

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Full Commission Meeting

Wednesday, September 8, 2004

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission held its Full Commission Meeting on September 8, 2004, at the Vergennes Fire Station, with Donald Shall presiding.

ROLL CALL:

<i>Addison:</i>	Alden Harwood	<i>Orwell:</i>	Andrea Ochs David King
<i>Bridport:</i>	Andrew Manning	<i>Panton:</i>	Mike Hermann
<i>Bristol:</i>	William Sayre	<i>Ripton:</i>	Jeremy Grip
<i>Cornwall:</i>	Donald Shall William McQuillan	<i>Salisbury:</i>	
<i>Ferrisburgh:</i>		<i>Shoreham:</i>	Elizabeth Golden Meg Barnes
<i>Goshen:</i>		<i>Starksboro:</i>	
<i>Leicester:</i>		<i>Vergennes:</i>	
<i>Lincoln:</i>		<i>Waltham:</i>	
<i>Middlebury:</i>	Karl Neuse Fred Dunnington	<i>Weybridge:</i>	Jan Albers
<i>Monkton:</i>	Charles Huizenga	<i>Whiting:</i>	Ellen Kurrelmeyer
<i>New Haven:</i>	Harvey Smith		

CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:

AC Chamber of Commerce:

AC Community Action Group:

AC Economic Development Corp:

Otter Creek Audubon Society:

ADDISON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**ACRPC EXECUTIVE BOARD**

CHAIR: Donald Shall

VICE-CHAIR: Tom Yager

SECRETARY: Thea Gaudette

TREASURER: Karl Neuse
Renny Perry
William Sayre
Andrea Ochs

STAFF:

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Adam Lougee

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/GIS DATA MANAGER: Kevin Behm

EMERGENCY MGT PLANNER/SENIOR PLANNER: Tim Bouton

SENIOR/TRANSPORTATION PLANNER: Garrett Daque

PLANNER/GRANT WRITER: Brandy Saxton

WATERSHED PLANNER: Neil Fraser

OFFICE MANAGER/BOOKKEEPER: Pauline Cousino

TELEPHONE: 388-3141

FAX: 388-0038

Public Program

Dr. William Mathis of the Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union District presented an overview of Act 68, Vermont's current school funding law. The FY05 plan signed into law modifies the existing system under Act 60 to further ensure taxpayer fairness and stability within the system by maintaining tax and spending equity.

Bill Talbott, Chief Financial and Administrative Officer for the Vermont State Department of Education, offered specifics on the new law in terms of land use:

The grand list for each town is broken down into two groups: non-residential and homestead. Owners of non-homestead property pay a fixed school tax rate of \$1.59 per \$100 of fair market value, while homestead tax rates vary by town with voted education spending per pupil. The state sets homestead tax rates for both property and income based on the per-pupil education spending approved by voters. The minimum rates are \$1.10 on property and 2% of household income. Higher per-pupil spending results in higher taxes. Mr. Talbott noted, however, that the 2004 Legislature reduced these tax rates to \$1.54 on non-homestead property, \$1.05 on homestead property, and 1.9% of household income for FY-05 only.

Mr. Talbott went onto explain the state's role in appraising property. Town listers first determine the fair market value, but since market prices tend to quickly change, the values become out of date. Therefore, each year the state compares towns' listed values with market prices, and develops a correction factor for each town called the common level of appraisal, or CLA. The towns' listed value, divided by the CLA on each property owner's tax bill, results in fair market value.

Andrew Manning asked if non-residential tax will change in proportion to school spending.

Mr. Talbott explained that the Vermont Legislature decided that 34% of the Education Fund should come from non-residential property. Owners of non-homestead property pay a fixed school tax rate of \$1.59 per \$100 of fair market value, with the one-time exception of fiscal year 2005, when the rate will be \$1.54.

Elizabeth Golden asked if the tax burden would be more evenly distributed among towns.

As outlined in "A Citizen's Guide to School Funding," Dr. Mathis emphasized that prior to 1997, school taxes were local taxes. While property owners still write their checks to the town, the tax is now a state tax. The state sets the tax rate, which is the same statewide for all non-homestead property. These state-set rates vary from town to town based solely on how much town voters approve in education spending per pupil. Taxpayers in two towns with the same per-pupil education spending pay the same homestead tax rates.

Karl Neuse pointed out the current trend of decreasing school enrollment, and asked how the Legislature had taken into account declining student population while formulating Acts 60 and 68.

