



*Bennington County Regional Commission*

## **2023 Annual Meeting Thursday, May 18 - 4:30 PM**

**Paresky Room  
at the  
Bennington Museum**

**75 Main Street  
Bennington, VT 05201**

Please join us for the 2023 Annual Meeting of the Bennington County Regional Commission. This event provides an opportunity for BCRC commissioners and staff to gather with local officials, businesses, and residents as we highlight the Commission's work in community and economic development. We'll begin with a social hour featuring a cash bar and passed appetizers provided by Pangaea. The business meeting will feature a brief report on the BCRC's work over the past year, recognition of this year's Bongartz Award recipient and election of BCRC officers before a keynote address by Dr. Jude Smith Rachele of Abundant Sun and an overview of BCRC's work on a new Health Equity Planning Toolkit by BCRC Regional Planner Callie Fishburn. We hope you can join us on May 18th!

### Schedule

- 4:30 PM - Social Hour
- 5:15 PM - Director's Report
- 5:30 PM - Bongartz Award Presentation and Election of Officers
- 5:45 PM - Featured Speaker: Dr. Jude Smith Rachele, Co-founder & CEO, Abundant Sun
- 6:15 PM - Callie Fishburn, BCRC, Health Equity Planning Toolkit
- 6:30 PM - Adjourn



**Dr. Jude Smith Rachele, PhD**

Dr. Jude Smith Rachele, is the Co-founder and CEO of Abundant Sun, a justice, diversity, equity and inclusion (JEDI) training, coaching and facilitation firm with offices in Vermont, the UK and Portugal. It was founded in 2003 by Dr. Jude Smith Rachele and Rollin Rachele with the goal of taking diversity and inclusion beyond a focus on human resource management and legal compliance into complexity theory and sustainable development.

### ***Bongartz Award Presentation***

The BCRC's annual Bongartz Award is presented to a person who has demonstrated "ideals, beliefs, and excellence in community planning and service." This year's award will be presented to recently-retired BCRC Executive Director Jim Sullivan. Please join us in recognizing Jim's long-standing service to BCRC and the communities it serves.

**RSVP:**  
(Optional)

The meeting is free and open to the public. No RSVP is required but please feel free to let us know you are coming if you wish by emailing BCRC Director Bill Colvin at [bcolvin@bcrcvt.org](mailto:bcolvin@bcrcvt.org).

## Three Bennington County Towns Receive Municipal Planning Grants

Congratulations to the Towns of Bennington, Manchester, and Pownal for receiving 2023 Municipal Planning Grants (MPG) awarded by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development. Bennington received \$21,159 for Phase 1 of a town plan update process which will include a multifaceted public engagement process that will result in a new list of town priorities and a new thematic outline for the town plan. Manchester received \$23,220 to develop an action-oriented town plan to guide the community in meeting its 21st century needs. Pownal received \$18,450 to identify and prioritize physical improvements to enhance the area surrounding the new town office in Pownal Center Village, with an emphasis on Center Street Park.

## BCRC Holds Annual Land Use & Planning Essentials Training

On a recent summer-like day in April at the Sunderland Town Hall, BCRC gave its annual training for municipal officials: Land Use and Planning Essentials, covering the extensive provisions of the Municipal and Regional Planning and Development Act (Chapter 117 of the Vermont Statutes). We had 15 participants representing 10 of our member municipalities.

Evaluations completed by participants suggest that the subject matter continues to be useful to town and village officials; however, they expressed a desire for a longer format that would allow more time for in-depth discussion. Perhaps we can plan for a three-hour session with lunch next year.

In addition, there was an interest in discussing ways that municipalities can address short term rental uses. Accordingly, the BCRC will explore addressing potential STR regulation at an upcoming BCRC meeting.

If you are a municipal official with questions about land use regulation and the planning process, contact BCRC Planning Program Manager Janet Hurley at [jhurley@bcrcvt.org](mailto:jhurley@bcrcvt.org).



