



# MAD RIVER VALLEY VERMONT

## **Mad River Valley FLO (For Local Opportunities) Bylaws of the Mad River Valley FLO Commission**

### **Purpose:**

1. The Purpose of the Mad River Valley FLO Commission (MRV FLO Commission) shall be to manage the For Local Opportunities (FLO) Fund in the Mad River Valley, as defined in the Mad River Valley Planning District (MRVPD) Charter.
2. Specifically, the FLO Fund will be used for:
  - a. Community Projects
  - b. Destination Marketing
  - c. Recreation
  - d. Economic Development
  - e. Reserve Fund
  - f. Administration
3. The scope of the FLO Investments in the categories listed above are laid out in the attached appendixes A through F.
4. The distribution among the 4 main categories (a-d) is based on how well the project requests submitted to the MRV FLO Commission meet the criteria and their potential return for the MRV. Grants may be for multiple years with the provision for annual review. Some of the FLO Investment categories shall have a fixed annual minimum allocation as noted in the respective appendixes.
5. Any unallocated funds in any year shall flow to the Reserve Fund.
6. Administration includes record keeping, bookkeeping, audit and other items as required.

### **Structure:**

1. The MRV FLO Commission shall consist of 7 Commissioners. One Commissioner from each town will be appointed by their respective Select Boards in Warren, Waitsfield and Fayston. One Commissioner from each of these towns will be elected at its Town meeting. The seventh Commissioner, appointed by the Mad River Valley Planning District Steering Committee as specified in the Charter, will serve as Chair. The Chair shall vote only in the event of a tie.
2. To be eligible as a Commissioner the individual must be a resident of the town they represent, or in the case of the Chair a resident of any of the three towns.
3. The terms for the Commissioners representing the towns shall be three years and be set such that one appointed and one elected Commissioner shall be up for renewal each year, and that the terms of the two Commissioners for each town are staggered. Each Commissioner may be reappointed or re-elected for two successive terms, except that the initially appointed or elected Commissioners whose terms are only one year are eligible to serve for a third term. The initial terms are determined randomly to meet these criteria and are specified in Appendix G. Commissioners are eligible for consideration again after one year off the Commission.
4. The appointed Chair shall serve a term of three years and shall be eligible for reappointment without a term limit.
5. The anniversary date for the renewals shall be April 1<sup>st</sup>.
6. In the case of the resignation before the end of their term of an appointed or elected Commissioner representing a town the Select Board of the respective town shall expeditiously appoint a replacement. A replacement Commissioner shall serve the balance of the term of the Commissioner being replaced.

7. In the case of the resignation of the Chair before the end of their term, the Mad River Planning District Steering Committee shall expeditiously appoint a replacement Chair with a term of 3 years following the next April 1st.
8. While the MRV FLO Commission shall operate as an independent body in making decisions, it shall be accountable to the Mad River Valley Planning District Steering Committee and shall provide a report of its Investments and audited financial statements annually each March.

