

Meeting Minutes

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Annual Meeting

Wednesday, May 13, 2009

The ACRPC Annual Meeting was held at Kirk Alumni Center at Middlebury College on May 13, 2009 with Fred Dunning, Chair, presiding.

ROLL CALL:

Addison:

<i>Bridport:</i>	Ed Payne Andrew Manning Mike Gamache	<i>Orwell:</i>	Andrea Ochs
<i>Bristol:</i>	William Sayre Peter Grant	<i>Panton:</i>	
<i>Cornwall:</i>	Mary Dodge Ralph Teitsheid	<i>Ripton:</i>	Jeremy Grip
<i>Ferrisburgh</i>	Bob McNary Larry Keyes	<i>Salisbury:</i>	
<i>Goshen:</i>	Chad Chamberlain	<i>Shoreham:</i>	
<i>Leicester:</i>		<i>Starksboro:</i>	
<i>Lincoln:</i>	Steve Revell	<i>Waltham:</i>	
<i>Middlebury:</i>	Fred Dunnington	<i>Weybridge:</i>	
<i>Monkton:</i>	Thea Gaudette Charles Huizenga	<i>Whiting:</i>	Ellen Kurrelmeyer
<i>New Haven:</i>	Harvey Smith	<i>Vergennes:</i>	

CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:

<i>Addison County Farm Bureau:</i>	Kent Wright
<i>Addison County Economic Development Corp:</i>	
<i>Otter Creek Audubon Society:</i>	
<i>Otter Creek Natural Resources:</i>	
<i>Addison County Chamber of Commerce:</i>	Andy Mayer

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: David Blittersdorf, Founder and CEO of NRG Systems spoke about the need for renewable energy generations, particularly wind power. Nine years ago, he wrote that our economic strength depends largely on energy. Oil prices will go up again, bouncing back up. We finally realize that we live in a finite world, but our economic model and systems are based on an infinite world model. Eighty eight percent of our current fuel supply is carbon based; specifically, forty percent oil, twenty percent gas, and twenty eight percent coal. We are going to run out of these fuels, and the carbon is too much to be sequestered. We need to look at wind and solar energy generation and spend our energy dollars more wisely, “where the fuel is free.”

The wind industry is expanding exponentially. Wind power is competitively priced. It has been driven by a tax credit, which will disappear on October of this year. In February, Congress decided to give grants from the U.S. Treasury on 30% of the cost, but did not create the rules needed. Therefore, the wind industry is waiting. There is built-up demand to implement wind technologies. In the State of Vermont, we passed an energy bill that sets energy efficiency standards for buildings, and considers State land for wind power, which would mean revenues for the State of \$10,000 per year for leases on State land.

David founded Earth Turbines, while his wife runs NRG. He prefers to work on start-up enterprises, while his wife is skilled in managing a company over the long-term. The large wind turbine market has matured, but the small wind turbine industry is a cottage industry. Last year, small wind finally got a tax credit. The Bill had limited the tax credit to \$4,000 and has restrictions, but since February, the restrictions were removed. Therefore, we will see a lot of small wind power projects in the market. Small wind certification is coming very soon. Also, there is a rebate available from the State of Vermont, which will use the certification as a requirement.

David also stated that he is now marketing solar technology with a sun tracker, which results in 40% more energy gained from the sun. Germany has a big solar power industry, due to their long standing incentives. We need to develop a large renewable energy industry in America. Currently, the State of Vermont provides a 30% tax credit plus a Federal 30% tax credit for solar projects, reducing investment costs by 60% in solar technology. Also, a business can take a 5 year (short) depreciation and receive Stimulus funding of 50% off the last year. Therefore, it is the right time to invest in solar technologies.

Vermont’s permitting system for net metered projects also functions as land use planning because the Public Service Board preempts local zoning. David hopes that in the future, no permits would be needed to renewable energy technologies. He suggests that we must “flip things on their head” and make changes immediately at the Federal level in order to make the changes we need to get through the current and long standing energy crisis. We are at a true tipping point in terms of energy.

At the national political level the U.S. House of Representatives is working on a carbon reductions bill wherein a 17% percent reduction in CO2 by 2020 is the goal. We need it to be a 30% reduction. We must cut carbon emissions in the next forty years by 5% per

year. We need to leave our coal resources for future needs and switch to renewable resources now. A Commissioner asks if the costs of alternative fuels will shut down industry in American. David explained that Germany stimulated its economy by supporting solar energy converting systems. We can do the same. Over time, renewable energy has the cheapest cost. Most of the costs are up front, but the energy source, wind and solar, as free. When you fully ‘cost out’ everything, including the environment damages, renewable energy is less expensive. Wind would be the cheapest source, then solar. They can be used together, for maximum benefit. The problem is that currently we are not including our ‘externalities’ in the costs of producing energy from carbon-based fuels. David suggests that we should be taxing the carbon at its initial use. The ‘cap and trade’ methods don’t work.

We need to be creating jobs in renewable energy technology, from research, to planning, engineering, production, installation, and monitoring. We need to switch our industries over to renewable energy users. Also, we need to convert to more fuel-efficient transportation methods, such as trains and mass transit (buses). It’s ridiculous to use a 2,000 pound vehicle to carry a 200 pound person from one place to another. Fred Dunnington asked how David sees people changing over to renewable energy sources. David replied that it takes extreme will. What’s coming is huge. When we hit the wall on finite fuels, we will have a huge decline in economic activity. It is much better to move now in the directions of renewable energy and pay a bit more for it, to reap the long term benefit of a secure and abundant renewable energy supply.

