

Meeting Minutes

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Wednesday, September 9, 2009

The ACRPC September Meeting was held at the ACRPC offices on September 9, 2009 with Thea Gaudette, Chair, presiding.

ROLL CALL:

<i>Addison:</i>		<i>Orwell:</i>	Clyde Park Robert Bogdon
<i>Bridport:</i>	Ed Payne Andrew Manning Mike Gamache Mark Pumiglia	<i>Panton:</i>	Michael Hermann
<i>Bristol:</i>		<i>Ripton:</i>	Jeremy Grip
<i>Cornwall:</i>	Ralph Teitscheid	<i>Salisbury:</i>	
<i>Ferrisburgh:</i>	Bob McNary Larry Keyes	<i>Shoreham:</i>	
<i>Goshen:</i>		<i>Starksboro:</i>	Richard Warren
<i>Leicester:</i>	Charles Makovec	<i>Vergennes:</i>	Alyth Hescoock
<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>	Jonathan Heppell
<i>New Haven:</i>	Milo Schaefer		

CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:

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

ACRPC EXECUTIVE BOARD

Chair: Thea Gaudette
Vice-Chair: Bob McNary
Secretary: Bruce Webster
Treasurer: Jeremy Grip
At Large: Ellen Kurrelmeyer
 Steve Revell
 Harvey Smith

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: Thea called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm and asked Adam Lougee to introduce the speaker. Adam introduced Adam Sherman, Project Manager for the Biomass Energy Research Center (BERC), who will speak on his research for ACRPC and the Town of Bridport concerning the viability of locating a pellet manufacturing facility in the Addison region. The study is nearly complete and will be available to the public at the end of September. Adam Sherman reported that BERC has been doing research to determine the feasibility of a conceptual fiber mill in Addison County. They are ultimately looking at the heating market, fiber supply and potential locations; to figure out the ideal size that would be feasible. Given the agricultural nature of the county, they looked at both wood and agricultural (ag) fiber potential resource capacity in Addison County. The study area is all of the 23 towns in Addison County. Most pellet mills in other areas of the country draw from a 50-100 mile radius; so we don't have that large a "fiber basket" to draw from. They used national data sets of forest inventory, the FIA – Forest Inventory Analysis, available down to the county area. They wanted to get to a finer spatial analysis, using GIS, weeding out wetlands, stream buffers, high altitudes, and other environmental factors. They used a computer model to determine how much low grade wood fiber is available to produce a pulp grade wood, minus what is currently harvested. They started with the foot print of forest land, looked at inventory, and applied the rates of net annual growth (new trees and tree growth), to get to a net amount of growth available to sustainably harvest each year. It's like living off the interest of your investment, and not touching the investment itself. Their numbers are based on current demand; but they could anticipate current growth in use. This is a finite, renewable resource.

A key assumption built into the analysis is the accessibility, based on parcel size and ownership. This is not a definitive analysis, but the best estimate of market conditions and landowner perceptions. A broad range of species can be used. When dried and pulverized, and extruded into an average density, the factors that limit wood use in wood burning stoves do not apply; so more species and conditions of wood are available. They over-laid the GIS data layers with photos to verify forest existed there. The eastern side of the county, naturally, has the greatest amount of forested area. By and large the footprint indicates the net available biomass. The net annual low-grade growth (moderate assessment) on accessible and managed forestland adds up to about 70,276 green tons annual growing on the land – the conceptual harvest. Then, factoring in harvests for pulpwood (2,500), firewood (48,000), chip wood (1,000), and Middlebury College's new demand (2,000), we have 16,776 tons available. This leaves room for growth in harvesting for the above uses. Adding in Chittenden County's surplus plus Rutland County's surplus low-grade wood, makes the total four times as great. Therefore, a pellet mill in the area, which can draw from all three counties, would have sufficient supply to enter the market.

The itemized cost of what a mill would pay for low-grade round wood, including the cost of stumpage (\$2.50/green ton), cost to fell, skid and process at the landing (\$15.00), to haul and mill (\$10), for a total cost of \$27.50/green ton. In the past, saw mills in Vermont processed wood and had leftover sawdust to turn into pellets. Today, with the saw mills shut down, the pellet company would have to process the wood from start to finish,

thereby increasing their costs. They would be in competition with the Fort Ti paper mill, Middlebury College's demand, and others. A Commissioner asked, if you add up all of the energy input for harvesting, hauling, processing and delivering the pellets, what would be the net energy return on investment? For cord wood which produces 16 million BTUs per dry ton, minus fossil inputs, assuming an average 35 mile haul distance, you are investing 5% of the energy content into creating the energy; versus 20% for pellets. Ethanol and corn are much worse.

