

**Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission**  
**May 14, 2013**  
**Minutes**

Present were:

Barre City: Michael Miller	Plainfield: David Strong	
	Robert Atchinson-absent	
Barre Town:	Byron Atwood	Roxbury:
	David McShane-absent	
Mark Nicholson-absent	Waitsfield: Don La Haye	Harrison
	Snapp-absent	
Berlin: Bob Wernecke	-absent	Warren: Craig
	Klofach-absent	
Cabot: Dick Payne		Dan
	Raddock - absent	
Calais:	Rolf Mueller	
	Washington:	
Duxbury: Brian Fitzgerald		Waterbury: Gunner McCain
East Montpelier: Tim Carver		Williamstown: Larry Hebert
Julie Potter		Woodbury: Janet Shatney
		David
	Barnowski-absent	
Fayston: Carol Chamberlin		Worcester: Bill Arrand
Marshfield: Faeterri Silver		
Middlesex: Ronald Krauth		
Montpelier: Tina Ruth		
Kim Cheney-absent		
Moretown: Deb Sargent-absent		
Northfield: Laura Hill-Eubanks		
Orange: George Malek		

Staff: S. Sinclair, L. Emery, J. Cassino, K. McKee

Others: Sam Andersen, CT VT Economic Development Corporation; Kim Swasey, East Montpelier; Carol Ellison, Ed Larson, and Josh Fitzhugh, CVEDC.

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

The minutes of the April 9 , 2013 Commission meeting were accepted as written.

Staff Report Additions: Census training will be offered to local officials and staff on June 10, 10 to Noon, at CVRPC's office. CVRPC has a Facebook page; "like" us on Facebook from your personal

Facebook page by searching for Central Vermont Planning.

Election of Officers and At-Large Members of the Executive Committee: Seventeen ballots were cast by Commissioners electing the following officers and at-large members: Don La Haye, Waitsfield - Chair; Byron Atwood, Barre Town - Vice-Chair; Michael Miller - Barre City- Treasurer; Tina Ruth - Montpelier- Secretary; At-large members: George Malek, Orange; David Strong, Plainfield; and Bob Wernecke, Berlin and past chair.

Town Plan Review Committee: The Town of Middlesex has requested that their Municipal Plan be reviewed for approval by the Regional Planning Commission. The standing committee members are T. Ruth, G. Malek, R. Krauth, B. Arrand, and D. Payne. The Committee will meet Thursday, May 23, to review staff comments on the Plan and make a recommendation to the Commission. Any other Commissioners interested in being on the Committee for this Plan review are welcome.

Consideration of the Report of the Joint Committee on Consolidation and Process for Presenting to Municipal Officials: As Joint Consolidation Committee Chair, questions were addressed to G. McCain. G. McCain summarized the steps to forming the Committee and the Committee's work in formulating a report and recommendation. The Committee members (5 from CVRPC and 5 from CVEDC) were thanked for their work and thorough consideration of the issues. G. McCain noted that the report speaks for itself and that we are here to answer questions, listen to the dialogue, and provide information. He explained that there will be as many meetings as necessary for municipal officials to feel well informed and ready to make a decision to recommend to their representative to CVRPC. The following points were raised:

- Merging makes good planning sense to serve our Region; planning work connects to economic development.
- VAPDA regional services report of January 2011 suggested that RPC's look at how to improve regional planning outcomes and economic development.
- Couldn't the 2 organizations collaborate to achieve the same ends?
- The Committee's charge was to design the best organization they could to meet the goals. The Committee concluded that consolidation was the way to go.
- The Committee's efforts are to be applauded for being so thorough. However, there's concern that if economic development people are added to the board that the influence of the towns on regional planning would be diluted.
- It was queried as to what is wrong with the current system.
- It was stated that it's not broken, but it can be better. CVRPC has 22 or 23 representatives now, but previously it only had 17 with 4 to 5 of those not attending meetings. This illustrates an "anemic" organization. The Committee believes that the energy and talent of both organizations together is stronger than the individual parts.
- CVRPC has been in place since 1967. Population decline needs to be overcome and quality of life improved so our children stay here. We need the synergy. The good work of the staff will continue, but we could use more opportunities for the younger population -- for those who want to stay in this area.
- Calais is a bedroom community; how would the merger benefit Calais?
- More people might reside in the town to carry the burden of taxes, but it's not likely that taxes would

go down. Should Calais decide it wants more economic development in town, the combined entity could better help.

