

Mad River Valley Planning District
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
December 21, 2017, 4:30 P.M.
General Wait House, Waitsfield

Present were:

Fayston: Jared Cadwell, Selectboard; Don Simonini, Planning Commission
Waitsfield: Kari Dolan, Selectboard; Steve Shea, Planning Commission
Warren: Bob Ackland, Selectboard; Jim Sanford, Planning Commission
Sugarbush: Margo Wade
MRV Chamber of Commerce: Peter MacLaren
CVRPC: Eric Vorwald

The meeting opened at 4:36 pm. Bob Ackland, Chair, brought the meeting to order.

I. Adjustments to the Agenda

1. Jared added a quick discussion of the proposed change to Fayston's Land Use Regulations

II. Public Comment

1. No public comment

III. Accept Minutes of 10/19/17 Steering Committee Meeting

1. Peter moved to accept the minutes, Don seconded the motion.

IV. Staff Report

1. Economic Development

- a. **Warren Main Street Improvement Project:** The project has been closed out. The Planning Commission has lights they are going to install on the recently rehabilitated bridge that will help complete the changes on Main Street. Bob said that the selectboard has not received any negative feedback about plowing from the road crew thus far.
- b. **Vermont Economic Conference | 1/5/18 | Hilton Burlington:** VT Chamber's annual presentation of national and global perspectives combined with state economic trends. Includes data from VT Futures Project showcasing strategic growth targets beyond 2018. 12/29 deadline to register. \$150
<http://web.vtchamber.com/External/WCPages/WCEvents/EventDetail.aspx?EventID=5202>

2. Flood Resilience/Water Quality/Climate Change

- a. The Ridge to River's 12/7 meeting focused on the upcoming Stormwater Master Plan for the entire Mad River watershed. Watershed Consulting Associates (undertaking the technical work) and CVRPC staff were in attendance. The master plan will identify future opportunities and ensure projects are in the queue for funding through the tactical basin plan. The Plan's structure includes details town by town – meaning it includes the full extent of the 5 towns.

- b. Two VT DEC Ecosystem Restoration Grants were awarded in the MRV for SFY2018:
 - i. Chase Brook Stormwater Master Plan, Fayston (\$14,500)
 - ii. Warren School Campus Stormwater Management - Subsurface Chambers & Raingarden (\$34,415)

3. Transportation

- a. GMT seasonal bus service began running on the weekend of 12/9-12/10. Mount Ellen service will begin on 12/22. Daily service on all routes will begin on 12/23. Please visit <http://ridegmt.com/regions/mad-river-valley/> for more information.
- b. Don asked if the real-time tracking app is now available? Margo said yes, but the MRV routes are only available when buses are actually running and will not include on-demand routes like the Valley Evening Service. Don said the app will be helpful for Sugarbush ambassadors to let riders know when the bus is coming.
- c. GMT staff held a public meeting about their NextGen Transit Study on 12/13 at the Waitsfield Elementary School to solicit feedback about the current service and the study's recommendations. The MRV recommendations focus on three themes: simplified service, upgrade demand-response to fixed-route service, and operate bidirectional service. Three service scenarios for the MRV developed to evaluate the system, cost neutral, modest changes (10% increase in operating costs), and moderate changes (20% increase in operating costs). The study also analyzed the possibility of a commuter bus from the MRV, but based on the analysis of potential ridership, they do not expect that there would be enough ridership to any particular employment center to make it successful.
- d. VTrans issued their State Paving Priority List for the 2018 construction season and a section of Route 17 is on the list. It means that this section would be in line for paving in either 2018 or 2019, depending on funding. Kristine will clarify with Dan at CVRPC exactly which section of Route 17 is on the list.
- e. Waitsfield West Sidewalk Project
 - i. The Town of Waitsfield SB discussed the project at its 11/13 meeting and instructed the Town Administrator to work with the MRVPD to come up with a proposal for project management going forward. They also decided to postpone construction of the project until the 2019 construction season. MRVPD staff met with Trevor Lashua, Town Admin, and Bob Cook about options going forward to for project management. Staff will provide the Steering Committee with our proposed approach when it's more fleshed out.
 - ii. Kari said that the MRVPD memo was a turning point in this project because it helped identify and explain the costs, and clarify that they were comparable to VTrans costs.
- f. Waitsfield West Sidewalk Project

- i. Joshua and Kristine are planning to meet with Kari Dolan on 10/20 to talk about a memo by MRVPD that broke down the current budget estimate and compared it to VTrans typical sidewalk costs. The memo concluded that the Waitsfield West Sidewalk project is only 2.8% more than VTrans' typical sidewalk costs and can be attributed to the fact that the Waitsfield projects costs are just estimates at the present time and not bids, don't account for inflation, or the increased cost of construction.
- ii. Bob expressed interest in the memo being shared with the full Steering Committee to show the quality of the work that the MRVPD is doing.
- iii. Steve said that the Budget Committee is exploring options for a path forward to pay for the municipal match for the sidewalk project in conjunction with the Town Administrator and Selectboard.
- iv. Peter asked if the notes in the Staff Report about the status of temporary easements for the project are a red flag or if it was just a progress report? Josh said that only one temporary easement has been signed, and that there is a lack of clarity on who is working with property owners to secure the other four easements in order to move the project into final design.

