



Bennington County Regional Commission

# *News and Notes*

*July 2023*

## **July BCRC Meeting - Developing a Web-Based Regional Plan**

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**Thursday, July 27th at 5:30 PM  
Prospect Mountain Ski Area Base Lodge  
204 Prospect Access Road  
Woodford, VT**

*A light meal will be provided.*

After the meal, join us for a presentation from Matt Bachler from Windham Regional Commission about developing a web-based regional plan. The Bennington County Regional Plan must be updated and re-adopted by early 2025, and BCRC would like to make the process and the final plan inclusive and accessible to all residents. Callie Fishburn from BCRC will also briefly discuss the upcoming Renewable Electricity Standard listening sessions that will be co-hosted by regional planning commissions and the Public Service Department.

### **Bennington County Regional Plan**

Adoption Date: March 19, 2015

Amended (new Regional Energy Plan added): March 23, 2017



**No RSVP necessary**

## New HOME Act Summary Available

BCRC prepared a quick reference guide to the wide-ranging provisions of the HOME Act (Act 47) passed by the legislature and signed by Governor Scott in June. This guide will be useful to local officials (including zoning administrators, planning commissions and DRBs and ZBAs) working to understand how to comply with new laws and how to access new programs designed to remove barriers to housing in their communities.

The BCRC guide includes references to sections of the HOME Act that will need to be consulted for a full understanding of its various provisions, as well as references to relevant sections in state statute. This is important because many of the provisions went into effect on July 1, 2023, although the Vermont Statutes Online will not be updated with the new language until October.

BCRC HOME Act Guide:

[http://www.bcrvt.org/uploads/1/1/1/8/111899771/home\\_act\\_summary.pdf](http://www.bcrvt.org/uploads/1/1/1/8/111899771/home_act_summary.pdf)

HOME Act as enacted:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2024/Docs/ACTS/ACT047/ACT047%20As%20Enacted.pdf>

Vermont Laws Online:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/>

## Benn High Redevelopment Project Health Impact Assessment Now Available

The Bennington Office of Local Health has recently completed a comprehensive Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of the Benn High Redevelopment Project in downtown Bennington. An HIA is a process that uses various types of data, analytical methods, and stakeholder input to determine the potential effects of a proposed project on the health of a population. The Benn High HIA was conducted to better understand the potential health effects of the redevelopment of the old Bennington High School (currently a vacant building), into housing and community space. Community engagement was an important part of the HIA process; a survey was distributed to residents of the Benn High neighborhood, and a series of forums were held with youth and seniors who stand to be impacted by the project. The HIA process was led by a steering committee with representatives from the Bennington Office of Local Health, the Town of Bennington, Hale Resources, the Bennington County Regional Commission, and University of Vermont Office of Engagement. The report provides comprehensive public health data about the Bennington community and offers recommendations to mitigate any potential negative impacts of the project, and amplify the positive impacts. [Read the full report on the BCRC website.](#)



Final Report  
Prepared by the Bennington Office of Local Health  
Roy Price, MPH

## Dara Zink Joins BCRC

Dara Zink joined the staff at BCRC on June 5th. Dara will be splitting her time at BCRC between overseeing the Emergency Management Program and doing general land use and other special planning projects. Dara is well-known in the region having worked at local supervisory unions in an administrative capacity as well as at Project Against Violent Encounters (PAVE). In her spare time Dara coaches track and field and cross-country in Arlington and is a certified Road Runners Club of America coach. She is also an accomplished runner herself. Please welcome Dara to BCRC when you see her.



## Congratulations and Welcome to Samantha Page



On May 25<sup>th</sup>, BCRC Planner Samantha Page received her master's degree in urban planning from the Harvard Graduate School of Design in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Samantha joined the staff at BCRC in mid-January working with BCRC on a part-time basis as she finished her studies. She began full-time at BCRC on June 26<sup>th</sup>. Following her graduation from Smith College, and prior to returning to graduate school, Samantha worked at the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown. Welcome Sam!

## Callie Fishburn Named a Southern Vermont Emerging Leader

At the Southern Vermont Economy Summit, BCRC Planner Callie Fishburn was honored as one of Southern Vermont's Emerging Leaders. Eighteen Southern Vermont Emerging Leaders were recognized at the Summit. The Southern Vermont Young Professionals and the Shires Young Professionals conducted the annual recognition event, with sponsorship from the Community College of Vermont. The Emerging Leaders Awards celebrate young people from the Bennington and Windham regions. Individuals were nominated based on their work as community leaders and volunteers, and for their professional accomplishments and commitment to serving the region.