Dr. Mathis noted that although the number of students enrolled in public schools is declining at a rate of approximately 1,000/year, the numbers are not evenly distributed among Vermont towns. Towns with declining enrollement suffer higher per pupil costs. He noted that fixed cost spending, including Blue Cross and Blue Shield, special education, and anticipated costs for the 'No Child Left Behind' Act continue to increase. However, Act 68 does provide a "parachute" whereby no town's equalized pupil count shall drop more than 3% any given year. The Department of Education adjusts the pupil count annually for each town. The adjustment accounts for various factors that affect the cost of educating different categories of students.

Dr. Mathis also pointed out that statistics show that, although Vermonters may be paying more in school taxes, they are getting a better return on their investment through increasing students' test scores and academic achievement.

Ellen Kurrelmeyer asked if taxpayers could expect special education costs to decrease.

Bill Talbott advised that 14% of Vermont students are presently enrolled in IEP (Independent Education Programs), and the number is growing, with the most significant growth among the number of autistic children. He attributes the increase to both the rate of incidents and improved methods of identification. The number of children diagnosed with ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and Emotional Disability has also seen notable growth. In most cases, full-time aides are required, and because of the No Child Left Behind Act, aides are now required to be certified.

Bill McQuillan asked how Act 68 would impact municipal land use planning and commercial development.

Dr. Mathis suggested that the current school funding law would create stability in the non-residential tax rate, which, in turn, will attract new businesses.

Fred Dunnington asked what recommendations Dr. Mathis and Mr. Talbott might have for funding municipal services of regional centers such as the Town of Middlebury.

Mr. Talbott suggested that town officials of regional centers band together in approaching their legislators, noting that taxable properties continue to fund municipal services.

Business Meeting

The business meeting began at 8:45 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: July 14, 2004

Elizabeth Golden moved to approve the minutes of July 14, 2004. Andrea Ochs seconded the motion.

Correction to the Roll Call: Both Alden Harwood and Bill McQuillan were present at the July 14th meeting.

Motion passed unanimously. Minutes approved as amended.

Treasurer's Report

Adam distributed and briefly reviewed the Treasurer's Report, noting that Miller, Deverell & Co. are in the process of auditing the books with completion slated for October.

Andrea Ochs moved to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Elizabeth Golden seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

Act 250 Committee

Harvey Smith reported that the New Haven police station has been put on hold pending an appeal filed by John Madden. Permits are in place and the state hopes to re-appropriate the dollars to construct the police facility.

Adam reported that the committee received a new application in August for a Garden Center in Bristol; and a hearing is scheduled on an amendment to an Act 250 permit for a gravel pit in Starksboro.

Economic Development Committee

No meeting held.

Natural Resources Committee

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 4th.

TAC Transportation Committee

Meg Barnes reported that a Park & Ride will be located at the southwest corner of Routes 17 and 116. The TAC Committee will meet again the week of September 12th.

Utilities, Facilities & Service Committee

Ellen Kurrelmeyer reported that committee members expect to complete their work on the Education Facilities section of the Work Plan, a 100-page document, and submit to the full commission at its October meeting. Adam added that this section of the Work Plan will be the focus of the public program at the October meeting. Ellen and Brandy will present an overview prior to the hearing process.

Local Government

Discussed later in agenda.

Joint Partners Report:

None.

Delegates/Staff Recognition:

None.

Old Business

Adam distributed committee mission statements and assignments (copy attached), and reminded those who had not yet signed up to serve on a committee to contact him.

VELCO Summary:

Adam reported that the VELCO process continues with hearings scheduled September 21-22. It is expected that the Public Service Board will make a final decision in January.

New Business

Vote Concerning the Confirmation and Adoption of the Addison Town Plan:

Bill McQuillan moved to approve the Addison Town Plan; Harvey Smith seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

Chapter 117 Training Proposal for Addison County Towns and Officials

Adam reported that ACRPC staff is currently reviewing all adopted zoning and subdivision regulations in its member municipalities, in preparation of offering Chapter 117 training/education sessions for local board members and zoning administrators. An ACRPC staff member has been assigned to each municipality in the region (list attached), with the exception of Middlebury since Zoning Administrator Fred Dunnington is fully familiar with the new law.

Members' Concerns/Information

Fred Dunnington advised that the Middlebury Select Board is considering a roundabout at the intersection of Exchange Street and Route 7. A second public hearing on the proposal is scheduled for September 28th. Fred noted that both the Select Board and Police Chief support a roundabout rather than a signalized intersection because of the proven benefits, even though the cost is greater.

Adjournment

Andrea Ochs moved to adjourn; Bill McQuillan seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Submitted by Peggy Connor