

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Addison County Regional Planning Commission**  
**Wednesday, February 11, 2009**

*The ACRPC February meeting was held at ACRPC's office on February, 11, 2009 with Fred Dunnington, Chair, presiding.*

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**ROLL CALL:**

*Addison:*

*Bridport:* Ed Payne  
Andrew Manning  
Mike Gamache

*Bristol:* William Sayre  
Peter Grant

*Cornwall:* Mary Dodge

*Ferrisburgh* Bob McNary

*Goshen:*

*Leicester:*

*Lincoln:* Dave D'Allienne

*Middlebury:* Fred Dunnington

*Monkton:* Thea Gaudette

*New Haven:*

*Orwell:*

*Panton:*

*Ripton:* Jeremy Grip

*Salisbury:*

*Shoreham:*

*Starksboro:*

*Waltham:*

*Weybridge:*

*Whiting:* Jonathan Heppell

*Vergennes:*

**CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:**

*Addison County Farm Bureau:*

*Addison County Economic Development Corp:*

*Otter Creek Audubon Society:*

*Otter Creek Natural Resources:*

*Addison County Chamber of Commerce:*

**ACRPC EXECUTIVE BOARD**

*Chair:* Fred Dunnington

*Vice-Chair:* Bob McNary

*Secretary:* William Sayre

*Treasurer:* Thea Gaudette

*At Large:* Jeremy Grip

Bruce Webster

Ellen Kurrelmeyer

**STAFF**

*Executive Director:* Adam Lougee

*Assistant Director/GIS Manager:* Kevin Behm

*EM/Senior Planner:* Tim Bouton

*Transportation/Senior Planner:* Richard Kehne

*Land Use/Environmental Planner:* Elizabeth Golden

*Office Manager/Bookkeeper:* Pauline Cousino

**Program:** Deb Shannon, a Telecommunications Analyst from the State of Vermont Department of Public Service, gave a report on the State of Vermont's Telecommunications Plan and policy initiatives. She reported that Addison County has good access coverage in telecommunications. Most of the towns in our region have DLS. Act 79 established the Vermont Telecommunication Authority. The Telecommunication Authority's plan sets a goal of every town having access to affordable broadband by the end of 2010. Another goal is to have our access be continuously updated to keep up with the rapid evolution in telecommunication technology and the network as demand increases. Providers are challenged to provide services to communities further out from the high population areas. The goal is to provide large, fast solutions to support home businesses and a cost effective way to deploy them.

The anticipated Federal Stimulus Package is expected to provide grant money to provide broadband. DPS is collecting data on what's available in rural communities. The Census Bureau tells what the demographics are, to determine what grants communities and states are eligible for. Grants could be used to stimulate demand for telecommunications technology, provide education and training, and encourage computer ownership. Businesses need special access lines with a private network, greater band width, and more security. The key to affordability is competition among providers, but the telecommunications market isn't very interested in Vermont, as a whole. Therefore, the stimulus package would be a great help to build out our telecommunications services into areas not currently served.

Adam asked Deb how towns can apply for these grants. Deb noted that we need to aggregate demand. This is best done at the local level, where we know who needs the service. When Fairpoint came, they promised to provide for 100% of 50 towns to have broadband access. As a result, 10-15 groups working on aggregating fell apart. Affordability is possible by bundling service with TV, telephone, and internet services. However, some people don't need all of these services, so in effect, they are paying more, not less. Satellite is also looking at bundling services. Some packages are the same channel, but offered in high definition (HD), so there is concern that the providers are misrepresenting the content of their packages. DPS looked into this, and asked the providers for greater clarity in marketing their services. Some changes were made as a result of their inquiry. DPS made the effort to help consumers because, although they cannot dictate bundling, they do control consumer affairs. They are looking at how public offices, libraries and educational facilities are provided service, as well.

Deb related her presentation to the Communications Section of the Addison County Regional Plan.

Infrastructure: i.e., towers – Providers use existing structures to save engineering and construction dollars, as well as for aesthetic reasons. Often, towers are located on familiar buildings, such as church steeples, farm silos, and college smokestacks. This helps preserve our traditional and rural viewsheds. Consolidating towers creates larger, more visible structures, however, so there needs to be a balance and careful consideration of each location. A conflict occurs around sharing poles. On the one hand, the poles belong

to the utility companies, but it would be logical to locate internet lines on them. Double poles are discouraged, but still occur. The issue of ownership, costs, and specifications for isp-internet service providers is a difficult one to resolve.