Using inaccessible and remaining agricultural land to grow fiber for pellets, they used VCGI data on ag land area in each town in Addison County. The market influences the yield capacity. For the moderate crop scenario – for a dedicated energy crop yield targeting underutilized, marginal ag land, they found the greatest amount of available land in the most ag areas in our county; significantly more capacity for fiber than they had for forest land. The itemized cost of bailed energy grass was \$15/ton for land use; \$57 to cultivate, plant, cut, ted, rake and bail, \$10 to haul to mill, for a total cost of \$82/ton. The grass pellets are higher ash fuels, lower moisture content, and the pellet stoves are convenient to use; but the stoves and pellets are most expensive than wood stoves and firewood. The ratio of available wood/grass in Addison County is 20/80, not a good cost-effective combination for a pellet business.

They looked at Middlebury College's potential for growing their own fuel crops. They can control their supply, but establishing the crop, buying the equipment, and putting it all into production are costly, over \$100/ton. Cellulosic ethanol would have a lower return for the tons inputted.

A Commissioner asked, what would the farmers get paid? They used market price for producing the biomass crop (hay). They built the costs based on average production costs. There was a range of prices when they interviewed farmers. So, they relied on others' research on prices. Another Commissioner asked, what is the land use trend in our county, and is this figured into the equation? They only looked at the current land use footprint, not the historical trends. Adam Lougee said that the marginal lands are being used less than in the past; prime lands are still utilized, although with larger farms. So, the amount of marginal lands will be increasing.

A Commissioner asked, there isn't much visible evidence of logging here. Would it be more visible if wood fiber was extracted at the rate assumed in the study? Adam replied that it would be more visible. The rate of growth in the model is an average. On a statewide basis, since we have more growth than we are harvesting, we have a slower growth rate, typical of older forests (a 2% growth rate). With more aggressive silvicultural methods, you could get a short-term increase in the growth rate, but also a long-term decrease in productivity if you over-harvest.

A Commissioner asked, what change would occur in the availability of ag lands for this purpose if we have development of ag land into residential land? Adam couldn't give a specific answer. On a state-wide basis, in the last two decades, the acreage has remained fairly constant, unlike other areas on the east coast.

In conclusion, when inaccessible and unmanaged forestland is removed, only low-grade wood is targeted, conservative rates of growth are applied, and current demands are all accounted for, the supply of wood fiber remaining on Addison County is not large. Wood fiber supply could be increased 400% by drawing upon Chittenden and Rutland County. The potential for dedicated energy crops dwarfs the supply of wood, however, it may not be practical to use more than 15% grass fiber in pellet fuel. It is possible that another pellet mill may use Chittenden and Rutland county's supply of wood; and others are planning a pellet mill that uses Addison County's supply of wood. You can only estimate how many proposed pellet mill projects will actually be built; only 1 of the 12 planned mills have been built. A Commissioner noted that costs don't include subsidized costs, and all externalities. If they were included, wouldn't fiber fuel be much less expensive? Adam replied that yes, wood chips and pellets are considerably less expensive than oil, and would greatly cheaper if all costs were included in the calculations. Currently, wood chips cost \$8/million BTUs and pellets cost \$19/million BTUs. They also surveyed people to find out what the threshold would be for people to install a pellet system if oil/propane costs increased to particular price points.

Thea announced a ten minute break, followed by the business meeting. Upon our return, Thea suggested a few rules of order. First, that the Commissioners focus their attention on the business at hand. Second, that they address the Full Commission on any topic, and refrain from side discussions during the meeting. Third, that they turn in to Elizabeth any written reports that they read aloud, to make it easier for her to take complete minutes.

BUSINESS AGENDA:

- I. **Approval of Minutes: July 8, 2009** - Bob McNary moved to adopt the minutes; Steve Revell seconded. The minutes passed unanimously. Fred Dunnington abstained. The July 8, 2009 Full Commission meeting minutes were approved as presented.
- II. **Executive Board Minutes** - Thea announced that the Executive Board minutes are provided for your information.
- III. **Treasurer's Report** – Adam reported that the report covers the new year, starting July 1. We have good balances in our accounts and we are running on budget. Formerly, we received DHCA every six months, and now they are given quarterly. It makes our cash flow a bit tighter. He asked for questions; there were none. Bob McNary moved to approved the Treasurer's Report; Ed Payne seconded. The Treasurer's Report was approved unanimously.
- IV. **Committee Reports** - Thea asked Chairmen to give their Committee Reports.

