

**Mad River Valley Planning District**  
**Steering Committee**  
January 26, 2017, 7:00 P.M.  
Sugarbush Lower Administration Building  
2405 Sugarbush Access Rd., Warren

Present were:

Fayston: Jared Cadwell, Selectboard  
Waitsfield: Kari Dolan, Selectboard  
Warren: Bob Ackland, Selectboard; Jim Sanford, Planning Commission  
Sugarbush: Margo Wade  
CVRPC: Eric Vorwald  
MRV Chamber of Commerce: Peter MacLaren  
MRVPD: Joshua Schwartz; Kristine Keeney  
Guests: Chris Keating, Valley Reporter

The meeting opened at 7:00pm. Bob Ackland, Chair, brought the meeting to order. There was not a quorum present at the beginning of the meeting, so the acceptance of the previous meeting's minutes were postponed until a representative from Waitsfield was present.

- I. Executive Director's Highlights of Staff Report:** J. Schwartz provided the Committee updates on several areas including economic development, transportation, housing, recreation, historic resources, and agriculture.

**Economic Development**

- a. V-DAT - Warren Main Street Improvement Project
  - i. 60% Design public meeting was held on 1/9 during a regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting. Kristine did substantial outreach for the meeting and there was a sizable turnout.
  - ii. Planning Commission decided not to move forward with the design and install of electrical conduit to accommodate future underground utilities due to the \$80,000 cost.
  - iii. Planning Commission choose a "coco" fired brick option for the parking/pedestrian area pavers.
  - iv. Planning Commission voted to give the consultants approval to move ahead with final design.
  - v. During recent MRV Transportation Advisory Committee meetings, attendees have voiced concerns about the truck loading/unloading on Main Street in Warren. Kristine has passed those concerns onto the project manager.
- b. V-DAT- Waitsfield Pocket Park/Lovett Park Project
  - i. Designs were reviewed and approved by the VT Floodplain Office.
  - ii. The DRB approved the project, with conditions, on 12/21.
  - iii. A draft Phase I Environmental Site Assessment report was completed on 1/7, revealing no evidence of recognized environmental conditions in connection with the site.
  - iv. Project Manager Isaac Wagner is currently working on completing the environmental review and developing bid documents
  - v. Kari pointed out that the project is substantially under budget.
- c. December MRV Economic Dashboard
  - i. Joshua shared a few of the data points from the report to the group.

- ii. Jared asked if we are comparing apples to apples for 2016 and 2015. And Kristine and Joshua explained that there are a few data points that do not have 2015 data available, but all other data points are comparing the month and year to date directly for 2015 and 2016.
- iii. Bob, Kristine, and Josh met with Jasmine and Amy from the Chamber to discuss next steps with the Dashboard and collaborating more with the Chamber. They discussed why the Dashboard is important to the community and relevant for both organizations, as well as how the Chamber could play a more active role. The group is going to meet again in the next few weeks to reevaluate the current data points and identify next steps.

