

Meeting Minutes
Addison County Regional Planning Commission
Wednesday, October 14, 2009

The ACRPC October Meeting was held at the ACRPC offices on October 14, 2009 with Bob McNary, Co-Chair, presiding.

ROLL CALL:

<i>Addison:</i>		<i>Orwell:</i>	David King
<i>Bridport:</i>	Andrew Manning Mike Gamache Mark Pumiglia	<i>Panton:</i>	Michael Hermann
<i>Bristol:</i>	William Sayre Jim Peabody Peter Grant	<i>Ripton:</i>	
<i>Cornwall:</i>	Mary Dodge	<i>Salisbury:</i>	
<i>Ferrisburgh:</i>	Bob McNary	<i>Shoreham:</i>	
<i>Goshen:</i>		<i>Starksboro:</i>	Richard Warren Jan McCleery
<i>Leicester:</i>	Charles Makovec	<i>Vergennes:</i>	
<i>Lincoln:</i>	Steve Revell	<i>Waltham:</i>	
<i>Middlebury:</i>	Fred Dunnington	<i>Weybridge:</i>	
<i>Monkton:</i>	Charles Huizenga	<i>Whiting:</i>	Ellen Kurrelmeyer Jonathan Heppell
<i>New Haven:</i>	Harvey Smith		

CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:

<i>Addison County Farm Bureau:</i>	Kent Wright
<i>Addison County Economic Development Corp:</i>	Harvey Smith
<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: Bob McNary called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. He introduced our speaker, John LaBarge, the Program Manager of the Vermont Byways Program, who gave an overview of the Vermont Byways Program. Recently, ACRPC helped six towns in Addison County secure or expand designation as a part of the Lake Champlain Byway. The Byway Program was initiated to get people to drive off of the highways to the local community. The Vermont Byways program is a voluntary, grass-roots program. Once the town's road is designated as part of the Byway, the town may apply for a grant to move forward with their roadway, bikeway, or other byway-related projects. The program is not about regulation, it's about recognition. It's based on six intrinsic qualities of an area or region: archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational and scenic. The benefits of designating a Byway include assisting towns in planning and updating their Corridor Management Plan, providing services for the traveler, assisting towns in the preservation of historic sites and natural resources, and creating access to existing trails. Adam added that we received a grant to include six new towns in Addison County into the Management Plan. Grant applications are reviewed by the Vermont Scenery Preservation Council. Grants are awarded annually on a competitive basis. In Vermont, the towns pay only 10% of the projects, while the Federal funding covers 90% of the work. Third party donations can be part of the 10% match, and these can include services, materials and property, all of which needs to be documented.

The Byway is a great marketing tool. The Towns create a logo, which is used on signs to mark the road. The Chambers of Commerce can be involved. John developed a website: www.vermont-byways.us/ where you can find all kinds of information on the area - maps, places to stay, places to see, and state parks along the Byway. The website includes an event calendar sent in by the Chambers, and some helpful links to the National Byways site, historic sites, State Parks, the Vermont Department of Tourism, and Vermont Life Magazine. Byways provide an open door to the region. John can be reached at 802-828-3508.

Adam pointed out the towns in Addison County which were recently added to the Lake Champlain Byway: Ferrisburgh added Route 7, Middlebury expanded Routes 7, 125 and 30, Whiting and Cornwall added section of Route 30, Shoreham added Route 74, and Orwell added Route 22A. We have almost a continuous byway from the Canadian border through Addison County. (Panton is the missing link.) Official designation is expected in December. Elizabeth Golden will be rewriting the Champlain Valley Scenic Byways Corridor Management Plan this year.

Attractions and tourism businesses along the Byway are advertised in Vermont Life Magazine and B&Bs are advertised in the B&B Guide. John has a budget of \$20,000 to spend on marketing each year. He has recently added large brochures and a handy pocket map. John distributed 15,000 pocket maps in just seven months.

