

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Full Commission Meeting

Wednesday, April 12, 2006

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission met at Middlebury College's Kirk Alumni Center on April 12, 2006, Donald Shall presiding.

ROLL CALL:

| | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Addison:</i> | | <i>Orwell:</i> | Andrea Ochs David King |
| <i>Bridport:</i> | Andrew Manning | <i>Panton:</i> | Michael Hermann |
| <i>Bristol:</i> | Peter Grant William Sayre | <i>Ripton:</i> | Jeremy Grip |
| <i>Cornwall:</i> | Donald Shall | <i>Salisbury:</i> | |
| <i>Ferrisburgh:</i> | Bob McNary Larry Keyes | <i>Shoreham:</i> | Elizabeth Pidgeon |
| <i>Goshen:</i> | Bruce Webster | <i>Starksboro:</i> | Elissa Close |
| <i>Leicester:</i> | | <i>Vergennes:</i> | Renny Perry Neil Kamman |
| <i>Lincoln:</i> | Jason Oleet | <i>Waltham:</i> | |
| <i>Middlebury:</i> | Fred Dunnington Brian Bauer | <i>Weybridge:</i> | |
| <i>Monkton:</i> | Thea Gaudette Charles Huizenga | <i>Whiting:</i> | Ellen Kurrelmeyer Jonathan Heppell |
| <i>New Haven:</i> | Harvey Smith | | |

CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:

*Otter Creek Resource Conservation
District:* John Chamberlain

Addison County Farm Bureau: Kent Wright

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: Jeffrey Owen
WATERSHED PLANNER: Neil Fraser
OFFICE MANAGER/BOOKKEEPER: Pauline Cousino
TELEPHONE: 388-3141 **FAX:** 388-0038

Public Program

The public program began at 7:35 p.m. with the introduction of three guest speakers to discuss creating affordable housing in Addison County, and recent changes to Chapter 117. The panel included Terry McKnight, Executive Director of Addison County Community Trust; Tayt Brooks, Government Affairs Director of Home Builders and Remodelers of Northern Vermont; and Brian Shupe, Director of Programs at the Vermont Forum on Sprawl.

Terry outlined the goals and objectives of Addison County Community Trust (ACCT), a non-profit organization charged with creating affordable housing. Four major components to meet this objective include: 1) the purchase, renovation, ownership, and operating of mobile home lots; 2) rental housing; 3) the sale and development of land; and 4) assisting people in the purchase of homes through the Homeland Program process, which offers 20% toward the purchase price of a home, up to a maximum of \$46,000. There are currently 40 houses in the ACCT portfolio affiliated with the Homeland Program. ACCT hopes to work together with communities working on revisions for Chapter 117, and including affordable housing on their own lands.

Brian Shupe explained that the Vermont Forum on Sprawl (VFS), both a conservation and development organization, was founded in 1997, for the purpose of promoting public policy to enhance economic vitality of downtowns. Research includes cause and effects of, and alternatives to sprawl. Brian described the Designated Growth Center bill as an important step forward in promoting affordable housing in Vermont by offering a voluntary opportunity to communities based on local initiatives. Two years ago, the VFS undertook the Vermont Neighborhoods Project. The project team works closely with communities to identify properties suitable for infill development -- sites that fit the character of the community while providing mixed-use housing options. Brian noted that a significant barrier in achieving these goals appears to be current zoning, and an aversion to density in village centers. He added that changes in Chapter 117 serve to eliminate local barriers to affordable housing, and offers flexibility in dealing with density by allowing communities to define their housing needs and then design zoning around those needs.