Act 250 Committee – Adam reported that not a lot has happened since the Executive Board meeting. He handed out a written report and read through it. (See attached report). Under New Application, Item 1, Adam added that H.V. 2005 Inc. is a Housing Trust in Vergennes. Under Approvals, Item 1, Adam added that CVPS received approval for a

Land Use Permit initially in conjunction with the Livingston Developers, and appealed on procedural grounds, meaning that CVPS wants its own permit, unconnected to the landowner.

Brownfields Committee – Jeremy Grip reported that they haven't had a meeting in some time, but Adam heard recently from Shade Roller Mill project. They will conduct a third examination of contamination. When the second round report came back, VDEC found the sampling was inclusive. They found more pollution but couldn't tell what it was, so they want more testing. We're the client paying for the assessment. The Brownfields Grant is given to the Planning Commission by the EPA based on a policy decision that they want to see more brownfield properties redeveloped. The grant pays to assess what is on the site and give a developer information as to whether it is financially viable to redevelop the site.

Energy Committee – Bob McNary reported that the Committee has met three times since the last Full Commission meeting. We have established a planning and task list for how we will utilize the funding from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG). We are eager to receive the funds to expand our energy work. We are ramping up our promotions for our monthly outreach/educational programs through radio, community television and printed material. Last month, we toured the Spencer and Fran Putnam house in Weybridge. The 1800 square foot home features net metered, solar electric, a wood burning stove, and geothermal hot water heating system with radiant floor heating.

The program for August was the screening of the documentary “Kilowatt Ours”, followed by a discussion led by Elizabeth Golden. Our program for September will be “Better Firewood and Renewable Energy from the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF).” We have four speakers reporting on their research on wood biomass in Addison County. Bob invited all of the Commissioners to attend the program on Thursday, September 22 at 7 pm.

The Committee is inviting Robin Scheu, Director of Addison County Economic Development Corporation (ACEDC) to their October Committee meeting to discuss our possible role regarding renewable energy in the Addison County business community.

Local Government Committee- Thea reported that there hasn't been much action recently, but Lincoln, Whiting, Waltham and Bristol are all nearing completion of the revisions to their Town Plans, so the Committee should be busy soon. The Committee meets to review Town Plans to recommend Full Commission approval. With no Municipal Planning Grants (MPGs) available in the year ahead, the pressure for towns to complete their plans is reduced.

Natural Resources Committee - Andrea Ochs asked Adam to report that they met during the past month to review another section of the Natural Resources Plan. They anticipate having the Plan available for review to the Full Commission sometime this fall. Their next meeting is Tuesday, September 22 at 7 pm.

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) – Bob McNary reported that they met last month and talked about the Champlain Bridge, which is in a poor condition. They received five proposals for funding transportation studies; and approved three preliminarily. Thea added that TAC has \$35,000 this year to fund grants for studies throughout the county, and three passed the first level of review. Adam added that the money is from ACRPCs budget to help engage the towns or look at regional transportation issues.

V. **Joint Partners Report** – Adam reported that we are doing the Biomass Study in conjunction with Economic Development to hopefully support the communities.

VI. **Delegate/Staff Recognition** – Thea asked that the delegates and alternates introduce themselves, which they did.

Adam handed out and reviewed some highlights of the staff's activities over the last month that would be of interest to the towns. This action was recommended during the Strategic Planning Process. (See attached report). He added that River Watch will be going out to Select Boards, presenting the results of their studies. Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO) is an urban planning agency. If there is an intersection or road that has a bad accident history, tell Rick, and he may add it to his study next year, and there may be funding for a study. Tim also manages the Rutland County Emergency District.

Ralph Teitscheid asked whether the High School in Middlebury would be participating in the Brownfield's Grant Program. Adam responded that they need to sign on to a contract to begin the process.

VII. **Old Business:**

Committee Assignments – Adam noted that the Committee Assignments for Fiscal Year 2009-10 (FY09-10) are the last item in the Agenda packet, and are also in the Orientation Booklet. Adam reported that the Executive Board (E Bd) took up the task of assigning committees at two meetings. He thanked the Commissioners for volunteering to serve on committees. The E Bd tried to give everyone one of their top choices. If you have any concerns, see Adam or the Executive Board.

Adam asked for Chairs to talk about their programs for the year ahead:

Local Government – Thea reported that they are asked by towns to review their newly revised Town Plans, and usually meets 4-5 times a year.