John hopes we can expand the Byways in a loop throughout Vermont, and across the state from east to west. He would like to see the Vermont Byways become a unique byways system that promotes the tourism economy. The key is marketing. The smaller towns have found out that Byway Designation is really helping them.

Mark Pumiglia asked how long it would take for a town to be designated and what grants are available. John answered that a town needs to hold meetings in the community and buy into the Corridor Management Plan. They can work with the RPC to hold a public hearing. The SPC recommends applications to the Board. A second public hearing is held, and then a letter is sent confirming the town's application. If you aren't close to the existing Byway, the town will need to develop a Corridor Management Plan. A town can designate if desired, as well. Mark asked why anyone would be against it. John answered that some people misunderstand and think it is regulatory, though it is not. The process could take as short as four months. Adam added that we have already have a Corridor Management Plan, which towns can be part of.

John noted that you have to be a Designated Byway to qualify for grants. Most grants run around \$25-150,000, for any variety of things, from land preservation to protect a viewshed to road improvements. Adam noted that Vergennes received \$400,000 for their river walk over several years, for example. Peter Grant asked if any town can join. Much of their town is in the National Forest Wilderness Area. Who would support this? John answered that you can restore historic buildings and create access to existing trails. It also benefits local businesses. You can build a visitor's center, restore an historic train station, and even rent out offices to support the center. All kinds of events can be held in these areas. Brattleboro turned a vacant store into a visitor's center. Panels offer interpretation of the area's history and culture. It can become a museum with displays, and paths for bikers and walkers. The connection is important and there is grant money for local projects. People are interested in even little bits of history. People usually hang around and investigate the community and its history, architecture and recreational opportunities. Bill Sayre suggested that some people might see this as a government intervention. John responded that some people do, but this program is for the towns to do what their community wants. The website states that Byways are the best way to meet Vermont.

Rich Warren asked if each Byway needs an administrative office; John replied no. Adam noted that they need to meet every few months, but most of the information is provided by the Chambers. The RPC can assist the towns, as well. Rich asked, if this provides an enhancement, why are only two signs provided per village in both directions. John answered that there is an effort to limit the amount of signage on our roads. There is also a sign after each major intersection so travelers will know which way to go to stay on the Byway. Rich also asked if we can we program GPS systems to guide people along the Byways. John answered that we don't have that ability yet. Until the mapping services acknowledge the Byways, it won't happen. We're going to have to find ways to get this information to people in their cars. He plans to seek a grant for this purpose once it is clear which way the technology is going. Rich suggested that in

the interim, they could suggest what towns people could input. Until recently, the roads were limited. Vergennes from border to border on Route 22A, Orwell on Route 73, and New Haven and Waltham haven't designated Byways yet, nor have the towns along Route 22A.

Rich suggested that as a Planning Commission, we have to plan for law enforcement along the Byways routes. A couple years ago at a TAC meeting, the idea was suggested for Route 17. John answered that they have to look at how to direct the people with minimal impact. There are no studies on how it increases traffic, its economic impact, or crime rates. It's possible to count people at descriptive signage that people walk up to. Bob McNary asked what advantages small businesses may see. John answered that local businesses will want to be involved in the marketing materials. However, you cannot charge someone for something that already is paid through taxes, except if the money goes directly into the media, such as a website. Any money collected from local businesses to be listed in promotional materials would have to flow back into the Byway. Sustainability is a big thing. Local Chambers realize that they are offering a great marketing tool, so they are supportive. Bob asked if it is his intent to contact small businesses with a program to offer them to get involved. John answered that he works with the Chambers, who work with the local business owners. This is a locally developed program. Local citizens learn about their history from getting involved in the Byways Program. Michael Hermann asked if John has looked at other organizations that have created maps, such as the trails groups. John answered that he is aware of the trail guides. He added that the Byways Program is about slowing people down in their travels. The process is important. The Byways can link people to the bike trails, but can't create recreational infrastructure. Michael asked where the continuous funding will come from to maintain the Byways, and John suggested some kind of endowment and possibly bringing in entrepreneurs.

8:50 p.m. BUSINESS AGENDA:

After a short recess, Bob opened the Business Meeting.

I. Approval of Minutes: Jim Peabody moved adoption of the Minutes of the September 9, 2009 Meeting; Charles Huizenga seconded. The Minutes of the September 9, 2009 were unanimously approved as written.

II. Executive Board Minutes: September 23, 2009. Bob asked if there were any questions. There were none.

III. Treasurer's Report: Charlie Huizenga moved the adoption of the Treasurer's Report, Steve Revell seconded. Adam reported that we are about a quarter of the way through the year and have collected about 25% of our revenues and 21% of our expenditures. In one area – Transportation expenses – we have exceeded our expenditures. We get a certain amount of money from the AOT. Rich and Kevin have been working on an ACTR project, and bought traffic counters and a new GPS unit. Most of our other expenditures are in line with our budget. Bob asked for questions; there were none. The Treasurer's Report was unanimously approved.

IV. Committee Reports:

Act 250/248. Ellen reported (Adam has report). No approvals or denials. Heffernans filed a construction amendment to expand an application. The extension was issued so they have additional time to submit the needed materials.

Brownfields: Adam reported that the committee was waiting for a proposal. (Adam has report) Printed materials are available. There will be a meeting to discuss it.

Energy: Bob reported that our September 24 outreach program was “Woody Biomass Availability in Addison County and Renewable Energy from the Green Mountain Forest”. The program was well attended. The discussion that followed was valuable because audience members included homeowners, engineers, and people in the wood products industry. The committee met on October and discussed programs and projects for the EECBG funding. Our outreach program this month is “Water Reclamation” on Thursday, October 22 at 7 pm, presented by Emma Melvin, UVM Water Quality Instructor. On October 28 and 29 some committee members will be attending the 8th Vermont Renewable Energy Conference and Expo in Burlington. Our next meeting will be Friday, November 6 at 12 noon. Elizabeth added that she has the ‘Kilowatt Ours’ video available to borrow, which explains how much coal is used to create electricity.

Local Government – Adam reported that the committee hasn’t met in a while. Vergennes has an application in for a Plan Review and a hearing planned for Monday, November 16 from 7:30 – 8:00 pm. Weybridge has requested a Plan Review as well. Elizabeth will be writing both Plan Reviews.

Natural Resources – Kevin reported that they worked on the scenic and global objectives of air quality and heard a presentation on the air quality regulations in place now. Earth resources will be their next topic.

Strategic Planning – Fred reported that they held their first meeting on October 6. They will be meeting monthly on the third Tuesday. They will determine what they can accomplish. They brainstormed on the charge of what they could do to identify regional interest, with particular interest on the towns that aren’t represented here. They will develop a strategy. They have just begun.

TAC – Bob reported that they met on September 16 and discussed the Route 17/Mount Abe Intersection in Bristol, the Dead Creek Bridge, and line painting on Route 7 in Ferrisburg. Their \$40,000 Study Proposal Grant was allocated as follows: \$15,000 to the Route 22A and Panton Road intersection in Vergennes; \$10,000 to the Addison County Park and Ride needs study; \$5,000 to identify and catalog the bridges and culverts; and \$10,000 for the Route 125 Relocation Ripton. TAC decided to hold the last RFP to determine if any of the other projects come in under budget, to allocate the extra funds to this project. Sue Clark from VTrans spoke about the Champlain Bridge situation. There are four study groups at work. Consulting turnaround is 12-115 months. Construction will start in 4-5 years. Andrew Manning added that the Route 17 bridge is now open.

