



Bennington County Regional Commission

News and Notes

September 2022

September BCRC Meeting - Merck Forest Programming and Rupert Village Trust Projects

Thursday, September 15 at 4:30 PM

**Frank Hatch Sap House at Merck Forest & Farmland
Center**

(DIRECTIONS)

A light meal from Zoey's Deli will be provided. Transportation to the Sap House will also be available. No remote meeting option is available.

After the meal, join us for presentations from staff at Merck Forest, and volunteers from the Rupert Village Trust. Merck Forest & Farmland Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to education and conservation of natural and working lands. They offer educational programming for children and adults, hiking and camping, and seasonal events. The Rupert Village Trust is a nonprofit organization formed to promote historic preservation and community development in Rupert's Designated Village Center. Their major projects include the revitalization and operation of the historic Sheldon Store as a community hub, and hosting events and activities at the adjacent Town Green. BCRC's Jim Henderson will also give an update on the D&H Rail Trail Project.



Autumn at Merck Forest



Historic Sheldon Store

No need to RSVP. Please come with an appetite and a friend!

BCRC and other RDCs Visit the Advanced Manufacturing Center at Vermont Tech

On August 5th, BCRC's Jonathan Cooper and Bill Colvin joined regional development corporation (RDC) leaders and representatives of the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) on a tour of the Advanced Manufacturing Center at Vermont Tech in Randolph.

The Advanced Manufacturing Center is part of a creative public-private partnership known as the Vermont Manufacturing Collaborative (VT-MC). VT-MC is funded, in part, through a contract with the United States Department of Defense secured through the efforts of Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy.



The Vermont Manufacturing Collaborative's mission is "to advance Technology-enabled Manufacturing and associated Workforce Readiness in Vermont and beyond through collaborative public-private partnerships and opportunities at work in innovative learning, teaching and manufacturing environments." This will be accomplished by building the Advanced Manufacturing Center at Vermont Tech, a facility housing leading-edge manufacturing equipment, where businesses can gain experience with advanced manufacturing equipment and receive unbiased process and equipment recommendations. Additionally, the AM Center will be an educational hub for learners of all types including early educational awareness (K-6), strong STEM engagement (7-12), technical and vocational schools, colleges and universities, and continuing workforce training / upskilling.

The Advanced Manufacturing Center will train students and assist Vermont businesses in all elements of product development from ideation to production. It will focus on advanced manufacturing techniques such as additive manufacturing (3D printing), collaborative robotics, augmented reality, wearable sensors/data analytics and cybersecurity. It is the first facility of its kind in the country and is drawing attention and requests for partnerships from prestigious educational institutions such as Princeton, MIT and Stamford.



Following the tour, the RDC directors and ACCD staff met with new Vermont State University President Parwinder Grewal and Vermont State College Chancellor Sophie Zdatny to hear of plans for an increased focus on workforce development efforts across the higher education system in Vermont.

BCRC (through BCIC) Receives \$350,000 NBRC Grant

BCRC's real estate holding company, Bennington County Industrial Corporation (BCIC), was awarded a \$350,000 grant from the Northern Borders Regional Commission (NBRC) to support the next phase of the Putnam Block Redevelopment. This next phase, known as the Mount Anthony House Development, will encompass 92,000 square feet of mixed-use, energy-efficient new construction adjacent to the initial phase of the development on West Main Street in downtown Bennington.

Proposed uses include medical offices, retail and 63 units of housing. This phase of the project is being led by a group of investors known as Putnam Community Health LLC with support from M&S Development of Brattleboro and the BCRC. The goal is to secure all financing for the Mount Anthony House Development by summer 2023. Construction would commence immediately and is anticipated to take twelve to fifteen months.

This is the first NBRC grant ever awarded to our region.

MOUNT ANTHONY HOUSE

Site Plan



BCRC Summer Intern Completes Energy Equity Research

This summer, BCRC was fortunate to work with an intern from Williams College, Josh Kirschner, who focused on energy burden and energy equity solutions. Josh's research had two primary focuses; access to community solar as a means of reducing energy burden, and increasing low-income uptake of state energy efficiency programs and incentives. Energy burden is the percentage of household income spent on energy costs, and Bennington County has been identified as a high energy burden region by [Efficiency Vermont's 2019 Energy Burden Report](#).

Josh gave two presentations on his research, and developed two in-depth reports which will provide valuable information to municipalities, energy committees, and others looking to address energy burden in their community. The recordings of Josh's presentations as well as his reports, can be viewed on the [BCRC Energy Planning page](#). This internship was supported by the Williams College Center for Environmental Studies, which provides funding to students pursuing an environmental internship at nonprofits and governmental organizations.