Home Builders and Remodelers Association is a statewide organization consisting of 600 members statewide, employing 20,000 people. Tayt Brooks explained that the association offers programs for builders with focus on workmen's compensation and recertification, as well as regulatory issues. The association is a strong supporter of compact settlement patterns, and provides significant input on housing issues in Montpelier. Pending legislation includes S.142, originally introduced to amend Act 250 in regards to definitions of primary agricultural soils. The bill contains language relating to the designation of growth centers and exemption from mitigation for affordable housing, and is currently being considered by the Senate Finance Committee. Last month the Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs Committee passed a bill that would create the Vermont Land Bank Program, establishing an inventory of land owned by the state, offered by a municipality or donated by a private owner, and determining the potential for use of that land for housing development. Noting that Vermont now has a 12,300 shortage of owner-occupied units, Tayt agreed that the most significant barriers to building homes are regulations, density, and infrastructure. He noted that one financial option, the Tax Increment Financing District (TIFF), helps pay for infrastructure improvements within municipalities.

Brian Bauer pointed out the discrepancy between the median price of \$270,000 to \$280,000 for a home and the median income, a critical issue making home ownership out of reach for many Vermonters.

Fred Dunnington noted that Middlebury has been absorbing about 15 units per year, and yet he believed that it is highly unlikely lot prices will go down even though the market will eventually be flooded with nearly 487 new units. Fred was not convinced zoning regulations were a major barrier to affordable housing, and he suggested that the Growth Center bill should be defined regionally, rather than a single statewide definition.

Brian Shupe explained that the Growth bill is intended to be an outcome of the local planning process and seeks to accommodate growth and development while supporting the economic vitality of the state's downtowns and village centers.

Bob McNary suggested that the State take a closer look at pre-existing houses, noting the exorbitant cost of building lots, and the significant number of vacant homes he has observed throughout the state

Tayt Brooks agreed that in some counties, renovating existing homes may be feasible; however, vacant homes are practically non-existent in Chittenden County, and older homes are very costly to renovate. Terry McKnight agreed that rehabilitating existing homes may be more productive than looking for land through the Land Bank, which is precisely the driving concept behind the Neighbor Works Program, offering rehab programs and staff to oversee the work.

Brian Bauer asked if alternative methods have been considered, such as those used in Pennsylvania to address inadequate soil for building purposes.

Tayt noted that there are 19 alternative systems available and approved. However the problem is their high cost of between \$30,000 and \$35,000. He added that statutory changes must be made to address this issue.

Harvey Smith believed that until a significant number of homeowners experience problems with existing mound systems, any statutory changes are unlikely.

Noting the number of zoning and planning members present, Adam asked the panel for any final thoughts or suggestions they wished to offer regarding the creation of affordable housing.

Brian Shute asked municipalities to look at densities and all dimensional standards currently contained in each town's regulations and compare them to their goals. Terry McKnight reminded members that ACCT can bring money and expertise to the affordable housing dilemma and is willing to work with communities to do so. Noting the NAMBY factor (Not In My Back Yard), Tayt Brooks reiterated the need to look closely at town bylaws and zoning regulations, and minimize density within communities.

The public program concluded at 8:45 p.m.

Business Meeting

Noting a quorum being present, Chairman Don Shall called the Business Meeting to order at 9:00 p.m.

I. Approval of Minutes: March 8, 2006

Andrea Ochs moved to approve the meeting minutes for March 8, 2006; Thea Gaudette seconded the motion. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote. Minutes approved as presented.

II. Treasurer's Report

Adam distributed an updated version of the Treasurer's report (copy attached), in which he noted more revenue than expenditures, and a budget in good standing.

Thea Gaudette moved to accept the Treasurer's Report; Bob McNary seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote. Treasurer's Report accepted as presented.

III. Committee Reports

Local Government

Refer to "New Business."

Act 250 and 248

Fred Dunnington cited the following new applications and decisions: 1) Brown Novelty Company filed an application to subdivide 17 single family homes from its property on Lower Plains Road in East Middlebury; 2) Middlebury College filed an application to renovate and add to the Hillcrest Environmental Studies building; 3) National Bank of Orwell submitted an application to build a branch office in Shoreham; and 4) Jason Barnard Consulting submitted an application to build a 5,200-square-foot truck repair facility on Plank Road in Bristol. The District 9 Environmental Commission issued a denial of Lathrop Ltd. Partnership's application to excavate gravel from a parcel of land on River Street in Bristol, noting that the Bristol Town Plan does not allow for that type of use in the RA-2 district.

