



Bennington County Regional Commission

News and Notes

March 2019

BCRC March Meeting
Thursday, March 21, 2019 - 5:30 PM
Sunderland Town Offices
[104 Mountain View Road](#)

Housing Programs

A recent BCRC survey and the planning exercise at our January commission meeting revealed HOUSING to be the top issue of concern among communities in our region. The March 21 commission meeting will feature three housing organizations active in the region – Shires Housing, Habitat for Humanity, and NeighborWorks of Western Vermont – presenting their programs and will include a discussion about strategies for improving housing quality and access in our communities. The meeting is free and open to the public, beginning with light refreshments at 5:30 PM.

Contact [Catherine Bryars](#) at the BCRC for more information.



Region Towns Gear Up to Form Energy Committees

Nearly 60 people crowded into the meeting room at Arlington’s Martha Canfield Library to learn about local energy committees and the work that they can do to help implement their community energy plans. This BCRC/ VISTA organized event featured speakers from the Vermont Energy and Clean Action Network (VECAN) and Efficiency Vermont, as well as a lively question and answer period. A video of the event is available at:

[Southwestern Vermont Regional Energy Forum](#)

For more information on energy committees and to learn about upcoming events for local energy advocates, contact [Madison Kremer](#) at the BCRC.



Ian Hitchcock discusses town energy committees at the recent forum in Arlington.

Southern Vermont CEDS

A creation of a Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was the number one recommendation of the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone Report in 2016. For the past year people in the Windham and Bennington Regions have been working to develop a strategy that builds off the success of the existing Windham County CEDS and leverages a broader set of resources and capacity to address challenges common to both regions. The draft of the Southern Vermont CEDS is now complete and has gone to the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) for review and comment. The draft submitted to the EDA can be found by following this link:

<https://www.sovermontsummit.com/2019-zone-ceds>

OBJECTIVES

Designed to meet the goals of strengthening business and supporting people

Increase our Population: Attract more people to live in Southern Vermont, to participate in the community, the workforce, and support the business and civic environment.

Improve our Physical Infrastructure: Make the critical infrastructure improvements so that Southern Vermont is resident and business ready.

Enhance our Social Infrastructure: Improve quality of life and stability for residents.

Expand our Business Infrastructure: Create an environment that will encourage more jobs and opportunities in Southern Vermont.

Develop our Economic Development Capacity: Enhance the ability for economic development professionals and partners to play a role in implementation.

From the draft 2019 Southern Vermont CEDS



Thanks to our Congressional delegation, passage of the federal Farm Bill included expansion of the territory eligible for grants under the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC), to include the entire State of Vermont. Formerly, only the northern-most counties were eligible. Between 1.5 and 2.5 million dollars will be available for economic and infrastructure projects, with a \$500,000 maximum award for infrastructure project and \$250,000 for other projects. Applications will be available on the NBRC website early March. A letter of notification is due March 30th and full applications due in May. Eligible applicants are public bodies, 501(c) non-profits, Native American Tribes, and state government, for projects that focus on:

- ⇒ Transportation infrastructure
- ⇒ Basic public infrastructure
- ⇒ Telecommunications infrastructure
- ⇒ Workforce development, entrepreneurship and businesses and technology development
- ⇒ Resources and open space conservation, tourism and recreation
- ⇒ Renewable and alternative energy.

The Department of Economic Development will be holding several informational sessions around the state of Vermont to provide information to potential applicants for the 2019 NBRC grant round. The closest to us will be held at 67 Merchants Row in Rutland on March 14th at 10:00am.

Workforce Development Grants

The BCRC has been awarded a \$7,500 grant from the McClure Foundation via the Vermont Community Foundation to help defer costs related to the Sophomore Summit and other workforce development and career exposure activities over the next three years.



The BCRC also received a \$25,000 grant from the Vermont Department of Labor to help expand internship opportunities in the region. These funds will pay for a part-time internship coordinator to work with area businesses to help them better understand how to locate, hire, and effectively utilize interns. This program will build off the successful mode deployed in Windham County and will be done in partnership with the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation which oversees the Windham County initiative.

Local Emergency Management Plans

A current **Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP)** is required for municipalities to receive federal preparedness funds and increased state reimbursement through the Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF). Those plans are due **May 1st**. The LEMP is replacing the Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP). The new LEMP format is intended to be more user friendly for towns during a disaster. If your municipality would like assistance with completing the LEMP or if you have any questions, please contact [Allison Strohl](#) at the BCRC (phone: 802-442-0713).

Flood Training Website



Flooding is Vermont's most common natural disaster. It's costly to clean up after floodwaters enter a building, but the majority of flood damage in Vermont involves roads, buildings, and bridges washing away when streams and rivers move underneath their foundations. Municipalities can significantly reduce the risk you face with several strategies. The training toolkit available at

FloodTraining.vermont.gov

is available for local officials who administer municipal flood hazard and river corridor bylaws. The site features tools and case studies for zoning administrators, members of development review boards, and other municipal officials. The new site complements FloodReady.vermont.gov with its focus on community planning for flood resilience, and the technical materials available at the DEC Rivers page.

