



Bennington County Regional Commission

# News and Notes

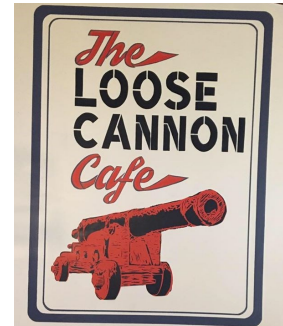
## September 2019

### September BCRC Meeting Regional Economic Development Initiatives

The September 19 meeting of the Bennington County Regional Commission will provide an update on various regional and inter-regional economic development initiatives. The BCRC has worked closely to advance the Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, developed jointly with our partners in Windham County, especially since establishing our new integrated relationship with the regional development corporation for Bennington County (the BCIC). Bill Colvin and Jonathan Cooper will discuss the critical work being done to develop necessary community and economic development infrastructure and will review and answer questions about some of the more visible projects, including business development grants and the Putnam Block redevelopment project.

The Commission also will be holding two public hearings to consider approval of the Pownal, Stamford, and North Bennington municipal plans and to approve certificates of energy compliance for the Pownal and Stamford plans under Act 174.

The meeting will be held at the Loose Cannon Café (formerly the Brown Cow Café) at 139 Main Street in Bennington and will begin with refreshments at 5:30 PM, followed by the public hearings and economic development discussion at 6:00 PM. Contact [Jim Sullivan](#) at the BCRC for more information. The meeting is open to the public.



### Putnam Block Redevelopment

After three years of work and workarounds, the Bennington Redevelopment Group closed on the Putnam Block properties on Friday, June 14. A small event took place on June 18, signifying the accomplishment and celebrating the work to come.



Governor Scott speaking at the Putnam Block groundbreaking ceremony.

Representative Peter Welch and Governor Phil Scott joined hundreds of attendees for the official groundbreaking ceremony on August 7. Twelve speakers, including the Governor, Representative Welch, and representatives from the offices of Senator Leahy, Senator Sanders, financial institutions, supporting non-profits, and local and state government, shared thoughts on the process that had led to the day's celebration and the importance of the project to Bennington's future.

Ted Brady, Deputy Secretary of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, referred to the Putnam Block as "the most important economic development project happening in rural Vermont today," and Vermont Housing and Conservation Board Executive Director Gus Seelig referred to the "conspiracy of goodwill" that allowed such a complex development project to move forward. Among the many complexities is the site's ownership, which passed to the BCRC's economic

development partner, the BCIC, in the course of the transaction. This ownership move allowed millions of dollars for remediation and other necessary work to flow into the project and freed up project dollars for other uses.

See more coverage of the event at: [WCAX Story](#) and [Bennington Banner Story](#).



Groundbreaking at the long-awaited Putnam Block  
Redevelopment project.

## Kocher Drive Bike-Ped Project Awarded Additional Funds

A critical transportation access and safety project along Bennington’s busy Kocher Drive corridor has received the funding needed for construction to begin in the near future. The project, which includes a bikepath along Kocher Drive, a safe crossing of US 7, and connections to other existing and planned sidewalks and bikepaths in the area, was awarded a \$224,000 grant through the Vermont Bicycle-Pedestrian Program. The project was selected from among thirty-one applications statewide with funding requests totaling \$13.6 million. The total cost of the project is approximately \$950,000, including a combination of grants and local funding.



Residents will soon be able to walk and bike safely along the busy Kocher Drive corridor between Benmont Avenue and Park Street, with a safe crossing of US Route 7.

The BCRC has worked closely with the Town, State , and project consultants to plan the improvements and manage the complex project, originally identified in the regional transportation plan as a critical because of the concentration of housing, retail services, schools, and public parks in an area almost completely lacking any facilities to safely accommodate the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists. Contact [Mark Anders](#) at the BCRC for more information about this and other local transportation projects.



## Vermont Public Transit Survey

The Vermont Agency of Transportation is updating the [Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan](#), examining Vermont's transit needs and proposing programs and policies to address them. After hearing from Vermonters from across the state and identifying public transit issues and challenges, as well as potential strategies for addressing them, the State invites you to help fine tune the results by [taking this survey](#) and letting them know what you think. Survey takers can register for a drawing for a \$50 gift card! Your input will help VTrans shape the future of public transportation in Vermont.