Callie has been a standout at the BCRC since joining us as a VISTA in 2020 and then moving to a full-time position in September 2021. Callie does general land use planning, leads two public health equity projects and heads the BCRC's energy planning program. She is one of three Energy planners statewide working with the Vermont Department of Buildings and General Services to facilitate the rollout of the new Municipal Energy Resilience Program. All of the 2023 Southern Vermont Emerging Leaders will be nominated for the Vermont Business Magazine Vermont Rising Star awards. Congratulations Callie!

## Another Successful Southern Vermont Economy Summit!

The sixth Southern Vermont Economy Summit brought nearly three hundred people to the Hermitage in Wilmington for a day of learning, networking and celebration of those who dedicated to making the regional economy stronger and improving the lives of those living here. The event is produced annually by Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation and the BCRC.

## New Funding for EV Charging Available!

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) has contracted with Green Mountain Power (GMP) to administer a new round of the Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment Grant Program. The most recent round of funding in 2021 allocated \$1 million to EV charging at multi-unit dwelling affordable housing properties across the state. Under this round, Shires Housing was awarded \$85,000 to install EV chargers at three of their properties in Bennington and Arlington. Preapplications for the new round of funding are now available! This new round will allocate \$3 million to charging at multi-unit properties (priority given to properties with less than 20 units), \$2 million to workplace charging (priority given to employers with fewer than 100 employees), and \$2 million to EV charging at public attractions. [Click here to complete the preapplication form.](#)



A fully electric Rivian truck at the 2022 Bennington EV Show.

Municipalities that are interested in supporting EV charging in their community can do so through the adoption of [EVSE-friendly development regulations](#). Businesses, nonprofits, and public entities that are interested in hosting EV charging at their location, as well as EV service providers, are encouraged to [complete a survey](#) to help the state gauge interest and capacity for EV charging.

Individuals who are interested in purchasing an EV or plug-in hybrid can find information about various models, as well as federal and state incentives at <https://www.driveselectricvt.com/>. Drive Electric VT has also created an [interactive map of statewide public EV charging](#).

## Take the Digital Equity Survey

The Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB) wants to hear from you! VCBB is working to collect feedback from Vermonters across the state on your experience accessing and using the Internet at home. This is a part of an effort to develop plans that ensure every Vermont household and business has reliable, affordable, high-speed Internet available to them, and eliminate barriers that keep Vermonters from using the Internet. These plans will help Vermont to secure over \$100 million in federal grant funding.

The survey is available here: [public survey](#). Please take the survey yourself, and feel free to distribute it far and wide!

If you'd like more information on the plan development process, please visit the VCBB's website at: [Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment \(BEAD\) Program and Digital Equity Act | Department of Public Service \(vermont.gov\)](#)



## **New Household Hazardous Waste Facility Opens July 31st**

The new Permanent Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility is nearly complete and we are accepting appointments for residents and small businesses to drop off material!

The new facility, located at the Bennington Transfer Station ([904 Houghton Lane in Bennington](#)), and will be open each week on Mondays (Tuesdays following holiday weekends) starting July 31st until early October.

Residents within the 13-member towns of the Alliance can make appointments online at [bcswa.org](https://bcswa.org) or by calling (802) 442-0713, ext. 2. The cost for residents is \$5.00 per car, per appointment with the fee will be collected at the time the appointment is made online, or in-person at the Alliance office at 210 South Street, Suite 6, Bennington, prior to the appointment date.

Small businesses, schools, and other Very Small Quantity Generators (VSQGs) should contact the Alliance office directly at (802) 442-0713, ext. 2 to schedule an appointment and arrange to pay fees charged by the hauler. Material will only be accepted at the facility from individuals who have a scheduled appointment.

In addition to the new facility, several local transfer stations and local retail establishments will continue to accept paint, fluorescent bulbs, used motor oil, computers and electronic waste, batteries and other materials banned from landfills. For more information, visit <https://bcswa.org> and follow the Alliance on [Facebook](#) for updates. Make an appointment on the BCSWA website: [Household Hazardous Waste Appointment – BCSWA](#)

## **Submit a CEDS Project by September 8th!**

A September 8th deadline has been announced for the annual submission of projects to be included in the 2019-2024 Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Any private or public entity directly responsible for implementation of a project in Southern Vermont is encouraged to submit a project for consideration. A project submission form, CEDS documents, and lists of past projects can be found at [www.vermontzone.com](http://www.vermontzone.com). At that website, prospective project submitters can also register for a lunchtime webinar taking place on July 11, 2023 at 12 pm.

The Southern Vermont CEDS, developed through a rigorous public engagement process, is a federally-approved five-year action plan for growing the region's economy. Each year the CEDS is refreshed with the submission of new and updated "CEDS Projects." These projects represent projects, programs and activities – both in progress and in the planning stages – that enhance the region's economic competitiveness and vibrancy.