Brownfields - Jeremy Grip reported that they meet for several months, then not for a while. They administer funds made available for investigations of presumably polluted properties, that under prior ownership; that suffered environmental hardships. In the first year, we had \$200,000 for primarily oil damage from underground fuel tank leakage in Ripton. The Shade Rolling Mill is a big project, where they are looking at a third round

of investigation. They also investigated a Whiting underground oil leaks, and an inquiry from Middlebury High School. Adam reported that we still have money for next year, if anyone has another project for the committee to consider. Brownfields are properties that have potentially been polluted, and thus not fully developed. The purpose of the EPA program is to encourage redevelopment of existing sites, rather than building new facilities in green fields.

Strategic Planning - Fred Dunnington reported that Strategic Planning was discussed at the July Full Commission (FC) Meeting. It's a new committee born of the idea of improving our effectiveness. In an ideal world, we might introduce the ACRPC to communities who aren't as active, and share ways that we can help them. By this time next year, perhaps we could say that towns could see a role of how we can help them or they could become more engaged. The Committee hasn't had a first meeting as yet. He will email the committee members to select a time to meet. The first question of the committee is how we see ourselves, what our charge is, and how much time we have to devote to this.

Energy - Bob McNary reported that the Committee meets the first Friday of each month at noon. It's an evolving target. He looks for three things of the Committee in 2009-10. He sees the year ahead as exciting, challenging and rewarding. What is exciting is the emerging technology that is developing day by day. Being a part of bringing that technology to the community in the form of education and on-the-ground energy-saving projects will be fascinating. What is challenging is working to bring the public on board with energy conservation and adopting renewable energy technologies. Helping folks change their daily routine to save energy, which saves dollars, is our priority. Those dollars could support our local economy. We are developing programs to make this happen. What are rewarding will be the beginnings of an enlightened county community. We see the ACRPC Energy Committee as a state-wide leader in accomplishing this goal. We were the first RPC to establish a Committee and we are way ahead; a model for other Energy Committees. These are aggressive goals, but there is no time to waste.

There are two significant factors that will make these goals attainable. First is money. We expect to receive one and very possibly two ARRA EECB Grants to support our work. Bob assured the Commission that these funds will be managed judiciously and they will see a return on the investment. The Committee will use some of the anticipated funds to leverage receiving more Federal stimulus energy money for our towns to participate in energy programs and build energy projects. Secondly, our skilled staff person, Elizabeth Golden, is essential to our success. Elizabeth possesses the knowledge, experience, and long term commitment to tackling this monumental task. The Committee meets the first Friday of the month at noon. They sometimes take tours prior to the monthly meeting. Bob welcomed new Committee members Jeremy Grip, Milo Schafer, Alyth Hescoc, Dave D'Allienne, Michael Hermann and Charlie Makovec to the Committee.

Act 250 – Adam read a report from Ellen Kurrelmeyer. Act 250 Committee meets as needed. They review each of the applications as they come in. The Committee determines

if the project is regionally significant. Any Committee Member can request a meeting to bring up a project.

Natural Resources (NRC) – Adam read a report from Andrea Ochs. NRC is reviewing the Natural Resource section of the Regional Plan. They should be offering a updated Plan to the Full Commission in the fall. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 22, at 7 pm.

Orientation Booklet – Adam handed out one for each Commissioner. It serves as a reference. It contains our Work Plan and Budget, Bylaws, Quick Guide to Open Meeting Law, List of Acronyms, and Contact Lists. Adam can answer any questions you have. Fred Dunnington noted that he should be removed from the Executive Board listing. Ed Payne asked what the cover picture is, and Adam wasn't sure. Elizabeth offered a prize for anyone who could identify the picture. Several guesses were made, but no one is sure, however, Adam is sure it is located in Addison County.

VIII. New Business: None

IX. Member's Concerns:

The question was asked when the TAC meets. Thea answered that the TAC meets on third Wednesday, usually alternative months. The next meetings are scheduled for September and November, at 7 pm. She suggested that they Commissioners see the calendar on the website. Adam added that our Newsletter has a monthly calendar on the first page with Committee and other local planning meetings as well.

Kent Wright remarked that Shoreham and Bristol haven't sent representatives and suggested that we encourage them to send someone. Fred suggested that we do it gently. Bob McNary remarked that there is a certain degree of responsibility when you are a delegate. It's important to share information with your town and the commission; and serve on committees. Charlie noted that we are all volunteers.

X. Adjournment:

Charlie moved to adjourn the meeting; Bob seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Golden
Land Use and Environmental Planner