

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Full Commission Meeting

Wednesday, February 13, 2002

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission Meeting was held on February 13, 2002 at Kenyon Lounge at Middlebury College with Harvey Smith presiding.

ROLL CALL:

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

CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:

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

STAFF:

Adam Lougee
Kevin Behm
Brandy Saxton
Hillary Spitz

Public Hearing

The meeting began at 7:35 pm with a Public Hearing. Representatives of the Addison County Chamber of Commerce and Addison County Economic Development Corporation were on hand to discuss the initiatives that each of their organizations are working to implement and to answer any questions regarding how those initiatives interact with regional planning.

Jaime Stewart from the Addison County Economic Development Corporation said that the corporation is in the process of completing its economic analysis. In performing the analysis, they have found that there are common issues of concern for each locality. These issues include housing, access to affordable daycare, the cost of public utilities, infrastructure needs, transportation, waste treatment, etc.

They will now transcribe the information and will schedule the next strategy committee meeting. Now that the information has been gathered, they need to look at how to address the issues that have been defined and to build upon the county's current strengths. That will become the draft of the comprehensive economic development strategy. Jaime said a completed plan should be ready to submit to the EDA within four to five months.

They're also tracking certain issues before the legislature including stormwater issues. Bill S277 deals with corrective action and allow for the continuation of the statewide strategy of cleaning the water while allowing for growth needed to maintain an acceptable economic standard. They will also be watching Bill S276, which deals with the stormwater permitting process. He added that much of the manufacturing base in the county is experiencing a reduction in workforce, but they are expecting a rebound within four to five months.

Linda Stearns of the Addison County Chamber of Commerce addressed the commission and distributed a folder with information outlining the goals of the chamber. She said the committee is updating its positions of public policy in terms of business and legislative issues. She described the staff and their responsibilities. She also talked about the publications that the chamber has produced.

Linda talked about the chamber's map, which Kevin Behm developed. She thanked Kevin and the commission for their help.

Linda mentioned that in a recent survey of its members, they found that one of the largest concerns is health insurance and the cost of providing it for their employees.

New projects include the Cultural Heritage project, which is a state pilot project to develop some heritage trails. There are more than 100 businesses participating to date. The project is part of the state's effort to highlight cultural heritage tourism.

Randy Friday asked Jaime what the next step will be for cities and towns following paperwork submission to the EDA. Jaime replied that individual cities and towns could use the economic analysis as a tool for justifying certain projects. He said that there will always be a certain amount of EDA funds coming to Vermont, but the cities and towns are in competition for those funds.

Harvey asked Jaime whether Chittenden County has CEDS. Jaime said it did not, but noted that Burlington is large enough to qualify for direct funding through HUD. The chances for the county depend on the total amount of funds appropriated and how they're chosen to be allocated nationwide. It changes every year, he said. Jaime also said that there has been discussion regarding a statewide CEDS. Without the CEDS, the state will decide the priorities for a given region.

Judy asked Jaime which types of programs have been funded to date. Jamie answered that it has been a broad range of projects from daycare centers, stormwater retention funds, wastewater treatment, roads, telecommunications infrastructure, etc. People have tended to focus on strengthening infrastructures that will enable growth of various sectors. One of the concerns holding back the state is the high cost of power. They must find a way to lower the cost of energy. If a region applied for funds to develop a cheaper energy source, it would certainly have a viable chance of receiving funding.

Adam asked about the Telecom Aggregation meeting scheduled. Jamie described a Massachusetts program called Berkshires Connect where they totaled up telecom bills for the county and invited providers to bid for the entire region in an attempt to lower costs. They ended up with a 2.9-cent per minute cost including broadband service. There was another county that had similar success. The unfortunate thing is that the company that won the bids has since filed for bankruptcy. On February 22nd a meeting will be held in the National Life building at 1:00. The meeting will discuss how regions can attempt similar programs to lower the rates for small and medium businesses in order to be competitive with the rates that larger businesses have.

Adam asked Linda where the Chamber of Commerce's 75,000 publications are being distributed. She answered all over the state of VT and NY, along the interstate, as well as to individuals that have requested them. Peter asked about success rates. Linda answered that it's difficult to measure without doing direct surveys. Most of the county's visitors come from NY, the Boston area, Mass, CT, and parts of Pennsylvania. They also advertise in various

publications. If the state has a major marketing effort underway, that will impact the numbers of visitors. Publications are also distributed in Canada.