## BCRC Wraps Up Career Month

April Career Month activities were back in full swing and back in person following a pause and then a move to virtual platforms during the pandemic. Organized by BCRC's Workforce and Education Committee, this year included over twenty events including several open houses, class sit-ins and the return of the Financial Reality Fair. Once again, the Bennington Banner was a terrific partner in the endeavor hosting op-eds by regional businesses and attending and writing about several events.

[https://www.benningtonbanner.com/local-nes/get-ready-for-april-career-month-in-bennington-county/article\\_1020534c-cd91-11ed-aa4d-073fa31359a0.html](https://www.benningtonbanner.com/local-nes/get-ready-for-april-career-month-in-bennington-county/article_1020534c-cd91-11ed-aa4d-073fa31359a0.html)

## **New Facility for Household Hazardous Waste to Open in June**

The Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance (BCSWA), a partner agency of BCRC, is building a new facility to improve the collection of Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) in the region.

The facility is expected to open in June of 2023, and will operate one day per week. Residents from the 13 member Towns of the Alliance will be able to reserve a dedicated drop off time through the [bcswa.org](http://bcswa.org) website.

The new facility will be co-located at the Bennington Transfer Station, and is being built with a \$69,000 grant from Vermont DEC, along with matching funds from the 13 member towns of the BCSWA (proportionate to their population).

HHW is banned from landfills but includes common items like antifreeze, silver polish, varnishes, oven cleaner, paint strippers and fertilizers that can be purchased easily from local hardware, automotive, and grocery stores. HHW can be harmful to human health and the environment and needs to be disposed of or recycled in a safe way. Vermont state law requires that towns provide HHW collection programs to residents and businesses.

In previous years, BCSWA hosted three (single day) collection events each year to give residents an opportunity to drop off their HHW, however over the past few years the cost of hosting events has increased dramatically due to factors including industry consolidation and inflation.

By building a permanent HHW facility, BCSWA is following the example of other Solid Waste Management Districts across the state; including Windham SWMD, and Southern Windsor SWMD which have both built permanent facilities and reported an increase in HHW collection rates, and a reduction in costs, BCSWA is hoping to replicate this model and provide additional opportunities for residents to dispose of HHW, along with savings for the taxpayer.

For more information about the facility, residents can follow BCSWA on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube or subscribe to the BCSWA newsletter at [bcswa.org](http://bcswa.org).

## **Emergency Management Director Certification Available**

Vermont Emergency Management's Emergency Management Director Certification Program is available for individuals to improve their skills and education in the emergency management field. The EMD certification is designed to provide leaders with the knowledge and skills to effectively manage local disasters. Trainings are a mix of nine online courses, three instructor-led courses, and one practical application – such as participating in a tabletop exercise. Trainings can be found on the Learning Management System. If you don't already have a LMS account, you can sign up here: <https://vem.vermont.gov/training/trainingprogram/lms>.

For more information about the EMD Certification Program, please visit <https://vem.vermont.gov/programs/emd/certification>.

## Community Recovery & Revitalization Grants Available

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 the first round three awards were made to three Bennington County entities – \$603,776 to the Town of Manchester for a sewer line extension and water system upgrades, \$500,000 to Hale Resources for the creation of housing at the former Benn High building and \$36,944 to Bennington Museum for upgrades to its roof and HVAC system. Bill attended a Vermont Economic Progress Council meeting in March to support Dorset’s application for water system upgrades. We hope to hear of that community’s successful funding when the second round of awards is announced.



Part of the Benn High building will be redeveloped into housing with CRRP grant funds.

## Complete the EV Charging Host & Provider Survey

Are you interested in helping expand the network of EV chargers across Vermont? Then please complete the [VT EV Charging Host & Service Provider Survey](#) widely through your networks! The purpose of the survey is to provide State agencies and partners with information on potential EV charging host properties and organizations interested in offering equipment and other services to support charging installations. As you may know, the State of Vermont has several exciting funding opportunities in development for EV charging installations.

For more information about the survey initiative and current EV funding sources, check out this [press release](#) from VTrans.

