

Meeting Minutes
Addison County Regional Planning Commission
Wednesday, April 8, 2009

The ACRPC April meeting was held at ACRPC's office on April 8 , 2009 with Bob McNary, Vice-Chair, presiding.

ROLL CALL:

Addison:

Bridport: Ed Payne
Andrew Manning
Mike Gamache

Bristol: William Sayre

Cornwall: Mary Dodge
Ralph Teitsheid

Ferrisburgh Bob McNary
Larry Keyes

Goshen: Bruce Webster

Leicester:

Lincoln:

Middlebury:

Monkton: Thea Gaudette
Charles Huizenga

New Haven: Harvey Smith
Milo Schaefer

Orwell:

Panton:

Ripton: Jeremy Grip
Ted Dunakin

Salisbury:

Shoreham:

Starksboro:

Waltham:

Weybridge:

Whiting:

Vergennes:

CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:

Addison County Farm Bureau:

Kent Wright

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: Bob introduced our program for this evening on the Green Mountain National Forest. He introduced Meg Mitchell, Forest Supervisor, who introduced the other people from the GMNF: Greg Smith, Middlebury and Rochester District Ranger; Kristi Ponzoso, Public Affairs Officer; Melissa Reichert, Forest Planner; Sara LaPlante from D.C. and . Kristi distributed the GMNF “Year in Review 2008”. Recently, Secure Rules School Act and Payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) – payment to towns for Federal lands, were both increased. The amount authorized was fully appropriated. This resulted in “bumps” in the figures, due to bank bailout funding. Addison County PILT is high enough (\$10,000) that they sent letters to the towns indicating that they must select another category within which to spend the money. Greg reported that damages from the recent flooding to the trails and roads in the GMNF include lost bridges, road and trail repair, and some in town roads. GMNF received emergency funding and some of the towns received FEMA funds. Towns that don’t have emergency funding must take the money out of their budget for these repairs. Economic Stimulus funding will become available to provide jobs and make infrastructure investments. These projects are handled differently from the usual GMNF projects. There is much more accountability, transparency and greater expectations. GMNF applies for the competitive grants. Unemployment in the Rutland area is high, and since the ESF targets job creation, Rutland will be targeted to receive funds. They submitted town and forest road repair and deferred maintenance projects to funding through ARRA.

Bill asked if they are bound by rules. She responded that the contracting process has many rules. Most contractors are from the local area. Indefinite delivery contractors allow them to absorb a peak in funding under existing contracts. Also, they let trail groups do the hiring for trail maintenance projects. The funding requires that they use at least 50% of the amount within the first 120 days, a much accelerated timeframe. They hope to receive funding for road repairs in Addison County towns, as well as culverts. They also work on maintaining aquatic passage on GMNF land. Ralph asked if they can provide assistance to that do on private lands. Meg replied that they can do some aquatic passage work on private lands if it affects the forest.

There has been a 20% spiked increase in participation in the firewood program. They are looking to be more strategic for commercial firewood, thinning in some stands. Mike asked: if one views Vermont as an island, and wood is removed, what is their view on the limit of what GMNF could accommodate? Are you looking at the dynamics of the forest? Meg replied that she just completed modeling and system analysis of the age and condition of our forest. We must have sustainable harvesting, therefore, they have limits on the amount harvested each year. It would take a change in the law to change that.

How people take it and use it is taken – 50% is chip quality, i.e. it won’t make a board. So they enhance the market, but the upper limits are set. Med just did a model for the entire forest in the State of Vermont. The Forest Roundtable discussed this. Greg noted that the GMNF can sustainably harvest 19 million board feet per year – that’s 40 million cords of annual average allowable harvest, on a sustainable basis. That’s enough to supply 1 million homes with 4 cords each winter. Jeremy asked what the percentage of the wood harvested is used for lumber versus fuel use.

Greg replied that a little more than half of the timber sale is dimensional lumber quality, versus firewood and chips quality. Bill Sayre estimated that the GMNF has a potential of 1500-2000 board feet per acre, or 100-120 million cords per year, compared to Meg's estimate of 40 million cords. Meg noted that the National Forest is managed for more than timber, firewood and chips, however. Ed asks if Meg saw the possibility in the future for the demand for forest resources to be so high that protected land will be tapped. Meg replied that it would require an Act of Congress, literally, to allow harvesting of protected forest. Jeremy asked what Meg's criteria for determining what forestland is harvested and if younger trees can be cut for pellet production. Meg replied that, on a global forestry basis, anything you can do to increase the value of non-board quality wood would help maintain forests as forests, because the land under the trees is getting more valuable, so trees need to keep their value to be able to retain the land as forestland and not be converted to other uses. It doesn't make sense to bring in wood from afar. Local harvesting is a better use of resources. Half of the GMNF is working forest. Also, birds need open areas. Different age classes of trees are needed to support our wildlife.

