



# MAD RIVER VALLEY VERMONT

## 2019 MRV Steering Committee Meeting & MRV Town Leadership Meeting

November 21, 2019 | 6:30-9:00PM  
Waitsfield Elementary Gymnasium

### Minutes

Attendees (per sign-in sheet)

- Joshua Schwartz, MRVPD<sup>1</sup>
- Kati Gallagher, MRVPD
- Dan Raddock, MRVPD; Warren PC<sup>2</sup>
- Mike Nucci, MRVRD<sup>3</sup>
- John Stokes, MRVRD
- Patti Lewis, Fayston Town Clerk
- Cindi Jones, Warren
- Bob Kogut, Mad River Riders
- Liza Walker, MRVRD
- Bob Cook, Waitsfield PC & CC<sup>4</sup>
- Margo Wade, Sugarbush Resort
- Alice Peal, Waitsfield PC, MRV TAC<sup>5</sup>
- John Hoogenboom, Moretown SB<sup>6</sup>
- Luke Youmell, Warren SB
- Andy Cunningham, Warren SB
- Jared Cadwell, Fayston SB
- Randy Graves, Warren SB & PC
- Chuck Martel, Fayston SB
- Kellee Mazer, Waitsfield SB
- Darryl Forrest, Waitsfield SB
- Jon Jamieson, Waitsfield SB
- Paul Hartshorn, Waitsfield SB
- Don Simonini, MRVPD; Fayston PC
- Marie Schmukal, Warren Library
- Corrie Miller, Friends of the Mad River
- Marilyn Gaul, Warren
- Mike Noble, Warren
- Peter MacLaren, MRVPD; MRV Chamber
- John Atkinson, Mad River Riders; Moretown RC<sup>7</sup>
- Trevor Lashua, Waitsfield Town Administrator
- Jim Sanford, Warren PC
- Alice Rodgers Graves, MRVRD
- Bob Ackland, MRVPD; Warren SB

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<sup>1</sup> Mad River Valley Planning District

<sup>2</sup> Planning Commission

<sup>3</sup> Mad River Valley Recreation District

<sup>4</sup> Conservation Commission

<sup>5</sup> Mad River Valley Transportation Advisory Committee

<sup>6</sup> Selectboard

<sup>7</sup> Recreation Commission



# MAD RIVER VALLEY VERMONT

[Full meeting footage by MRVTV can be found at [mrvtv.com](http://mrvtv.com) and PDFs of all presentations are attached with these minutes at [mrvpd.org/agendas-minutes/](http://mrvpd.org/agendas-minutes/)]

## I. **Welcome & Introductions** (Bob Ackland, Warren Selectboard & Chair of MRVPD Steering Committee)

- Welcomed the group and opened the meeting at 6:30PM.
- Selectboard and Planning Commission members introduced themselves.
- Thanked Karl Klein for stepping up to chair Housing Coalition and introduced Kaziah Haviland-Montgomery, who will be helping the HC as a consultant.
- Public comment: None.
- Reviewed agenda. Noted that housing demand analysis was originally intended to be presented, but completion was delayed due to illness; will be presented at an upcoming spring MRV housing summit.
- Explained purpose of and context for the meeting. Reviewed MRV vision statement. MRV is three+ towns *and* a community connected by greater ecosystem.

## II. **Mad River Valley Transit Service** (Jamie Smith, Green Mountain Transit)

- Review of services provided to the Valley:
  - o Elderly & Disabled Service provides specific transit needs.
    - Grant funded, no funds from towns.
  - o Seasonal (December-March) bus service includes 5 routes.
- Changes for 2019-20 season:
  - o Return to more historic service model.
  - o New route through shopping center and pulling directly into MRV Health Center – benefit for seniors and shoppers.
  - o New fare on Valley Evening Service.
  - o Implementation of new bus tracking and ticketing app services.
- GMT & Partners: works with MRVPD, Sugarbush and community members within the MRV TAC structure to plan for bus service.
- Funding model:
  - o Relies heavily on Census data rather than actual service.
  - o Goal for 20% local match. Starting education and outreach process to municipalities.
    - Clarification that the match is for seasonal bus service, not E&D.
- Next steps:



# MAD RIVER VALLEY VERMONT

- New Community Relations Manager, Jenn Wood, will be starting to meet municipal officials and discuss potential for towns to include transit funding in budget.
- Working on service guidelines document to help staff & Board evaluate services.
- Questions and comments:
  - Alice Peal applauded GMT for participating in MRV TAC meetings and implementing improved bus route. Noted benefit of new route serving Valley Floor businesses; Tom Barnes (GMT) will be communicating changes with businesses. Also applauded Margo Wade (Sugarbush) for helping with bus schedule edits.
  - Advocating for increasing bus ridership to help expand service.
  - Margo asked for clarification that towns contribute to E&D? Jamie explained the amount that towns contribute goes to bus service, E&D is funded federally.
  - Margo stated that the local match is currently about 30%, of which Sugarbush contributes 80% of the local match to seasonal bus service. Margo noted appreciation for GMT.

