



Bennington County Regional Commission

# *News and Notes*

*May 2017*

## May 18 Annual Dinner Celebrates BCRC's 50th Anniversary

The Bennington County Regional Commission was established by action of its member towns and villages in 1967 and has been providing important services to those communities ever since. This year's annual dinner meeting, celebrating this special anniversary, will be held at [The Publyk House](#) on Harwood Hill in Bennington.

At the meeting we'll take a few moments to reflect on the past, looking back at the enduring planning goals and policies that have helped guide development and conservation in the region. We'll also look at some interesting forecasts from the original Bennington County Regional Plan that didn't pan out quite as expected. The Director will review the current budget, programs, and staffing for the organization, and will offer some thoughts on how the BCRC may need to adapt in the future to meet the needs of local communities. And we'll see how the vision of the founding members of the BCRC continue to provide a consistent direction for regional planning.



Ellen Stimson, Dorset resident and bestselling author, will provide plenty of smiles and laughs at this year's special annual dinner meeting.

A social hour will provide everyone an opportunity to visit with friends and colleagues from around the region while enjoying the spectacular views from the deck. A delicious dinner and the brief retrospective will be followed by a look to the future and the evening's main event, an entertaining talk by area resident and NY Times bestselling author, Ellen Stimson. Her stories describe how she and her family moved from St. Louis to a "quintessential New England town: in Vermont, bought a "perfect" old farmhouse that, "with just a few renovations...would be a start to their new, magnificent Vermont lives" (or so she thought!). As a special 50th Anniversary bonus, everyone who pre-registers for the dinner will receive a free copy of Ellen's book, ***Mud Season: How One Woman's Dream of Moving to Vermont, Raising Children, Chickens and Sheep, and Running the Old Country Store Pretty Much Led to One Calamity After Another.***

The meeting, open to anyone with an interest in regional planning, begins with the social hour at 5:00 PM. Pre-registration is required and the cost is \$30 per person. For more information and an invitation, contact Jim Sullivan at the BCRC:

([jsullivan@bcrcvt.org](mailto:jsullivan@bcrcvt.org) or 802-442-0713 x5).

Because the Bennington County Regional Commission is an organization composed of our seventeen member towns and villages, we thought it appropriate to dedicate the rest of this month's newsletter to acknowledging each of them and providing a little information about current happenings.

## Rupert

Population: 714

BCRC Commissioners: Charlies Rockwell  
Phil Chapman

Bongartz Awards: Robert Graf, Jed Rubin

Well-known for its agricultural heritage, including the pastoral Mettawee Valley, and for the Merck Forest and Farmland Center, Rupert also has an innovative town plan and land use regulations, placing special emphasis on maintaining vibrant village centers and its rural open spaces. The town has just implemented three better roads projects developed from its stormwater master plan, is working on forest road restoration projects, and is updating and improving its inventory of town highway infrastructure, all with an eye toward water quality improvements.



## Dorset

Population: 2,031

BCRC Commissioners: Nancy Faesy  
John LaVecchia

Dorset is famous for the historic villages of Dorset and East Dorset, its country stores, and the quarries that supplied marble to many landmark buildings. The town has successfully conserved important forest lands for public use, including the recent acquisitions on Owls Head, and has developed the information necessary to support official state designations for Dorset and East Dorset Villages. Dorset was an active partner with Manchester and Manchester Village in creating the Northshire Economic Development Strategy and currently is working with the BCRC to better plan for development in its business parks. Dorset's active energy committee has spearheaded numerous energy efficiency initiatives in town and currently is working with the BCRC on a new energy plan.



## Peru

Population: 375

BCRC Commissioners: Paul Myers, Gail Acosta

Peru sits at the top of Vermont, the only town in the state with land in the Connecticut River, Lake Champlain, and Hudson River watersheds. The town also is a center for outdoor sports, with downhill and cross country skiing, the Long Trail and Catamount Trails, and a National Forest Recreation Center. After working with the BCRC to complete an economic development study, Peru has received a state village center designation, improved its village park, seen reconstruction and re-opening of the Hapgood Store (also an important town gathering place), and a revitalized inn and market. A multi-million dollar private investment also is bringing new life to Johnny Seesaws, an historic stopover and restaurant along Route 11.