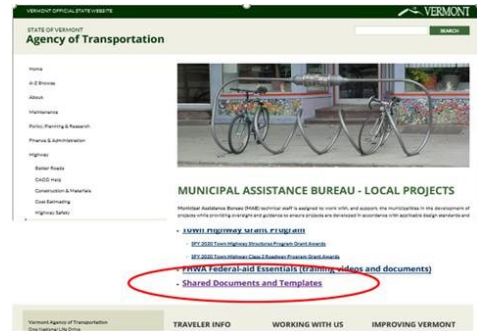
## Updated Website for Local Transportation Project Support

VTrans has given their Municipal Assistance SharePoint Site a new look. This new format should be easier for you to navigate and find the documents available to work on the development of local projects. Local officials should update their records with this new link:

<https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/VTRANS/external/MAB-LP>

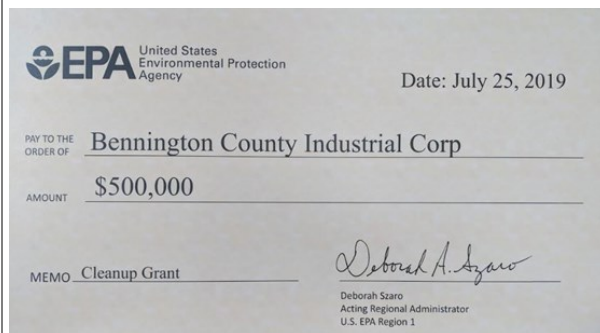
The site can still be accessed through the "Shared Documents and Templates" link in the MAB Webpage:

<https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects>



## New Website for the VT Department of Labor

The Vermont Department of Labor launched a new website in July to create a more user-centric resource for employers, job seekers, and the general public. Go to [www.labor.vermont.gov](http://www.labor.vermont.gov)



## EPA Brownfields Multipurpose, Assessment, and Cleanup Grants

BCRC staff traveled to Montpelier recently to receive one of six grants awarded by the EPA to Vermont entities through its 2019 Brownfields MAC Grant program. The \$500,000 grant to BCRC's partner organization, BCIC, will be used for site remediation and cleanup on the portion of the Putnam

Block parcel that is not associated with the Phase 1 redevelopment.

This funding provides more than half of the estimated cleanup cost for the Phase 2 portion, and will go a long way toward bringing the full site back into productive use. More than half of the total \$2.2 million in grant funding awarded statewide went to support cleanup and assessment efforts in Southern Vermont, as colleagues from the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation and the Windham Regional Commission received grants of \$500,000 and \$300,000, respectively.

## Events and Opportunities....

### BCRC Brownfields Redevelopment Program Seeks Projects

The BCRC has maintained a “Brownfields Redevelopment” program since 2006, funded through environmental site assessment grants awarded by the US Environmental Protection Agency. The program identifies properties that are either vacant or underutilized because of known or perceived contamination, conducts environmental assessments, and develops remediation and re-use plans that will lead to redevelopment meeting identified community objectives.

Assessments may be completed for properties contaminated by either petroleum or hazardous substances. Numerous properties throughout our region have benefited from the program, including historic industrial buildings, vacant automobile dealerships and service stations, dams and hydroelectric generating facilities, and other properties, often located in or near economically important downtowns and village centers. **Property owners and municipalities who may benefit from the program are urged to contact [Jim Henderson](#), BCRC’s Brownfields Redevelopment Coordinator.**

A typical project begins with a Phase 1 environmental site assessment (ESA) that includes a review of records, a site visit, and interviews to document any Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs). Such conditions might include stained surfaces, stressed or dead vegetation, leaking containers, and/or historic site uses that may be evidence of the presence of hazardous materials or petroleum releases. The Phase 1 ESA may lead to a finding of no RECs or a recommendation that a Phase 2 ESA be completed.

Phase 2 ESAs include on-site environmental investigations focusing on the RECs identified during Phase 1 and may include additional information to address gaps in data. Soil borings and ground water monitoring are typical during this phase of the investigation. Once the types, levels, and extent of contamination are identified, a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) is prepared to outline steps needed for remediation. The CAP is typically written to accommodate a proposed re-use of the site and will become part of the site’s land record. Quite often, a CAP is necessary before a potential purchaser can obtain financing.