Update to the Statewide River Corridor Map

The River Corridor and Floodplain Protection Program is pleased to announce the availability of draft enhancements to the Statewide River Corridor Map. Over the last three years, the program integrated over 2200 miles of field-based stream geomorphic assessment data into the existing statewide map. Updates to the map were informed by field determined valley wall locations, confining features such as bedrock, and sensitivity rating based on physical stream condition. Some changes are based on more recent and detailed map data (e.g., aerial imagery or LiDAR) were also included. The draft river corridor map is posted on the [Flood Ready Atlas](#).

Natural Playground Planned for Bennington

BEFORE



AFTER



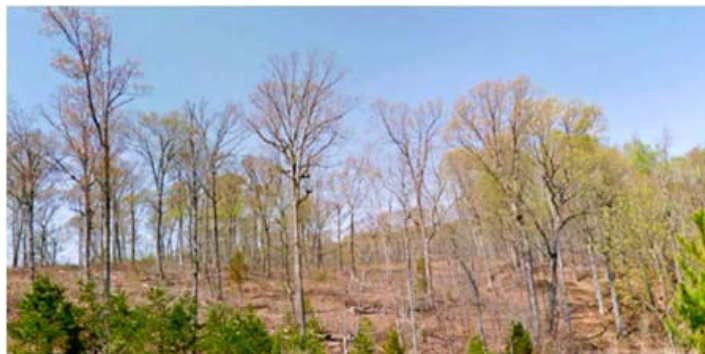
The BCRC is partnering with the Town of Bennington, the Department of Health and other groups to bring more innovative, walkable recreation opportunities to downtown Bennington. In December 2018, the Department of Health obtained a grant to install nature-based playground equipment at Stark Street Playground in Bennington. Natural playgrounds are play areas built from natural materials and designed to engage children in more dynamic and creative play. Research suggests that nature-based play contributes to the overall physical, cognitive, and emotional development of children better than convention playground equipment does. An upcoming Bennington Select Board meeting will host a presentation on the benefits of natural playgrounds (date TBD). For more information on this project or the upcoming presentation, contact BCRC staff Cat Bryars at

cbryars@bcrcvt.org or 802-442-0713 x310.

GMNF Forest Management Plan Available for Review

The USDA Forest Service has completed the Early Successional Habitat Creation (ESHC) Project Environmental Assessment and DRAFT Decision Notice. Both documents are now available for public review.

The project area is located on the Green Mountain National Forest, Manchester Ranger District located within multiple towns in Bennington, Rutland, Windham and Windsor Counties, Vermont. Initially proposed in May 2018, the ESHC Project includes up to 15,000 acres of timber harvest treatments to be implemented over a 15-year period. The harvests are designed to increase the acreage of the regenerating age class (0 to 9 years old) of vegetation in order to move the forest toward its desired future condition provided in the Green Mountain National Forest Land & Resource Management Plan. The project also aims to improve habitat for neotropical migrant passerine birds (or perching birds) and other wildlife species requiring early successional habitats.



A shelterwood cut, one type of treatment planned for use to support early successional habitat in the Green Mountain National Forest.

The ESHC Project Environmental Assessment, Draft Decision Notice, Project Maps, the Response to Comments received during the scoping/30-day public comment period, and Implementation Guide are available for review at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=53629> .

Vermont Decarbonization Study Findings

In July 2018, the Vermont Joint Fiscal Office hired Resources for the Future (RFF) to compile a report on decarbonization policies for the state. The report findings are being reviewed as policy makers consider options and implications for advancing Vermont's climate and energy goals.

Given Vermont's current emissions profile, with emissions concentrated in transportation and heating fuels, decarbonizing the economy to meet the state's goals will require new, ambitious policy. The report's quantitative evaluation suggests that a carbon pricing-only strategy in Vermont is unlikely to produce the level of GHG emissions reductions required to meet the state's climate targets (unless the carbon price is set substantially higher than levels considered in this study). The analysis demonstrates, however, that the combination of a moderate carbon price with a comprehensive set of nonpricing policies (for example, from providing electric vehicle and energy efficiency incentives, to increasing the stringency of the statewide Renewable Energy Standard) could allow the state to meet some, but not all, of its emissions reduction targets. The economic effects of carbon pricing in Vermont are expected to be small; and under all policies modeled, the public health and climate benefits outweigh total costs. How the revenue from carbon pricing is recycled has important implications for how the costs are distributed throughout the economy—including how low-income and rural households fare compared to upper income and urban households.

The complete report is available at:

<https://www.rff.org/publications/reports/an-analysis-of-decarbonization-methods-in-vermont/>



Events and Opportunities....

Green Mountain Power Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) Hearing

March 12—6:00 PM—Rutland Free Library, 10 Court Street, Rutland

GMP will present their plan to continue providing cost-effective, reliable, and increasingly renewable power. At 7 p.m., the Public Utility Commission will host a public hearing to take comments. For more information and to view the IRP, please visit: <https://greenmountainpower.com/regulatory/2018-integrated-resource-plan/>



Free Workshop on Self-Employment

March 19— 10:30AM to 1:30 PM—Bennington Free Library
101 Silver Street in Bennington

Are you curious what it takes to start a business or need some guidance toward self-employment? BROCC Community Action's Business Counselor will provide an interactive, fun workshop with many resources available to help you plan your way to success. Registration is requested and greatly appreciated, but please arrive about 15 minutes early if you were unable to pre-register. Please call (802) 665-1744 or email ahoyle@brocc.org.