## **Transportation**

- d. MRVTAC 1/11/17 Meeting
  - i. GMT provided initial ridership data for the Mad Bus, which showed all routes with higher ridership compared to the 2015-2016 and 2014-2015 seasons. The group will continue to monitor ridership data as the service season progresses.
  - ii. MRVPD, GMT, Chamber, and Sugarbush have been working together to get the word out about the Mad Bus. Kristine did extensive outreach to groups and organizations that posted info on social media. This outreach work appears to be paying off.
- e. Chamber Mad Bus Moving Mixer
  - i. Kristine worked with the Chamber to organize a “moving mixer” utilizing the Mad Bus. Peter said the bus was full with mixer attendees and regular riders. He thought it was good for the businesses and Mad Bus, and the Chamber should consider organizing another one next year to kick off the Mad Bus service season.
  - ii. GMT put out a call for volunteer drivers to help people get to doctor appointments, pharmacy, etc. A Chamber member subsequently came in to ask for more info about volunteering for the program and Kristine was able to provide that information.
- f. Sugarbush Access Road Path Scoping Study
  - i. Kristine and Joshua recently finished providing comments on the second edition of the final draft.
  - ii. Jared asked what the timeline looks like for applying for a grant to fund the design and/or construction of the path. Kristine and Joshua explained that it depends on the funding source. Margo asked if the MRVPD/Town would apply for design & build project or split them up for a grant application? Joshua suggested splitting the two phases up due to the cost of the project might be the best way to proceed.
  - iii. Kari suggested looking into economic development grants with a focus on recreation because this path would be aligned with Sugarbush’s goals and it would provide needed connections to existing and future mountain biking trails. She also expressed concern that there might be less money available for bike/pedestrian grants in the near future due to other VTrans priorities.
- g. CVRPC TAC Meeting & Paving Priorities
  - i. Meeting on 2/28 will be dealing with VTrans paving priorities.
  - ii. Josh explained that the MRVPD was given a VTrans “Top 50 District Paving Candidates for Ranking” map and it does not include eastern portion of Route 17.
  - iii. Kristine is planning on attending the upcoming meeting to advocate for Route 17 as a paving priority for the region but she currently has a conflict with a Warren Selectboard meeting.
  - iv. Kari stressed the economic importance of repaving this section of roadway because cyclists enjoy riding the gap roads in the Valley. She knows someone who fell off his or her bike on Route 17 because of a pothole and got severely injured.
  - v. The group discussed traffic volumes on Route 100 & Route 17 and Joshua explained that both roads have the same volume in the summer and the winter based on available

counts. Jared thought that there might be less traffic on Route 17 than there otherwise would be because of the pavement condition.

h. Moretown Bridge Update

- i. The 1928 bridge is considered functionally deficient by VTrans because of its 9' wide travel lanes.
- ii. VTrans' preferred alternative is 2a- a 90' structure with 11' travel lanes and 4' shoulders, with Option 1 for traffic detour- closing VT100B and utilizing an Off-Site Detour on state routes.
- iii. Timeframe:
  1. Conceptual plans, easements, preliminary plans – 2017
  2. Permitting, final plans – 2018
  3. Contract plans, advertising, bids – 2019
  4. 2020 summer construction during school vacation
- iv. Peter asked if there is anyway to speed up the construction timeline? Bob said that the Moretown selectboard has been pushing and exploring all options to get it done faster.
- v. Eric mentioned that CVRPC contacted all towns in their region on behalf of Congressman Peter Welch's office in order to put together a list of infrastructure projects that could be ready in the next 4 years: water, sewer, transportation, etc. MRVPD was not contacted. Bob and Jim were not aware that Warren had been contacted.

**Housing**

i. MRV Housing Study 2017

- i. Housing Study will be available by the end of February. Kristine will be giving a presentation at the next MRVPD Steering Committee meeting in February.

j. Tin Houses

- i. At the MRV Housing Coalition meeting on 1/12/17 the group discussed tiny houses as an option to address the issue of affordable housing in the Valley. The discussion was positive and Alison from Downstreet expressed an opportunity with a parcel they currently own in Waitsfield. Based on that conversation, Kristine will be organizing a tiny house stakeholder meeting as a first step towards implementing one of the recommendations of the Housing Study. Yestermorrow is also excited to join the conversation.
- ii. Eric pointed out that Will Eberle, Vermont Agency of Human Services, Field Director for the Barre and Morrisville Districts, is forming a movement to determine if tiny house development could be used for the homeless population. Kristine will follow up with him.
- iii. Bob asked how wastewater is addressed in a tiny house? Kristine explained that mobile tiny houses can either use a composting toilet or hook-ups at mobile home/RV parks, and tiny houses on fixed foundations can connect to municipal sewer or a private septic system. Another option in a tiny house village is to utilize a central wastewater system that is provided through a shared building.
- iv. Jim mentioned that recently in Davos shipping containers were used to provide cost efficient beds to people that were there for a conference.

**Recreation**

- a. MRV Moves Plan was completed on 12/22 and is now available for download at <https://mrvmoves.org/project-documents/>.
- b. Josh gave a presentation on the MRV Moves Plan to the Tri-Town Conservation Committee on 1/12.

**Historic Resources**

- a. Lareau Farmstead in Waitsfield was officially listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 27th. This designation enables the owners to apply for federal Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credits to offset the cost of rehabilitating the historic barn on the property.

