MINUTES
Thursday - January 17, 2019
5:30 PM
Brown Cow Café – Main Street, Bennington, VT

Present: Michael Walker (Pownal), Ed Shea (Woodford), Walt Klinger (Pownal), Tyler Yandow (Dorset resident), Chris Williams (Shaftsbury), Brian Knight (Manchester Village), Suzanne dePeyster (Sandgate), Judy Boehlert (Sandgate), Valerie dePeyster (Sandgate resident), Jon Hale (Economic Development), Tim Scoggins (Shaftsbury), John LaVecchia (Dorset), Nancy Faesy (Dorset), Anthony MacLaurin (Manchester Village), Gaye Squire (Dorset resident), Janet Hurley (Manchester), Hal Wilkins (Peru), James Salerno (BCIC Board – designee to BCRC), Wayn Goodman (Energy), Charlie Rockwell (Rupert), Chris Damon (North Bennington), Dan Monks (Bennington)

BRC Staff: Michael Batcher, Jim Henderson, Catherine Bryars, Jim Sullivan, Madison Kremer, Bill Colvin

I.   After a light meal, the meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM.

II.   November 15, 2018 Minutes
        Motion (Hurley): Approve the Minutes as presented.   Second by Boehlert. Passed unanimously.

III.   Proposed BCRC Bylaw Amendments

        Director, Jim Sullivan, presented an overview of the proposed changes to the organization's bylaws focusing on integration of the regional development corporation and representation from that group as a BCRC committee and with 5 members serving as commissioners and 2 as executive committee members. Voting by ballot. 17 in favor of the amendments, 0 opposed. The Bylaw amendments are approved.

IV.   Overview of BCRC Programs and Funding

        Sullivan presented a brief summary of current BCRC organizational structure, programs, and funding sources (presentation attached).

V.   Implementing Municipal and Regional Plans – Discussion

Michael Batcher described the exercise – noting that the extended timeline for effective dates of regional and municipal plans has placed a new emphasis on implementation of those plans. (Presentation attached) Results of a survey recently distributed by the BCRC were reviewed; the issues rated highest for local priorities and need for BCRC assistance were noted and served as a basis for discussion.

Key discussion points:

- Housing programs/incentives, public-private partnerships
- State permitting timelines
- Marketing Opportunity Zones
- Enforcement of housing codes
- Cooperative discussions to develop more trails – hiking, mountain biking, etc., including for economic development
- Cooperative relationship with GMNF
- Find ways to increase effectiveness of energy efficiency programs, especially for commercial businesses
- Renewable energy driven local transportation shuttles
- IT infrastructure (broadband and cellular)– identify needs and implement
- Improve southern gateways to Vermont (esp Pownal highway entrances)
- Develop rail service center(s) in Pownal – freight and passenger
- Dedicate BCRC staff person dedicated entirely to tech assistance for municipalities in plan and bylaw development/updates
- Need for transportation system changes, reducing carbon footprint
- Implementing bylaws and regulations
- Increasing awareness of climate change and motivating behavioral change at the individual level
- Take advantage of economic opportunities presented by local natural resources/outdoor recreation – local business opportunities and tourism
- Bike-Ped infrastructure development
- Downtown and village center revitalization and growth
- Quality workforce housing development
- Downtown vitality
- Reacquiring BCRC's lost towns of Winhall, Readsboro, and Searsbury
- Alternative transportation options
- Wood biomass energy development and other businesses to support working landscape and healthy forests
- Food systems and value-added agriculture
- Financial support for private property owners for restoring/maintaining historic buildings
- Attracting younger people to the area

- Broadband and cell phone access in rural areas
- Quality affordable housing
- Energy conservation and efficiency
- Education/training for local planning and zoning boards
- Grant assistance for rural towns
- Open space and scenic land protection and maintenance
- Emerald Ash Borer response
- Addressing diversity of needs between rural and more "urban" towns; need for BCRC support in rural communities that don't have municipal staff
- Improved communication between local governments and residents
- Conflicts among user groups in rural areas (e.g., different types of recreational users,…)
- Dealing with rampant substance abuse problem in our communities
- More proactive approach to business development (R&D, specialty education, etc.)
- Providing opportunities for additional growth in rural towns
- Consistency between town regulations/bylaws
- Websites and information dissemination by local governments

After a brief effort to prioritize these issues, the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 PM.

