

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Full Commission Meeting

Wednesday, December 8, 2004

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission held its Full Commission Meeting on December 8th the Vergennes Opera House, with Don Shall presiding.

ROLL CALL:

Addison:

Orwell:

Bridport: Edward Payne

Panton:

Michael Herman

Bristol: Peter Grant

Ripton:

Jeremy Grip

Cornwall: Donald Shall
William McQuillan

Salisbury:

Shoreham:

Ferrisburgh: Bob McNary

Goshen:

Starksboro: Elissa Close

Leicester: Kathleen Swinington-Ramsay

Vergennes: Neil Kamman

Renny Perry

Greg Clark

Lincoln: Jason Oleet

Waltham:

Thomas Yager

Middlebury: Karl Neuse
Fred Dunnington

Weybridge:

Monkton: Thea Gaudette
Charles Huizenga

Whiting:

Harvey Smith

New Haven:

CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:

AC CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE
AC COMMUNITY
ACTION GROUP
OTTER CREEK
AUDUBON SOCIETY
AC ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORP
AC FARM BUREAU
OC NATR. RESOURCE
CONSERVATION DIST

ADDISON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

ACRPC EXECUTIVE BOARD

CHAIR: Donald Shall
VICE-CHAIR: Tom Yager
SECRETARY: Thea Gaudette
TREASURER: Karl Neuse
Bill Sayre
Renny Perry
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

Executive Director Adam Lougee introduced House Representatives Betty Nuovo, Mark Young, Connie Houston, Greg Clark, and Harvey Smith. The newly elected legislators were invited to share their thoughts and goals regarding transportation and land use projects. Adam and Kevin Behm distributed and briefly reviewed maps outlining both the region's watershed planning work and road projects (copies attached).

Rep. Betty Nuovo noted that she found the Commission's mission statement very helpful, particularly its goal to promote a healthy cultural and economic community. Rep. Nuovo explained that legislation would get underway once committees are assigned in January. She asked if Middlebury's second in-town bridge continued to be a priority. Adam explained that although the second bridge does not appear on the capital program, it remains a priority with the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). Fred Dunnington added that the Middlebury Select Board is in the process of re-studying seven alternatives for a second bridge, and will present their findings to voters at a series of public hearings.

Karl Neuse pointed out that Sand Hill Bridge in East Middlebury is rapidly deteriorating and asked when it was scheduled for replacement. Adam advised that Sand Hill Bridge is currently scheduled to be reconstructed in 2007.

Bob McNary asked if the infrastructure financing problem is due to a lack of or redistribution of funds.

Rep. Connie Houston explained that diverting transportation monies has always been an issue. A good example is the "Bridge 2000" project under the Kunin administration, in which monies were diverted elsewhere, thereby undermining the project. She also noted that it was reported in the *Burlington Free Press* this week that the State of Vermont had received a 'D' in the category of 'Business Vitality', and an 'F' on its 'Infrastructure.' Rep. Houston believes the state is facing a billion-dollar infrastructure problem.

Rep. Harvey Smith pointed out that because of the current permit process; the same project that used to take seven years to complete now takes up to 14. He added that all the red tape is crippling Vermont towns that are working hard to improve their infrastructure.

Elissa Close suggested that the quality of life is compromised by the deterioration of the state's infrastructure, and noted a significant increase in the number of large trucks on Vermont's highways that contribute to the problem.

Don Shall called attention to the ACRPC's website; specifically, the portion entitled "Service to Member Municipalities," in which one of the commission's responsibilities is to "work with municipalities on economic development options, especially related to infrastructure..." Don stressed the importance of aggregating resources independent of state funding, citing the Brigham Memorial School as an example of a project funded without tax dollars. The school is commonly referred to as "The Bootstrap School." Don posed the question, why not a "bootstrap bridge," funded by public financing bonds? Don challenged commission members to review the bylaws and suggest innovative ways to reverse the situation.

Rep. Connie Houston stressed the importance of 'thinking outside the box,' citing the Route 22A project funded by local transportation funds, supervised by the City of Vergennes, and utilizing local businesses such as J.P. Carrara & Sons who have supplied other states with pre-cast bridge construction.

Peter Grant questioned the bidding process used by the Agency of Transportation.

