

**Mad River Valley Planning District  
Director's Report  
June 2011**

Municipal

- Fayston hired Carol Chamberlin as their new Zoning Administrator. Joshua has been in conversations with Carol and offered support.
- Waitsfield has hired a new Zoning Administrator. Vickie is staying on until the transition is complete.
- Assisting Waitsfield's new Energy Committee Chair, Chris Badger.
- Supporting the Town of Warren's Transportation Enhancement Grant application for engineering of the covered bridge abutment replacement project.
- The Department of Economic, Housing & Community Development has announced the next round of Municipal Planning Grants (MPGs). This grant program funds planning and implementation projects aimed at revitalizing communities and guiding future development. Priority will be given to projects that further smart growth principles and town plan projects that address the new economic development element as passed by the legislature this year as [Act 52](#). MPG funding for fiscal year 2012 was allocated at approximately the same \$400,000 level as last year. A cash match is now required for grant requests between \$8,000-\$15,000. Joshua is in conversations with the towns about a potential consortium application focusing on the new requirement for town plans to include an economic development chapter. Applications due 9/30. Additional info available here: <http://www.dhca.state.vt.us/Planning/GMS/OnlineApplication2012.htm>.

Energy

- Joshua is working with the Valley's Energy Coordinators to develop the series of 5 energy presentations as funded through VECAN's grant program entitled *Building the Power of Vermont Communities to Increase Energy Efficiency and Reduce Climate Change Impacts*. The presentations, which will happen between fall and the end of the year, are shaping up to address the following topics: Energy Context, Residential & Community PV, Efficient Heating without Fossil Fuels, Efficiency/Renewable Financing & Weatherization.
- Localvolts have undertaken its energy monitoring program, entitled MRV Unplugged, recently funded through the Vermont Community Foundation. The project is developing a Localvolt led small business outreach program that will provide three month of monitoring and follow-up energy information visits to 12 local businesses. The Warren Store is the first customer. Contact Chris Badger if you know of a business interested in participating in the project: [csbadger@gmail.com](mailto:csbadger@gmail.com).
- A legislative fix was passed addressing concerns regarding Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) programs (issues regarding the hierarchy of property liens in the event of foreclosure as recently raised by the feds). This will permit Waitsfield to move forward, who received funding to set up a PACE program last winter, but had been holding off.
- VNRC & VLCT recently released two tools designed to help communities' harness

their town plans to address energy-saving and energy-generation opportunities through *The Energy Planning & Implementation Guide for Vermont Municipalities and Communities Tackling Vermont's Energy Challenges*. Both can be downloaded here: <http://www.vnrc.org/energy/resources/energy-planning-implementation-guidebook-for-vt-communities/>.

### Agriculture

- The MRVPD & Localvolts sponsored 5/10 VSJF Farm to Plate Presentation at the Big Picture was a big success. More than 115 people attended to hear about the Farm to Plate Strategic Plan and the new Mad River Food Hub L3C. Joshua presented “next steps.”
- The mission of the Mad River Food Hub is to support and strengthen the agricultural economy and access access to local food in the MRV and beyond. The Food Hub is currently under renovation and is located at Irasville Business Park. The facility will offer a state inspected facility for vegetable, fruit and meat processing and storage. Refrigerator and freezer space as well as a kitchen and butchering area will be rented out on a daily basis. Mad Taco, Gaylord Farm and the Kingsbury Market Garden have already made commitment to use the facility. The facility will be up and running by late summer 2011.
- Approximately 30 people have been added to the VFN Agriculture listserv to continue the food system conversation, a result of the 5/10 event.
- Assisting in the development of a farmer/land matching system with Liza Walker of the Watershed Conservation Partnership.
- Joshua is serving on the Mad River Food Hub Advisory Committee.
- Attended a food distribution working meeting on 4/28 with local individuals and the creator of the Brattleboro based Windham Farm & Food Network. A MRV focused online ordering and billing program for wholesale buyers is currently under development.
- Provided grant assistance and letters of support for six grant applications to support the Mad River Food Hub applications. Success has been sought through the following programs:
  - \$10k from the Vt Housing & Conservation Board's Farm Viability Enhancement Program for processing equipment,
  - \$7.5k from the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund for strategic planning
  - Application to the USDA's Rural Business Enterprise Grant Program was one of three supported by the state and forwarded to DC.
  - Awaiting word on the Agency of Ag's Agricultural Innovation Center Infrastructure Development Program for an apprentice training program and market viability assessment for a distribution program.
  - Awaiting word on the Agency of Agriculture's VT Specialty Crop Block Grant Program for the purchase of a flash freezing unit
- Participated in a meeting with Agency of Agriculture and USDA representatives in regards to a potential Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) focusing on funding business incubators and adult education programs.

### Mad River Valley Path Association

- The East Side Greenway closed on 4/12 for an undisclosed period of time. MRPA continues to work with Elwin Neill to discuss various Greenway issues.
- The MRV Recreation District has awarded MRPA with an additional \$5,000 to support the hiring of Autumn full time. This is in addition to the \$15,200 previously awarded for 2011.
- The Mad River Path Association Annual Meeting was held on May 27<sup>th</sup>.
- MRPA met with Sugarbush to identify further collaboration and support.
- Dog waste stations have begun to be erected at key points along the Path.
- Joshua has been attending MRPA Land Owner Committee meetings to discuss various topics of interest. Joshua is planning on attending future meetings for the time being.