## New Round of Downtown & Village Center Tax Credits Available

In FY 2024, \$4.35 Million in state income tax credits are available. Credits are awarded to projects that improve building safety, attract new business, and create jobs. Projects must be within a state-designated [downtown](#), [village center](#), or [neighborhood development area](#). Funding supports general rehabilitation and code compliance work. The program also funds flood mitigation upgrades and exterior façade improvements. Applications are due July 3, 2023. [https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD\\_Web\\_Docs/HP/HP-Grants/Tax\\_Credits/2023\\_HTCGuidelinesandApplication.pdf](https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/HP/HP-Grants/Tax_Credits/2023_HTCGuidelinesandApplication.pdf)

## Southern VT CUD Begins Phase 2 of Fiber Built



The Southern Vermont Communications Union District has started Phase 2 of its three-phase fiber optic connection campaign in partnership with Consolidated Communications. Phase 1, completed last year, provided fiber upgrades and new construction throughout Bennington, Woodford, Glastenbury, and most of Shaftsbury. Phase 2, which should be completed by the end of 2023, will reach 2,000 households in Dorset, Landgrove, Londonderry, Manchester, Peru, Pownal, Rupert and Sandgate. (Phase 3 will follow, connecting the final twenty or so unserved or underserved homes around the region not included in Phase 1 or Phase 2.)

The \$27 million investment was underwritten by a federal award from the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, a \$9 million grant from the Vermont Community Broadband Board, and private sector investment from Consolidated. BCRC staff have worked closely with the CUD's volunteer governing board, as well as the representatives from Consolidated, to provide organizational capacity to the CUD. Construction is underway in Winhall, Londonderry, and Manchester, and will reach Dorset and Arlington in the spring, and Pownal and Rupert in the summer. Many thanks to the local volunteers who have kept the momentum going, and congratulations on this important achievement!  
[https://www.benningtonbanner.com/business/southern-vermont-cud-fiber-build-will-be-completed-this-year/article\\_556df46e-e2da-11ed-82bd-db65dd302c5e.html](https://www.benningtonbanner.com/business/southern-vermont-cud-fiber-build-will-be-completed-this-year/article_556df46e-e2da-11ed-82bd-db65dd302c5e.html)

## BCRC Says Farewell to Allison Strohl

Emergency Management Program Manager, Allison Strohl, is leaving after 10 years at BCRC. Allison was hired in March 2013 and has led BCRC's emergency management planning work for the past decade, helping towns develop hazard mitigation plans, and providing support to municipalities in the aftermath of severe weather events and other emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. She has also supported the transportation and energy planning programs. Allison and her family are moving to Minnesota where she will be taking an emergency management position with the Washington County Sheriff's Department. We wish her the best in her new endeavor!

## What BCRC Staff are Reading/Listening To

Bill is reading "[The Case for Abolishing Zoning](#)" from Strong Towns and "[In Rural America, Those Who Can Supply the Talent Will be the Winners,](#)" from the Daily Yonder.

Samantha is reading "[Yes in Our Backyards](#)" from Mother Jones.

Jonathan is reading "[Why are Public Restrooms Still so Rare?](#)" from the New York Times, and "[Ten Code Reform Priorities for the Housing Crisis](#)" from the Congress for the New Urbanism.

Scott is reading [Dangerous Years: Climate Change, the Long Emergency, and the Way Forward](#) by David W. Orr.

Mark is reading [The High Cost of Free Parking](#) by Donald Shoup.

Callie is reading [The Death and Life of Great American Cities](#) by Jane Jacobs.

## Events and Opportunities....

### **Park Your Carbon Week | May 10-16**

Want to try a different way of getting around? How about a healthy option, one that can save you some money and even be fun? You can reduce carbon pollution in Vermont and impact worldwide climate change. Park Your Carbon is a week-long initiative to help change Vermonters' transportation and commuting habits by encouraging green ways of travel. Do it for a day, a week or make it a habit.