Jeremy Grip reported that dial-up service is working well in Ripton. Peter Grant reported his concern with the high cost of internet service and suggested that our access is limited and prices higher in the United State than European countries. He also believes that dial-up service is too slow and needs to be improved. Deb replied that DSL was unregulated by 1997 law, and therefore costs are not controlled. There exists a duopoly in some areas, which allows high pricing.

Kevin Behm noted the arrangement between Green Mountain Power and NRG to provide wireless on VTA, established by Act 79 in 2007. The State wanted to create a bonding authority. It has a Board of Directors and a \$40 million staff. They are looking at different technology to get broadband deployment out. In contrast, Deb's group is the consumer representative group. Since the State of Vermont is the third largest employer in Vermont, they have some influence. They work with utility companies and the Agency of Transportation (VTrans) on fiber installation in new roads, for example.

Bill Sayre remarked that fiber landline service provides more services than Wildblue satellite. Deb noted that is due to the curvature of the earth limiting some services, as well as to weather and latency issues. She also noted that the satellite services start up slower, but do catch up, and also progress better. Bill suggested that Wildblue receive a subsidy, rather than building new infrastructure, at greater costs. Deb reminds him that we need to keep up with the new technologies and all that they provide. Satellite doesn't provide the same quality as wireless can. She compares it to getting electric service in the past, in that it is a leap in technology. Bill asked if a booster was possible to improve service in areas where it is weak. Deb replied that service depends on where the nearest tower is. DPS sent out an RFP to provide service to all of the towns without 90% coverage. All of the towns in Addison County have at least 90% coverage, except Weybridge, which has 80%.

Peter believes that the cell phone companies should tell us exactly what they cover. Bob asked if there are different degrees of strength in particular towers and whether we are getting poorer equipment in Vermont. Deb replied that we get equipment that is good at the time, but when we don't get the newest equipment, our service suffers. Unicell is a rural cellular provider across the country, and provides good equipment. AT&T has spent more dollars in Vermont due to siting. It may be more popular with young people because they offer IPODS. Verizon is not permitted to be a monopoly.

Adam asked what towns can do to prepare for the potential Stimulus Package grants. Deb indicated that towns could survey their citizens to find out what services they use and want, and what they use internet services for, both in their homes and businesses, and in public buildings, such as libraries, schools and town buildings. Also, they should ask non-users why they are not interested in service. Is it the cost? Towns can also bring a project to the NTIA. The Stimulus dollars will be given to towns who take an active

interest in using the funds for its intended purposes. The Senate voted for a \$9 million appropriation for broadband, while the House wanted only \$6 million spent on this effort.

**Business Meeting:**

**Call to Order:** 9:05 p.m.

Fred Dunnington, Chair of ACRPC, called the meeting to order. Adam noted that the minutes of the January 14 meeting were emailed to everyone for whom we have an email address, and mailed to those for whom we do not have an email address, along with the Agenda. Bob noted a couple of typos to be corrected in the minutes. Thea moved that the minutes be approved, as corrected; Bob seconded. The minutes were unanimously accepted.

**Executive Board Minutes:** Adam noted that The Executive Board Minutes have not been completed, so they were not in the Agenda packet.

**Treasurer's Report:** The Treasurer's Report was distributed. Bob moved that the Treasurer's Report be accepted; Ed seconded the motion. The Treasurer's Report was unanimously accepted.

**Committee Reports:**

Act 250 – Since Ellen had to attend a School Board Meeting, Adam reported for the Act 250 Committee.

**New Applications:** On January 30, 2009, AgriMark applied for a 10,000 sq. ft. expansion at its Middlebury Plant. The District 9 Environmental Commission has issued a draft permit and shall treat that application as a minor application not requiring a hearing.

**Approvals or Denials:** On December 19, 2008, Otter Creek Engineering applied for a permit on behalf of Craig Newton to subdivide one lot in the Middlebury Industrial Park on December 19, 2008. The lot currently holds Agway. The second lot created is currently vacant. The Newton's will sell the Agway lot and retain the vacant lot. No development is planned on the vacant lot at this time. The application received an approval on January 23, 2009.

