

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Full Commission Meeting

Wednesday, September 10, 2003

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission's meeting was held on September 10, 2003, at Middlebury College's Kirk Alumni Center with Don Shall presiding.

ROLL CALL:

<i>Addison:</i>	Alden Harwood	<i>Orwell:</i>	Andrea Ochs David King
<i>Bridport:</i>	Andrew Manning	<i>Panton:</i>	
<i>Bristol:</i>	William Sayre Jim Peabody	<i>Ripton:</i>	
<i>Cornwall:</i>	Don Shall William McQuillan	<i>Salisbury:</i>	
<i>Ferrisburgh:</i>	Bob McNary	<i>Shoreham:</i>	Margaret Barnes Elizabeth Golden
<i>Goshen:</i>	Jeffrey Cathcart	<i>Starksboro:</i>	
<i>Leicester:</i>		<i>Vergennes:</i>	Neil Kamman
<i>Lincoln:</i>	Steve Revell	<i>Waltham:</i>	
<i>Middlebury:</i>	Fred Dunnington Karl Neuse	<i>Weybridge:</i>	
<i>Monkton:</i>	Thea Gaudette Charles Huizenga	<i>Whiting:</i>	Ellen Kurrelmeyer
<i>New Haven:</i>	Allen Karnatz		

CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:

AC Chamber of Commerce:
AC Community Action Group: Peter Dominico
AC Economic Development Corp:
Otter Creek Audubon Society: Judy Kowalczyk

STAFF:

Adam Lougee
Brandy Saxton

Public Program

The public program focusing on outdoor recreational opportunities in Addison County began at 7:30 pm. A panel of local members from various outdoor recreational interests were on hand to discuss and document existing facilities, identify needs for additional infrastructure, and discuss planning's role in reducing conflicts between different recreational activities and between recreational users and others.

Gerrie Heuts, recreation coordinator for the Bristol Recreation Department, kicked off the program. The department began six years ago as a result of a town survey requesting a coordination of recreational activities. The department has grown over those years and now has a \$157,000 annual budget. No other department serves all five towns in the region. In addition to sports activities, the department offers arts and crafts activities as well as a skate park and teen center. An outdoor skating facility is in the process of being constructed. Palmer Park, which sits on the New Haven River, has been acquired, but the town is still planning to develop the park for recreational use. A picnic pavilion is also being planned. There has definitely been an increase in demand, particularly from families and youth. One thing lacking is the number of campsites. The department is funded mainly from Bristol taxpayers, although the four other towns in the region are now pitching in. Grants also contribute to the funding. A trails committee is also being

explored to help create a network of trails branching out of the town of Bristol.

Tony Clark from Blueberry Hill Ski Center and the Moosalamoo Area spoke next. The Moosalamoo Area comprises more than 22,000 acres and many miles of cross-country skiing trails, snowmobiling trails, and hiking trails. The issue the group is faced with is the demand from other recreational uses, particularly ATVs. Tony said he hopes that the Oakridge parking lot will be turned into an informational center for the Moosalamoo area, and that a path and pedestrian bridge might be constructed across Rte. 125. Volunteers currently do all of the work, and the National Forest Service has joined forces with the group. The only trails that have a fee are the cross-country ski trails at Blueberry Hill. Even though many areas are seeing a decline in trail use over the past decade or so, Tony anticipates an increase in demand as the Baby Boomer generation comes into retirement age.

Neil Kamman asked Tony about the conflict with ATVs. Tony answered that there are now more ATVs registered than snowmobiles. The relationship with snowmobilers has been positive, but ATVs are not allowed in many places and the creation of a new corridor dedicated to ATVs is not really feasible. The National Forest Service is very cautious of their use in National Forest land.