Bob asked how to translate this management policy to the State level. Meg responded that, all politics aside, Bernie Sanders asks yearly what harvest level they need. He is very interested. GMNF increased harvest in the past year. Meg sees the potential for both protection and harvesting within our National Forest – a sustainable forest. Ralph asked: when other technologies become more prominent, such as wind, does the Forest Plan consider whether we need harvesting for a shorter period of time. Meg replied that the Forest Service revisits the Plan annually in response to these changes. They are open to locating renewable energy technologies such as individual-sized wind, on National Forest land. They have plans to build a solar/wind project at the Rochester Ranger District.

Adam noted that during the Forest Planning process, some towns were concerned the NFS wouldn't have the money to maintain the wildlife forest openings. Greg replied that the Forest Service now allows GMNF to retain 80% more of the receipts from harvesting sales to use on projects for local stewardship. Adam asked how a town could get involved in that. Greg replied that a town could be involved through timber purchases. They could do streamside restoration, forest road improvements, and much more. Towns can bid on the project, for example. They could approach the GMNF during the planning stage, the NEPA process, to affect how they package the opportunities for dividing the project by roads, wildlife, and timber harvest. The Town could show an interest in how they group the package into contracts; and GMNF could develop a "stewardship contract" to handle the unit a certain way, based on the Town's desires. The Contract could be sole-sourced to the Town itself. They could target a larger area to be managed through the Contract, rather than selling individual units to be harvested (where all of the proceeds go to the Federal government). These "stewardship contracts" must be approved by the Regional Forester. The County can contract with the GMNF in this manner, as well. Through this process, we could create a local contract industry. Some of the typical components include road work, management for wildlife, treating invasive species, timber harvest, and stream maintenance. They are currently doing projects of this type in Granville.

Kevin suggested that we need to plan gravel pits in the Northern Forest because we need a source for stone, so we don't have to pay so much to pave and maintain our roads. GMNF would like to develop gravel pits in the forest, because they could use the stone for roads into the forest and for emergencies. However, a problem arises in that they are forced to sell the stone. They would like to do more environmental planning – demand is high for it; but the NEFA process is so long and arduous, that it is a difficult process. Marcia asked how much clear cutting is done in the GMNF and whether it makes flooding worse. Meg replied that, actually, the forest is healthier with opening of 10 acres or less. The GMNF has some of the only bird habitat available in certain areas. They have to work hard to keep the spaces open! Clear cutting may look bad for a year or two, but the forest grows back very quickly. Marcia asked if clear cutting is good for wildlife. Meg replied that it depends of which species you are referring to. Bob asked about the management plan for the Moosalamoo area. Greg replied that it is a popular area. It holds some of the most intensive trail networks in the Northern Forest – 65 miles in 20,000 acres, which is a lot of maintain. Therefore, GMNF welcomes trail organizations to do the work. For example, the mountain bike trail organization does a lot of work there. They are trying to bring back many apple trees in Moosalamoo. Also, the forest is used for educational purposes. Some trails are actually underutilized by mountain bike, and would be good for family recreation. They are less steep, with rolling hills that are easier to climb. They contain beautiful, unique areas that can be used in exciting, new ways. You can download to your iPod the trail educational information.

Bill asked if they have conducted research on how much carbon is stored in the Northern Forest. Meg replied that they haven't done that yet. This is a debatable issue. It's important to keep the forest in forest use, if you want carbon sequestration benefits. However, even table made of wood contain carbon, so it's a complicated equation. The challenge is forest fragmentation. Climate change causes a risk of invasive species. Thinning keeps the forest healthy. Mary expressed her concern about the effects of snowmobiles on wildlife. Meg explained that snowmobiles have been on the trails for a long time. There are between 300-500 miles of snowmobile trails in the GMNF. Their activity has actually been decreasing over the past several years, except it increased this past year, due to good snow conditions. Some people like the snowmobilers because they crease ski trails, while others prefer a quiet trail, like you do. Meg reminded her that the snowmobiles have to keep to the trails and are not permitted in the wilderness areas. ATV's are not permitted in the forest at all, but enforcement is a problem. Town roads may become accessible to ATVs, due to legislation under consideration to license ATVs, so the GMNF will be working with towns who are considering it to work out limits. However, GMNF must respect the Town's jurisdiction over these matters.

Business Meeting:

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 9:005 p.m.

Bob McNary, Vice Chair of ACRPC, called the meeting to order. Adam noted that the minutes of the March 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. Elizabeth noted a couple of changes to the Minutes. Thea Gaudette moved that

the minutes be approved, as written; Bruce Webster seconded. The minutes were unanimously accepted.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer's Report was distributed. Bill Sayre moved their adoption; Bruce seconded. Adam reported that we have good account balance and receivables. (Budget: Adam-please add to this.) Ted asked why Brownfields dropped from \$100,000 to \$15,000 in the budget. Adam replied that the petroleum grant usage dropped, as did the hazardous materials grant, due to lack of applications of sites. We have the grant funds available, but we haven't spent it because we're not spending time on it. We have a year and a half left to do so. We need to find project that can use the funds.

Committee Reports:

Act 250 – There was one application this month: VUHS retroactively applied for an Act 250 approval for their outdoor challenge course. The draft permit was granted.

Brownfields – Jeremy Grip had nothing to report.