### **Agriculture**

- a. Joshua has provided assistance to the Mad River Food Hub on a Working Lands Grant submission focused on marketing local products through the Mad River Taste, a new regional tasting center.

### **Other**

- a. Joshua and Kristine met with Waitsfield resident Iliyan Deskov about a potential internship in 2017. Iliyan has offered to update GIS maps created in 2010 by Stone Environmental that identified well shield locations and wastewater options within the Waitsfield municipal water service area. This work will be foundational for both affordable housing and for Irasville infill potential.
- b. Joshua assisted Open Hearth in exploring CDBG funding opportunities for the Flemer Barn property.
- c. Joshua assisted the Joslin Memorial Library in exploring CDBG funding opportunities for implementation of a plan to do renovations to the basement to make it less vulnerable to flooding and a useable space for the library in the future.
- d. CVRPC Staff changes:
  - a. Steve Gladscuck passed away, CVRPC Transportation Planner and Waitsfield resident.
  - b. Dan Currier is transitioning from GIS to the Transportation Planner position.
  - c. They are hiring a new GIS position to replace Dan and a temporary Land Use/Natural Resource Planner to help with energy planning.
- e. Received notice on 12/19/16 that the District 5 Environmental Commission approved an Act 250 Administrative Land use Permit to Geoffrey and Jennifer Bergen in Waitsfield (5W1511-A) for the conversion of an existing 5-bedroom seasonal dwelling, located on 11 acre Lot 8, to year round use.
  - a. Eric said it was an administrative amendment so they were given the permit. Margo asked why the lot was permitted as seasonal in a first place, and according to Eric and Josh it was a wastewater issue.

## **II. New Business**

- a. **Vermont Arts Council's Animating Infrastructure Grant- Warren Village Bike Rack**
  - i. MRVPD's preliminary application to develop an artist-designed bike rack in Warren Village has been approved for the VT Arts Council's Animating Infrastructure Grant program. The MRVPD application was one of ten out of a field of 42 projects selected to prepare and submit a full proposal. The deadline for submission is 3/20, with notification of 5/1.
  - ii. Jim asked if it would be helpful if we had a design concept created for the full grant application? Kristine said she would review the details of the grant application before determining if that would be helpful.
- b. **Town Roundtable Update**
  - i. Fayston
    1. Working on budget for road projects including Number Nine Rd and Lower Bragg Hill Rd and they are still dealing with damage from a storm last summer on Randall Rd & Sharpshooter Rd. The repairs from the storm are going to be 80% covered by state emergency funds (only for unnamed storms).

2. The Waitsfield-Fayston Fire Department wanted to replace a 30-year-old fire truck with next year's budget, but Fayston has said that they need to rebuild their Capital Reserve Fund back up over the next several years.
  - a. Bob said that the idea of additional collaboration between Valley fire departments seems to be gaining some traction. He said between 3 departments (Waitsfield-Fayston, Warren, and Moretown) there are 6 pumper trucks.
  - b. Margo said there are concerns about having enough volunteers during the day to respond to calls and that Sugarbush has created an incentive program for employees to join the Warren Fire Department or MRVAS. After their first year of service volunteers get \$300 and after obtaining certifications they get another \$300 and parking privileges at Sugarbush.

ii. Warren

1. Jim said the Planning Commission is working on updating their Town Plan and will be sending out an RFP for a consultant in the next few weeks.
  - a. Jared asked if they have dealt with the issue of stream buffers. Jim said that he had not reviewed the rules related to stream buffers recently but the Planning Commission did adopt Fluvial Erosion standards. Jared said the Fayston Planning Commission is recommending a 100' stream buffer and he has concerns about it since there are already so many homes within that 100' buffer that would become non-conforming. Kari pointed out that it's important to discourage building in vulnerable areas in order to reduce risk of damage from future flooding events.
2. Jim also said that the Planning Commission feels that there needs to be renewed energy on the part of the Town to find an appropriate site for the town garage.
3. Brook Road will be repaved from Main Street to the Four Corners and a culvert replaced just below Bane Rd. This work will require the road to be closed for 2-3 weeks.
  - a. Bob said after Brook Rd is repaved, all of the roads in Warren would have been repaved within the last 6 years.
  - b. Peter mentioned that his guests have remarked on the great conditions of the roads in Warren.
4. The Town will also be working on a stormwater project on Fuller Hill Rd.
5. A small bridge on West Hill Rd will be repaired- this work will not be completed by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, so there might be some parking issues.
6. The Town is working on connecting water to the Municipal Complex, Fire Department, and Church. The well has been drilled but additional work is needed to complete the project.
  - a. Jim asked if the town green is included in this work? Bob said that stormwater and electrical will be done, but he's not sure about the pathway down to Main Street.