## Landgrove

Population: 158

BCRC Commissioner: Jerald Hassett

Landgrove originally may have come into existence due to a mapping irregularity, but the result was a beautifully situated town along Utley Brook and a fertile valley surrounded by mountain peaks. The town's population increased steadily after the mid-1900s, and planning work has focused on preserving the area's natural beauty while ensuring efficient delivery of necessary services in a small, rural community. The community is engaged in a continuing planning process; having worked with the BCRC to develop a new town plan and revised land use regulations over the past five years, an updated plan is now being drafted and maps and other resources are being added to the town's website.



## Sandgate

Population: 405

BCRC Commissioners: Suzanne dePeyster  
Judy Boehlert

Bongartz Award: Suzanne dePeyster

Sandgate is situated among the remote mountains and valleys of the Taconic Range, with most settlement along the Green River Valley and "over the Notch" in the West Sandgate Valley. Outdoor recreation, agriculture, and forestry always have been important in the town, exemplified recently by large-scale maple sugaring operations near aptly named, Beartown. The town recently received an Ecosystem Restoration Program grant to develop a stormwater master plan and also is using a Better Roads grant to address specific local road and water quality issues.



## Manchester

Population: 4,391

BCRC Commissioners: Pauline Moore  
Janet Hurley

Bongartz Awards: Ivan Beattie, Michael Kilburn

Manchester is the "Shire Town" and center of commerce in northern Bennington County. Having just completed a new town plan, the community is now drafting comprehensive revisions to its land use regulations, focusing on strategies to encourage mixed use development and housing in the downtown area. At the same time, the BCRC is helping the town develop a new Energy Plan and working with the town on implementation of the Northshire Economic Development Strategy. The town also has made a commitment to being accommodating of bicycles and pedestrians, highlighted by its plans for a new River Walk and the bike-ped friendly redesign of Depot Street that was supported through BCRC's transportation planning initiative.



## Manchester Village

Population: 749

BCRC Commissioner: Anthony Maclaurin

Stately homes line the historic tree-lined streets of Manchester Village, a community that also is home to hotels, inns, restaurants, a regional arts center, two golf courses, Burr and Burton Academy, and the Hildene estate. Not to be overlooked are attributes ranging from Equinox Pond and the entrance to the Equinox Preservation Trust lands to important residential care homes. The Village recently completed work on its new comprehensive Village Plan, is developing a new hazard mitigation plan, and is cooperating on implementation of the Northshire Economic Development Strategy and a planned Amtrak shuttle service.



## Arlington

Population: 2,317

BCRC Commissioners: Keith Squires  
Reginal Jennings, Jr.

Bongartz Award: Keith Squires

The Batten Kill turns west in Arlington and the river and its surrounding valley always have been important attractions. The town inspired the creativity of notable residents such as artist, Norman Rockwell, and author, Dorothy Canfield Fisher. The historic villages of Arlington and East Arlington have been officially designated under Vermont's Village Center program, and those areas have benefited from major improvements to the municipal water supply system. Arlington also has worked consistently to improve access for pedestrians throughout the community, with recent projects including sidewalk repairs and extensions in Arlington Village and a plan for a safe bike-ped connection from the Village to the Recreation Park. A new hazard mitigation plan also is in the works.



## Sunderland

Population: 956

BCRC Commissioners: Steven Bendix  
Ed Bove

Sunderland is a residential community in the center of the region and a gateway to remote lakes and forests in the Green Mountain National Forest. The community worked diligently to recover from tropical storm Irene's impacts to Kelly Stand Road and the Roaring Branch, and municipal work continues in its beautiful new town office building that overlooks farmland and Mount Equinox. The town has received an Ecosystem Restoration Program grant to develop a stormwater master plan, is inventorying local highway infrastructure, and has completed a plan to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety on Sunderland Hill Road.



## Shaftsbury

Population: 3,590

BCRC Commissioner: Ken Harrington

Bongartz Award: Charles Yoder

Shaftsbury has some of the largest expanses of agricultural land in the area and the region's most extensive network of unpaved local roads. Fortunately, the town just approved plans and funding for a new town garage, allowing it to relocate out of its cramped location next to Cole Hall in South Shaftsbury Village. The town's Village Center designation, the subject of well-attended public meetings, will help support redevelopment efforts, as will a zoning ordinance that was completely revised this year with BCRC assistance. The town is particularly interested in pursuing wastewater options that will support higher density mixed use development in the village area.



