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BCRC Regular Meeting

Thursday, March 15, 5:30 PM

Bennington Project Independence, 614 Harwood Hill Rd, Bennington, VT

The regular March meeting of the BCRC will include four brief presentations from BCRC staff and commissioners on ongoing initiatives in southwestern Vermont as well as the public hearing on Bennington's Town Plan. Please join us as we hear from the following individuals:

- **Catherine Bryars**, *BCRC Regional Planner*, will discuss BCRC's ongoing energy planning initiatives.
- **Jim Henderson**, *BCRC Environmental Program Manager*, will provide an update on the work of the EPA-funded BCRC Brownfields Committee.
- **Michelle Marrocco**, *BCRC Community Development Coordinator*, will discuss the Bennington Comprehensive Internship Program and cultural planning for Bennington County.
- **Jonathan Cooper**, *BCRC Community & Economic Development Specialist*, will provide an overview of the Regional Economic Development Group and its work on a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Southern Vermont.

The Town of Bennington recently amended their Town Plan to include an expanded chapter on energy conservation, efficiency, and renewable energy. The Town is now seeking a determination of energy compliance for the updated plan – the BCRC is responsible for rendering a decision on the request because our Regional Plan received a similar determination from the Department of Public service last year. If the BCRC finds that the Town Plan meets the [Act 174 standards](#) for a municipal plan, approval of the determination will mean that the Town Plan will have greater weight at Public Utility Commission proceedings on new energy development projects.

Events & Opportunities

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Public Information Portal



Updated Online Information for VT Transportation Systems

“VTransparency” is a public information portal to provide access to data and promote transparency in the state transportation decision-making process. The [VTransparency](#) portal includes information related to road conditions and closures, crash data, bridge inspection reports, real-time snow plow locations and more.

Municipal Road General Permit Issued

The Secretary of the Agency of Natural Resources issued the final Municipal Road General Permit (MRGP) on January 26, 2018. The final permit, response to comments and support documents can be found [HERE](#). All incorporated cities, towns and villages with operational control over municipal roads are subject to the requirements of this permit and will need to apply for the permit by July 31, 2018. BCRC will be hosting Jim Ryan, Municipal Road General Permit Coordinator, at the next Bennington County Road Foremen meeting at 10:00 AM on April 10, 2018 at the Arlington Town Office. Jim will give an encore presentation to municipal officials that evening at 5:30 PM at the Arlington Town Office. Please see the website or contact Jim Ryan at Jim.Ryan@vermont.gov or (802) 490-6140 with any questions.

Five Village Centers Designated in Bennington County in 2017

March 13 | VT State House Montpelier

Downtown supporters from across the state will converge at the State House to thank legislators for their support and showcase the important role [downtown and village center tax credits](#) play in building strong communities. For more information contact [Gary Holloway](#).

Downtown Transportation Grants

Due March 19

This year, \$335,000 is available to [designated downtowns](#) with a maximum annual award of \$100,000 per community. The program supports streetscape improvements, bicycle and pedestrian projects, electric vehicle charging stations, transit facilities, utility relocation, way-finding signage, street lighting, and ADA access improvements. For more information, review the [program guidelines](#).

Town Officers Education Conference

April 3 | Fairlee

April 10 | Montpelier

These annual conferences offer a great opportunity to learn about changes in regulations that affect your town as well as network with fellow Vermont municipal officers. The conference always includes a strong lineup of workshops, speakers, and exhibitors, and this year Jim Condos, Secretary of State, Micheal Schirling, Secretary of Agency of Commerce and Community Development, and John Quinn, Secretary of VT Agency of Digital Services and Chief Information Officer, will be on the keynote panel. Click [HERE](#) for registration information.

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Congratulations to Peru, Dorset, East Dorset, Rupert, and West Rupert for their recognition as [Designated Village Centers](#) in 2017. The Vermont village center designation program supports local revitalization efforts across the state by providing technical assistance and [state funding](#) to help designated municipalities build strong communities. Designated communities are eligible for tax credits, priority consideration for state grants and state building sites, and the establishment of neighborhood development areas (NDAs).

Village center designations across the state have increased 50% since 2013. Bennington County is home to twelve designated village centers and downtowns. The Village of Manchester is working to establish a designation in 2018. Also this year the Towns of Manchester and Shaftsbury will be renewing existing designations. If you would like more information about this program, its benefits, or your community's eligibility, contact BCRC staff Catherine Bryars at cbryars@bcrcvt.org or 802-442-0713 x310.