**Other:** The Town of Middlebury received a Jurisdictional Opinion that the Cross Street Bridge would not be subject to Act 250. Fred noted that it comprises only 8-1/2 acres, and towns are subjected to Action 250 review only if the project is 10 acres or more. He also noted that AgriMark is installing new vats at its plant, rather than emptying the ones they have, to avoid a month long shut-down.

Brownfields – Jeremy report that the Committee met recently to discuss funding an additional assessment at the Shade Roller Mill project. They agreed to fund the additional assessment, but will wait to determine whether or not to fund a corrective action plan until the next assessment is completed.

Energy – Bob reported that on January 22, VPIRG presented its program on renewable alternatives to Vermont Yankee. An insightful discussion filled the evening. He suggested that the participants came away from the program with more puzzle pieces in place, but still not a full picture as to the solution to this important question.

On February 17, the committee will display and participate in the MiddAction Fair at Middlebury College. The hope is to engage some students who are interested in the committee's efforts to volunteer their time to assist in marketing our programs, doing some light research and assisting with our work.

On February 25, the Public Service Board will hold a public hearing on Efficiency Vermont's 2009-11 draft Work Plan. It is a lengthy document. We have reviewed the document and found no red flags. The Committee intends to write a letter of support in favor of Efficiency Vermont's Work Plan.

On February 26, our monthly program will be on Community Hydroelectric, presented by Ben Gordesky, owner of EarthBound Services. Ben is knowledgeable on this subject and will present a program covering design, construction, permitting, financing, and the environmental impact of community-scale hydroelectric projects.

As an F.Y.I., if you are served by Direct TV, there is a channel called Planet Green (#286), which presents some very informative programs, including low-cost projects most people can do.

At a recent Rutland Regional Planning Commission meeting, Elizabeth spoke about how to establish and develop an active Energy Committee. RRPC has since formed an Energy Committee and is off and running. Our efforts continue to bare fruit.

Local Government Committee – Thea reported that there was no activity.

Natural Resources Committee – Mary Dodge reported that the Committee completed the Wildlife Section of the Natural Resources Plan at their last meeting and will be working on the Cultural and Scenic Sections next.

TAC – Bob reported that there was no quorum at the last TAC meeting, and thus no business was conducted.

Joint Partners – The topic at the March meeting of the Economic Development Corporation meeting will be the survey on freight transportation in the Western Corridor. Adam will talk about the Plan. Bob asked if that included highway and rail transportation. Adam replied that it does.

### **Old Business:**

Replacement Water Heater – Adam reported that the new 8 gallon water heater installed at our offices, through the efforts of Bob McNary and Charlie Huizenga, is saving us

\$100 a month. Kevin noted that the bill is up from last year, but Adam responded that is another issue, due to the addition of tenants being added on the second floor and in the garage of the CVPS building. Bob commented that the water warms up faster now. Peter Grant asked if we had not considered an on-demand system, with individual heaters at each sink. Bob replied that would have cost us more money, because it would require a mixing valve under each sink, as well.

Strategic Planning – Adam handed out copies of the Strategic Planning Survey summary results and suggested that the Commissioners read it at their leisure. He also handed out a memo on the Results Analysis and referred to the “B: Tabulate Survey and Bring to Executive Board.” He was pleased with the participation and results, which were very favorable. We sent out to survey to 260 people, and 44 (17%) completed the survey. Most respondents were commissioners and municipal officials. The results were largely positive, with minimal negative responses. The four biggest items that respondents wanted were: 1) more inter-town events, 2) more mapping available on the website, 3) the Regional Plan was rarely used, which was disappointing – he would like ideas on how to improve its usage, and 4) there was great interest in more educational programs. The Energy Committee Programs have raised the exposure of our programs. Our new facility gives us a venue to do more programs, and we will continue to provide more programs as a way to increase outreach to our communities.

The next step in the process is the Strategic Planning Session on February 25, where we will develop action items. 15 people signed up to attend. Adam invited the commissioners to attend as well. He asked that they let Elizabeth know if they plan to attend, as we are providing dinner. Following that, the Executive Board will consider their recommendations and create a draft Strategic Plan. At the April Full Commission Meeting, we will review the draft Plan, make any revisions, and seek approval of the Strategic Plan at the May Annual Meeting.

