>Cornwall:</i>	Don Shall	<i>Salisbury:</i>	
	Bill McQuillan		
<i>Ferrisburgh:</i>	Chester Hawkins	<i>Shoreham:</i>	
<i>Goshen:</i>		<i>Starksboro:</i>	
<i>Leicester:</i>		<i>Vergennes:</i>	Randy Friday
<i>Lincoln:</i>	Vicki Smith	<i>Waltham:</i>	Thomas Yager
<i>Middlebury:</i>	Fred Dunnington	<i>Weybridge:</i>	
	Karl Neuse		
<i>Monkton:</i>	Charles Huizenga	<i>Whiting:</i>	Ellen Kurrelmeyer
<i>New Haven:</i>	Harvey Smith		
	Allen Karnatz		

CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:

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

STAFF:

Adam Lougee
Kevin Behm
Brandy Saxton
Hilary Spitz

Public Hearing

The meeting began at 7:25 pm with a Public Hearing to hear comments and questions from the Public concerning the Amendments to the Population and Housing Section of the Addison County Regional Plan.

Brandy began the public hearing by discussing the three sections of the plan that contained changes: the Introduction, the Housing and Population section and the Consistency section. She outlined some of the specific changes and opened the floor to comments or questions.

Since there were no comments or questions, Adam Lougee closed the public hearing at 7:30 pm.

Public Program

The Public Program was a discussion of the Agency of Natural Resources' Watershed Basin Planning Program proposed for the Otter Creek Basin and how that program interacts with the other water-related rules currently being developed at the Agency, including the Lake Champlain Phosphorus TMDL, other TMDLs, and the proposed Stormwater Rules. Guest speakers included Stephan Syz, the Section Chief of Planning for the Water Quality Division of the Agency of Natural Resources, Ethan Swift, a Watershed Coordinator currently working on the Basin Plan for the Poultney Mettawee Basin in Rutland, and Eric Smeltzer.

Stephan Syz began the program by saying that the state is attempting to have a unified method for undertaking basin planning. He then presented a document entitled "Guidelines for Watershed Planning," and asked for feedback on the document.

Stephan stated that, in simple terms, watershed planning is a way to protect the best waters and restore the rest. He also said that the process must be inclusive to come up with practical approaches to correcting problems and preserving waters. He noted that the state plan also must take into account regional plans.

Stephan explained that previous basin plans focused on municipal and industrial wastewater collection and treatment. Since then, he said, non-point-source pollutants have been unmasked.

The state has been divided up into 17 drainage basins, each of which must come up with a plan, he noted. Water quality assessments have been completed for some of those 17 basins, but others have not yet been started.

Stephan said that one new element of basin planning is that waters classified as B (good quality) waters must now be broken down into three separate quality levels. This is where local and regional plans can help in the planning, Stephan said. Current water management classifications are A1 (ecologically important waters), A2 (public water supplies) and B (all others). The new process includes B1 (almost natural), B2 (minor changes in the biology) and B3 (changes in the biology and the habitat).

Stephan concluded by saying that this planning process is unique because watershed coordinators will remain responsible to that watershed even after the initial planning phase.

Peter Grant asked how many state, local and private employees are needed to implement these plans, and how these staffing levels may be affected by the recession. Stephan answered that it varies by locale, and that he's not sure how budget cuts will affect the plans.

Ellen Kurrelmeyer asked whether there was a time limit for implementing the plans. Stephan said that after five years, there should be a review of the success of the plans.

Edward Payne commented that the Lake Champlain basin plan includes a radical change in the loading model and that they have set the bar too high. He also questioned the science upon which the plans will be based. Ethan Swift responded that he believes they do have good science. He also argued that the loading model has not changed, but that certain segments may have changed. He said that the job of the TMDL was not to set the goals, but to determine how to meet the goals.

Kevin Behm asked how planners would know whether they're getting specific reductions. Ethan answered that they're constantly monitoring all tributaries, but he admitted that they need to pull the data together and give a status report. He added that the lake has not really responded to any reductions thus far, and that monitoring should be performed on a long-term basis rather than yearly.

Harvey Smith asked how the programs are being coordinated to ensure that they will fit together. Stephan answered that the 17 watershed plans will be evaluated together. The TMDL will be developed for a particular segment, while the watershed planning process will attempt to find which practices will be the most cost effective.

Thomas Yager asked how the shortened time period for meeting goals has impacted their process. Eric answered

that it has created a greater sense of urgency, but that the underlying strategies will not be affected. He agreed that the deadline is aggressive and that there are some concerns. Thomas said he is concerned that the public input period will be shortened. Eric answered that they are working hard to make enough time for public hearings.

