



VERMONT ECONOMIC PROGRESS COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES
September 28, 2023
DAVIS BUILDING, CALVIN COOLIDGE CONFERENCE ROOM
1 NATIONAL LIFE DRIVE, MONTPELIER, VT
9:30 A.M. TO 11:15 A.M.

Members Attending In-person: Chair John Russell; Michael Keane; Mark Nicholson; and Jamie Stewart

Members Attending Virtually: Kim Gobeille; Rachel Smith; Sen. Thomas Chittenden; Heather Chase; and Mike Donohue

Members Absent: Thad Richardson and Rep. Emilie Kornheiser

Staff Present: Abbie Sherman, Executive Director; Angie Farrington, VEPC Program Manager

Others Present: Don Turner (Milton); Corey Parent (Milton); Sam Anderson (GBIC); David Snedeker (NVDA); Dan Predpall (Greensboro); John Reilly (Greensboro); Mallory Rakowski (Greensboro); and Jeff Carr.

9:32 a.m. Roll Call and Agenda Review

Chair John Russell called the meeting to order. Members present are noted above. