



**Mad River Valley Town Leadership Meeting
November 16, 2016 Meeting Minutes**

Attendees on sign-in sheet:

- Eric Vorwald, CVRPC
- AnneMarie Defreest, CVP
- Amy Todisco, CVP & Chamber
- Jasmine Bigelow, Chamber
- Brad Long, Chamber
- Peter MacLaren, Chamber
- Jamie Murphy, MRVSA
- Anne Greshin
- Dave Ellison, Mad River Path Association
- Jed Kalkstein, Fayston
- Mike Riddell, Fayston
- Nancy Baron, Warren
- Kristen Seibert, Waitsfield
- Terry Reilly, Waitsfield
- Mary Simmons, Waitsfield
- Amy Kretz, Warren
- Carol Chamberlin, Fayston Planning Commission
- Robin Bleier, Warren
- Jared Cadwell, Fayston Selectboard
- Valerie Capels, Waitsfield Town Administrator
- Margo Wade, Sugarbush
- Bill Parker, Waitsfield
- Patricia Floyd, Warren
- Steve Shea, Waitsfield Planning Commission
- Mark Woolley, Warren
- Mike Bridgewater, Warren Planning Commission
- Jim Sanford, Warren Planning Commission
- Logan Cook, Recreation District
- Catherine Bunhen, Warren
- Miron Malboeuf, Warren Zoning Administrator
- Shane Mullen, Fayston
- Steve Andrews, Fayston
- Drew Simmons, Mad River Lacrosse
- Chris Keating, Valley Reporter
- Shelby Semmes, MRVPD Minute Taker

Bob Ackland welcomed the group. Select board members introduced themselves. Bob noted that Moretown select board member(s) would be joining mid-way through the meeting, due to a partial conflict.

Citizen Planner of the Year Award, NNECAPA

Randy Saxton presented the 2016 citizen planner award to Robert (Bob) Vasseur. She reviewed other regional awards that Bob had received recently. She noted that students had made a documentary about Bob and it was presented at the annual meeting of NNECAPA, which was well received. Bob accepted the award and spoke about his long involvement with, and the early days of, the Planning District.

Bob Ackland underscored that there are common threads through all the issues on the docket. Bob noted that Kristine Keeney's addition to the Mad River Valley Planning District (MRVPD) is a direct result of earlier funding requests and investments by the towns, and noted that her professionalism is an asset to the Valley.

MRV Housing

Kristine Keeney, Community Planner, MRVPD reviewed interim results from 2016 MRV Housing study. Kristin reviewed that a core effort of the MRVPD of late was development of a housing study to develop strategies for affordable housing. She categorized the inventoried housing efforts in the Valley by “Planning & Infrastructure”, “Regulatory”, and “Development”.

- She reviewed MRV demographic trends:
 - Population growth is expected to increase between now and 2030, up to 14-18%; 55% drop in young homeowners; MRV has much higher % of higher income individuals than VT, households are more affluent.
- She reviewed results of a survey given to employers in the Valley:
 - Retail and leisure & hospitality are lower wage industries, and dominate in the Valley so there is a need to keep those demographics in mind when considering housing affordability.
 - 50% of 36 business respondents said housing is a barrier to attracting talent/job applicants.
- She reviewed trends in MRV housing stock:
 - 51% seasonal housing stock; 49% built in the ‘Resort era’ – 1960-1979.
 - In the mid-2000s the median primary housing prices become a lot more volatile; rents are more expensive in the Valley than surrounding communities (Avg gross median rent = \$994, which is more expensive than Montpelier or Waterbury)
- She walked through an **Ownership Affordability Gap** analysis the MRVPD conducted:
 - If a 2-person household makes 80% of median income (\$46k), they can afford \$174k house (at 30% of income, the prevailing definition of ‘affordable’).
 - Median advertised home prices advertised on a given day in the last few months: Single family: \$438k, Condo: \$170k, Mobile home: \$140k
- She walked through a **Rental Affordability Gap** analysis the MRVPD conducted:
 - A single person making 80% of the state’s median income makes \$40,500/year. At that income, affordable rent for that individual is = \$1,015/ mo.
 - The hours needed to work per week at minimum wage, to afford the average 1 bedroom apartment in the Valley = 93 hours/week.
 - Conversely, the hourly wage required to work at 40 hr. week - \$22.22 per hour.
 - She noted very few 2 bedrooms on the market. 3-4 br units are more available but often seasonal.
 - The results of MRVPD’s Housing Seeker Survey showed that 52% of respondents were looking for year-round rentals.
- She walked through the recommendations of the MRVPD going forward:
 - What are the housing needs based on the data? 1) need more housing, 2) need housing for older population looking to downsize 3) need housing to keep and attract young people.
 - Types of housing to consider: accessory dwelling units, single family homes, multi-unit housing, co-housing/PUD (clustered homes, shared facilities), tiny houses.

- Examples from other communities: Snowmass – deed restricted single family homes. Hinesburg –new development opened in Sept with state affordable housing developer, Jackson Hole, Tenants for Turns program.
- She reviewed that the MRVPD is working with planning commissions of each town to update housing sections of town plans. They are discussing opportunities and prioritizing strategies. They intend to publish an updated housing study. Implement strategies during next year’s work plan.