Better Roads Grants Announced



New stone lined ditch with a turnout in Rupert, Vermont.

The Vermont Better Roads Grant Program recently announced grant awards for 2019. Municipalities in



April 10 | Arlington

10:00 AM: Special session for road foremen/supervisors

5:30 PM: For municipal officials, BCRC commissioners, and other interested parties

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Vermont Walk Bike Summit

May 4, White River Junction

This year's Summit will include interactive mobile workshops, peer exchanges, a highly-acclaimed keynote, Russ Roca, co-owner of The Path Less Pedaled, a bike travel blog-turned-business, and a variety of dynamic presentations and topics including advocacy and education, safe and healthy communities, economic development, and the built environment. For information and registration, click [HERE](#).

BCRC Annual Dinner Meeting

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2019. BCRC will create road erosion inventories in Landgrove, Pownal, Rupert and Sunderland. This work will help position these towns to be in compliance with the 2018 Municipal Road General Permits which are required by the Vermont Clean Water Act. Road crews in Pownal, Rupert, Sandgate, Shaftsbury and Sunderland will be busy completing road erosion projects through the installation of upgraded culverts and stone lined ditches. A streambank stabilization project will be completed on Collins Road in Stamford. The Vermont Better Road Grant Program receives grant applications each fall and BCRC is ready to assist our municipalities with the application process. Contact [Jim Henderson](#) for more information.



May 17 | West Mountain Inn Arlington

Save the date and plan to join your fellow commissioners, municipal officials, and other guests for the BCRC's Annual Dinner Meeting. The evening will feature a social hour, a delicious meal, the annual Bongartz Award presentation, and this year's featured speaker, Michael Snyder, Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation. Commissioner Snyder will highlight the important role our forests play in our lives and in the regional economy and will talk about the State's [Outdoor Recreation Initiative](#). Invitations and details coming next month!

Shaftsbury Stormwater Master Plan Under Development



Rill erosion along Tinkham road in Shaftsbury, Vermont.

As part of the Vermont Ecosystem Restoration Program's annual competitive grant process, a Project Selection Committee has elected to award The Bennington County Regional Commission \$21,761 to develop a Stormwater Master Plan for The Town of Shaftsbury. A minimum of 70 road miles will be assessed and at least 5 stormwater retrofits will be identified. The Stormwater Master Plan will identify, map, evaluate and prioritize stormwater problem sites in the Town, outline appropriate steps the Town Highway Department can take to address those problems, and assist the Town in developing a Municipal Roads General Permit and Capital Improvement Plan. The BCRC will work with a

New Environmental Notice Bulletin Available

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has activated a new Environmental Notice Bulletin (ENB) to improve access to permitting information. The ENB will provide the public with information about applications that are under consideration by the DEC and includes permit, certification, and registration applications for most DEC programs. It is possible to search by geography, DEC division, and type of permit. Find it [HERE](#).

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develop and adopt the Stormwater Master Plan. This grant serves the dual purpose of protecting the State's water quality while supporting the BCRC's goal to work to build strong, resilient, and sustainable communities.



**PUTNAM
BLOCK**

New Markets Tax Credit Announcement: Good News for Putnam Block

The Bennington Redevelopment Group is delighted that the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund awarded 73 Community Development Entities (CDEs) \$3.5 billion in New Markets Tax Credits (NMTCs) today, including multiple CDEs that have expressed an interest in investing in the Putnam Block Project. CDEs are the entities that have the authority to raise investment capital in exchange for claiming the tax credits, and then invest that capital in appropriate projects.

Vermont Rural Ventures, Inc., a CDE located in Vermont, received an allocation of \$60 million. Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation, a CDE located in Massachusetts that has participated in many Vermont projects, received an award of \$65 million. A portion of these awards, when coupled with the previous awards granted to Mascoma Community Development and other possible financing partners, will contribute to providing the Putnam Block Project with the funding needed for Phase 1 of the project.

The project's funding is expected to be finalized by spring 2018 with a financial closing by summer. Multiple and diverse funding sources must be coordinated for this project, including historic tax credits, private and government loans, New Markets Tax Credits and grants. Construction on the first phase of the project is expected to start this summer and be completed in fall 2019. For more information visit www.PutnamBlock.com.

The annual Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) project prioritization process has begun. This collaborative effort between VTrans and the regional planning commissions is required in order to meet Vermont legislative directives and internal agency initiatives.