The BCRC assessment grants cover 100% of the costs associated with Phase 1 ESAs, Phase 2 ESAs and the preparation of Corrective Action Plans. Although the assessment grants can’t be utilized to cover the costs associated with the cleanup of the site, some property owners have applied for and received low interest loans to help pay for this work.

**Please contact Jim Henderson, [jhenderson@bcrcvt.org](mailto:jhenderson@bcrcvt.org), 802-442-0713, for more information.**

**Local Foods, Local Places Technical Assistance:** EPA invites communities interested in revitalizing neighborhoods through development of local food systems to apply for [Local Foods, Local Places](#) technical assistance. Local Foods, Local Places supports projects that:

- Create livable, walkable, economically vibrant main streets and mixed-use neighborhoods.
- Boost economic opportunities for local farmers and main street businesses.
- Improve access to healthy, local food, especially among disadvantaged populations.

Communities with projects located in [federally designated Opportunity Zones](#) will receive special consideration. See the complete application instructions at [Local Foods—Local Places Application](#). Application Deadline: September 30, 2019 \* **Webinar: September 4, from 2:00-3:00 p.m.** for an overview of the Local Foods, Local Places program and the selection criteria for the 2019-2020 application. Register for the webinar at:

[https://epawebconferencing.acms.com/lflp6-application/event/event\\_info.html](https://epawebconferencing.acms.com/lflp6-application/event/event_info.html).

**2019 Vermont Emergency Preparedness Conference: September 6-7**

The 12th annual Vermont Emergency Preparedness Conference will be held September 6 & 7 at Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee, VT. How to access federal grants, what local officials need to know during a disaster, and how to pay for debris removal after a storm are just a few of the things your town needs to know in the event of an emergency. The Emergency Preparedness Conference provides a primer on those topics and helps lay the groundwork for a response system that protects life and property in your town. Acting Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Peter Gaynor will address conference attendees on Friday about leading FEMA and how his local and state level emergency management experience has shaped his approach to the agency. Local officials (elected, appointed, volunteers) responders, planners, students, or anyone who may play a role in emergency response or just has an interest is welcome to this free event. Registration Desk opens at 7:30AM and the conference begins at 9:00AM. Lunch and midday snacks are provided. [Register for the conference](#)

**Energy Committee Roundtable: September 12 - 5:30 PM - Manchester Community Library**

For local energy committee members and anyone who is interested in joining or forming an energy committee in their community. Find out about upcoming events and how you can make a difference in your town! Contact [Jim Sullivan](#) at the BCRC for more information.

**Drive Electric Bennington! September 18**

**3:30 PM to 6: 30 PM**

Join Green Mountain Power and the BCRC at the municipal parking lot/park at the corner of Depot Street and River Street in Bennington to check out electric vehicles! You can see a

variety of EVs, ask questions of owners and dealers, and go for a test drive with local dealers. This is a great opportunity to learn more about EVs and \$\$ financial incentives \$\$ available!

To find out more and register, go to: <https://driveelectricweek.org/event.php?eventid=2116> or contact [Madison Kremer](#) or [Jim Sullivan](#) at the BCRC.



**Municipal Highway and Stormwater Mitigation Grant Program :** In a commitment to improving the quality of state waters and providing funding to municipalities to assist in their efforts, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) is pleased to announce this funding opportunity. Grants funded through this program must have a transportation link. VTrans has identified the following as potentially eligible project types:

- Planning Studies (stormwater inventories, flow restoration plans, phosphorus control planning)
- Salt/Sand Sheds
- Culvert Replacement/ Re-sizing
- Detention Ponds
- Swirl Separators
- Infiltration Basins
- Subsurface Detention Systems
- Bio Retention Systems
- Bank Stabilization
- Stream Bank Stabilization
- Check Dams
- Permeable Pavers
- Gravel Wetlands
- Bio Filters

Eligible applicants for this grant program are municipalities. There is not a program cap on the amount of funding granted to a specific project, however, there is a 20% local match requirement. There will be a Skype informational workshop on September 18: [WORKSHOP](#) . For more information and an application: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/Municipal-Highway-and-Stormwater-Mitigation-Program> .