MRV Recreation District

MRV Recreation District, Rebecca Baruzzi, Chairperson, MRV Recreation District opened this section, describing work the district had done since the last meeting. Rebecca provided overview of Rec District’s history and more recent requests for recreational needs in the Valley. Reviewed the 2016 requested and granted fund amounts. They are working on bylaws and a new website to increase transparency and do more to respond to requests.

Logan Cooke reviewed the Mad River Park acquisition project. He presented a few alternatives the District evaluated for other fields to create similar capacity, should Kingsbury/Mad River Park fields go away. The upshot for the District is that the Mad River Park will be very difficult to replace if lost. If lost, there would be No U12 league, shortened practices, and home games would have to occur in Waterbury and Stowe. That would impact one out of every three kids in the Valley. Soccer and Lax both play on these fields.

Dan (Soccer) Drew (Lax) spoke to the need of acquisition. Just under 50% of elementary school Valley kids play soccer. They noted the trend that while population/student enrollment is dropping in the schools, enrollment in soccer and lax is going up. They reviewed uses of the field:

- Soccer: 360+ players in spring and fall. 7 day / week use of fields. 8,000 player visits per year. 3400 soccer players registered since 2007. Waterbury plays into MRV travel team.
- Lacrosse: 100+ players in spring. 7 day/week use of fields. 2,300 player visits per year.

Quotes from community members were read describing the unique nature of the fields being so concentrated, their economic value, and the emotional ties that people have to the fields.

Logan reviewed Acquisition Project updates for the select boards. A recent appraisal valued the property at \$725,000. With the help of the Vermont Land Trust, the District has applied for Land and Water Conservation Fund state recreational grant for \$250,000. This grant comes with a limiting deed restriction requiring that the fields remain recreational space in perpetuity.

The District meanwhile is working on usage agreements, addressing improvements and maintenance. Logan noted an anonymous donation through VLT of \$100,000 will bring purchase price down significantly. That anonymous donor has also agreed to also cover transaction costs and option deposit to purchase. The total acquisition funds required to close range between \$125k, or \$400k if grants don’t come through. The per town cost will range between, \$41,000 (likely). \$133,000 worst case scenario.

In closing, Logan commented that this is a large town asset and would benefit the town for many years. He asked a show of support, sufficient to have the Vermont Land Trust continue supporting the Rec District in the pursuit of the Option Agreement. He then opened the floor to questions:

- Select board member **Paul Hartshorne** asked for clarification that Kingsbury lands are ID'd in Waitsfield town plan as an economic development zone and other questions, including: Where is the District in negotiation with planning boards? What percentage of the land are we looking to absorb? Logan answered that there are 4 more acres of other future developable land in the larger ownership after the proposed town acquisition. There are 47 acres of developable land total. Yes, for Waitsfield, this is the only commercial development area in Waitsfield. Yes, there will be a loss of tax receipts.
- Rebecca noted that Accepting grant's deed restrictions is problematic so it might be an option to bond it and over all but the 100k of acquisition cost.
- Bob Ackland asked Rebecca if would the rec district bond it itself? She answered that either that was an option or each of the three towns individually would do so. Bob expressed support for this idea as it would maintain greater flexibility for the town.
- When asked if Moretown would be willing to participate, the Moretown select board member **John Hoogenboom** said that Moretown isn't interested right now. Open to some partial support, but need more information; He is willing to look at it further but needs more info.
- Mike Vasseur, a community member, gave an impassioned plea that there is no legitimate reason to not do this. He noted that there are very few public facilities to support our kids. Lots of places that aren't public. Made a plea to the board that the 'right thing' not to miss this opportunity, stating that we are trying to attract young families here so why loose a key resource in that effort?
- Another Select board member Ed Read suggested that instead of bonding, why not just pay for it now?
- Chuck Martel asked for more clarity on the timing and budget needs specifically, "when will be know what we need to budget this project?". Logan promised to provide more detailed info once the Option term was worked out via VLT and details of the federal grant were understood.
- Waitsfield select board member Sal Spinoza said this was a very legitimate proposal, very attractive, and that the towns were considering several other very compelling opportunities right now. He noted that in determining what the town's debt load is important to know what the term of option is so that we can stage this spending.
- There was another suggestion by Andy Cunninham that the towns would voluntarily pay the tax loss.
- Kari Dolan noted that the requires losing some important commercial land, tax base. She noted that there are some costs, but that she appreciated people putting heads together to determine "HOW" not "Whether". To determine how we make this affordable for our community.

Logan asked for a show of support. For the show of support among select board members, the majority of hands were raised. The District will be moving forward and more details will be shared at the next meeting.

MRV Clean Water & Resilience Ridge-to-River: A Mad River Valley Coalition for Clean Water & Resilience

Corrie Miller, the Executive Director of Friends of the Mad River spoke. She identified folks in the room who are involved with the Ridge to River effort.