Mr. Katz asked why it matters if the United States reduces its energy use, if China and India are moving in the direction of vastly increasing their energy usage. David replied that the U.S. consumes 25% of the world’s energy, so we certainly have a lot of energy savings to do! We need to secure our energy and economic future. He suggests we build mass transit to replace individual vehicular travel. We have to decrease our consumption AND use renewable energy. We cannot simply replace the carbon-based fuels we use today with renewable energy at the same level.

Business Meeting:

Call to Order: Fred called the business meeting to order at 7:45 p.m.

Recognition of ACRPC Staff:

Fred asked each staff member present to speak briefly about their work. Adam Lougee, Executive Director, began by saying that his favorite projects this past year were the Biomass Pellet project and the Waltham Town Plan update. Adam noted the conference space in the offices substantially increases the capacity of ACRPC to reach out to the public, particularly in our monthly energy programs. He enjoys speaking with town representatives. He quoted Amy Diller, a former employee, who said that our staff “projects a friendly, humble competence.” He likes that description.

Kevin Behm spoke next, introducing himself as a GIS manager and Assistant Director, working at ACRPC since 1995. He provides operations support and maps. He uses maps as a beginning to the planning process, as they help people to see and consider land use relationships. During the past year, he has been working on a Community Build-Out Analysis to allow towns to envision future buildout scenarios. Kevin also enjoys working with the Addison County Riverwatch group, mapping their data. There are 60 different sites, with 4-6 parameters per site. Kevin plans to work on web mapping in the coming year. Kevin also recognized Pauline Cousino, ACRPC's Office Manager and Bookkeeper, who could not attend tonight. Kevin noted that Pauline has been managing ACRPC since March 3, 1972.

Tim Bouton, ACRPC's Emergency Management Planner, started at ACRPC in 1997 in a part time position. This past year, he has been conducting regional workshops with 4-6 neighboring towns to compare their disaster plans and walk them through disaster scenarios. He also helps with State of Vermont drills and the Vermont Yankee drills. Shortly after working on the River Corridor Plan for Middlebury, the town had a major flood. He has been working with Ripton to reduce their flood damage risk. He witnessed Ripton's flood last June and his pictures sent to Vermont Emergency Management got their attention and assistance. He and Rick went to both Ripton and Goshen to witness their flood damage.

Rick Kehne, Transportation Planner, enjoys working at the local level with road foreman, the front line of the transportation network and local initiatives. He also enjoys corridor planning, the route planning studies he has been working with ACTR on and working at the State level with VTrans to provide them with local information they otherwise would not have access to. He communicates with our legislators, Federal delegation, and Senator Leahy's staff to address Addison County's transportation needs. He previously spent seven years with VTrans, where he missed the relationship with communities that he has now.

Elizabeth Golden, Land Use and Environmental Planner, works with towns to update their Town Plans, and assists with Municipal Planning Grant applications. She works to develop sound land use and environmental policies, and supports multi-town cooperation on common issues and opportunities. Elizabeth works with the ACRPC Energy Committee to support energy efficiency and local, clean, renewable energy production in Addison County. She supports Town Energy Coordinators and committees, produces monthly educational programs on current energy topics, does outreach to the community, serves on local energy boards, and organizes and participates in local and statewide energy conferences and events, such as Earth Day and the Green Energy Expo. Elizabeth also administers the ACRPC database and website, is editor of our monthly newsletter, and takes the minutes and sends notices for our Full Commission meetings.

Fred thanked the staff for the work they do and for sharing their interests with the Commission.

Vote on the Workplan and Budget for Fiscal Year 2009-2010: Fred introduced the topic of our Annual Workplan and Budget. Andrea Ochs moved that we adopt the Workplan and Budget for FY 2010. Peter Grant seconded the motion. The Commission adopted the Workplan and Budget by a nearly unanimous vote, with only Kent Wright voting against the motion.

Nominating Committee: Fred noted that he served on the nominating committee with Steve Revell and Bill Sayre. Steve Revell announced the slate of officers chosen by the Nominating Committee for the coming year: Chair – Thea Gaudette, Vice-Chair – Bob McNary, Secretary – Bruce Webster, Treasurer – Jeremy Grip, Members at Large – Ellen Kurrelmeyer, Steve Revell, and Harvey Smith. Fred asked for nominations from the floor. There being none, the nominations were closed. Andrea Ochs moved that we elect the slate of officers recommended by the Nominating Committee; Charlie Huizenga seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the slate of officers as proposed by the committee.

Bertha Hanson Award: Thea Gaudette, a previous recipient, presented the Bertha Hanson Award to Fred Dunnington for his outstanding work on behalf of the Regional Planning Commission. She noted that Fred grew up in Montreal, worked in Chittenden County, moved to Middlebury in 1981, and has served the Addison County Regional Planning Commission for twenty eight years. She noted Fred worked hard in Montpelier on the Chapter 117 updates in 2005 and receive the award for Outstanding Planner in 2003. She thanked Fred for his many years of service to our region.

Other Awards: Adam awarded a certificate of appreciation to Thea Gaudette, Mary Dodge and Bruce Webster entitling them to participate in the upcoming Planning Commissioner Summer Retreat. He also thanked all of the Commissioners and their families for their support, especially Committee Chairs. He commended Bob McNary for his service to the Energy Committee and the Executive Board. Adam thanked Thea, Andrea and Bob for their efforts in organizing our Annual Meeting Dinner this evening.

Comments from Commissioners: Andrea thanked the staff for their helpfulness and announced that the Natural Resource Committee meeting date has been changed to June 2. Adam thanked Fred for his extraordinary efforts as Chair of the Executive Board over the last few years.

Adjournment: Thea moved to adjourn. The Annual Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Golden