Gioia Kuss from the Middlebury Area Land Trust spoke next. Her organization is responsible for maintaining the Trail Around Middlebury (TAM), which encircles the town. Bridges were built by funds from the state and private donors. They've seen an increase of use of the trails. User conflicts do arise occasionally between mountain bikers and hikers, but they've been able to work through many of those problems by separating users where necessary. They have been receiving increasing inquiries about horseback riding, which could be another potential source of conflicts. They would like to create some additional connectors, specifically with East Middlebury, Bristol, and Vergennes. With the increased use, more maintenance is required. Most of their funds come from private donors, particularly from members. The public funding is primarily for new trails, not maintenance. They also field a great deal of questions from other towns seeking to duplicate what the Land Trust has accomplished. The group's land conservation program also banks easements for use in the future.

Jim Arnold with the Middlebury Bike Club spoke next. Jim said he's seeing evidence of more bikers in the area, many of whom come from out of state. Are we ready to accommodate a growth in demand from bikers? We need to think about issues that encourage biking in Middlebury. Is there enough room on the roads for bikers? Jim said they have a great relationship with TAM, assisting with trail maintenance and being good neighbors. He'd love to see the Chipman Hill area available for more recreational use, particularly for the youth. It's against the law to ride a mountain bike on state lands (such as Snake Mountain), which he'd like to see changed. He'd also like to encourage bikers to come to the area.

Peter Hare, director of Camp Keewaydin, addressed the group next. Besides providing a private summer program, the group has established the Environmental Education Center. Many county schools send students to their center each year. Their biggest challenge is the funding. The center is only open in the spring, but they would like to increase the program's scope again and add a fall program. Before they do that, they need to make sure they have enough demand from area schools. He does see a conflict between his camp's needs and motorboats using the area near their property.

Lawrence Pyne from VPT Outdoor Journal spoke next. His group is developing a new wildlife management area in East Bridport. Hunting and fishing are decentralized types of recreational activities. Demand has clearly been increasing, and he's seen more women taking part in wildlife viewing and hunting. More urbanites are moving to the area and picking up the sports. He hasn't seen many conflicts in users, although they do exist. ATVs and all unauthorized trail use is a big problem. Part of the problem is the lack of education provided to ATV users. The biggest impact to hunting and fishing is sprawl and poorly planned growth. Good planning that keeps land open is critical to the continued enjoyment of the lands. There's always a need for better access to Lake Champlain. An access in Orwell was a recent addition, and was sorely needed. Ice fishing is very popular and provides easier access, but that's going by the wayside due to changing land ownership, etc. Most wildlife-based recreation is user funded by registration and excise taxes. He'd like to tap into the broader spectrum of wildlife recreators that don't contribute to this funding.

The next speaker was Warren King from the Otter Creek Audubon Society, which is made up of over 300 families. They're interested in protecting birds and other wildlife and their habitats. They are strictly a volunteer organization

and have tried to develop partnerships with other organizations in Addison County to put on programs to involve the public in wildlife-oriented activities. They are seeking more members and more active members. His group is growing slightly, mainly because wildlife viewing is one of the fastest growing sports in the country. His group aims to get the public enthusiastic about wildlife and its habitat. On October 4th, they will be holding Dead Creek Wildlife Day, which creates a bridge between wildlife viewers and hunters and fishermen. Within the Fish and Wildlife Department, wildlife viewers feel there's a disproportional amount of leverage exercised by hunters and fishermen most likely because wildlife viewers don't officially contribute much to the state coffers in the way the hunters and fishermen do. They would like to contribute in the future as a way to get more influence at the state level. There is no nature center in Addison County, and they would like to see that happen in the near future.

Fred Dunnington asked where such a center would be located? Warren answered somewhere reasonably close to the population center, but also near or in a wildlife area.

Mike Winslow of the Lake Champlain Committee spoke next. In recent years, he has seen a huge increase in the number of paddlers – particularly kayakers – in the area. With this growth, there is some perceived conflict between kayakers and canoeists and motorboat users. The group has put together a booklet listing sites that can be used by paddlers. Their goal is to set up a trail that would enable paddlers to do a trip around Lake Champlain, but they still need to get landowner permission in several areas like Bridport. The biggest conflict they're seeing is the uncertainty over whether paddlers are free to use state boat launches. Often times paddlers purchase fishing licenses to avoid with this.