iii. Waitsfield

1. Kari explained that the town is still dealing with a lawsuit with VTrans related to a water main break.
2. She also said that the selectboard has set aside the money for the purchase of the parcel adjacent to the Scrag Forest, but they have not voted on it yet.
3. The sidewalk project needs to be completed by next year but she had not been given an update on the project in a while.
4. Issues still remain with the sound in the Town Office conference room. The Town has been working with the architect to determine a solution. Jim suggested that a

boat/canoe could be filled with fiberglass and hung from the ceiling- this would help absorb the sound and be a cheap option.

- iv. CVRPC
  - 1. Focused on energy planning and will be providing local data to municipalities, mapping, and energy targets in April.
  - 2. There have been signals from Governor Scott that he doesn't support large-scale wind development, so that may play a role in regional energy planning.
- v. Chamber
  - 1. Peter said that Jasmine, Executive Director of the Chamber, is recommending a 2-3 month strategic envisioning process with lots of interaction with member and non-members for input on the Chamber's direction. The result of that process will be a 3-year strategic plan, 8-month operating plan, and they are also working on a website update.
  - 2. Peter also explained that the info kiosk at the "Top Gas parcel" was vandalized and that he worked to clean part of it. He said that Waitsfield Champlain Valley Telecom is going to help replace the maps and information panels that were damaged.
- vi. Recreation Fields
  - 1. Fayston selectboard voted in favor of an article at Town Meeting for \$31,250.
  - 2. Waitsfield has included the \$31,250 cost in their budget.
  - 3. Warren selectboard voted in favor for an article at Town Meeting for \$31,250
  - 4. Moretown will be on board with investing the same share of the cost if the other 3 towns are as well.

**III. Accept Meeting Minutes of 12/15/16 Steering Committee Meeting:** The meeting minutes were accepted with one typo corrected.

#### **IV. Old Business**

- a. Community Vitality Project Update
  - i. Bob said the CVP group is trying to focus on tasks and goals that can be achieved. They are currently working on 3 programs related to recreation in the Valley:
    - 1. Developing tourism packages
    - 2. People/organizations/businesses working together
    - 3. Inventory
  - ii. There is a consensus among the group that it is important that the recreation community in the Valley work together towards common goals. They want to further develop the culture of recreation in the Valley.
  - iii. Middlebury College students created an interactive map tool that shows an inventory of available summer and winter activities in the Valley.
  - iv. CVP members will be reaching out to "tier one" recreational providers to get an idea of what their vision for recreation is, collect the data, and then bring providers together to have a conversation about next steps.
  - v. CVP expects to have a business/strategic plan by the summer.
- b. Kari supported the idea of focusing on recreation as an economic development tool. She said no single state in New England has stepped up to be the lead recreation destination. She thinks whatever state "gets it right" on recreation is going to be on the map for the whole region. She believes the Valley has an opportunity to be part of that vision for Vermont.
- c. Bob commented that research on how European countries develop their trail systems couldn't be directly applied in the U.S. because of private property rights. Jim said that is one of the biggest barriers for the Mad River Path to create a continuous path on the Valley floor. The Mad River

Riders are having great success with mountain bike trails because the trails are generally wholly located on public land or private land; they don't tend to cross over multiple private properties. Also any consolidation of the two organizations would be difficult due to their current individual dues structures. He would like to see a path on the Valley floor that connects to both mountain bike trails and local businesses.

- d. Joshua pointed out that the MRV Moves Plan has laid the foundation for implementation of a trail network and now the Valley is one step ahead of other communities that have not done this type of planning work.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristine Keeney