## Glastenbury

Population: 8

BCRC Commissioner: Meg Cottam

With most of the town lying in the Green Mountain National Forest, Glastenbury is an important regional recreational resource. The Appalachian/Long Trail traverses the town and its namesake mountain, as do many snowmobile trails. Famous for its history of a casino accessed by a rail line and substantial settlements based around the logging business, many people today mention "ghost town" and even "Bigfoot" when talking about Glastenbury. Its upland forests, streams, and wetlands play important water quality and flood control functions, and the BCRC works with interested volunteers to develop and implement its town plan and hazard mitigation plan.



## Bennington

Population: 15,764

BCRC Commissioners: Daniel Monks

William Deveneau

Bongartz Awards: Terry Ehrich, Lodie Colvin,  
Michael McDonough, Stuart Hurd, Barry Horst

Bennington is the commercial, institutional, and cultural center of the area, with a vibrant and historic downtown, colleges, a regional medical center, and state offices. The community is at the center of regional economic development efforts, including workforce training and housing initiatives as well as a major downtown redevelopment at the "Putnam Block," that is uniting the town, BCRC, businesses, institutions, and individuals in a project that will be transformative for the town and region. The town also is working on new energy and hazard mitigation plans and is developing and promoting its extraordinary trail networks and other outdoor recreational assets.



## North Bennington

Population: 1,643

BCRC Commissioner: Robert Howe

Bongartz Award: Robert McWaters

North Bennington Village, with its state designated historic Village Center, includes a diversity of housing, stores, restaurants, and other businesses. It also is home to Bennington College, the Park-McCullough House, and expanses of conserved lands and a popular trail network.

The Village is working to extend municipal water to residents and businesses affected by PFOA contamination, while continuing efforts to expand and improve its pedestrian connections. A hazard mitigation plan is being prepared with BCRC assistance as well as a new inventory of local highway infrastructure. The Village is working with the College and a local hydroelectric expert to develop small generating facilities at historic dam sites along Paran Creek.



## Old Bennington

Population: 139

BCRC Commissioner: Charles Edson

Old Bennington is the site of one of Vermont's first permanent settlements, the historic First Church, and the Bennington Battle Monument. It contains many historically significant structures and maintains design control standards to preserve the character of the community. The Village's planning commission, working with the BCRC, recently completed a new comprehensive plan.

With Vermont Route 9, Monument Avenue, and other heavily traveled local roads, the Village has worked with the BCRC to develop and implement traffic calming measures and is considering opportunities for improvements that will enhance pedestrian access and safety. There may be opportunities to utilize at least a portion of the old "Corkscrew" rail corridor to make some of those pedestrian connections.



## Woodford

Population: 424

BCRC Commissioners: Edward Shea

Chris Cranston

Bongartz Award: Edward Shea

Much of Woodford lies within the Green Mountain National Forest; it contains popular hiking destinations along the Appalachian Trail, a major Nordic ski center, and a hub for snowmobilers. Much planning work is coordinated with the Forest Service, including the recently completed "South of Route 9 Project."

The BCRC has worked closely with Woodford on new plan and land use bylaw updates and currently is helping coordinate parcel mapping and surveys of local roads.



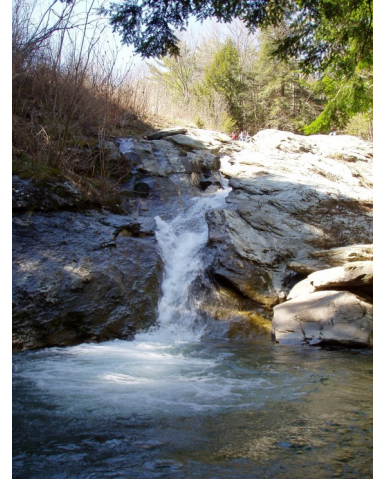
## Pownal

Population: 3,527

BCRC Commissioner: Walter Klinger

Bongartz Award: Nelson Brownell

Pownal is a southern gateway to the region and to Vermont, with the scenic Hoosic River Valley framed by the Taconic and Green Mountain Ranges. The town is actively engaged with the BCRC in the development of a new comprehensive plan, while also developing a new river corridor plan and maps for the Hoosic River and an inventory of local road infrastructure. The town has seen significant investment in renewable energy, with approximately 5 MW of installed solar generating capacity and a 500 KW capacity hydroelectric generating station being developed at the town dam in North Pownal. The town was just chosen as one of two municipalities in Vermont to receive special support as a “model climate economy community” by the Vermont Council on Rural Development.