**Bike. Walk. Carpool. Bus. Work From Home.**

It's easy. You can let us know you are taking the pledge by sharing your contact information or posting to social media. Once you let us know, we will plant a tree, making Vermont a greener state! [Take the Pledge.](#)

### **Southern Vermont Economy Summit | May 23rd**

The 6th annual Southern Vermont Economy Summit will take place in Wilmington on May 23, 2023. The theme of the 2023 Southern Vermont Economy Summit is "Forging our Future". BCRC organizes this event along with Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation. <https://www.sovermontzone.com/summit>

### **Vermont Employee Ownership Conference: June 1st**

[21st Annual Vermont Employee Ownership Conference | Vermont Employee Ownership Center \(veoc.org\)](#)

### **Vermont Energy & Climate Action Network Spring Summit | June 3rd**

[Registration is now open](#) for the June 3rd VECAN Spring Summit at Middlebury College! We are excited to reconvene in-person once again, especially at this moment of tremendous urgency when it comes to climate and tremendous opportunity when it comes to unprecedented federal funding. Please join us on June 3rd to reconnect, strategize and co-create opportunities to help Vermont advance just and bold climate action!

### **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).

### **Health Equity and Community Design TA Pilot Program**

From safer, walkable, universally accessible streets to more green spaces, the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) in partnership with the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) invite communities to apply for technical assistance to support community-led design, placemaking, and healthy equity projects across Vermont. Approximately 20 to 35 communities will be accepted for in-person and virtual engagement sessions between December 2022 and October 2023. Visit the Healthy Communities Vermont website to [learn more](#). *Applications close May 31, 2023!*

### **Funding Available through the Better Places Program**

Better Places is a non-competitive, community matching grant program empowering Vermonters to create inclusive and vibrant public places serving Vermont's [designated downtowns, village centers, new town centers, or neighborhood development areas](#). The program provides one-on-one project coaching, local fundraising support, and two to one (2:1) matching grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$40,000 to make your community-led placemaking ideas happen. The program accepts applications on a rolling basis. Visit the [website](#) for more information.

### **Green Mountain Job & Retention Program**

The State of Vermont, in collaboration with the University of Vermont (UVM) and the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC), is offering a loan repayment program to incentivize and retain new graduates from Vermont state colleges and universities. Any graduate during the spring 2023 academic year with a Bachelor of Science and/or Bachelor of Arts can apply for the award. Awards will be distributed as student loan repayments by VSAC to the recipient's student loan servicer. Graduates must be authorized to earn the award through the application on a first-come, first-served basis based on regional, employer, and institutional distribution criteria. Applicants must submit proof of employment when applying. UVM will confirm employment with the Vermont-based employer at two points: After one year of employment and after the second year of employment. Click [here](#) for more information.

### **10% in Vermont Program**

Vermont State Treasurer Mike Pieciak and the Vermont Local Investment Advisory Committee (LIAC) are offering an exciting loan program for local economic development. The 10% in Vermont Program will offer up to **\$85 million in low-interest rate loans to parties advancing housing, environmental, and social equity goals**. Proposals for the first round of funding are **due June 1**, and the first funds are expected to be disbursed in July. Visit the [main webpage](#) and [application details PDF](#) for more information.

### **Municipal Energy Resilience Program Mini-Grant Available**

Municipalities can apply for a \$4,000 community capacity building mini-grant for public outreach and education about energy efficiency, or hire a consultant to help build capacity. [Municipal Energy Resilience Program | Buildings and General Services \(vermont.gov\)](#)

### **Last Chance for Free Energy Savings Kits!**

Order your [free energy savings kit](#) from Efficiency VT before lighting incentives end on July 1st. The kit includes LED lightbulbs, faucet aerators, and a low-flow showerhead. For a limited time, kits will also include wildflower seed packets while supplies last!

### **Advanced Wood Heat and Biodiesel Heating Incentives**

Incentives for wood and biodiesel heating systems are available through the Vermont Renewable Energy Resource Center with new income-eligible adders. Visit the [RERC website](#) for more information.

### **BCRC Staff Contacts**

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