The final speaker was Pete Diminico of the New Haven River Anglers. The anglers have dedicated their efforts to education and conservation. The average age for anglers in the state is 46, and they contribute millions to the economy. They've seen a growth in the number of women anglers. They also attempt to build bridges between communities. Pete said the flood of 1998 really showed how powerful the New Haven River is and more studies should be conducted. Degradation of habitat is one of the river's largest problems. He'd like to see more bridge building in the future to bring together anglers, hunters, fishermen, trappers, etc. to enable conflict resolution. Tonight's panel discussion goes a long way towards this goal. He would like to see an ad hoc committee of all users come together to resolve common issues. The posting of private land has grown significantly and is an important issue that needs to be discussed.

Andrew Manning asked Mike Winslow how they've gone about finding suitable property in Bridport. Mike answered that they haven't gone through town channels.

Neil Kamman commented on what Jim Arnold said regarding increasing bike tourism to the area. He described the Kingdom Trails in Northeast Vermont. They've done a great job developing a trail network with more than 150 miles of trails. East Burke has seen a huge boom of tourism in the area for this area. Addison County should put together a region-wide map including TAM and Moosalamoo and other bike trails to help promote these resources.

Tony Clark mentioned that mountain biking is not allowed in the Green Mountain National Forest, but his group is doing a pilot project to allow biking in the Moosalamoo area.

Elizabeth Golden asked about where bike riding is allowed in Middlebury. Fred said because of complaints from pedestrians, they've banned bicycles from sidewalks. The town has to balance the needs of pedestrians, cars and bicycles. Elizabeth added that there needs to be more discussion about rights of way between drivers and bikers.

Jim Arnold commented that the Lake Champlain Bikeways Committee has maps, and the Addison County region is the most often requested. They're working on developing new maps for the region.

Peter Hare asked Neil Kamman how the Kingdom Trails came about. Neil answered that it was originally developed by mountain bikers mostly on private land, but they now have permission from every landowner and have begun promoting the trails.

Tony Clark added that there is a Wilderness Proposal for the Moosalamoo area. Jeffords and Leahy are trying to increase the amount of wilderness in Vermont. The Moosalamoo Foundation is proposing a National Recreation Area, which would act as a buffer to the wilderness and enable the group to get federal funding. Several meetings

are coming up to discuss this issue. Adam said that on September 16th a meeting would be held at Holley Hall in Bristol to discuss wilderness in the Green Mountain National Forest.

A member of the audience thanked the commission for putting together such an informative panel. He added that linking websites would be a great idea. He also asked if there was an attempt made to include representatives from snowmobilers and ATV users. Don Shall noted the already diverse groups represented on the panel and the time constraints of the meeting, but acknowledged he did not believe any other groups were invited to participate.

The public program ended at 9:10 pm.

Business Meeting

The business meeting began at 9:20 pm.

Approval of Minutes: July 9, 2003

Thea moved to approve the minutes from July 9, 2003. Alden seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Board Minutes: July 25, 2003

There was no discussion.

Treasurer's Report

Adam said they have a fair amount of money in the accounts and are in good shape so far. Last year's audit should be complete by the end of the month.

Judy moved to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Allen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

TAC: Adam said there was no meeting last month. The next meeting is planned for September 17th and then a joint TAC meeting with Rutland Regional Planning Commission on October 23rd at 6:00 pm at Otter Valley Union High School. They will focus on transportation and economic development.

Bob McNary asked how the TAC grants are being used. Adam answered \$17,500 to Middlebury to study Rte. 7 and Exchange St., Orwell gets \$15,000 for trail planning, and the remaining \$20,000 will be spent on culvert inventory work for each town in the county.