Bill Sayre asked for an explanation about why these rules won't go through the normal regulatory-approval process. Stephan said he doesn't believe that they are regulations, but actually procedures. Adam Lougee asked Stephan to find out whether or not they are considered regulations and to inform the commission about his findings.

Harvey Smith thanked the speakers, and the public program was adjourned at 8:48.

Business Meeting

The business meeting began at 8:48 with a presentation from the Vermont Citizens for Safe Energy, which is opposing VELCO's plan to build high-voltage transmission lines through the town of Monkton.

Michael Hurlburt said that voters in Monkton have directed their selectboard to do whatever possible to keep VELCO from building high-voltage transmission lines through Monkton. He said they would like to have something written into the regional plan. Ted Birdsey from New Haven said that his town incorporated similar language. Ken Wheeling of Monkton said that the health risks that were dismissed 20 years ago are now turning out to be valid. These studies, he said, are finding that there needs to be more discussion of the health risks.

Fred Peyser said that the basic issue is not founded in economics but in health risks, which are attested to by various studies. The National Institutes of Health study concludes that EMF/ELF exposure cannot be concluded as safe and may pose a cancer risk to humans. He said that in the commission's November meeting, VELCO said that transmission lines would not run through Monkton. But according to the company's own documents, Fred noted that there are plans for such transmission lines. He also asserted that such a system is not necessary and would provide anywhere from 5 to 25 times the amount of megawatts necessary to alleviate the strain on the current system. He maintains that the purpose of the system is to transport power to southern New England.

Harvey Smith asked the group to submit something in writing regarding what they'd like the Commission to do along with the specific reasons why. Adam said that they should contact him, look at the entire plan and make specific recommendations. Randy Friday suggested that the group go through VELCO's presentation to the commission and respond to each point.

Approval of Minutes: December 12, 2001

Jim Peabody moved to approve the minutes from December 12, 2001. Peter Grant seconded the motion. Fred Dunnington said that he wants the minutes to be amended. Under Committee Reports, he wants it to read: "He added that the state is making very slow progress on the signalization of Court Street." He also questioned the projection for Middlebury housing units. Brandy responded that those numbers were not correct and that there was an updated table. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Approval of Executive Board Minutes:

Harvey said that the minutes were there for motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Adam said that they got the second half of the VCA payment, so there has been a substantial increase to the amount previously sent out. Harvey moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Peter Grant seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

TAC: Thomas Yager said there has been no meeting.

Local Government: Don Shall said there had been no meeting.

Act 250: Fred Dunnington said no new applications have been received.

Natural Resources: David said two meetings had been held: three members attended the first one, and three different members attended the second. They discussed the TMDLs and agreed to set a date for another meeting. Bill Sayre said the two meetings have been combined into one report. Kevin, who attended both meetings, said that a letter had been drafted to Bill Holland regarding accelerating the time frame for phosphorous reduction and outlining the committee's concerns regarding the TMDLs. The committee tried to come up with a list of questions for the state planners, some of which were addressed in tonight's commission meeting. He said that the list of questions is available. Kevin said that they had missed the deadline for sending comments to Bill Holland. Thomas Yager suggested that they send the comments anyway. Bill Sayre suggested they compose the letter for the next full commission meeting.

Housing: no report.

Joint Partners Report

Adam said that the CEDS process is moving forward. There will be a visioning session focused on the Small Towns on January 17 at 7:30 p.m. at the Ag and Business Center in Virginia Stuart's office.

Staff and Delegate Recognition

Adam thanked Brandy for her work on the Housing Plan. He also thanked the delegates for coming and said that there will be no vote because they are five members short. Adam then introduced Hilary Spitz, who will be the county's watershed planner. She will be looking out for the county's interest and make sure that it is represented in this process.

Old Business

Vote on Amendments of the Population and Housing Section of the Plan: no vote

New Business

Ellen reminded the group that the legislative breakfasts will start again on February 4th. Harvey said every other Friday morning at the Ethan Allen room there is also a legislative meeting.

Jim Peabody raised the issue of amending the process for amending. He says that once the hearing is done, they could get recorded votes from delegates without requiring that they attend the meeting. He also suggested changing the assessment procedure to a strictly per-person assessment rather than a requiring a minimum. No further action was taken.

Adjournment

Peter moved to adjourn. Harvey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Submitted by Ursula Jones