Rep. Harvey Smith responded that VTrans tends to work within the agency itself throughout the bidding process; however, the State has recently been allowing municipalities to take over their own transportation projects, citing the intersection at Rte. 30 and Cider Mill Road as an example of the town taking the initiative to alter the dangerous intersection, the site of a fatal accident in recent years.

Renny Perry commented that the State of Vermont adheres to a pay-as-you-go mentality, whereas other states and cities bond for projects. With interest levels at an all-time low, Renny asked why the option of bonding was not considered more frequently.

Rep. Houston advised that the high debt per capita in the state of Vermont affects everything from local bonds to school budgets. Rep. Nuovo cited \$80-120 million of bonding for the State at the present time. Rep. Harvey Smith noted that the infrastructure costs are running higher than the State's ability to bond or borrow.

Rep. Greg Clark stressed the need for an ongoing partnership between state government and regional planning, which is the key to successfully improve the State's infrastructure and to address its transportation needs.

Rep. Mark Young stated that affordable housing in Vermont remains a large issue for legislators, and a challenge for planning commission members. Vermonters can no longer afford to live here. Rep. Smith concurred, adding that many of his constituents have been forced to move to New York State while continuing to work in Vermont. Rep. Young also made reference to the ongoing debate over burying the power lines in connection with the VELCO project. He intimated that the issue of aesthetics has overshadowed the fact that the lines will supply two-thirds of our power -- an undisputed fact to which no one has offered a viable alternative.

Neil Kamman recommended that for every subdivision in Chittenden County, newly built homes should be required to install solar panels to be hooked up to the grid.

Don Shall closed the interactive portion of the program by thanking our legislators for coming and wishing them all happy holidays and good luck in the upcoming legislative session.

Business Meeting

The Business Meeting commenced at 8:54 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: November 10, 2004

Thea Gaudette moved to approve the minutes of November 10, 2004. Bob McNary seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. Minutes approved as presented.

Treasurer's Report

Adam distributed and briefly reviewed the Treasurer's Report (copy attached), and noted that the final draft of the budget should be made available to members by the commission's next meeting in January. The budget shows no adverse findings and reflects a \$6,000 surplus from the previous year.

Treasurer's Report unanimously accepted as presented.

Committee Reports

Act 250 Committee

Fred Dunnington advised that a second temporary tower would be seen from Chipman Hill while a new antenna is being installed.

Economic Development Committee

No meeting held.

Natural Resources Committee

The next meeting will be held in February.

TAC Transportation Committee

The committee will meet in January to review regional priorities for roadways.

Utilities, Facilities & Service Committee

Jeremy Grip reported that committee members reviewed comments received regarding the draft section submitted for the Work Plan, and will hold two additional meetings in January to complete responses and rewrites before presenting the final draft to the full commission.

Local Government

Thea noted that the committee is scheduled to be in Ripton on January 18th to review the Ripton Town Plan, and will be scheduled to be in Starksboro shortly.

Adam distributed minutes from the Executive Board's meeting held December 1st, and advised that the Board plans to review the consistency of each section of the Regional Plan to ensure it is up to date. Thea added that the CEDS annual meeting would be held December 14th at 8:30 a.m. to review the entire document

Joint Partners Report:

None.

Delegates/Staff Recognition:

Adam wished to thank Ed Fagan publicly for volunteering his time to submit testimony on behalf of the commission in regard to the ongoing VELCO litigation. Adam recognized Jean Vissering for her efforts as well.

Don Shall also acknowledged Kevin Behm's appointment to the Board of Directors of the Vermont Center for Geographic Information.

Old Business

VELCO Summary

Adam reported that he submitted a final brief November 24th on behalf of ACRPC. Reply briefs are due December 17th and a final decision is expected in January.

Municipal Planning Grant Update

Adam called attention to the first page of the newsletter for a list of towns awarded planning grants.

Audit Update

Adam offered no audit update in addition to the Treasurer's Report.

New Business

Vote Concerning Fiscal 2005/2006 Municipal Dues

The Executive Board recommended a 2-cent increase in municipal dues (proposal attached), for a total increase of approximately \$700.

Harvey Smith moved to approve the 2-cent increase in municipal dues; Thea Gaudette seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried.

Members' Concerns/Information

None.

Adjournment

Neil Kamman moved to adjourn; Peter Grant seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.