**Operations:**

1. The Commissioners shall meet as required, and at least quarterly.
2. The organization of all meetings shall follow the Vermont Open Meetings Law.
3. Administrative support shall be organized by the Mad River Valley Planning District.
4. Minutes shall be kept of each meeting and published on the Mad River Valley Planning District's website no later than 5 days after each meeting.
5. In April each year the Commissioners shall request proposals in each of the designated categories for investments to be made in that year starting July 1<sup>st</sup>. Commissioners may also consider proposals throughout the year subject to funding still being available.
6. The Mad River Valley Planning District Steering Committee Treasurer shall advise the MRV FLO Commission's Chair by May 31st each year of the projected available funds for Investment.
7. Investments shall normally be approved based on an annual amount, with the funds normally distributed quarterly to the responsible organizations. The Commissioners may consider making multi-year commitments. The distribution details can be varied by the Commissioners on a case by case basis.
8. In February of each year the Commissioners shall receive and review reports from all funded organizations in order to prepare and deliver their report and audited financials to the Mad River Valley Planning District Steering Committee in March.
9. The Commissioners shall allocate available investment funds for each area, based on the following criteria:
  - a. The proposed investment addresses one or more project(s) or program(s) within one of the designated areas of Community Projects, Destination Marketing, Recreation, and Economic Development that will benefit the Mad River Valley.
  - b. Unless changed at a future date (see Governance section) the organizations eligible to manage Community Projects shall be the Departments within the Towns of Warren, Waitsfield and Fayston and/or the Mad River Valley Planning District, and/or non-profit Community organizations working primarily for the benefit of the Mad River Valley.
  - c. Unless changed at a future date (see Governance section) the organization designated to manage Destination Marketing shall be the Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce.
  - d. Unless changed at a future date (see Governance section) the organization designated to manage Recreation shall be the Mad River Valley Recreation District.
  - e. Unless changed at a future date (see Governance section) the organization designated to manage Economic Development shall be the Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce.
  - f. The proposal comes from an organization that has the skills and resources to accomplish the proposed project and program.
  - g. The project or program has clearly measurable objectives that the funded organization will report on at least annually.
  - h. Future investments to any organization shall be based on the assessment of the Commissioners of how well the committed objectives were met of any prior year's investment.
  - i. The Commissioners may establish additional decision criteria as they see fit to achieve the stated purpose of the Mad River Valley FLO.

**Governance:**

1. The MRV FLO Commissioners shall meet at least quarterly at a time and place designated by the Chair after establishing a best convenient date and time.
2. A quorum shall be at least one Commissioner from each town, plus the Chair. There shall be no proxies and the Chair's role cannot be delegated.
3. Decisions on investments shall wherever possible be made unanimously. If a vote is required at least one Commissioner from each town must vote in the affirmative.
4. The Commissioners may recommend to the Mad River Valley Planning District Steering Committee an allocation from the Reserve Fund to increase the funds available in a particular year to one of the designated areas. A two-thirds majority of the Commissioners shall be required for such a recommendation, including at least one Commissioner from each town.
5. The Commissioners may recommend to the Mad River Valley Planning District Steering Committee a change in the designated/eligible organization(s) responsible for each designated area. A two-thirds majority of the Commissioners shall be required for such a recommendation, including at least one Commissioner from each town.
6. Recommendations for allocations from the Reserve Fund or a change in the designated/eligible organization(s) responsible for a designated area shall be forwarded to the Mad River Valley Planning District Steering Committee for consideration at its next scheduled meeting. The decision of the Steering Committee shall be final for the current year, while noting that any such recommendations can be made again in a subsequent year.

**Changes to the Bylaws:**

1. A change to these Bylaws may be initiated by a recommendation from a two-thirds majority of the Commissioners including at least one Commissioner from each town, delivered to the Mad River Valley Planning District Steering Committee for their consideration, or by the decision of the Mad River Valley Planning District Steering Committee.

*Appendices on next pages...*

## Appendix A: Community Projects

*Supports the MRV Vision by advancing efforts towards housing, transportation, sustainability, and historic preservation.*