### III. **Ridge to River: From Planning to Action** (Corrie Miller, Friends of the Mad River)

- Ridge to River background:
  - Taskforce includes volunteers from 5 Valley towns, some of which in the room.
  - Goal is to slow down runoff to decrease vulnerability, reduce costs, and support a healthy environment.
  - Findings of 2-year research initiative: people care, environmental changes, infrastructure challenges. Most MRV development does not trigger state stormwater permitting thresholds. Local regulations are limited in mitigation.
- Action Framework:
  - Stormwater master plans and fixes implemented at 5 locations, including Warren and Fayston schools.
  - Town-wide and Mount Ellen stormwater master plans:
    - 5 plans per town + 3 at Mount Ellen
    - Grant funding exists to support plans
    - Road Roundtables (7 so far): SBs and road crew member gatherings have been production and
  - Storm smart homesites and drives:
    - Home visit assessment for personalized suggestions, 65 done so far; 17 homeowners have implemented BMP



# MAD RIVER VALLEY VERMONT

- Focus on community outreach
- Storm smart private drives:
  - Challenges: many private drives lack an HOA, steep slope drives prone to erosion
- \$750k brought to MRV so far
- Questions & Comments:
  - Bob Ackland noted that program has been eye opening.
  - The public can call FMR for a home assessment.
  - FMR celebrating 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in upcoming year.

#### IV. **Sugarbush Resort Update** (Win Smith, Sugarbush Resort)

- Discussed responsibility to ensure long-term sustainability of organization.
- Necessary to recognize trends in ski industry:
  - Consolidation: Maybe only 2 large (>250k visitors) independent mountains left
  - Climate Change trends show increasing impacts → need for additional capital
  - Challenges compounded by costs of doing business in Vermont
- Believes Alterra Mountain Company will be a positive partner that can bring needed capital, increased efficiencies, and long term sustainability. Will bring a different approach: each destination will retain individual brand and support for community. Leaders are passionate.
- Changes in ownership, but Win will remain as president. Staff, mission, values, brand, community support will not change.
- Questions and comments:
  - Asked if anticipates increased crowds i.e. Stowe after Vail purchase?
    - Win noted that Stowe was already crowded. Sugarbush has better lift and parking capacity, and 3 roads in/out. Still, there is a need to grow responsibly.

#### V. **Annual MRV Data Update** (Kati Gallagher, MRVPD)

- The MRV Data Report is produced annually by the Planning District and provides MRV-wide information for community use and planning purposes. The report is produced with publicly available information and data from local organizations.
- Reviewed data themes based on the 2015 MRV Vision Statement.
- Community:



# MAD RIVER VALLEY VERMONT

- MRV population has been steady since 2010, but is getting older. While on par with the rest of the state, high school enrollment continues to decline.
  - Housing remains a challenge for current and prospective residents and employers. Home sale prices, values, and rents are higher than Washington County. The majority of the MRV housing stock is occasional use.
  - Economy:
    - Most MRV employees commute in, and this is increasing.
    - The MRV's winter bus service has had steady ridership since 2003, despite increasing population and skier visits.
    - MRV has diverse businesses, with the majority in professional and business services. 62% are based in Waitsfield.
    - The vast majority of jobs are in Leisure & Hospitality due to Sugarbush; the next highest number are in retail trade, professional & business services, and construction.
    - Wages have been largely steady over the past 3 years, despite increasing housing costs.
    - Meals, Rooms and Alcohol tax receipts continue to increase, with a majority of the increase experienced by Waitsfield. Increasing tax receipts coming from summer months.
    - Skier visits and non-winter trail use has been increasing.
  - Environment:
    - MRV has reduced its electrical consumption in recent years, largely due to energy efficiency measures taken by Sugarbush.
    - *E.coli* monitoring shows levels below state protective levels, but additional data shows challenges with runoff pollution.
    - Almost a quarter of MRV land is conserved, with more continuing to be added.
  - Kati offered to present or discuss data more in depth with interested individuals and groups.
  - Questions and comments:
    - Clarification re: what gross receipts show. Gross receipts include taxable and non-taxable sales.
    - Is the decline in gross receipts due to online shopping?
      - May be difficult to determine, but important question.
- VI. **MRV Recreation District** (Liza Walker, Alice Graves & Mike Nucci, MRVRD)
- MRVRD Background (Liza):



