

Bennington County Regional Commission

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes - April 26, 2019

8:30 AM

Second Chance Animal Shelter – Route 7A, Arlington

Present: Cinda Morse, Dan Monks, Janet Hurley, John LaVecchia, Suzanne dePeyster,
James Salerno / Staff: Jim Sullivan, Bill Colvin

1. Minutes of February 22, 2019 Meeting

Motion by Monks to approve as submitted. Second by LaVecchia. Passed unanimously (Morse abstaining).

1. Financial Report

- Third Quarter Financial Report was reviewed. Noted that both revenues and expenditures are ahead of budgeted projections, with net income through three quarters at about \$11,500 (less than projected due to some higher consultant costs and revenues lower than expected because of shifting staff time to be sure to recover all costs in some large grant programs such as TPI). Sullivan noted that the last quarter is likely to show another increase in expenditures above the budget because of moving up the timetable on the BCRC's changeover of its computer systems.

2. Program Reports

- Planning
 - Reform of Development Process for Local Transportation Projects: The BCRC has initiated a process with VAPDA to seek reforms to locally managed transportation projects that receive federal funds. Many of these projects are bicycle-pedestrian and "streetscape" projects that are nominally classified as being "categorically excluded" (CE) from the rigorous state and federal environmental/historical impact review process, but in practice are subjected to essentially the same review to prove that they are, after all, subject to the CE. The resulting delays result in cost escalations that result in further delays,... The value of our transportation program is being diminished and questioned as a result. We have met with other RPCs and developed a summary of our concerns along with examples. We are now working with VAPDA's transportation lead to schedule a meeting with key staff at VTrans and FHWA while also surveying other regional planning and development organizations around the country to see if they have experienced similar frustrations or if they are unique to our FHWA region. The committee agreed that it was worth pursuing this kind of reform. Staff will report back on progress.

- Legislative proposals to create Clean Water Service Provider (CWSP): Legislation that is moving in the Vermont Senate this year contemplates establishing Clean Water Service Provider organizations for each major watershed area of the state. It is likely that RPCs would be looked to as the default CWSPs, with the BCRC serving that role in our region (basically, the part of the Hudson River watershed in Vermont). The main role would be to identify and prioritize water quality improvement projects in the region. We would not be implementing the projects ourselves, but would have a central administrative role. Concerns have been raised about the exact role of the RPCs, how we might be held accountable if the region doesn't meet water quality targets, and how the program would be funded over time. If this program moves forward it could significantly expand our position in water quality, but it would take 2-3 years to get underway. The committee supported the BCRC's potential role as a CWSP and will monitor this program as it develops.

- Funding for Energy Plan Implementation: The BCRC received funding a few years ago to develop a regional energy plan and has received a little over \$20,000/year in each of the past three years to help municipalities develop local energy plans consistent with "Act 174" planning standards. We are in the final year of that program and with no additional state funding forthcoming, we have been concerned about maintaining our role in energy planning and implementation. Fortunately, Efficiency Vermont has expressed an interest in providing about \$10,000 per RPC to assist with plan implementation, especially supporting things like municipal use of energy data, outreach on weatherization and alternative fuels, etc. We are working with them and other RPCs to finalize details now. Sullivan reported that it is likely that existing staff will spend more time on this energy work (perhaps increased hours for a position that currently is part-time) or some new TPI funds would be used to create a part-time energy coordinator position.

- Act 250/Section 248
 - Bennington Solar Projects ("Stark and Warner"): A number of solar generation projects continue to be submitted to the PUC with opportunities for BCRC input. Most recent projects have been relatively small and/or located on statutory "preferred sites." These projects are larger and potentially controversial. The BCRC's energy committee has reviewed the projects and recommended that we submit a letter indicating that the projects are consistent with the Regional Plan based on our renewable energy goals, siting guidelines, and the fact that the Town of Bennington has identified the project location as meeting the town's "preferred site" criteria (and our plan specifically defers to siting maps/guidelines of Act 174 approved town energy plans). We submitted the letter to the PUC along with some recommendations about site use. The committee agreed to stand by our written submittal and not engage further in the PUC process.