Local Government: *See New Business.*

Act 250: Fred said little has happened, but asked Adam to give a report on VELCO activities. Adam said he attended a procedural meeting recently and mentioned that VELCO has agreed to provide notification to all adjacent landowners and have provided a schedule for doing so. More public hearings are scheduled. One will take place at Otter Valley Union High School on September 29th at 7:00 pm. and another at the Charlotte Elementary School on

September 30th also at 7:00pm. Adam will attend on behalf of the Commission and will present the resolution that the Commission passed back in March.

Judy asked if the committee should begin meeting on this subject. Fred said that with regards to Act 248, it appears to be more of a local issue. The town of Middlebury is taking the position that they will comment only on aesthetic concerns. Our regional plan does not say anything about height restrictions. He said individual communities would likely have the most success in getting VELCO to address a lot of these concerns.

Ellen suggested that the committee comes up with a process that individual towns can follow. It was agreed that the committee would come up with some suggestions.

Natural Resources: Elizabeth said the committee met last Monday to discuss intrusive species. They went out on a milfoil harvester owned by Dr. Frank Russell, which broke that night -- underscoring the need for more funding. The Lake Champlain Restoration Commission was represented and discussed the group's plan. The committee brainstormed on how the group could acquire money to fund its operations. Nell said she would provide the group with some direction.

Neil Kamman offered to assist in this area. He said the state does have funds available for projects like this, but there are many competing needs right now.

Economic Development: Jim said the next meeting would be held Tuesday September 16th at 4:00 at the Regional Planning Commission office.

Utilities and Facilities: Ellen said the committee met in August and finished the Health and Human Services portion of the plan. They've collected a lot of information on its update on the Recreational Facilities section of the plan. Monday night they will hold a meeting to discuss power generation in the county.

Joint Partners' Report

Adam passed around the summary of the report they've prepared.

Staff/Delegate Recognition

Adam thanked Brandy for organizing tonight's meeting.

Don welcomed Neil Kamman, the new delegate from Vergennes and Jeffery Cathcart, the new delegate from Goshen.

Allen Karnatz added that tonight might be his last meeting.

Old Business

Committee Membership: Adam asked that members join any additional committees they'd like.

Update on the Strategic Plan for Celebration Champlain: Adam passed around an agenda for a workshop to discuss attractions in the area that participate in cultural heritage. They're trying to get these groups to work together on this issue. In addition to the symposium, they've put together a survey asking for suggestions for the strategic plan.

Distribution of the Joint Partners State of the Region Report: *See Joint Partners Report.*

Other: Judy spoke about the VELCO project and said she feels it is not the best option for the state. She discussed her reasons for opposing the project and instead encouraged self-sufficiency and energy efficiency. She said these new lines carry enough power for six cities the size of Burlington. In addition, she said most of the energy would be sent out of state. She encouraged the commission to read the information packet she passed around.

New Business

Report and Vote on the Confirmation and Approval of the Salisbury Town Plan: Thea said the entire committee met in Salisbury to hear about the town's ongoing planning process. The maps were not included in the plan, and the statement of compatibility was lacking. They offered to help the town, and the town has now completed its plan. **Thea made a motion to confirm Salisbury's planning process and to approve the Salisbury town plan. Ellen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Report and Vote on the Confirmation and Approval of the Cornwall Town Plan: The committee also met in Cornwall and confirmed that their plan update was complete. They recommended that the town flesh out its implementation plan and consolidate it. **Thea made a motion to confirm Cornwall's planning process and approve the Cornwall town plan. Allen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Member Concerns/Information

Elizabeth Golden mentioned that she now works for the National Community Forestry Center Northern Forest Region, (Yellow Wood Associates), which is sponsoring a free workshop on forest resources this Saturday in Gorham, NH.

Next month's meeting will be held at the new Monkton Fire House.

Adjournment

| **Ellen moved to adjourn. Thea seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 pm.**

Submitted by Ursula Jones