Josh also assisted BCRC's Solid Waste Program Manager, Scott Grimm-Lyon, with installing a Green Cone solar digester at the office. Check out the video from CAT-TV [here](#).

The Vermont Women’s Fund Releases This Way UP Mid-Year Report

The Vermont Women’s Fund recently released the mid-year report for This Way UP, an initiative to identify women business owners in the state.

To date, the **2,250 businesses that have been identified and counted** (70 of whom are business leaders running companies and nonprofits):

- Generate \$2.1 Billion annually
- Create over 4,500 part-time and full-time jobs in our state
- Give back to charities and/or nonprofits equating to \$28 million into our communities

When asked, “What life changes led them to start their business?”, responses included:

- 22 percent lost employment and decided it was time to work for themselves
- 20 percent became a caregiver of children, parents, and/or relatives and needed the flexibility
- 17 percent had a mentor who helped them
- 14 percent had someone who offered to support them while starting
- 12 percent had no other work options and had to start a business

More highlights and the full report can be viewed [here](#).

New Rebates for Weatherization, EVs and E-bikes

Weatherization

New home weatherization rebates are available through Efficiency Vermont! The new rebate provides up to 75% of a weatherization project cost back up to \$2,000. Income qualifying households are eligible for up to 75% of the project cost back up to \$5,000. More information about this rebate is available on the Efficiency VT [website](#).

EVs

The Inflation Reduction Act passed on August 16, 2022 has introduced new eligibility requirements and other components of the federal EV tax credit program. Tax credits ranging from \$2,500-\$7,500 are available depending on the vehicle. Significant changes:

- Vehicles must have final assembly completed in North America to be eligible for the tax credit
- Beginning January 2024, purchasers will be able work through a participating dealership to receive the tax credit at the point of sale
- The Act includes a new incentive for used EVs that would offer a 30% tax credit up to \$4,000 towards a used EV priced at \$25,000 or less.

More information about federal and state EV incentives can be found on the [Drive Electric VT website](#).

E-bikes

New e-bike incentives are now available through the State of Vermont. Income qualifying Vermonters can receive up to \$400 off the cost a new e-bike which can be combined with the \$200 rebate offered by several Vermont power utilities. Purchasers can receive the incentive at the point of sale through participating retailers, or submit an application after purchase. More information about e-bike incentives is available [here](#).

VLCT Announces New Equity Resources for Municipalities

The **VLCT Municipal Equity Toolkit** is a **ten-part online resource** that covers everything from creating a municipal equity committee to building a framework and action plan to listing equity-related books, podcasts, and videos. **It is free and available to all VLCT members and the public** at vlct.org/JDEIB-resources. VLCT's equity consultants, Nikki Fuller Esq-SHRM-SCP of Workplace Matters and Dr. Wanda Heading Grant, helped create the toolkit in collaboration with the VLCT Equity committee and with the support of a grant from the Vermont Community Foundation. The toolkit includes resources for both internally focused equity efforts (ensuring a community is a model employer) and external equity resources (ensuring the community itself is a welcoming place to all). More information and resources on equity can also be found through the [State of Vermont Office of Racial Equity](#).



Sunderland Receives 2022 VTrans Bike/Ped Program Grant



The Town of Sunderland has received a \$69,000 grant from the 2022 VTrans Small Scale Bicycle & Pedestrian Program to create a paved shoulder for walking and biking on Sunderland Hill Road. Sunderland was selected from among 8 applicants. The grant requires a 50% project cost match from the municipality.

What BCRC Staff are Reading

This new section of the newsletter will highlight articles and other content that are inspiring BCRC staff and their work in the region. Enjoy!

Bill is reading about the unintended consequences of public participation ([The Atlantic](#))

Mark is reading about why it is hard and expensive to build infrastructure in the US ([Niskanen Center](#))

Callie is reading about how the Inflation Reduction Act will support Vermont climate and energy goals ([PBS NewsHour](#) and [Bipartisan Policy Center](#))

Scott, a recent transplant to Bennington County from NYC, is watching "Rural towns don't have to suck" ([the Armchair Urbanist on Youtube](#)) and reading "Glastenbury: The History of a Vermont Ghost Town" by Tyler Resch

Cat is reading about how the race to attract remote workers is going international ([Skift](#))

Jonathan is reading about the disappointing economics of rural housing markets (Bennington County featured extensively!) ([MarketWatch](#))

Jim has been reading about proper display of plans for bypass highways ([Leopards in the Basement](#))

Events and Opportunities....