### Transportation

- Joshua attended a 6/1 MRV Transportation Advisory Committee meeting. The MRVTAC is attempting to increase outreach, increase ridership for the Mad Bus, and strengthen its service. The Warren Shuttle will be discontinued next season due to low ridership. The Valley Floor route is in danger of being lost if ridership doesn't increase next season. Joshua has been crunching numbers to develop an equitable financial request for MRV businesses. The MRVTAC presented at the last MRV Chamber Mixer.
- The MRV TAC supported an application from the Mad Marathon for GMTA bus service. Service is not available this year, but may be possible in 2012.
- The MR Byway Committee is communicating with Green Mtn. Power in regards to the development of the Taplin School for a Byway grant funded restoration project. The next MR Byway meeting is scheduled for 6/24.
- Reviewed plans and organized comments in regards to Waitsfield's proposed sidewalk projects.
- Participated in a meeting on a crosswalk in Waitsfield to service the Waitsfield School.

### Forests, Wildlife, Communities Project

- Joshua presented results from a FWC funded build-out analysis to the Waitsfield PC on 5/3 along with Jens Hilke of ANR and Jamey Fidel of VNRC. Conversations will continue to identify opportunities for further collaboration and technical support. Similar meetings are scheduled for the Fayston PC (7/5) and Waitsfield PC (8/22).
- MRVPD served as a host site for a 6/21 webinar entitled Habitat Blocks & Connecting Lands presented by the VT Fish & Wildlife Dept. Carol Chamberlin, Fayston's ZA, and Liza Walker attended.
- Joshua is overseeing development of the FWC web presence, which will be hosted on the [mrvpd.org](http://mrvpd.org) site.
- The FWC met on 6/26 to finalize conservation maps and work on the future website.

### Waitsfield Infrastructure

- Joshua has continued discussions with the Waitsfield PC Wastewater Committee regarding next steps. The Committee met on 5/19 and decided on next steps. A request for a development proposal has been sent and should be responded to by the end of the month.
- Continuing to explore options to utilize SRF (State Revolving Funds) and \$1 million in EPA State & Tribal Assistance Grants) STAG to fund the creation of a decentralized wastewater system, develop a Wastewater Management District, and start a demonstration program. Continuing conversations with VT DEC, EPA Reg. 1, and DHCA. Additional funding opportunities may be had through the VT Community Development Program.
- Participated on a phone call with the State regarding Waitsfield's SRF funding opportunities.
- Participated on a 6/13 Webinar entitled Making Wastewater Affordable which focused on Wastewater Management Districts and Loan Programs.

### Recreation

- The MRV Trail Collaborative Steering Committee met on 6/8. We reviewed our priorities to
  - update MRV Trails map;
  - Inventory existing trail access easements;
  - create trail crew projects list;
  - organize a Trail Summit in the fall
  - Collaborate with the MRV Chamber to update its trail webpage.
- An initial trail inventory has been created and an associated letter and questionnaire has been sent to all MRVTC organizations. The Trail Summit is being scheduled for 10/19 and will focus on trail projects and opportunities for trail enhancement work during the Summer 2012.
- The next MRVTC SC meeting is scheduled for 8/3.
- Joshua and Autumn have identified a scope of work for the inventory and mapping portion of the MRVTC project. Unfortunately, much of the data utilized in the 2004 Map Adventures map will need to be recollected and developed.
- Joshua attended the 5/14 USFS site visit at Blueberry Lake. USFS is taking input on a variety of improvements at the site. Joshua developed a letter of comment highlighting the importance of the work proposed (primarily ownership and improvement of a "easy" mtn biking network within the Valley and related enhancements that add to the MRV recreation experience).

### Valley Futures Network

- Joshua is working on setting up a third installment of the *Local Community Initiatives* course this fall.
- Six project applications have been received, of which three will be chosen.

### Economic Development

- Joshua, Jim Halavonich, Bob Ackland, Bill Parker, and Susan Klein gathered on

5/31 as the second MRVPD Economic Development sub-committee meeting. We started a process of identify information required to keep businesses in the valley through awareness of baseline data and required infrastructure. The group is undertaking an inventory of commercial real estate, lodging establishments, and a breakout of business categories from the North American Industry Classification System. Bob shared a template for measuring economic development from western resort community.

- Joshua participated in a webinar focused on an interesting “local living” economic-development calculator.

#### Rural Resource Commission

- Attended a handful of meetings with Mad River Glen with regards to their CLG funded historic designation project. A contractor has been selected and work will be done through the summer and fall. Ellen Strauss and Joshua will be administering this grant.
- Working on the Warren Dam CLG funded historic designation project. Ellen Strauss is administering this grant.
- Met with the Mad River Valley Rural Resource Commission and discussed ongoing grants and additional opportunities.

#### Etc

- The Mad River Valley Housing Coalition’s Valley Affordable Land Initiative (VALI) is moving into high gear. The group is working working on a pilot project with land to be donated by Sugarbush. The project has recently gone through DRB approval with the Town of Fayston. John Donaldson will be at the Sept. MRVPD SC meeting to talk about the project.
- Attended the 2011 Green & Sustainable Communities Conference.