4. Housing

- a. Kristine has finalized the 2017 MRV Housing Study, which updates the 2006 version. The 2017 Mad River Valley Housing Study Overview is completed and now available on the MRVPD's [website](#); it is also available in hard copy in the MRVPD office.
- b. MRVPD would like to ensure that all Planning Commission and Selectboard members have a hard copy to read. The overview document is intended to be an easier to read version of the full 2017 MRV Housing Study, and includes a data, graphs, photos, and quotes from local stakeholders. To read the full study, click [here](#).
- c. Josh said it appears the extra work to create the overview document was worth it because people are reading and commenting on it. Jared said that VLCT spoke for 45 minutes with the Speaker of the House about the Study. Peter said it is a very readable document that presents all of the information well.
- d. Tenants for Turns
 - i. 13 landlords have received incentives and 18 employees placed in housing through the program. Bob said that he is blown away about the response, especially from landlords; Josh said the response highlights the demand for rental housing.

5. Hazard Mitigation Planning

- a. Joshua attended the third VT Emergency Management Planning & Policy working group mtg on 12/13. These meeting are designed to provide direction on Statewide Hazard Mitigation Plan. The mtg was focused on advancing "big ideas" for hazard mitigation and gauge working group opinions on specific

action priorities. Joshua continued to focus much of his comments on strategies that incentivize smart growth style development in areas safe from natural hazards – especially flooding.

6. Recreation

- a. Staff has put considerable time into next steps from the 9/6/17 MRV Trails Summit, focusing on advancing trail network signage & mapping. Stakeholders have expressed interest in broader trail signage, from wayfinding to trail routing, but have decided to focus on trailhead signage as a first step. MRVPD has worked with numerous stakeholders and produced a MRV Signage & Mapping Projects Outline, which provides context, scope, costs, a proposed timeline, and identifies a host of outstanding questions that need to be addressed as the project moves forward.
- b. MRVPD hosted a second trail network signage subgroup on 12/11. Kristine took minutes and provided a summary of the discussion held by the 11 representatives to the larger Trail Summit group, including:
 - i. The group provided feedback and came to general agreement on the structure of a valley-wide trailhead kiosk and expressed willingness to continue working on the design.
 - ii. There's interest in further exploring the printing of a combined map, but more discussion is needed before things can move forward on that front, particularly related to MRPA.
 - iii. Next steps include comparing MRR and MRPA signage inventory spreadsheet to finalize the number of desired kiosks to be constructed. Outreach needed to MRRR/VAST to determine how they would like to participate in the unified signage project going forward.
 - iv. Hold next meeting in January.
- c. The MRVRD requested signage and mapping project funding from the towns at the MRV Leadership Meeting. The Rec District followed up on the request with each selectboard (Fayston 11/20, Warren 12/12, & Waitsfield 12/18). Fayston and Warren both approved the request, with Waitsfield balking.
- d. Kari said that Waitsfield was for the project on principal, and would like to help support it, but they are working hard on their budgeting and it's going to take another year or so to get to a better place because they have not fully paid into their reserves. They are also going to see an increase in the tax rate, so the timing is not good this year.
- e. Jim said he understands the point of view that people may not understand why investing in recreation is valuable for economic growth and people are concerned about their taxes going up.
- f. Bob said the issue he sees with putting off this investment is that as time goes by, the MRV is going to keep missing opportunities to draw people in to recreate that are otherwise driving by to go to Killington, Stowe, or Burke.
- g. Jared said that someone could propose an amendment from the floor at Waitsfield town meeting to add the \$8,500 back into the budget. He also said that Fayston doesn't have to pay for infrastructure like Waitsfield and Warren

