

# Addison County Regional Planning Commission

## Full Commission Meeting

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission's full commission meeting was held on December 14, 2005, at the Vergennes Opera House, with Donald Shall presiding.

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**ROLL CALL:**

<i>Addison:</i>		<i>Orwell:</i>	David King Andre Ochs
<i>Bridport:</i>	Andrew Manning Edward Payne	<i>Panton:</i>	Michael Hermann
<i>Bristol:</i>	Peter Grant	<i>Ripton:</i>	Jeremy Grip
<i>Cornwall:</i>	Donald Shall	<i>Salisbury:</i>	Brennan Michaels
<i>Ferrisburgh:</i>	Bob McNary Stephen Gutkowski	<i>Shoreham:</i>	Jeremiah Parker
<i>Goshen:</i>		<i>Starksboro:</i>	Elissa Close
<i>Leicester:</i>		<i>Vergennes:</i>	Renny Perry
<i>Lincoln:</i>	Jason Oleet	<i>Waltham:</i>	Thomas Yager
<i>Middlebury:</i>	Fred Dunnington Karl Neuse	<i>Weybridge:</i>	Jan Albers
<i>Monkton:</i>	Thea Gaudette Charles Huizenga	<i>Whiting:</i>	Ellen Kurrelmeyer
<i>New Haven:</i>	Milo Schaefer Harvey Smith Alan Karnatz		

**CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:**

*AC Chamber of Commerce:*

*AC Community Action Group:*

*AC Economic Development Corp:*

*Otter Creek Audubon Society: Marcia Parker*

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

**CHAIR:** Donald Shall

**VICE-CHAIR:** Renny Perry

**SECRETARY:** Andrea Ochs

**TREASURER:** Karl Neuse

Andrew Manning

Elissa Close

William Sayre

**STAFF:**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:** Adam Lougee

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/GIS DATA MANAGER:** Kevin Behm

**EMERGENCY MGT PLANNER/SENIOR PLANNER:** Tim Bouton

**SENIOR/TRANSPORTATION PLANNER:** Richard Kehne

**PLANNER/GRANT WRITER:**

**WATERSHED PLANNER:** Neil Fraser

**OFFICE MANAGER/BOOKKEEPER:** Pauline Cousino

**TELEPHONE:** 388-3141

**FAX:** 388-0038

## Public Program

The public program commenced at 7:35 with the introduction of Kevin Dorn, Secretary of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, who gave a presentation on the governor's housing policy, which was announced October 31<sup>st</sup>. Secretary Dorn pointed out that the working draft proposal entitled, "Homes for Vermonters" has been designed to begin a dialogue to address Vermont's housing needs.

Secretary Dorn explained that the primary factor currently impeding the development of both affordable and moderately priced housing in Vermont is the availability of appropriately located and reasonably priced land with services. The Home for Vermonters campaign seeks to stimulate the production of housing and increase the supply by addressing these challenges with counteracting measures. In order to increase the availability of land for housing, the agency proposes creating the Vermont Housing Land Bank, which would initially be capitalized with surplus state land. It is further proposed that with land would be continually added to the Bank's resources from various sources, including: 1) land made available through mitigation and donated to the Bank, with the cost savings passed onto the homeowner; 2) proceeds from the Land Bank's sales would be used to acquire more land for housing; 3) charitable contributions; 4) a process identifying parcels with the potential for accommodating new housing; and 5) a review of land set aside due to permitting requirements that may be more suitable for housing. The proposal also calls for the State to work with regional planning commissions, and other agencies to conduct a statewide land suitability map for housing.

The Agency of Commerce proposes to streamline the functions of the following three primary funding entities that provide for affordable housing as defined by State statute: The Vermont Housing Finance Agency, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund, and the Community Development Block Grant program. The boards of these funding organizations will be asked to: a) streamline administrative processes and improve customer service; b) give priority to net new units; c) establish a pro-active approach to evaluating housing investments; d) expand application eligibility to for-profit developers; and e) complete a capital needs assessment.