Peter Grant noted that the Regional Plan was useful to the Town of Bristol when they were working on the Town Plan. The Plan was missing some items, however, such as references to gravel pits. Ed asked if the Regional Plan is an aggregate of the Town Plans, and suggested that we need ideas from Bristol and other towns to inform the Regional Plan. Peter suggested that we work together more often and have greater interaction between the RPC and the Towns. Kevin mentioned that we had the idea of asking towns that are doing Plan reviews to communicate more with surrounding towns. Thea questioned how we can get them around. Bob noted that some towns won't work with their surrounding towns. Kevin hoped that at least we can provide the opportunity for more towns to work collaboratively on planning. Bob felt that people want to see more teeth in their Energy Section. Elizabeth noted that she encourages towns to develop stronger Energy and Natural Resources Plans. Bob suggested they include language supporting more energy efficient construction methods, at least to have something to debate. He also suggested that the RPC needs to promote itself more. He suggested we create a document stating all that we do and forward it to the Town Clerks. Adam responded that we do that in our Annual Report. Some organizations do a glossy report. Bob hopes the towns realize what quality work is done in this office. Some work is not

being credited properly to ACRPC. It's about marketing to show how we are a relevant operation, moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and not afraid to do new things, such as the energy programs. Mary added that the Energy and Transportation Committees have done a lot. She would like to know more about the work they do. Adam talked about how the Selectboard and Road Foreman meeting was an educational exercise and well attended and that we've done it before. Dave would like to see more mapping products on-line. Adam noted that there was a strong response in the survey to provide more mapping services. Kevin noted that the desire is strong for interactive mapping capability via our website. We can offer a selective group of layers with our database information. We already have an interactive map of Bristol and a water quality page is not too far down the road. Bob said that, as we have more requests for more programs, they need funding to pay for the staff to do them. Adam agreed. Mary suggested that it is helpful to have the Regional Plan to work from.

Affordable Housing – Adam announced that our speaker for next month's meeting will be Terry McKnight from Addison County Community Trust (ACCT).

CDBG Program Biomass Study – Adam announced that the Biomass Study is back on track, now that the legal issues have been resolved in Bridport.

Email Delivery of Information Packet – Adam asked the Commissioners if they received their Meeting Agenda, Minutes, and Newsletter. Nearly all of the Commissioners received their packets. He noted that the packet will be distributed by email to everyone who has an email address in our database from now on, and that anyone who hasn't given us their email address should please do so, so we can convert to email mailings, to save costs and time. Bob McNary, Mary Dodge, and Peter Grant asked Elizabeth to send their information packets through the mail. Andrew Manning asked that the Newsletter Calendar have a lighter background because his printer prints too darkly. Elizabeth offered to send him a hard copy, and he gratefully accepted. Dave D'Alleinne asked to be put on the email distribution list.

### **New Business:**

New Programs and Activities – Adam related that ACRPC will be receiving additional funding for several programs, including the Cornwall Path, Lake Champlain Byways Plan Update, Short Range Transportation Plan, and CCMPO-Cooperative Planning. These programs will make up in part for the two overall State funding reductions ACRPC recently experienced. Adam is working hard to make sure that we have programs to replace the DHCA budget cuts and that we remain a viable entity into the future.

### **Members Concerns:**

Mary asked if the Cornwall to Middlebury College Route 30 highway shoulders are being constructed soon. Adam replied that they are planned for paving in 2010.

Bob expressed his concern that the staff is down one member and that the staff has a heavier work load. He also suggested that delegates and alternates sign up for committee work to do their part, to really make an effort, because the more the committee members can do, the more the staff can accomplish and get work done in a timely manner. We also need to get more funding.

**Other Business:**

Adam announced the Family Emergency Preparedness Workbooks are available, and he asked the commissioners to bring copies to their Town Meeting.

Adam announced the DHCA Planning Commissioners Retreat will be held at Ohana Camp on Lake Fairlee from Friday, June 5 at 3:00 p.m. to Saturday, June 6 at 3:00 p.m. We have funded two attendees. If you have someone to nominate, please send Adam their name.

**Adjournment:**

Charlie moved to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Elizabeth Golden