Each year, VTrans sends BCRC a short list of capital projects in our region to prioritize with categories for paving projects, roadway projects, town highway bridge projects, and traffic and safety projects. The BCRC's Transportation Advisory Committee meets and ranks the projects. While the Agency's process for prioritizing projects is complex and subject to many inputs, BCRC's rankings does influence the final decisions on projects for the 2020 fiscal year.

For a list of projects we are ranking this year, or, if you have any comments about the projects, please contact [Mark Anders](#). Please provide comments by March 30, 2018.

VT Training Program Grants Over \$630,000 to Regional Businesses

In January, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development informed BCIC that state personnel had approved a \$273,000 grant from the Vermont Training Program to Mack Molding in Arlington. BCIC staff met with

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Recently, Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) worked with a team of emergency planners and emergency management directors (EMDs) to create a new Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP). The draft plan is a complete rewrite from the current version, consisting of a new format that is over twenty pages. The new sections include: Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activation, emergency operations, contact information, public information and warning, resources, vulnerable populations, and incident planning.

The draft plan was released last month for public comment. BCRC sent the draft plan out to EMDs

for review and compiled their feedback, along with our input, into one response discussing the pros, cons, and recommendations for the final draft. The final version should be released in the coming weeks. Towns have the option of completing the new plan for 2018, but it will not be required until Spring 2019.

To request a copy of the draft plan, or for help filling out the new LEOP, contact [Allison Strohl](#). BCRC will send out the final version when it becomes available.

BCIC Featured at ACCD's *ThinkVermont* Luncheon



Photo Credit: Rep. Laura Sibilia

BCIC's Bill Colvin and Jonathan Cooper were two of

and December, when Mack finalized its application in response to an aggressive expansion and the need to train up new employees and existing workforce. The grant will support cross-training for 175 current employees, and 50 new hires. BCIC thanks Mack Molding representatives Nancy Cefalo and Rich Hornby for joining them in Montpelier as panelists for the ThinkVermont luncheon in Montpelier.

Total VTP funding secured for regional employers in FY18 now exceeds \$630,000 for workforce development programs to support training for upwards of 615 existing employees, and up to 60 new hires. Awardees include Energizer, Mack Molding, NSK Steering, and Southwestern Vermont Health Care.

Regional Economic Development Capacity & Coalition Building

The Regional Economic Development (RED) Group has laid out its meeting topics for the next six months. Join us at 8:30 AM in Arlington's Martha Canfield Library on the following dates as we examine:

- March 13: The Economic Development Toolkit
- April 10: Rural Repopulation Efforts
- May 8: Entrepreneurship & Main Street Businesses
- June 12: Business Recruitment, Retention, and

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Bennington region to demonstrate the ways businesses, municipalities, and residents leverage the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development's programs to strengthen their communities.

Bill was on hand with Zirwat Chowdhury, Director of the Town of Bennington's Office of Community Development, to detail how the ACCD and other partners have played a role in the ongoing Putnam Block redevelopment project.

Jonathan joined representatives of Arlington's Mack Molding to discuss how grants from the ACCD's Vermont Training Program support workforce development and create new opportunities for prosperity. Matt Harrington, Executive Director of the Bennington Area Chamber of Commerce, spoke to the travel and tourism initiatives that the Chamber has been able to dovetail with its own work bringing people to the Shires of Vermont.

ACCD Secretary Mike Schirling, Deputy Secretary Ted Brady, Economic Development Commissioner Joan Goldstein, and Tourism Commissioner Wendy Knight presented the Vermont Economic Advancement Award to former Senator Kevin Mullin and Pownal Representative Bill Botzow. The award recognized the gentlemen for their service in the Vermont legislature to advance economic development initiatives throughout the state.

Professional Housing

- August 14: Meds, Eds, and Emerging Drivers of Economic Growth

The RED Group serves as the steering committee coordinating regional participation with colleagues in Windham County for the creation of a Comprehensive Economic Development Zone for Southern Vermont. Three RED Group members, along with BCIC staff, serve on the RFP Committee that has reviewed proposals from economic development firms interested in serving as a consultant for the forthcoming CEDS project. Final contractor interviews will take place in early March.



Download the FREE "Tip411" app from the Android and iPhone app stores and, send completely anonymous tips to an account monitored by the Bennington County Sheriff's Department. Learn more [HERE](#).



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