

# Addison County Regional Planning Commission

## Full Commission Meeting

Wednesday, July 9, 2003

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission's meeting was held on July 9, 2003, at Middlebury College's Kirk Alumni Center with Don Shall presiding.

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### ROLL CALL:

<i>Addison:</i>	Alden Harwood	<i>Orwell:</i>	Andrea Ochs
<i>Bridport:</i>	Edward Payne	<i>Panton:</i>	
<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>	Bob McNary	<i>Shoreham:</i>	Margaret Barnes Elizabeth Golden
<i>Goshen:</i>		<i>Starksboro:</i>	
<i>Leicester:</i>		<i>Vergennes:</i>	
<i>Lincoln:</i>	Jason Oleet	<i>Waltham:</i>	
<i>Middlebury:</i>	Fred Dunnington	<i>Weybridge:</i>	
	Brian Bauer		
<i>Monkton:</i>	Thea Gaudette	<i>Whiting:</i>	Ellen Kurrelmeyer Jonathan Heppell
	Charles Huizenga		
<i>New Haven:</i>	Allen Karnatz		

### CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:

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

### STAFF:

Kevin Behm  
Tim Bouton  
Nell Fraser  
Garrett Dague

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## Public Program

Tonight's public program was led by Kate Lampton, executive director of the Champlain Valley Greenbelt Alliance (CVGA). The mission of the CVGA is to help create and preserve greenbelts of open space along major road corridors in Vermont, with an initial focus on the Route 7 corridor from Shelburne to Middlebury. CVGA's work is divided into three programs: land conservation, outreach and education, and its new Roadscape initiative.

Kate began her presentation by describing her organization, which was founded in 2000 in the Charlotte/Shelburne area. Soon thereafter, the group decided it was too broad-based and began to focus on the creation of greenbelts along roadways such as the Route 7 corridor. Kate's background is in municipal planning.

Route 7 has a lot of characteristics common and symbolic of roadways in Vermont: changing uses, traffic issues, etc. The group wants to use this corridor as a model for future endeavors. CVGA does more than land conservation.

They work with municipalities to help them with bylaws and permit review, etc. They don't deal strictly with regulations.

They've created a visual analysis of the Route 7 corridor using a landscape architect. The objective was to come up with a list of things they liked and disliked and why. A map has been created, and Kevin has a copy at the ACRPC office for those interested. The next phase of the project will be a written piece that will accompany the map to be used as a resource by municipalities.

The group's priority with regards to land conservation is to look for suitable parcels to purchase and conserve. One of the first projects was a 10-acre parcel in Charlotte which they gave back to the town. The property in and of itself is nothing special, but it serves as a visual link between other green areas in the landscape. They've also conserved a parcel in Ferrisburgh. They are currently working to conserve a parcel near New Haven.

The Roadscape plan will use landscaping and other techniques to create a more cohesive pattern of development along roads. Haphazard commercial and residential development creates a chopped-up look to the landscape and traffic safety is also affected. One idea is to work with the town of New Haven with its section of Route 7 near New Haven Tire and Greenhaven Nursery. They want to create a master plan that can act as a framework for future development. They are also working on the landscaping around the new state police barracks.

They've also submitted a joint application with ACRPC to VTRANS for the Access Management Pilot Project. The project will provide tools to help towns assess the functional and visual impacts of access management alternatives, and create models that towns can use to make better access and land-use decisions. Kevin passed around a copy of the application that was sent to the Agency of Transportation.

The floor was then opened for questions from the commission members.

Jim Peabody asked if Kate would define a greenbelt. Kate answered that it's any continuous strip of undeveloped land on both sides of a roadway.

Ellen asked about their focus areas in terms of size and distance from the road. Kate answered that it really depends on the property.

Peter Grant asked about what happens to the property that's conserved. Kate answered that in some cases they give the property over to the town. In another instance, a farmer owns it and is actively farming it. A private person or entity ends up owning it but cannot develop it.

Alden Harwood suggested that they're 20 years too late on Route 7. He wondered if they might look elsewhere for a model. Kate agreed in part with that assessment but argued that it isn't "lost." There are still some beautiful, open stretches of land on Route 7. Because they're trying to show a range of techniques, Route 7 is a good choice for them.