- do. Warren and Fayston benefit from Waitsfield's infrastructure and downtown and don't pay for it.
- h. Steve said that local municipal taxes are low in Fayston and Waitsfield compared to the rest of the state, both in the lowest 25%. He said that Fayston and Waitsfield have the lowest taxes in Central Vermont. He said it's important to note that the majority of the taxes that people are paying are coming from the state level.
 - i. Kari said if the MRVRD had said they have raised or will raise private money for the project, then that could help to leverage town funding. She also said that no doesn't mean no forever if the request changes or if the budgeting circumstances change in Waitsfield.
 - j. Bob asked if Fayston and Warren pass it, is Waitsfield going to put in their share or withdraw from the Rec District based on the articles of agreement?
 - i. Kari suggested that maybe there's another way to say that within two years they will provide that funding.
 - k. Josh said that staff has been working on creating a small, medium, and larger size project options. Small would be just the design work deliverables but not the actual construction, medium would be the design and construction of the trailhead kiosks, and large project is the design and construction of trailhead kiosks and medium size secondary signs.
 - l. Kari said it would be really interesting to look at those how many trailheads are in which towns. But Bob warned against doing this, because it's really a Valley-wide project to benefit the whole community.
 - m. Josh said the reason that we're focusing on this because is because of the next steps identified through the Economic Study and the Vision & Vitality series to enhance the Sense of place in the MRV.
 - n. Peter said he believes that one of the reasons we keep having these discussions is the need for alternative funding sources for these types of projects.

V. Old Business

VI. New Business

- 1. Fayston Land Use Regulations
 - a. Proposed changes based on natural resources that have been done, wants MRVPD staff to review and comments on regulations before the 2/19/18 scheduled public meeting.
- 2. 2017 MRV Housing Study Next Steps
 - a. Staff was going to present on the status and next steps for recommendations from 2017 MRV Housing Study, however the agenda item was move to the next meeting in January when there is more time to dedicate to the subject.
- 3. MRVPD Strategic Plan
 - a. Eric reviewed all of the primary issues and goals from multiple documents and plans that have been created in recent years. Eric highlighted the fact Wayfinding/placemaking and affordable housing were the two most important issues.

- b. Affordable housing- Implementation can be municipal enabling of the private sector to develop housing. MRVPD is not going to own land and build housing, so they have to help facilitate others.
 - c. Recreation is also important, particularly year round recreation. The MRV needs to create the identity for year round recreation. Trails Collaborative should continue the signage and mapping projects to support this effort.
 - d. Margo asked if Eric should look at other information as well like Valley 2020 or Valley Futures? Bob said that for Vision & Vitality Series, CEDC created a summary of that past work. Josh said he would find that summary and send it to Eric.
 - e. Jim said he believes that the important thing to focus on is identity, placemaking, and wayfinding- particularly in Irasville.
 - f. Bob said Moab wasn't in a good place, and the community came together to say how are we going to get out of this? They decided to focus on mountain biking. He said the MRV should focus on what we want to be, not what we don't want to be.
 - g. Eric said that one of the issues of identifying one way forward in the MRV is the small year round population, and the struggle between the rural vs. tourist destination identities.
 - h. Kari suggested the need to embrace pedestrian/bike friendliness. Jim said one way to do that is to build more housing in Irasville, so that services are walkable. Kari said South Burlington is creating a new town center with housing, even with wetlands in the area. Kari said the timing is good with the PC undertaking the planning for Irasville in the spring. MRVPD can be the unifying force.
 - i. Peter said guests say that Waitsfield is just a strip, people just drive through and that they are surprised that there's no where they can walk around. Don brought up Stowe Path that people drive from the Valley to use it.
 - i. Jared said he thinks this strategic plan work is the first step toward the "ask," and Peter agreed saying we don't need another committee.
 - j. Bob suggested bringing in a developer to ask what they could do and what they would need to develop housing in Irasville. Eric suggested Eric Farrell as a developer with Redstone in Burlington to reach out to.
 - k. Josh and Eric will provide the Steering Committee with the strategic summary and they can provide their thoughts on it for the next iteration.
4. Sugarbush
- a. Margo provided an update on Sugarbush saying that the holiday period is teed up really well and they have made more snow than they have ever made at this point in the season, season pass and quad pack sales are strong, reception of RFID is strong. However, staffing wise they are challenged; back of house people are getting trained on things like running lifts. Sugarbush are also installing 13 EV charging stations.

VII. Events/Workshops

1. [Town Meeting Tune-up | 2/7 | Montpelier](#): VLCT is hosting their annual workshop directed toward moderators, selectboard members, town clerks, town managers and

administrators, and all local officials who are interested in learning how to run town meeting.

2. [Local Government Day | 2/15 | Montpelier](#): Local Government Day in the Legislature is an annual event at the Vermont State House during February where local officials can learn about the status of pending legislation that affects local government, attend legislative hearings, and speak with their representatives and senators.
3. [Emergency Management Director Course | 2/17 | Montpelier](#): LEPC 5 will host the new Local EMD 8-hour course on 2/17 in Room 10 of the State House from 9 am - 5 pm. The course prepares local Emergency Management Directors to perform his/her duties through all phases of a local emergency: Preparation, Response, Recovery, and Mitigation. For more info, contact Laura Ranker (ranker@cvregion.com).

VII. Next meeting -January Meeting TBD (1/11, 1/18, 1/25?)

Peter moved to adjourn, Jared seconded. Meeting closed at 6:36pm.