Natural Resources Committee

Harvey Smith reported that the committee will meet to discuss watershed planning initiatives, and invites members to submit their ideas for consideration.

TAC Transportation Committee

Refer to "Old Business."

Bylaws Committee

Refer to "Old Business."

IV. Joint Partners Report

Adam noted that Addison County Day will take place under the dome in Montpelier this week on Thursday, April 13th. Governor Douglas and Lt. Governor Brian Dubie will speak to the delegation at 10:30 and 11:30 a.m. On the same day, Kevin Behm noted that a Geographic Information Conference will be held at the Windham.

V. Delegate/Staff Recognition

On behalf of the commission, Chairman Don Shall welcomed new delegates Kent Wright, representing the Addison County Farm Bureau; John Chamberlain of the Otter Creek Resource Conservation District; and Larry Keyes, an alternate delegate from Ferrisburgh.

VI. Old Business

Comments on Proposed ACRPC Bylaws

Thea noted that changes brought forth at last month's meeting have been incorporated in the latest draft of the bylaws distributed to members, and invites any further comments. The bylaws will be considered for adoption at the annual meeting in May.

Report of Nominating Committee on Its Selection of a Slate of Executive Board Members

Ellen reported that the Nominating Committee has recommended the following slate of officers: Fred Dunnington, Chair; Elissa Close, Vice Chair; Andrea Ochs, Treasurer; Andrew Manning, Secretary; Thea Gaudette, Chair of Transportation section rewrite committee; Renny Perry, at large; and Bill Sayre, at large. The committee further recommends that Fred Dunnington and Thea Gaudette join the Executive Board. A formal vote on the nominees will be held at the annual meeting next month.

Announcement of Annual Meeting Agenda and Location

Adam announced that it is anticipated this year's annual meeting will be held May 10th at the Blueberry Hill Inn in Goshen with a guest speaker from the Gund Institute on Environmental Economics. Final confirmation will be conveyed to members via email within a week. Cocktail hour will begin at 5:00 p.m.

VII. New Business

VOTE on the Regional Confirmation of the Town of Bridport's Planning Process and Town Plan

Thea reported that members of the Local Government committee met with the Bridport Planning Commission and recommend confirmation of Bridport's Town Plan. **Thea so moved; Bob McNary seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

Town Selection of Delegates and Alternates

Adam asked members to remind their town select boards to make appointments and submit to the ACRPC office.

Presentation of DRAFT Workplan and Budget

Adam reviewed the draft of the workplan and budget, noting few changes as the document represents a continuation of the current plan. As suggested, storm water regulations have been added to the plan, and the inclusion of Brownfields under Special Planning Projects will be determined once it is determined if grant monies will be available. The Transportation Plan will be a priority, and multi-town cooperation is encouraged to consider issues of housing and creating community infrastructure that benefits economic development.

Adam noted that the proposed budget will largely remain the same as last year. He noted that on the expense side, the ACRPC office has the opportunity to expand by assuming the upstairs of the building, and have been advised to do so at a cost of \$500/month.

VIII. Members' Concerns/Information

Noting that the county is home to a significant migratory bird population, Bob McNary asked if the regional planning commission should address the issue of bird flu. On the same topic, Andrea Ochs invited members to attend a regional pandemic flu meeting at the American Legion in Vergennes on Wednesday, April 26th beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Ellen asked how towns can qualify for a portion of the six million dollars in grant money available to reduce water pollution. Adam will consult with Rick Kehne and report back.

On behalf of the Town of Ferrisburgh, Larry Keyes offered his thanks to the commission for its support in connection with the VELCO litigation, and requested the commission's assistance in drafting a letter expressing the concerns and anger with VELCO's revised plans. Adam agreed to do so, and advised he has sent letters to all landowners along the line in Addison County. Final plans have not yet been filed with the board, but he anticipates seeing the results of his comments within a couple weeks.

Thea Gaudette moved to adjourn; Neil Kamman seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Submitted by Peggy Connor