BCRC Monthly Meeting: Housing Programs

March 21—5:30 PM—Sunderland Town Hall

104 Mountain View Road, Sunderland

See Article on page 1 for more information or contact Catherine Bryars.



Grant Writing Workshop: “Make Fund Finding Fun!”

March 22—9:00 AM to 3:00 PM—Bellows Falls Moose Lodge

A workshop featuring expert grant writers and funders who will teach skills, provide insights into creating successful proposals, and work directly with participants. The event is sponsored by the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation’s Southern Vermont Economy Project, in partnership with the Vermont Community Foundation and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. If your community or organization seeks funding for projects or programs, this training can help. For more information about the Workshop and registration please visit:

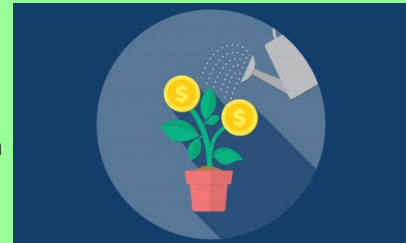


www.brattleborodevelopment.com or contact Sarah Lang, SVEP Manager, at slang@brattleborodevelopment.com or 802-257-7731 ext. 222.

Strengthening Communities for the Future: Community and Economic Development Forum

March 27—Burke Mountain Resort, East Burke, VT

Local government and community leaders play vital roles in the creation of thriving local economies that generate revenue, attract new residents, create jobs, and preserve the unique qualities of a town. This forum offers attendees the opportunity to not only learn about community and economic development tools and strategies, but also hear town officials describe how they successfully reached their goals and overcame challenges. Attendees will also meet technical assistance and resource providers and be able to network with their colleagues around the state. For more information and to register:



<https://www.vlct.org/event/strengthening-communities-future-community-and-economic-development-forum>.

Vermont Woodlands Association Annual Meeting

April 6, 2019—8:30AM to 3:00PM—Vermont Technical College,

Randolph Center, VT

For more information and to register:

<http://www.vermontwoodlands.org/documents/AMAgenda.Registration.pdf>.



Town Officers’ Education Conference

April 11—Rutland Holiday Inn

The conferences are organized by UVM Extension in partnership with participating organizations. They are designed to help town clerks, planners, listers, select board members, and other officials do their jobs more effectively by providing updates on tax laws and regulations, municipal recordkeeping, and effective strategies for handling planning, zoning and other town issues. For more information:

https://www.uvm.edu/extension/extension_event_calendars.

USDA Community Connect Grant Program

Application deadline: April 15, 2019

The Community Connect program helps rural communities extend access where broadband service is least likely to be commercially available, but where it can make a tremendous difference in the quality of life for people and businesses. The projects funded by these grants help rural residents tap into the enormous potential of the Internet for jobs, education, healthcare, public safety and community development.

Grant forms and resources: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-connect-grants> .



ICS 402 Training

May 9—2:00 PM to 5:00 PM at the BCRC Offices in Bennington

An important training for municipal officials will be coming to Bennington County this May. ICS 402 is an overview of the Incident Command System (ICS) and how it can be utilized in your community. This course defines roles and responsibilities during an emergency, explains terminology and organizational structure, discusses multi-agency coordination, provides information on administrative and reporting needs, as well as logistics. All municipal officials that may be involved in incident management should attend this training, either for the first time or as a refresher. Please make sure to sign up for the course through the Learning Management System (LMS) [here](#). Or visit the [VEM training page](#) for information on how to sign up if you have not used LMS before. If you have any questions or have problems signing up, please reach out to Allison Strohl at alangedale@bcrcvt.org.

VBSR's 29th Annual Spring Conference

May 15 at UVM's Davis Center

Throughout the day, you will engage in workshops designed to help CSR-minded professionals find new opportunities through values-led work. Attendees will enjoy a localvore menu, visit with 40+ exhibitors, and enjoy a cocktail reception and networking opportunities with more than 300 forward-thinking business professionals. For more information: <https://vbsr.org/events/> .



Bennington County Regional Commission Annual Meeting

Wednesday, May 22

At the Taconic Hotel in Manchester Village - Save the date!



Southern Vermont Economic Summit

Thursday, May 23 at the Grand Summit Resort, Mount Snow

The Southern Vermont Economy Summit is a daylong learning and networking event for municipal, community and business leaders that focuses on the long term development of Southern Vermont's economy. This year's theme is Investing in Southern Vermont's Future – strategies for planning, focus, and developing the economy. A day long track featuring workforce and capital development tools has been added for business owners, employers and managers. The day will highlight notable achievements of some of Southern Vermont's emerging community and business leaders and will close with a reception celebrating the Windham and Bennington County 5-year Comprehensive economic Development Strategy (CEDS). For more information and to register:

<https://www.sovermontsummit.com/> .