Energy – Bob reported that on March 21, the Committee exhibited at the 2009 Addison County Green Energy Expo at MUHS from 9 a.m.– 4:30 p.m. Reports are that a thousand people plus attended. Our booth remained active all day due to our strategy to engage the public. Bob thanked Ed, Bruce, Ellen and Elizabeth for all their hard work. On March 26, we presented our monthly energy program on the topic “Generating Electricity with Photovoltaics.” Steve Yates from Independent Power presented with a PowerPoint show. Fran and Steve Putnam from Weybridge spoke about their experiences with PV at their new home. On April 31, at our monthly meeting, we continued planning on our upcoming outreach programs, composition of a position letter to the PSB on flow standard for small hydro projects, and upcoming grant opportunities to support our work. On April 23, our monthly presentation will be Energy Technologies for Agriculture. This will be a comprehensive look into renewable energy solutions for today's farm community. Harvey Smith will be one of our panelists. Lastly, the Energy Committee has a fundraiser in progress. Profits from the sale of these great t-shirts will be used to finance Energy Committee programs and projects to help the countywide community. Ed Payne modeled the t-shirt and Elizabeth will be available to sell them after the meeting.

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

Natural Resources Committee – Kevin reported that the Committee is doing very well. The Cultural Resources Section is complete, and the Scenic, Air and Earth Sections are ahead.

TAC – Andrew Manning reported that upon review, the priorities did not change much, but the Crown Point Bridge is now on the list. Ed noted that the second light in Bridport went on to the list, and was installed the very next day! The first light took five years and was a difficult process. The State wouldn't listen to the Town's request. Bob remarked that five years isn't that long for an AOT project to be built!

Joint Partners – Adam reported that ACRPC, EDC and COC are collaborating on a Telecommunications Project for businesses on Exchange Street in Middlebury. The project came out of a meeting two months ago with Deb Shannon. Fred brought up the need for the businesses on Exchange Street to have access to fast internet services. A survey was conducted to find out if the business owners were interested, and indeed they were. We will be putting out an RFP shortly for the work.

Staff Recognition – Adam introduced a new Delegate from Vergennes, Alyth Hescok. Alyth said that he is originally from Orwell, works in Real Estate, and is a licensed appraiser. He recently was working with Justice Rebruez (sp??)

Old Business:

Strategic Planning – Adam handed out a synopsis from the survey and planning session. He said that since we are doing work plans and budgets, we will put off discussion of the Strategic Plan until June, and vote on it in July. He welcomed the Commissioners' suggestions for changes.

Email Delivery of Information Packet – Adam asked the Commissioners if they received their Meeting Agenda, Minutes, and Newsletter. Everyone has. Alyth asked that his packet be emailed to him and gave Elizabeth his email address. Andrew Manning asked to receive his packet by email as well.

Kevin announced that we will be sending our packets soon to all of the Towns requesting information on their appointments. Adam asked the Commissioners to please facilitate the process of getting the Select board to make the appointments and sending the information to our office, so we can update our records. He hopes to see everyone here again next year.

New Business:

Nominations for the Bertha Hanson Award – Adam announced that we have one nomination for the award. He also explained what the award is and welcomed nominations. Thea also mentioned that the award is for s Delegate, not for staff, and is for someone who either has a long history of contributing to the Commission, or has made a significant contribution in the past year. Bob said that Adam needs any nominations to be made in writing to him by April 20 at 5 pm.

Annual Meeting – Bob announced that the Annual Meeting will be held at the Kirk Alumni Center with a potluck, to be supplied by the Commissioners. No liquor is allowed due to the meeting being held in a college building. Bob suggests everyone bring an item that will feed 10-15 people. Thea will keep the list of what's being contributed. David Blittersdorf is our speaker. The meeting will honor our staff, who have diligently, under budget cuts and increased workloads, to support the Commissioners. Staff will be asked to say a few words about the work that they do. Kevin asked if they have a plan to get

Pauline to attend, as she is reluctant to do so. He noted that it took her son to get her there once before. Elizabeth volunteered to talk to Guy Cousino, to ask him to make sure she attends. Mary asked if it is a sit-down dinner. Bob answered that it is buffet style, with tables, linens and proper silverware. There will be a podium for our speakers. He and Thea are working out the details and room layout. Ed asked if Bob is bringing his renowned chocolate chip cookies. Bob replied that he would.

Report of the Nominating Committee – Steve Revell, Fred Dunnington, and Bill Sayre served on the nominating committee, and recommended the following slate of officers: Chair - Thea Gaudette, Vice-Chair – Bob McNary, Treasurer – Jeremy Grip, Secretary – Marjorie Drexler, At Large Members – Ellen Kurrelmeyer, Steve Revell, and Harvey Smith. Bob asked for nominations from the floor. Hearing none, the nominations were closed for today. Thea reminded everyone that nominations will be accepted from the floor at the Annual Meeting as well.

Other Business:

Larry Keyes thanked the staff for their assistance in dealing with the VELCO issue in Ferrisburgh. Bob noted that Adam spent many hours wading through the process with VELCO. Bob recognized Larry, as well, for his help to Ferrisburgh throughout the process.

Adjournment:

Thea moved to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Golden