In addition, the proposed Vermont New Neighborhood Initiative offers tax incentives for communities who choose to participate in the program. Towns that create zoning for dense housing development will be allowed to maintain the school portion of the property tax for new units built in those zones for three years, funds that would then be used for any municipal purpose related to the New Neighborhoods. Towns would be required to apply for the program, and change their zoning to accommodate additional housing and higher density use than existed at the time of application. Reallocation would be limited to the tax generated from new housing located in the area rezoned after the application was completed.

The proposal also addresses the permitting barriers faced by developers, and offers a new program whereby developers could claim up to \$1,000 per unit tax credit against the capital gains on any newly developed home sold for less than \$200,000. New mortgage programs through VFA that address mortgage issues from a graduated perspective is also part of the plan, as well as a mobile home replacement project whereby inmates of the State's correctional institutions would build quality but low-cost modular, stick-built units of housing.

The draft policy suggests that the executive order 07-92 be revised to include an advisory panel consisting of representatives of the public and private housing providers, developers, builders, business organizations, and organizations which represent large consumer segments such as the elderly.

Ellen Kurelmeyer asked how the issue of high taxes is being addressed in terms of housing affordability.

Although the draft proposal fails to address the property tax problem, Secretary Dorn pointed out that the supply-and-demand element factored into the proposal would serve to moderate taxes.

Andrea Ochs noted that increased housing would inevitably have a significant impact on towns' infrastructure, an issue that also needs to be addressed.

Secretary Dorn suggested that if a \$100,000 building lot were reduced from \$15-\$20,000, then an affordable home could be built, which is precisely the stated goal of the Land Bank: to make land available at affordable prices to enable people to build homes.

Brennan Michaels asked if taxing second homes at a higher rate had been a considered option.

Secretary Down responded that the issue had come up, particularly in Windham County.

Jan Albers opposed communities designating appropriate lands for affordable housing rather than going through the Act 250 process. Jan also pointed out that although Secretary Dorn said that the State cannot dictate zoning to communities, compliance with the new state-mandated zoning laws effective in September 2005, has been the focus of zoning boards throughout the state this past year.

In terms of perpetuity, Gioia Kuss expressed concern with both the State and for-profit agencies taking a more active role in determining designated lands versus non-for-profit agencies working with Act 250, who would likely be more sensitive to the character of a particular town.

Bob McNary opined that the shortage of affordable housing in the State is due to a lack of good-paying jobs, inadequate infrastructure, and an unforgiving permit process. Bob felt that until these issues are addressed on a national and state level, the problem of affordable housing will continue to be unresolved, regardless of the draft policy set forth by the Agency of Commerce.

The public program concluded at 8:55 p.m.

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## Business Meeting

Noting a quorum being present, Chairman Don Shall called the Business Meeting to order at 9:05 p.m.

### I. Approval of Minutes: November 9, 2005

**Thea Gaudette moved to approve the November 9<sup>th</sup> full commission meeting minutes; Andrea Ochs seconded the motion. Minutes approved as submitted by unanimous voice vote.**

Don Shall extended an opportunity to each of the six Addison County legislators present to address commission members.

Representative Willem Jewett spoke briefly about transportation issues, followed by Senator Claire Ayer who offered updates on topics including, the Middlebury rail spur and second in-town bridge, land use, agriculture legislation, and health care. Sen. Ayer also expressed her concern with the housing proposal presented by Secretary Down, specifically the notion of giving land to a few in order to make a profit.

Senator Harold Giard described the second bridge proposed for the Town of Middlebury as a priority, as well as adequate funding for upkeep of rural roads. Sen. Giard also presented an update on recent work by the Agriculture and Government Operations Committees.