- She noted that clean water is the measure of our success as stewards of the landscape. Reviewed photos of Hurricane Irene, and an August 16th 2016 rain event caused a lot of damage in Duxbury and Fayston. She urged that more frequent disruptive events will continue and increase.
- She explained that the Ridge to River project grew out of a hope that the sense of post-Irene comradery would be continued. She reviewed the primary strategy for water management especially with the Valley's steep slopes: slow down water before it hits the streams; we can become more resilient if we can control the speed that the water runs off the land.
- She noted that at the last tri-town meeting, the R-to-R Coalition secured board support for \$60k grant from High Meadows Fund, which they went on to receive. Since then, they have assembled a task force and commissioned Stone Environmental to perform a clean water and vulnerability assessment. Now they are sharing what was learned from that.
- She then played a video summarizing the R-to-R Coalition.
- She reviewed land uses that influence storm water: Public roads (noted that some Mad River subwatersheds have very high road density); Private roads and driveways (lesser construction standards). 33% roads are private in the MRV (higher than state avg); Interface between private and public roads; Rooftops and lawns; Development in highest steepest places; Village development near river; resort development; working landscape (drainage issues in corn and hay fields, livestock).

She posed the question, why does flood and clean water resilience matter?

- She referred to the documented and anticipated growth in the MRV, shown in the MRVPD's housing discussion.
- She then reviewed relevant (and new) legislation in Vermont Act 64 – Vermont Clean Water Act. Passed 2015. The legislation requires Municipal Road General Permit, for which the State is aiding. The collaborative is trying to do what it can to help share resources.
- She reviewed the connections between clean water and forest cover. Studies in the Pacific Northwest demonstrate risk that with less than 65% forest cover in a subwatershed, there are negative downstream impacts. Between 2001-2011 the Valley lost 500 acres of forest cover.
- She noted that over the next 6 months the Collaborative is looking for ways to advance efforts on existing residential development - looking to develop a pilot. They are reaching out to the community to perform home site audits. On December 7th, there is a community forum and resilience celebration at the Big Picture.

Community Vitality Project

Bob Ackland (Chair) introduced the Project. He noted that it had a unique beginning wherein Community Vitality Project Committee members were identified thru the Planning District's nominating and then voting process. No nominees declined to help. He reviewed preceding vitality planning efforts like this Community Vitality project since the 1980s. He then played a video illustrating what "a Vital Mad River Valley" might look like.

Amy Todisco reviewed the focus areas/areas for improvement that the committee had identified and was working within subcommittees to discuss in greater depth: community collaboration, working lands/recreation/open space, business support and advancement.

Margo Wade identified challenges facing working land, recreation, open space. They include: preservation, diversification, access and smart use of land/open spaces including farms, forests, and water, succession/estate planning, quantifying land lost to dispersed development, public private cooperation for trail systems and recreation facilities (walking, hiking, biking, X-country). She probed, 'Are we prepared to deal with the challenges confronting us with a changing climate?' We need smart, resource preserving and prudent development.

Bill Parker spoke for the Community Collaboration sub-committee, identifying gaps that include: Incentives (like mentorship between established and new businesses; lift tickets for new small businesses), permitting, and valley-wide resource allocation and plan. He provided examples of how towns can work together to resource-share optimally, including town water, industrial development in Fayston if Waitsfield is finished, water and wastewater collaborations.

AnneMarie DeFreese described a "Return on Investment" analysis needed to understand what should happen to incentivize the right kind of growth here. She appealed to the select boards that the committee (which speaks for the community in an informal capacity) wants and needs the select boards expertise and support, for helping them move this dialogue along.

She asked for a show of hands of 'support' for the Community Vitality project and a willingness to listen to future asks, to which a majority of select board members' hands were shown, with a few not raised. Due to time constraints, not many questions were asked nor was there much discussion among the select board members.

MRV Planning District

Joshua Schwartz gave an overview of the MRVPD. Their scope of work includes work with Sugarbush, Valley wide projects, and then municipal planning & support. He stated that the value of the MRVPD is bringing professional planning, grants, coordination, leadership, awareness, leadership, coordination, grants to the five towns.

- He reviewed grant activity since 2008, noting the high level of post-flood Housing & Urban Development (Federal) and Transportation (Federal and State) grants secured in the last few years.
- Under municipal planning, he stressed that they have moved more into an implementation mode, beyond just planning.
- Joshua reviewed the 2017 Work-plan for the MRVPD
- Bob Ackland (Board Chair for MRVPD) reviewed the 2016 actuals and proposed 2017 budget. He noted, mostly level funding, with some salary/benefit increase for staff. He noted a \$20k surplus in 2016 that they requested to carry over. He presented a case for use of some of the \$20k the carry-over into a 'input-output' model ROI analysis for the Valley (also called an "In-plan model) which is relatively inexpensive. Request from the CVP.
- There was a comment from a select board member Jared Cadwell praising the work and professionalism of the MRVPD. He noted that salaries need to be livable wages and that the towns get far more from the staff than the 40-45-hour week they are quoted in the budget requests.
- Kari Dolan asked for clarification about two small line items that had increased funding levels compared with last year. Bob and Josh provided an explanation for those increases.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelby Semmes

DRAFT