FREE & Self-Paced Online Floodplain Management Training. This training is hosted in partnership with ASFPM and will help new and experienced floodplain administrators, emergency managers, elected officials, and others learn more about the NFIP and its requirements. New floodplain administrators will also learn how floodplain management decisions affect insurance, health, and public safety. No professional membership is required. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Electric Drive-In in Manchester: September 24th

The Manchester Energy Committee and Earth Matters/350VT will host an electric drive-in on September 24th from 10-12:30PM at the Manchester Rec Center. There will be a variety of electric cars, e-bikes, lawnmowers, and other equipment on display.

Bennington EV Show: October 1st

BCRC will host an EV Show on October 1st from 10-1pm at the Bennington Farmers Market. There will be a variety of EVs, e-bikes, and purchase incentive information. If you would like to show your EV at the event, please RSVP on the [event page](#). Contact [Callie Fishburn](#) for more information.

2022 Vermont Emergency Preparedness Conference: September 20 & 21

The 2022 Vermont Emergency Preparedness Conference [schedule of events](#) is now available! Those attending in person will have access to all 31 sessions, and those attending virtually will have access to a single track of 11 sessions. Please consider joining us on September 20th and 21st, either in-person at Killington Grand Resort or virtually through Microsoft Teams. If you would like to attend either in-person or virtually, please make sure to [Register to attend the 2022 Vermont Emergency Preparedness Conference!](#)

Energy Action Network Summit: September 22nd.

[The EAN 2022 Network Summit](#) will be on September 22, 2022 at the Vermont College of Fine Arts Alumnx Hall, at 45 College Street, Montpelier. The event will begin at 9am, with all attendees invited to stay through a reception and dinner.

2022 Women's Economic Opportunity Conference: October 1st

The 25th annual Women's Economic Opportunity Conference is a free event hosted by Senator Patrick Leahy. The conference will feature keynote speaker, Janet Yellen, and a variety of workshops on skill development, financial planning and more. [Agenda and registration](#).

2022 NNECAPA Planning Conference: October 17-19th

The annual Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association Conference will be held October 17-19th at the Sunday River Resort in Newry, ME. Click [here](#) for more information and registration.

Save the Date: Renewable Energy Vermont Conference October 27 & 28

Now in its 20th year, the annual [Renewable Energy Vermont Conference & Expo](#) is returning to an in-person format this October 27 & 28 in Burlington, VT. Join the hundreds of business leaders, policy-makers, activists, and visionaries at REV2022 to discuss how to realize our 100% fossil free future. For questions, please email Kit Price at kit@revermont.org.

Low Emission and Electric Vehicle Rulemaking Public Events

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) is announcing a series of events for the public to learn more about proposed amendments to existing rules related to low emission and electric vehicles. View the public events schedule and RSVP [here](#).

Last Chance to Submit a CEDS Project!

[The Southern VT Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#) is a federally approved 5-year action plan for growing the Southern Vermont economy developed with a regional public engagement process. Each year the CEDS is refreshed with new and updated “CEDS Projects” which highlight planned projects, programs, and activities that address Southern Vermont’s greatest needs and enhance the region’s economic competitiveness and viability. Project submission are due September 9th. Contact [Jonathan Cooper](#) for more information.

Funding for Flood Resilient Communities

[Flood Resilient Communities Fund \(FRCF\)](#) was established by the Vermont Legislature under Act 74 with the intent of improving landscape and community resilience and reducing the future public safety and water quality impacts of climate-related flood hazards in Vermont, focusing on buyouts of flood-vulnerable properties. Applications are due October 28, 2022.

New Round of Climate Catalyst Innovation Fund Grants Now Open

The Vermont Council on Rural Development, in collaboration with local funders invites [applications](#) for small grants to support local innovators developing solutions that move Vermont closer to its climate and energy goals. Grants: Awards ranging from \$500-\$4,000. Funds can be awarded to a municipality, school, non-profit organization or business. Applications are due September 18th.

2022 BRIC Funding Announced

The notice of funding was just released for FEMA’s annual [Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities \(BRIC\) program](#). Applications need to be submitted into State review by Friday December 9, 2022 in [FEMA GO](#). You can view the [fact sheet](#) as well as the [full notice of funding](#).

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Fall Education Series

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department Community Wildlife Program is proud to announce the schedule for our Fall educational series of webinars and trainings. This year we have five new topics planned and will be offering several sessions of each. View the [schedule and register](#).

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