Ed Payne asked how they reconcile with the towns and their existing zoning. She says they work with the existing zoning and don't attempt to fight that. The group tries to focus on keeping the developed area as nice as possible by using a variety of techniques including landscaping. Because Route 7 is a state-owned land, there's always a balancing act between the towns and other interests.

Elizabeth Golden asked if they advise on the use of traffic lights, etc. Kate said they really don't focus on engineering aspects of the roadways. They focus more on the scenic areas, although there's definitely a safety component to what they're doing. What they do meshes well with safety and capacity issues.

Ed asked whether they're interested in purchasing the access rights along the road. Kate said it's nothing they've been involved with.

Bob suggested that the first thing the group should do is get the traffic speed under control and be sure to maintain the property (keep it mowed, etc.). They should also look to the future when limiting development opportunities in Vermont.

Meg mentioned an effort near four corners in Addison that attempted to define the village. It was very satisfying to her to see the state paying for the landscaping. Kevin said the plan was to slow down traffic and define the edge of the village. It also provides extra curbing that has increased safety.

Jim Peabody agreed that it may be too late for Route 7. He believes transportation is the primary use of the road. Scenic viewing is secondary. Because Route 7 is the primary North-South road in western Vermont, he'd like to see this kind of thing extended to places like Route 17 and other places that are still open and currently have slower speed limits. He also wondered if scenic pull-offs are part of their plan. Kate answered that they do have some plans in place for scenic pull-offs.

Ellen asked if the group works with the Agency of Transportation in any way. Kate answered that they do work with the state in certain cases such as with the police barracks project, but there's no formal relationship.

Allen asked if the pilot project is one of the group's closest collaborations. Kate said it's a grant and the collaboration is with the regional planning commission. Kevin said they're trying to leverage what Kate's group is doing to solve some issues.

Fred said they've attempted to do an access management grant in the town of Middlebury with the goal of boulevarding and consolidating developments. Our access management work was shelved entirely for lack of funding. It's expensive and there are so many other priorities for transportation funds.

The public program ended at 8:50 pm.

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## Business Meeting

The business meeting began at 9 pm.

### Approval of Minutes: June 11, 2003

Under the Utilities and Facilities Committee report section, the end of the last sentence should read "...emergency services."

Also under the Legislative Wrap-Up, Bob McNary wanted the minutes to show that he asked the question about the manure spreader.

Several members requested that the use of underlining be discontinued in the minutes.

**Thea moved to approve the minutes from June 11, 2003. Peter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

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### Executive Board Minutes: June 25, 2003

There was no discussion.

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### Treasurer's Report

Kevin said the Accounts Receivable line is quite high, because the first installment of State funds were already entered in the report

**Peter moved to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Andrea seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

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## **Committee Reports**

**TAC:** The next meeting is next Wednesday at the planning commission office. Fred said there's a process of evaluating proposals for communities that wish to use funds. The towns that have expressed interest have been asked to submit more information for consideration at the next meeting. The TAC allocates up to \$50,000 per year for consultant studies. The town of Middlebury wants to address the intersection of Rte. 7 and Exchange St.

**Local Government:** Nothing to report.

**Act 250:** Fred said the town of Middlebury submitted an application last week for the new police station. A pre-hearing conference on the VELCO project is being held next Wednesday in Montpelier at 10:00 a.m. at the Public Service Board.

**Natural Resources:** Ed said they're meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Nell said they did a site visit on the Middlebury River with Kristen Underwood. For the next meeting, the committee will discuss some of the basin planning work going on in Rutland County. Don said he went to watch the group doing a geomorphology study and was very impressed with the work they're doing. They're mapping the river and looking primarily at providing warning to towns as to potential hazards from future flooding.

**Economic Development:** Jim said the next meeting is July 15<sup>th</sup> at the planning commission office. They will start setting goals. The August meeting has been canceled.