Following the close of the annual submission period, project submissions are reviewed and ranked by a committee of volunteers from across the region. The ranking process considers how each project will advance CEDS objectives, as well as readiness to begin, partners, and funding. While the inclusion of a project in the CEDS update does not guarantee future investment, it does indicate to federal, state and philanthropic funders that a project aligns with regional goals and plans.

## What BCRC Staff are Reading/Listening To

Bill is reading [“What’s the Sweet Spot for Building Housing Inexpensively?”](#) and [“Silly Rabbit, Streets are for Kids,”](#) from Strong Towns.

Janet Hurley just read [Arbitrary Lines: How Zoning Broke the American City and How to Fix It](#) by M. Nolan Gray. Several BCRC staff will be reading and discussing this book over lunch at the end of July.

Jonathan is reading Lewis Mumford’s 1925 essay, *Regions—To Live In*. A delightful excerpt: “There are a hundred approaches to regional planning; it brings to a head, in fact, a number of movements and methods which have been gathering momentum during the last twenty or thirty years. But each approach has this in common with the others; it attempts to promote a fuller kind of life, at every point in the region. No form of industry and no type of city are tolerable that take the joy out of life.”

Callie is listening to the new [“Small Towns, Healthy Places”](#) podcast, hosted by staff at ACCD and the Vermont Department of Health. The latest episode is about accessible transportation.

Sam is reading [In Defense of Housing](#) by David Madden and Peter Marcuse.

Dara is listening to [“How Has the Geology of Vermont Affected its Character?”](#) from Vermont Public.

## Events and Opportunities....

### 2023 Vermont Community Leadership Summit | August 15th

The Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) has announced their [2023 Vermont Community Leadership Summit: Strengthening Skills, Capacity, and Opportunity for the Future!](#) The event will take place on Tuesday, August 15 at Vermont Technical College in Randolph, Vermont. All people who care about their community and the future of our state are encouraged to attend. Learn more at [vtrural.org/summit](http://vtrural.org/summit)

### Municipal Energy Resilience Program Assessments Available

Municipalities can apply for free building energy assessments which will qualify them for project implementation funding. [Join a webinar on July 19th to learn more!](#)

Apply now: [Municipal Energy Resilience Program | Buildings and General Services \(vermont.gov\)](#)

### Vermont Employee Ownership Center Webinars

The Vermont Employee Ownership Center is hosting two live webinars on the topic of ownership succession planning for small to medium-sized businesses. Sergio Alvares, Statewide Advisor for Strategic Projects at the Vermont Small Business Development Center, will take the lead for the first webinar, and the second webinar will be led by Tammy Richards, Associate at Country Business, Inc. Matt Cropp, Executive Director of the Vermont Employee Ownership Center, will co-present on the topic of selling a business to the employees for both events.

Webinar 1: Tuesday, September 26th from 12-1:30pm. [Register.](#)

Webinar 2: Thursday, September 28th from 3:30-5pm. [Register.](#)

### **Community Recovery & Revitalization Program Grants**

CRRP grants are available to for-profit, nonprofit, and municipal applicants. The funding is intended for projects making capital improvements or capital expansions that spur economic recovery and revitalization in communities across the state. Eligible projects may include those that assist industries most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic such as arts and entertainment, hospitality, agriculture, and educational services. The funding is also available for capital expenditures that support childcare and affordable housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households, and to establish or improve municipal water and wastewater systems to build housing or create jobs through business creation and expansion. Projects must show a COVID impact. In Bennington there are also two qualified census tracts (QCTs) that provide additional flexibility for applicants. <https://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/funding-incentives/community-recovery-and-revitalization-program>

### **Vermont Businesses Are Invited to Join the Maple 100**

From September 15 – October 15, 2023, Vermont businesses are invited to join forces with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture (VAAF), Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing (VDTM), and organizations from across the state as we kick off this annual event to help visitors and Vermonters alike discover new and delightful ways to indulge in Vermont's sweetest treat. Participating in the Maple 100 is easy and absolutely free. While we invite you to get creative and curate something truly unique, you can also sign up to promote a maple-related product or activity that you already offer, such as a maple creemee, beer, menu item, tours of your sugarhouse, etc. Whatever your connection to maple, you're invited to be part of this celebration! [Learn more and apply here](#). Applications are due on July 31st!

### **Draft Clean Water Plans Available for Public Comment**

The Draft Clean Water Intended Use Plan (IUP) and Draft Drinking Water IUP are available for public comment. There will be a public hearing on July 31st at 1PM in Montpelier or via Microsoft Teams. Public comments are due on August 7, 2023. [Learn more at the Vermont DEC website](#).

### **How Much Money Can You Get from the Inflation Reduction Act?**

Check out Rewiring America's [savings calculator](#) and [other IRA resources](#) collected by the Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network (VECAN).

#### **BCRC Staff Contacts**

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