- Community and Economic Development
 - Colvin briefly reviewed the Southern Vermont CEDS process and report (see attached overview). He noted that the BCIC board had endorsed the report and that a similar vote from the BCRC would be appropriate. Salerno provided some insights into the process and review of submitted projects. Following a brief discussion, Morse motioned and Monks seconded endorsement of the Southern Vermont CEDS. Passed unanimously.
- 3. Annual Meeting – May 22 (Wednesday) at the Taconic Hotel in Manchester. Featured speaker will be Joe Minicozzi, who also will be speaking the following day at the Southern Vermont Economy Summit at Mount Snow. Also noted that Mr. Minicozzi will be presenting at the Southern Vermont Economy Summit the following day.
- 4. Officers and Appointed Executive Committee members for the coming year: The Nominating Committee has nominated the current slate of officers to continue for another year. Sullivan will get ballots out to all commissioners next week. The BCRC Chair will make an appointment to the executive committee: Cinda Morse is interested in continuing in this position, and the Community and Economic Development Committee (BCIC Board) will make two appointments, probably at their annual meeting.
- 5. Interest Group Commissioners: Positions to continue/discontinue
 - Currently active representation: Transportation (Bruce Lierman), Energy (Wayn Goodman), Local Business (Greg VanHouten), Housing (Jonathan Ryan).
 - Not active: Local Food and Agriculture (Liz Ruffa), Public Health (Vacant), Conservation (Donald Campbell but just resigned).

The Executive Committee agreed that all of these interest groups should be represented. Members will discuss possible new members and make a recommendation for an future vote of the Commission.

- 6. Other Business and Adjourn

Next Meeting – June meeting rescheduled to Friday June 21, 8:30 AM, at Second Chance. Review and approval of FY 2020 Work Program and Budget will be on the agenda.

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
James Sullivan



BCRC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

APRIL 26, 2019

BENNINGTON, VERMONT



CEDS COMPLETION PROCESS

Milestone Events

- November 2017: EDA funding announced for SoVermont CEDS
- March 2018: Camoin Associates selected as CEDS Consultant
- May 2018: EDA Workshop; second Southern Vermont Summit; Emerging Professionals Awards; Business leader interviews
 - Oct 2018: four Emerging Professionals receive VBM's 2018 Rising Stars Award
- June 2018: Public Input – Assets & Opportunities
- July – September 2018: CEDS Focus Groups
- September 2018: Public Input – Vision & Goals
- November 2018: Public Input – CEDS Draft
- January 2019: Opening of Public Comment Period on Final CEDS
- March 2019: Public Submission of Projects to the CEDS
- April 2019: Selection of 2019 Vital Projects by CEDS Project Committee

CEDS Interviews & Focus Groups

- Healthcare
 - Tom Dee, SVHC
 - Steve Gordon, Bratt. Mem. Hosp.
- Tech & Entrepreneurship
 - Dimitri Garder, Global-Z
 - **Focus Group 8/22**
- Manufacturing
 - Michele Pilcher, National Hanger
 - Jessica Fredette, Mack Molding
 - Anapum Martins, New Chapter
 - Jill James, Chroma
 - John Hanley, GS Precision
- Arts & Culture
 - **Focus Group 7/18**
- Diversity & Inclusion
 - **Focus Group 12/18**
- Recreation & Tourism
 - Dick Deutsch, Mount Snow
- Building Trades
 - Joe Miles, r.k. Miles
- Childcare
 - Michelle Prouty, Myers Prouty
 - **Focus Group 8/31, 9/12**
- Housing
 - Stephanie Lane, Shires Housing
 - **Focus Group 7/18**
- Public Sector
 - Deb Wright, Town of Rockingham
 - Stephen Morse, ret. House Speaker
- Small Business
 - Lisa Sullivan, Bartleby's Books
 - **Focus Group 9/4**
- K-12 Education
 - Bill Anton, Wind. Cent. SU
 - **Focus Group 8/6**

CEDS HIGHLIGHTS

- Two Goals
 - Strengthen Business
 - Support People
- Five Objectives
 - Increase our Population
 - Improve our Physical Infrastructure
 - Enhance our Social Infrastructure
 - Expand our Business Infrastructure
 - Build our Economic Development Capacity
- Five Priority Actions
 - Apply to US EDA for Economic Development District designation
 - Focus resources on helping existing residents stay in the area
 - Utilize SoVermont to attract qualified talent to the area
 - Combine assessments and industry surveys to address current and projected workforce needs
 - Address broadband and cell access issues

PROPOSAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Bennington County

- Kayla Becker Catamount Connections
- John Burnham Kimpton Taconic
- Kelly Clarke Centerline Architects
- Jim Martinez Tri-State Area Federal Credit Union
- Elisabeth Marx Vermont Community Foundation
- James Salerno Hale Mountain Research

Windham County

- Drew Bryenton Commonwealth Dairy
- Eric DeRoucher Southern Vermont Chamber
- Gary Fox Town of Rockingham
- Chris Parker Town of Vernon
- Eilidh Pedersen Brattleboro Memorial Hospital
- Melissa Trainor School for International Training
- Cor Trowbridge BCTV