Representative Steve Maier agreed that several issues remain priorities for the Town of Middlebury, including railroad bridge construction in the downtown area, the Cross Street bridge proposal, maintenance of the Battell Bridge, and the Signalization project. In terms of the proposed affordable housing initiative, Rep. Maier stressed the importance of including an energy conservation factor, and pointed out that reducing funds for the weatherization program while discussing affordable housing made little sense. Rep. Maier serves on the Health Reform Commission and summarized public input to date: 1) an urgency among Vermonters to act; 2) every Vermonter should have health coverage; 3) anxiety about the cost and affordability of health care; and 4) how to fund health care remains the biggest challenge. To that end, Rep. Maier noted that since chronic care represents 75% of the cost in the health care system, studies suggest there is significant room for improvement in managing chronic illnesses, such as medical liability reform and better use of information technology.

Representative Betty Nuovo advised that the Ways & Means Committee is scheduled to meet this week to discuss transportation needs, housing, and education. One major concern is the non-renewal of Vermont's 20-year contract with Hydro Quebec.

Representative Harvey Smith spoke of the agriculture economic bill, which he was instrumental in passing this year, and he added that companies are now being invited to Vermont to study the latest energy technology.

## **II. Treasurer's Report**

Adam reported that the updated Treasurer's report (copy attached) reflects fund balances in good order. A portion of the most recent audit was previously distributed to members, including two letters from the auditor who found no adverse findings.

**Acceptance of the Treasurer's Report passed unanimously by voice vote.**

## **III. Committee Reports**

### **Act 250 and 248**

Fred Dunnington reported that the following applications have been submitted: 1) for the Eastview Retirement Community Project in Middlebury; and 2) from Jeff and Joan Forbes for the purpose of removing permit restrictions imposed in connection with the Lindale Mobile Home Park on property they own on Route 116 in East Middlebury; and 3) from Lathrop Ltd. Partnership in Bristol. Fred also advised that VELCO has cleared the aesthetic mitigation component of their project, and a motion to dismiss is pending in the case of Ochs v. Trickett.

### **Natural Resources Committee**

Harvey Smith reported that discussion at the December 1<sup>st</sup> Natural Resources Committee focused on the watershed plan initiative, the greater Otter Creek planning process, the recently passed Agriculture Bill signed into law, and International Paper's tire burn. Harvey asked that members of the committee advise him if they plan to attend upcoming meetings so that appropriate accommodations can be arranged.

### **TAC Transportation Committee**

Bob McNary reported that committee members met with Secretary of Transportation Dawn Terrill November 16<sup>th</sup>. Bob learned that a significant amount of funding had been redirected from the transportation fund to the education fund. Harvey Smith explained however that the appropriation had been directed by the Legislature.

### **Bylaws Committee**

Thea reported that the Bylaws Committee continues to meet monthly, prior to the commission's regular meeting, and expects to present a draft for consideration by February.

## **IV. Joint Partners Report**

Adam advised that this week's meeting with the Addison County Economic Development Committee focused on housing and related demographics issues.

## **V. Delegates/Staff Recognition:**

Commission members welcomed new delegate Marcia Parker, a representative of the Audubon Society.

## **VI. Old Business**

### **\* Municipal Planning Grant Update**

Adam noted that the towns of Orwell and Cornwall both received \$27,000 in municipal planning grants, the only two towns to apply.

### **\* Brownfield's Grant Update**

Adam reported that two grant applications had been submitted in the amount of \$200,000 each for the purpose of defining property sites affected by hazardous materials and a subsequent assessment process. He anticipates a response within four to six months.

## **VII. New Business**

### **\* Vote Concerning Fiscal Year 2006/2007 Municipal dues**

The Executive Board has recommended a 3-cent-per-capita increase in municipal assessments to cover cost of business expenses.

**Karl Neuse moved to increase municipal dues as recommended by the Executive Board; Jan Albers seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

## **VIII. Adjournment**

**Andrea Ochs moved to adjourn; Michael Hermann seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.** Meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

*Submitted by,  
Peggy Connor*