1. Support on-going efforts and new initiatives to develop affordable housing in the MRV.
  - Why: With few affordable housing options available locally, our workforce is living further and further away from their jobs. Local businesses are finding it hard to fill positions.
  - How: Focus on necessary infrastructure: engineering, zoning assistance, and permitting to make it attractive for developers to invest in affordable housing units.  
As affordable housing is the number one priority identified through community engagement, projects supporting the building of affordable housing shall receive the highest priority from the FLO Commission.
  - Goal: Lower the median age of the MRV population and increase the MRV elementary school enrollment within the first five years of the FLO Fund's existence.
2. Improve public transportation options throughout the Valley
  - Why: A need to extend the Mad Bus service is clearly identified in the latest MRV transportation plan. Improved user-friendly routes will help elders, students, other local residents and visitors move around the Valley.
  - How: Work closely with Green Mountain Transit to identify gaps in current service and prioritize new options.  
This program shall have a minimum annual allocation of \$40,000.
  - Goal: Produce a 15% increase in public transportation ridership by 2022.
3. Support a variety of other community projects
  - Why: There are ongoing needs in our community to help keep the MRV healthy and safe for everyone. Examples could include, but are not limited to:
    - community facilities
    - environmental protection
    - storm water
    - flood resilience
    - public safety systems
    - emergency communications
    - signage
    - septic and water systems
  - How: Proposals requesting funds for specific projects will be submitted to FLO by the towns and other MRV organizations.
  - Goal: The FLO commissioners will propose guidelines and funding criteria for public comment within three months of its first meeting.

## Appendix B: Destination Marketing

*Supports the MRV Vision in its entirety as our economy is heavily dependent on tourist visits. Not only does tourism money directly impact the businesses of the MRV, but that money is then recirculated into efforts to sustain natural resources, enhance year-round recreation, and maintain our historic buildings and vibrant villages*

### 1. Increase MRV tourist visits in the off-seasons and mid-week.

- Why: Develop a more stable and predictable year-round business climate. By making more efficient use of our existing capacity, we can boost our economy and minimize environmental impact.
- How: Identify and bring to the Valley meetings, conferences, tournaments, and niche events to help fill current facilities during these slower periods.  
Destination Marketing shall have a minimum annual allocation of \$75,000 per year to allow for funding ongoing promotional activities.
- Goal: Increase mid-week and non-peak weekend occupancy, leading to a rise in annual occupancy from 32% to 37% by 2023. That increase is estimated to be about \$8.5 million in additional annual visitor dollars into the MRV economy.  
Add 4 major events to the MRV by 2022.

### 2. Expand destination marketing efforts targeted to families and outdoor enthusiasts.

- Why: These are people who are most likely to enjoy what the MRV offers visitors, to become repeat life-long visitors, to share their appreciation of the MRV with others over time, and to develop a lasting connection to the MRV community.
- How: Use demographic and behavioral targeted marketing channels, and creative design and messaging targeted at families traveling together, and outdoor recreation enthusiasts. Deliver a welcoming and quality guest experience to all visitors.
- Goal: Institute the Net Promoter scoring system for businesses across the MRV and track improvements over the first three years.

## Appendix C: Recreation

*Supports the MRV Vision by enhancing year-round recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike.*

1. Enhance our recreation-based economy by funding groups to maintain and develop new trails and facilities, continue improving trail signage, organize events, and foster collaboration.

- Why: Recreation has been recognized as a key driver of economic development as well as a strong contributor to the well-being of communities through physical and emotional health, reduced crime, and increased social connections. The MRV Recreation District and local volunteer organizations are ready to launch projects such as mountain bike trails, a walking path through Irasville, and equipment for a new girls' softball program that would elevate recreation in the Valley. However, current funding for the MRVRD's grants falls 30% short of demand annually, slowing these efforts.

If the MRV wishes to continue to enjoy the economic and community benefits that come from being a premier destination for four season recreation, it cannot rest with the status quo. Towns such as Waterbury and Stowe spend more per capita (\$111 and \$164, respectively, to the MRV's \$11 per capita investment) on recreation and are attracting businesses, young families and visitors as a result.

- How: Replace the current annual town assessments to the MRVRD with a minimum allocation of the same \$45,000 from the FLO Fund as well as provide access to additional FLO grants. The result will be an increase in public money available for facilities, programs and events vital to MRV recreation, and in addition reduce town budgets.
- Goal: Complete the MRV Recreational Needs and Assessment by the end of 2020 (detailed in the 2018 MRVRD Strategic Plan).

2. Fund a staff position to assist the MRVRD board in implementing its 2018 Plan and support the thousands of volunteer hours donated annually to enhance recreation in the Mad River Valley.