**Utilities and Facilities:** Ellen said they've reached consensus on the remaining goals for the water/wastewater subsection of the plan and will now turn to the health and safety subsection of the plan. The next meeting is July 21<sup>st</sup> and there will be no meeting in August.

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## **Joint Partners' Report**

*See New Business.*

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## **Staff/Delegate Recognition**

Don welcomed Jason Oleet as the new alternate for Lincoln. He also welcomed Brian Bauer as the new delegate from Middlebury.

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## **Old Business**

**Committee Membership:** Don passed around a sheet for members to indicate their committee choices.

**Other:** Jim asked Kevin whether the VELCO resolution the planning commission passed had been sent to the Public Service Board. Kevin answered yes.

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## **New Business**

**Vergennes Basin Redevelopment:** Kevin said the city of Vergennes received a byways grant to develop the basin area below the falls. Because of the change in the Town Manager role, ACRPC was asked to assist the city of Vergennes in doing this project. They will split the project now, and Adam will be responsible for getting the permits. They're trying to develop trails and a walkway and some enhancements to the parking area. They'll be using \$7,000 of a \$14,000 grant.

**Joint Partners' Workplan 2004:** Kevin passed around copies of the revised workplan that incorporates some minor changes in the Chamber of Commerce's section.

**Green Mountain National Forest Service Plan Revision:** Nell said the planning commission has a contract with the Green Mountain National Forest Service regarding the plan revision. She then passed around a timeline for public involvement. She recommended visiting the GMNF's website for more information ([www.fs.fed.us/r9/gmfl/nepa\\_planning/plan\\_revision.htm](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/gmfl/nepa_planning/plan_revision.htm)). The planning commission will likely need to make a comment on the plan sometime in the fall. Direct comments to Nell or to Melissa Reichert or through the website.

**Revised Budget:** Due to some changes, we need an approval on a revised budget. The original budget took into account a 3% increase in money received from the state which did not come through. Kevin went over the specific changes. They include the money from the shared grant with Vergennes mentioned above, an additional emergency operations planning grant, and additional funds from a training program. The revenue side is \$15,000 in the black. Under expenditures, there was a \$2500 equipment expense related to the emergency operations grant. There was also an increase in staff salary by \$7000. The new total shows a \$4600 contingency as opposed to \$500 from the budget approved last month.

**Peter moved to approve the revised budget. Thea seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Resolution Regarding Permissions for Entry onto Private Property:** Don proposed a resolution changing the commission's current policy requiring written permission for entry onto private property during the course of any project funded by the commission. The State Geologist has requested that a detailed phone log of permissions be substituted for the written notification procedure while it is mapping the surficial geology for hazard assessment of the Middlebury River watershed.

**Peter moved to approve the resolution. Allen seconded the motion.**

Brian asked if it would be possible require the inclusion of emails as well. It's a matter of liability. If someone is injured, who is responsible?

Kevin said the whole project has to be completed by September 30<sup>th</sup> when the federal fiscal year ends. Jim asked when the project begins. Kevin said as soon as this resolution is passed, the contract can be finalized and work can begin.

Jim said our policy is a good policy and he doesn't think this project is worthy of us changing this policy. We should at very least notify the landowners even if it's after the telephone conversation confirming the access.

Brian asked how many landowners are involved and how other surveys like this are conducted? Kevin said he's not aware of how other surveys have been done. He also said that they won't need to visit every parcel, only some.

Fred said encouraging the written follow up as Brian suggested is not an unreasonable request.

**Fred moved to amend the resolution to include the sentence: "Permission shall be confirmed in writing by the State Geologist to the landowner for the landowner's signature and return." Andrea seconded the amendment. The motion carried with three nays.**

**The vote was then held on the amended resolution. The motion carried with five nays.**

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## **Member Concerns/Information**

Ed said he wanted to urge caution in the Greenbelt Alliance program since we're used to working bottom-up with the towns in the region, whereas this project is the region driving the towns. It has been the commission's policy to accept town plans and not to generate town plans. He feels this signifies a change in our role and the commission should be careful in how it proceeds.

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## **Adjournment**

| **Peter moved to adjourn. Thea seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 pm.**

*Submitted by Ursula Jones*