## Stamford

Population: 824

BCRC Commissioners: Jean Kurpiel

Ronald Plock

Stamford is a close-knit community located among the hills and valley drained by the North Branch of the Hoosic River. Most of the developed land lies along VT Route 100, a scenic byway entering the state from near North Adams, MA. The region’s largest lake, Sucker Pond (aka “Lake Hancock”) is located in the remote forested area in the northwestern corner of Stamford. The town is in the process of working with the BCRC to complete a comprehensive revision of its town plan.



## Regional Bongartz Awards

In addition to the municipal officials, staff, and volunteers who have been recognized for the community service with Bongartz Awards since its inception in 1997, several individuals have been recognized for region-wide contributions in certain areas. Those individuals include:

Dianne Binnick - Affordable Housing and Historic Preservation

Richard Pembroke - Transportation Infrastructure

Jim White - Forestry and Natural Resource Management

Shelly Stiles - Land and Water Conservation

Gregory Burke - Comprehensive Regional Planning

Thomas Fields - Emergency Management

Trevor Mance - Solid Waste Management and Business Entrepreneurship

## Events and Opportunities....

- April 27: LEPC 7 Meeting. 6:00-7:45 PM. Bennington Project Independence - 614 Harwood Hill Road. Contact [Allison Strohl](#) at the BCRC for more information.
- April 29: ICS 400 Training: Incident Command System for Executives. 9:00 AM to Noon. Sunderland Town Hall. 104 Mt. View Road, Sunderland. Contact [Allison Strohl](#) for more information.
- May 2: Act 174 Energy Planning—Municipal Plans, Data, and Maps. 6:30—8:00 PM. Martha Canfield Library - 528 East Arlington Road, Arlington. The session will cover planning standards for municipal energy plans and will go over data and maps available from the BCRC. Contact [Catherine Bryars](#) at the BCRC for more information.
- May 10: Staying Connecting Initiative: Forest Blocks and Wildlife Habitat Connectivity between the Green and Taconic Mountains. 6:30-8:00 PM. Arlington Town Hall, Route 7A. Contact [Jim Henderson](#) at the BCRC for more information.
- May 10: Vermont Community Development Association Spring Conference: Economic Impact of Trails and Recreation Paths. 9:00 AM—3:00 PM, Burke Mountain Hotel & Conference Center, East Burke. For more information contact Theresa Bachand [Tbachand@vlct.org](mailto:Tbachand@vlct.org) or call (802) 229-9111.
- May 18: BCRC Annual Dinner Meeting: See page one—contact [Jim Sullivan](#) for details.
- May 20: Youth Appreciation Day at Willow Park, Bennington. In partnership with United Way of Bennington County and the Alliance for Community Transformations, a celebration of the area's youth with a day of FREE food, activities, games, live performances by local teen musicians, special snapchat filter, and more! Contact [Elyse Belarge](#), BCRC VISTA, for more information.
- May 23: Invasive Species Workshop and Removal, Whipstock Hill Wildlife Management Area, White Oak Drive, Bennington from 3:00—6 :00PM. Contact [Jim Henderson](#) for more information.
- May 24: Southern Vermont Economic Development Summit. Stratton Mountain Base Lodge. The Southern Vermont Economic Development Summit is a daylong event that will focus on the key projects and perspectives affecting economic development through out the Southern Vermont region. For more information, please contact Jonathan Cooper at the BCRC: [jcooper@bcrcvt.org](mailto:jcooper@bcrcvt.org) or 802.442.0713 ext. 312.
- June 8: Vermont Downtown and Historic Preservation Conference. Barrett Center for the Arts in White River Junction. [Click here](#) for information and registration. Contact: Gary Holloway - [gary.holloway@vermont.gov](mailto:gary.holloway@vermont.gov) - (802) 828-3220.
- June 16: Smart Growth Summit. Champlain College, Burlington, VT. 8:30 AM-12:30 PM. Learn about Vermont's smart growth accomplishments, practical tools, and discuss ways we can harness smart growth to provide housing choices, transportation options, and a high quality of life for all Vermonters. Go to: <http://arp.cvent.com/SmartGrowth> for the agenda and to [RSVP](#) (SPACE IS LIMITED).