- Why: After extensive public input, the MRVRD identified specific priorities in its 2018 Plan including trail work, maintaining Mad River Park, continuing the grant program, and supporting community rec events. A paid staff coordinator will ensure that the work gets done.
- How: Hire a coordinator.
- This position shall have a minimum annual allocation of \$45,000 to provide for an ongoing commitment,
- Goal: Have a coordinator hired by January 1, 2020.

## **Appendix D: Economic Development**

*Supports the MRV Vision by maintaining and promoting a diverse economy that supports existing businesses and attracts new ones.*

1. Support existing businesses in their efforts to expand job opportunities and variety
  - Why: As existing businesses grow, they will provide more year-round employment opportunities and services for current and new residents.
  - How: Present mentoring workshops to help businesses develop and strengthen existing business plans. Grants will be used to bring experts in all aspects of business to the Valley to provide workshops, seminars, and coaching services.
  - Goal: Have 20 people request business training per year, for initial five years of the FLO Fund.
  
2. Position the MRV as an attractive location for new businesses, existing businesses, or telecommuters to move to.
  - Why: Provide more year-round employment opportunities and services for current and new residents.
  - How: Create a MRV “marketing package” that commercial realtors, the state of Vermont, and other partners can use when pitching locations to new businesses or businesses considering a move.  
Develop a MRV “business welcome concierge program” to meet with potential incoming business investors and help them navigate the process, highlight MRV assets, identify the types of businesses that would do well in the MRV, and demonstrate a welcoming and business-friendly community.
  - Goal: Increase the number of businesses in the MRV by two per year, over the initial five years of the FLO.

## **Appendix E: Reserve Fund**

*Having a funding source that can be nimble will allow organizations to take advantage of unexpected opportunities such as the purchase of the recreation field.*

- Why: The purpose of building up a Reserve Fund is to create a source for additional funding, when appropriate, to any one (or more) of the designated investment areas.
- How: Reserve Fund decisions will be made by a two-thirds majority of all FLO commissioners, including at least one Commissioner from each town. This recommendation will be forwarded to the Mad River Valley Planning District Steering Committee for consideration at its next scheduled meeting where approval would require a majority of all committee members.  
The Reserve Fund shall have a minimum annual allocation of 4%. Also, any unallocated funding in any year shall be placed in the Reserve Fund.
- Goal: Provide a mechanism to allow for funding priority opportunities that exceed the pre-determined allocation available in any one year – a rainy day fund.

## **Appendix F: Administration**

*The FLO Commission is responsible for specific tasks that require oversight such as audits and other professional services.*

- Why: The FLO Commission is responsible for managing the FLO fund and reporting back to the citizens of the MRV Valley where money was granted and the success of those grants.
- How: Pay for a part time administrator to record minutes, maintain requirements of open meeting law, gather information for the FLO Commission, track grants, record incoming and outgoing funds and provide financial reports. The FLO Fund will also require an independent audit which this investment area will pay for.  
Administration shall have a budget determined annually by the Commissioners
- Goal: Provide efficient and accurate information to the FLO Commission as well to the public. Provide transparency in accounting for funds collected and distributed to grantees.

## **Appendix G: Initial Commissioner Terms**

- Fayston Appointed Commissioner – one-year term and eligible for two subsequent three-year terms
- Fayston Elected Commissioner – three-year term and eligible for one subsequent three-year term
- Waitsfield Appointed Commissioner – two-year term and eligible for one subsequent three-year term
- Waitsfield Elected Commissioner – one-year term and eligible for two subsequent three-year terms
- Warren Appointed Commissioner – three-year term and eligible for one subsequent three-year term
- Warren Elected Commissioner – two-year term and eligible for one subsequent three-year term
- MRVPD Steering Committee Appointed Chair – three-year term and eligible for subsequent three-year terms