- V. Joint Partners Report: Harvey reported that the Economic Development Committee is meeting with county legislators tomorrow morning to talk about local business concerns.
- VI. Delegate/Staff Recognition: Adam recognized Al Cremer of Cornwall, a long time member of TAC, who passed away last weekend. He was a gifted engineer who did a lot of work for the RPC. He assessed every bridge over 20 feet long in Addison County in terms of its structural integrity. Bob added that Al always had good comments and input at the TAC meetings.

Adam read the staff narratives on the highlights of their work over the past month. Kevin and Rick work on ACTR grant applications for three route applications and, due to their work, received all three grants. Kevin explained that the route between Vergennes, Middlebury and Bristol will be expanded. New Haven will be a transfer. Adam added that they will be expanding routes to reduce the time it takes to travel between the towns.

Tim is holding H1N1 public informational meetings. Pauline is still working on the audit. Orwell applied for Village Center Designation which allows business owners to apply for storefront improvements. Andrew asked how large their village center is. Kevin responded that it covers all of their old slate sidewalks. Elizabeth has been working on the ARRA Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant application for \$153,700, which is due tomorrow.

VII. Old Business:

1. Energy Program Expansion –Elizabeth reviewed the list of projects in the \$153,000 ARRA EECBG application, a summary of which was handed out earlier in the meeting. The four activities are: an electric vehicle and charging station, energy audits and grant application assistance to towns for municipal building retrofits, development of a clean energy assessment district and model process, and application support for methane digesters on two farms. In addition to the \$153,000, ACRPC will be receiving \$80,000 to cover Elizabeth’s time and the expenses for another list of energy programs and projects. That application is not due until mid-November. Ellen Kurrelmeyer suggested that the Vermont Cow Power Program be included in the Methane Project. Harvey Smith questioned whether the project is feasible, given the lack of infrastructure and the highly technical nature of the application. Adam responded that the program will fund the technical application itself. Steve Revell noted that farms are losing money generating electricity. Adam replied that the low rates given to existing farms for Cow Power would not apply to the new installations. He expects the new participants to receive the newly increased tariffs covered under H.446, and that this program provides funding for the most at-risk investment.
2. Crown Point Bridge Update – Adam reported on the public hearings; five years may be too aggressive a timeframe.

VIII. New Business:

1. VTrans Grant Application to Expand Amtrak Passenger Service from Rutland to Burlington – Adam passed out an article about the 71.5 million grant (point one), that would return passenger

rail service to Burlington from Rutland, with a stop in Middlebury. The proposal includes one northbound and one southbound train each day. The service – the Ethan Allen line – travels to New York City’s Penn Station. The federal government will decide whether Vermont is awarded the grant in December or January. If approved, construction count start in the spring of 2010 and trains could be picking up passengers in Burlington in the fall of 2011. A second proposal is for \$50.9 million for largely physical rail upgrades which will benefit the freight traffic in the area. Also there’s a grant to increase service frequency to Rutland from Albany, NY. The Omni rail may get an additional incentive. Fred noted that the town of Middlebury and its Select board have discussed this. They have a problem with the old line through Middlebury. It is thought to be too expensive to change the situation. They had a meeting with engineers at VTrans, the town managers and himself. VTrans came up with the idea of a tunnel built in pre-cast sections, starting at the Elm Street underpass. VTrans did not include this in the grant, but they included slab replacement, which will not work. The prospect of passenger rail is interesting, but they choose an area near the Agway grain elevator. Steve of County Tire purchased the train station. There isn’t any money for the restoration of the train station. There was a discussion about the tunnel concept. Fred noted that property owners had agreed with the tunnel concept, but it was not included nonetheless.

2. Transportation Planning Intern – Adam reported that we hired a sophomore from Middlebury College to put the ACTR routes onto the web. He will be working with Kevin and Rick. Kevin added that he is also working on census data for commercial properties to validate the information. The data we purchase is from a commercial source. We will compare the actual data to the census count, as a quality control.

IX. Member’s Concerns/Information: none.

X. Adjournment: Peter Grant moved to adjourn the meeting. Fred seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Elizabeth Golden