**BCRC September Meeting: September 19 at the Loose Cannon Café in Bennington**  
Regional Economic Development Initiatives—See Page 1 for more information.

**Housing Vermont—Annual Meeting: September 19**

Contois Auditorium - Burlington City Hall - 149 Church Street - Burlington, VT  
<https://www.hvt.org/>

**2020 Municipal Planning Grant Program:** Towns may apply for up to \$22,000 and joint applications from several municipalities (a consortium) may apply for up to \$35,000. A wide range of municipal planning and implementation activities are eligible for funding. Strong grant applications must demonstrate community engagement and buy-in, and I encourage you to reach out now to stakeholders and discuss local needs, opportunities and strategies for change. Review the [Program Description](#) for eligibility requirements and use the new [Application Guide](#) and the criteria for successful applications. Even the [smallest Vermont towns](#) can write a winning application and open doors to new opportunities. Application Schedule for the 2020 Grants:

- ⇒ Online application (GEARS) opens for use: August 1, 2019
- ⇒ Training videos posted: August 1, 2019
- ⇒ RPC confirmation of municipal planning process (for eligibility): September 30, 2019
- ⇒ Application Deadline: September 30 @ 6:00 p.m., 2019
- ⇒ Award Decisions: Early December 2019

If you have any questions about the Municipal Planning Grants or wish to talk through project ideas, please do not hesitate to contact a staff member at the BCRC, (802-442-0713) or Jennifer Lavoie, [Jennifer.Lavoie@vermont.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Lavoie@vermont.gov), at the Department of Housing and Community Development .

**VLCT Town Fair: October 2 and 3 at the Killington Grand Hotel**

VLCT's annual trade show and conference is your chance to learn from and connect with your municipal colleagues who experience many of the same challenges and rewards that you do. Because many local officials serve multiple roles and have a variety of responsibilities, Town Fair 2019's twenty-five training sessions have been structured to address topics that municipal officials have specifically said are important to them. [Click here for registration](#) and a schedule.

**Renewable Energy Vermont Conference:** October 10 and 11 at the Doubletree by Hilton Conference Center in South Burlington. This annual forum brings together business leaders, system operators, architects, builders, manufacturers, engineers, scientists, policy makers, and regulators. Join us at REV2019 to connect with innovators and experts on:

- ⇒ Achieving 100% Renewable Energy & Customer Driven Climate Solutions
- ⇒ Equitable & Affordable Access to Renewable Electricity, Heating, & Transportation
- ⇒ Emerging Technologies, Business & Financing Models
- ⇒ Integrating Innovation & Distributed Energy on the Grid
- ⇒ Deep Dives into the Latest Policy & Regulatory Issues
- ⇒ State & Local Climate Leadership

For more information and to register: <http://www.revconference.org/register> .

**CDFA New England Roundtable - Catalyzing Opportunity Zone Investments in New England**

**October 22, 2019 in Boston:** Learn about Opportunity Zones Fundamentals & the Latest Updates in New England \* Where are Opportunity Zones? \* Perspectives from State and Local Agencies \* Developing a Local Opportunity Zones Strategy \* Opportunity Funds to Support Rural Development Energy Financing in Opportunity Zones , and more! [Click here for more information.](#)

**2019 Northeast Transportation Safety Conference (NETSC): Northeast Highway Safety - Regional Challenges, Successes, and Opportunities - Monday, October 28th & Tuesday, October 29th**  
The Hilton, Burlington, VT - This conference brings together engineering, education, law enforcement and EMS highway safety specialists from across the Northeast to focus on a common goal: the reduction of fatalities and injuries on our roadways. [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

**State Government Municipal Day - October 31 at the ANR Regional Office in Rutland**

When Governments Cooperate is sponsored by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. This annual training includes a wide variety of workshops and gives you the opportunity to network and engage with state and municipal colleagues. Over the years, our offerings have grown. We try to meet people where they are by holding training opportunities at our regional offices -close to where you live and work. Space is limited and pre-registration is required. To see a full agenda and to register, go to: [https://anr.vermont.gov/about\\_us/special-topics/municipal-day/rutland](https://anr.vermont.gov/about_us/special-topics/municipal-day/rutland)

**BCIC Annual Meeting - Save the Date! - November 7, 2019**