-- Not every town wants to grow; they would prefer to maintain their rural character. Regional planning supports more than economic development. Calais is very satisfied with the work of Regional Planning and is concerned that the town will have to share the services with 35 members rather than 23 towns.

-- Synergy could improve the delivery of town services. The resource base would be increased by a joint organization.

-- Food systems, agriculture, forestry, downtowns, telecommunications are all addressed by regional planning. The joint organization would offer ways to fix the economic development problems in order to have better planning and better collaboration. There would be a direct link with economic development and could better identify economic development barriers. How could the Village of Cabot, for instance, be made more vibrant? The joint organization could help identify and fix that.

-- Lower attendance for regional planning reflects satisfaction with the status quo, particularly for the more rural towns. Regional planning has addressed development in multiple ways, but doesn't just deal with development. That balance could be put off by adding economic development as a major influence. It feels like a dilution of what CVRPC is all about.

-- CVEDC has been instrumental in getting a grant to bring telecommunications to rural towns, like Calais. Economic development is about the quality of life. You can like your town, but you still need jobs and opportunities to handle change. CVEDC members are business people working to help the towns with economic development. This is an opportunity to look at how we can work together and combine resources and have top notch thinking that looks at the transportation system in a different way. We could strengthen the powers of select boards because we would be working together.

-- Both organizations have been collaborating over the years. Why or how would that be different?

-- The Governor denied the certificate of need for Central VT Medical Center a few years ago and CVEDC asked CVRPC to request a meeting to reconsider that decision.

-- S. Andersen stated that not in the 7 years while Executive Vice President has any town felt that CVEDC came to impose any economic development on them; nor has one town called to make this claim. CVEDC would not approach a situation that way. It's about the economic vitality of the Region.

-- What changes in policy does the Committee want?

-- G. McCain stated that he didn't recall any discussion at the Committee of policy changes being needed.

-- If there aren't any policy changes needed, why can't we work in partnership or cooperation rather than consolidation?

-- The Committee feels the best would be consolidation. They had assessed co-location, but thought consolidation was a better idea.

-- D. Strong stated that he doesn't believe that the Committee ever considered collaboration and information sharing. The charge was to look at a consolidation model. Initially, the groups looked at co-locating, but felt that consolidation was the better way. There used to be a Central Vermont Regional Cooperative of the 3 organizations (CVRPC, CVEDC, and the Central VT Chamber of Commerce) and they did lots of successful projects together.

-- What's the long term vision for the Region, especially rural towns?

-- The Committee sees better delivery of services to all towns, but not necessarily a change in atmosphere in small towns if they don't want it. Consolidation could bring in other regional organizations that would be well served if we were talking and working together.

-- This idea looks more top down than coming from the towns first. It's not town-initiated.

-- CVRC (the proposed consolidated entity) would have more power and clout than one single entity has. The stronger we are as a town-supported organization, the more "bottom up" emphasis there would be.