# MAD RIVER VALLEY VERMONT

- Union municipal district; Liza noted RD currently has strong board.
- Many ways to recreate in MRV, many recreation partners, many community & economic benefits.
- Strategic plan: much less spending per capita on parks and recreation than neighboring towns, thanks to civic and community engagement and support.
- Grant work (Alice):
  - Grants have been the primary work for the RD, but are expanding focus.
  - 2019: 8 applications; 1 new = Bocce; grant awards were fairly evenly distributed (as opposed to previous years).
  - 2020: 14 applications – 50% new. Reflects goals to diversify recreation opportunities. Almost \$80k in grant requests.
  - Unified trailhead kiosk & mapping project: RD acted as fiscal agent for municipal contributions.
- Mike (MR Park field manager):
  - 2019 Challenges:
    - LAX tournaments - unprepared for 1k+ people, but learning.
    - Administrative changes:
      - Leases
      - Policies and procedures: new fee schedule
  - Experienced increased usage in 2019. Continuing to look for additional opportunities.
  - 2019/2020 Improvements: ADA compliant ramp; topsoil/seed/aeration; staymat, picnic table.
    - Long term: bathrooms; irrigation
  - Developed workplan/hours for potential MRVRD Recreation Coordinator based on Mike's current hours and work. Requesting funding from selectboards for part-time position.
    - RD is becoming a member of VLCT, looking for guidance for managing an employee.
- 2019 Financial Report (Liza)
  - Kiosk project
  - Mad River Park
  - Mad River Valley Recreation
- 2020 Budget: doubling annual ask from towns to fund new staff position. From \$15k/town to \$30k/town.
- Questions and comments:
  - Comment that others in state are jealous of MR Park, and we should be proud!
  - SB members noted appreciation for MRVRD work.



# MAD RIVER VALLEY

## VERMONT

- Parent of teenagers: agreed with appreciation of work and resources.
- SB member noted relevance of revenue generation in addition to fulfilling needs for kids/recreation.
- Parent likes idea of having a central person (prospective staff member) to communicate with/ask rec-related questions.

### VII. **MRV Planning District** (Joshua Schwartz, MRVPD)

- Background:
  - Expressed appreciation for attendees, MRVTV, and American Flatbread.
  - Reviewed context and charge of MRVPD.
- Focus area highlights:
  - Transportation
    - Infrastructure improvements
    - MRV bus schedule and alignment
    - Grant support for electric vehicle charging stations
    - MRV TAC: community engagement in transportation decision making and opportunities
  - Recreation
    - MRV Active Transportation Plan (2016) provided long range vision and framework.
    - Recent work on streetscape improvements, complete streets, unified signage and wayfinding, mapping.
    - MRV Unified Trailhead Kiosk & Mapping Project:
      - Kiosks. 60% complete
      - Updated paper map. 1,000 made available for community via town offices and libraries.
      - Digital map. Collaboration with trailfinder.info (VT & NH)
  - Housing
    - 2017 MRV Housing Study led to reinvigoration of MRV Housing Coalition, which is leading valley-wide efforts to increase affordable housing.
    - 2019 MRV Housing Demand & Market Analysis being released by Doug Kennedy in December 2019. Will be presented at MRV housing summit in spring 2020. Couple of highlights of upcoming final report:
      - Demographic realities: projected change shows increase in higher income middle and older households.



# MAD RIVER VALLEY VERMONT

- Market realities: lower and middle income younger households are the ones who are moving/seeking new homes. Mismatch between what is available and who is looking.
  - Survey reinforced that 79% of MRV employers are concerned about housing.
  - Employer/public assessment: data shows market for low/moderate income rental housing and small scale ownership (smaller units and slower pace development).
- Grant funding:
    - o \$179k brought in or supported by MRVPD during 2019
    - o \$3.7 million since 2009.
  - FY21 (FY starts at Town Meeting Day):
    - o Continue existing work in recreation, transportation, housing, placemaking, municipal support, data, and Sugarbush
    - o Review of operating expenses
    - o Ask of 3% increase in annual contribution from 4 partners for FY21
  - Questions and comments:
    - o Notice many empty houses – can anything be done to either tear down or restore?

## **VIII. Final Discussion & Comments**

- None.
- Jared moved to adjourn, Jon seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kati Gallagher  
11/22/19