Bill Sayre asked Linda about the research into the payoff for marketing. She said that for every tourist dollar spent, the state gets back six or seven times that amount. There has been discussion about a percentage of hotels and meals taxes being directed back to the travel and tourism budget. She said that a 10% increase in room occupancy in the state would generate an additional \$30 million in taxes.

Bill then asked about how callers to the state were being directed. She answered that when people call asking for Chamber of Commerces in Vermont, Addison County tends to be given out first because the county is first alphabetically.

Bill McQuillan asked Jaime how such a Telecom Aggregation plan would work. Jamie explained that the consumer basically chooses the provider. You would essentially establish a co-op, which then finds the lowest cost provider of services. You're trying to create economies of scale for the provider. It would be considered a private nonprofit entity.

Harvey thanked Jamie and Linda and closed the public hearing at 8:20 pm.

Business Meeting

The business meeting began at 8:20 pm.

Approval of Minutes: January 9, 2002

Peter moved to approve the minutes from January 9, 2002. Fred seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion of Executive Board Minutes: January 30, 2002

Peter Grant asked why the executive committee did not take up the issue of passing amendments without a 60% majority. Adam answered that he didn't believe they could change the rule. Harvey said they need to go back and look at the statutes. Adam said he will research the options and bring it to the next executive board meeting.

Treasurer's Report

Adam said the commission is still in good shape. The second half of the DCA payment has come in, and the fund balances are significant enough to carry the commission through the rest of the fiscal year, which ends June 30th. **Thea moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Peter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Committee Reports

TAC: Tom Yager said that Ned Kehoe presented information regarding Addison County Transit Resources ridership. Adam said that if you include the Tri town shuttle, ridership has doubled to approximately 34,000 riders a year in the last year. The Tri-town shuttle and the extended hours on the Middlebury Shuttle bus are funded by a Job-Access Reverse Commute ("JARC") Program. Adam noted that the State's funding of that program may end next year, leaving a lot of low-income riders stranded.

Local Government: No report.

Act 250: Fred said that one new application has come in for Middlebury College's Atwater Commons. The town has approved it, and the application is pending, but now a neighboring property owner has appealed on environmental grounds. St. Mary's Diocese has appealed because they don't want construction traffic to pass their school.

Natural Resources: Adam talked about the letter regarding the Lake Champlain TMDLs etc. The letter included question about the documents, some of which were asked at the last full commission meeting. The letter has been sent to the NRC and various other entities.

Housing: No report.

Joint Partners Report

No report.

Staff and Delegate Recognition

A new delegate from Goshen, Chad Chamberlain, was introduced and welcomed. Don Shall said that Kent Wright should receive recognition for his 25 years of service on the commission.

Old Business

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

Vote on Re-adoption of the Plan: no vote.

New Business

Mid-year Budget Adjustment: Adam ran down the revenue projections and talked about the reasons for the changes. **A motion was made to pass the revised budget, it was seconded, and it passed unanimously.**

Programs/Attendance: Adam has drafted a letter to send out to each town regarding the number of members that each town has on the commission, and asking about bringing this issue up at the next town meeting. This is an attempt to improve attendance. Other ways to improve attendance include making the programs more interesting to the public. It was also suggested that representatives from Chittenden county come down to discuss their plans.

Judy asked whether towns are aware of whether or not their delegates attend the commission meetings. Harvey said that towns get copies of the minutes from every meeting. Jim Peabody suggested that if delegates are not going to attend, they should be sure to notify the alternate so he/she can attend. An attendance sheet will go out to each town along with the letter Adam mentioned.

Randy Friday suggested possibly attaching a financial incentive to the towns to encourage the attendance of their delegates.

Educational Forum for Planning Commission Member with VLCT at the Vergennes Opera House, February 25th, 2002 at 7:00p.m.: Adam encouraged all members to attend.

Member's Concerns/Information:

Adjournment

Peter moved to adjourn. Bill Sayre seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 pm.

Submitted by Ursula Jones