Idea	Category
More incentives for public private partnerships	Economic development
State permitting restructure- make more efficient/streamline	Permitting
Market opportunity zones in the region	Economic Development
Enforce housing codes to improve quality of housing	Housing
Towns/regional cooperation with area trail systems to enhance recreational assets/networks	Open Space/Rec
Improve national forest trails	Open Space/Rec
Increase effectiveness and scope of energy programs- commercial properties	Energy
Alternative energy-powered shuttles linking colleges and towns	Transportation
Develop IT infrastructure (cell, broadband) – evaluate and identify where needed	Economic Development
Enhance gateways to Vermont	Economic Development
Develop Pownal rail infrastructure/service – passenger and freight	Transportation
Dedicate one BCRC staff member to amend member town plans and bylaws to provide continuity and help with scheduling	Municipal Planning
Rural towns need help getting people out of their LDVs (cars)	Energy
Challenge to get plan and bylaw amendments through adoption process	Municipal Planning

Idea	Category
Increase residents' awareness of climate change	Energy
Monetize the natural environment; Place to purchase outdoor gear	Economic development /Recreation
Bike/ped infrastructure- create networks	Transportation
Revitalization of town and village centers – infrastructure, historic preservation	Economic development
More recreation opportunities	Open Space/ Recreation
Increase housing options for econ development	Housing
Increase downtown vitality	Economic Development
Re-acquire 'lost towns' from Windham Co – Winhall, Readsboro, Searsburg	Regional Planning
Increase transportation options for wellness and energy conservation- includes trails	Transportation
Develop woody biomass industries that support sustainable forestry businesses	Energy / Econ Dev
Support value-added food products development in region	Food/ Economic Development
Help for private property owners of historic structures to maintain or restore their buildings	Historic Preservation / Housing
Address growing 'geezer culture' – need more young and hip people	Regional Planning
Increase broadband and cell phone access	Economic development / municipal planning

Idea	Category
Quality, affordable housing	Housing
Energy conservation	Energy
BCRC helping with training of planning commissions, zoning administration	BCRC Support / Municipal Planning
BCRC help with grant applications, even on small projects	BCRC Support
Open space and recreation asset development – youth engagement	Open space / Rec
Take more pictures of eagles and don't feed the bears	Natural Resources
Recognize diversity of rural towns and more urban areas – small towns need a dedicated BCRC representative (ex. Rupert) to be able to take advantages of more opportunities that are out there	BCRC Support
Communication with town residents – newspaper doesn't each enough people; diversify means of communication	Communication
Conflict of uses in towns – identify better land use planning strategies (ex. Overlays for recreational access points)	Municipal Planning/ Land Use Planning
Need to develop low- to moderate-income housing in region	Housing
Better substance misuse prevention programming	Substance Misuse
Proactive approach to business development – attract institutions, areas of interest to region	Economic Development
'Reverse 911' (notices sent out over the phone to every resident) resource to communicate with residents	Communication

Idea	Category
Attract young people to town – need for infrastructure (IT, housing); Identify areas for affordable housing and shift local resistance to affordable housing	Housing
Consistent support from BCRC to towns – eliminate inconsistencies between plans and bylaws	BCRC Support
Need for municipal website, how to communicate municipal permitting requirements, low attendance at annual meetings, need for consistency of communication	Communication
Group Categories	**Smiley Stickers**
Develop quality housing at a variety of income levels	18
Improve trail systems, recreational amenities and open space	11
Better broadband and cellular communication infrastructure	9
Increase downtown and village center vitality	9
More proactive approach to economic development	9
Enhance local forest businesses and ecosystems	8
Develop alternative transportation options	8
Improve efficiency of permitting processes	7
Assisting towns with communication with residents	5
Support agriculture and value-added food production	4
Establish BCRC consistency and support for land use planning in member towns	4

Idea	Category
Enhance gateways to Vermont	2
Improve utilization of energy efficiency programs	1

Improve input process

Statements are very aspirational – how do we make these actionable? What do next steps look like? Town can't do everything.

How economically feasible are these goals for the towns?

It is helpful to hear perspectives of other towns

Pick projects that impact entire region rather than single town (ex. Broadband)

This process didn't necessarily recognize the differences in BCRC services that towns need (ex. Rupert vs. Bennington)

There is a Northshire / Southshire disconnect that should be recognized and addressed

Business development / communication – single website to market and integrate region