-- T. Ruth expressed thanks to the Committee for tremendous work, but there doesn't seem to be any compelling reason to consolidate. The 2 groups cover the same geographic area, but they do their work differently. Towns are the clients for CVRPC. The major portion of the CVRPC work is the services CVRPC offers, particularly to towns that do not have paid planners. Would prefer to see cooperation rather than consolidation and expressed concern about dilution of the towns' influence on regional planning. CVRPC already has an economic development element in the Regional Plan and now towns will be required to do the same per statute. CVRPC is required by statute to do certain things. Both organizations have contracts with the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. Would like to see those contracts to see what's required and whether those requirements mesh. CVRPC once had 5 at large seats on the Commission, but eventually the town representatives decided to amend the Bylaws to remove the at large seats apparently because towns were concerned about dilution of their vote and representation. It's not clear that the towns want to go back to that scenario. A larger board has less attendance because people feel that there's no need to participate. CVRPC needs to have its 23 representatives participate in regional planning. If one adds 9 economic development members with town representatives who also represent economic development then their work would not benefit the towns. It's important that we have more background information on both organizations, such as 3 years of financials, 3 years of activity reports, and 3 years of State contracts in order to fully understand how it works and whether it will mesh or not. Bringing 2 bodies together needs to be done with eyes wide open and would need staff skilled in both regional planning and economic development; cannot make a recommendation to Council without more information on the individual organizations.

-- The world has changed in 10 and 20 years and we have changed, too. The contracts with the Agency will still be separate. The Economic Development Committee would still have a separate contract and CVRPC would still have its own separate contract.

-- There have been efforts to change CVRPC voting in the past and have it be based on population, but it was defeated and for the benefit of the small towns so everyone has an equal voice.

-- We need to think ahead about the kind of business that's going to be driving the economy; it's a global economy and we need to grow with the times. We need to work in conjunction with each other. CVEDC has not ever imposed its will on anyone or on a town. CVEDC holds a job fair with job placement and works on job training so that employees are trained for the jobs that are available.

-- Both organizations are very healthy and neither one is bailing out the other. There's no legal or technical reason why we cannot merge; it's a political and philosophical decision to merge or not.

-- CVRPC members represent many businesses and developers. CVRPC's budget is 3 times that of CVEDC's and there may be a need for CVEDC to merge, but not sure it's the way to enhance economic development. NVDA did not make a presentation to the Committee and no one asked members of NVDA if that large of an organization functions well. If there is interest in going ahead, we should hire a consultant to assist, earmark \$20,000 for both organizations to contribute and do further research.

-- Concern was expressed about not having more aggressive outreach, the next steps and how they will work, and would like someone to come to the board of selectmen to have a discussion.

-- G. McCain stated that the Committee made a strong attempt to keep the information flowing and being transparent, but being aggressive about outreach was not part of the charge. The next steps are outlined in the report on page 13. There is still a lot to do and it will take time, but without a

commitment from both organizations to move forward, volunteers are not willing to put in another year's worth of work without a commitment to proceed.

- Concern was expressed on voting to merge or not without first seeing the memorandum of agreement.
- The memorandum would outline the process to proceed, but would not be a guarantee that the details would all work out and merger would happen. There would have to be a second vote at this point to agree or not with the memorandum.
- CVEDC promotes businesses and jobs. What will the Region look like in 20 years? We need to move forward and reduce overlap between the 2 organizations.
- If we move forward, we need to keep in mind that bigger isn't better.
- We attend Commission meetings and hear what staff is doing (where the rubber hits the road), but we don't have an economic development staff member, but we have to have an economic element in our Plan. We could have that if we merge, and the CVRPC services to towns would not be diminished by merging.
- How would the consolidation do things better than what's already being done? What staffing level or expertise would be needed?
- With different interests directing regional planning, allocation of resources could change based on input from the 35 member board. Early projections indicate that as a combined organization, the 2 would lose \$14,000 from town dues currently paid to CVEDC.
- The new entity might have to raise the municipal dues in order to make up the revenue loss. Regional planning is only one piece of what a developer has to go through in order to get permits. Developers would not pay to get projects built where they are not wanted.
- Concern was raised about the board composition. No other regional planning commission has at-large members on their board, but if they did they wouldn't all be from one broad area or interest such as business or development. To what extent would the Committee think about other voices on the board?
- There are an additional 3 seats that would be filled from the membership at large; any business or organization who wants to pay dues and belong to the organization can be eligible for a seat on the board. Others can attend all the meetings; they are open meetings and input is welcome.
- CVEDC members are diverse and do not always agree on everything so they are not necessarily a voting block any more than the town reps.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Emery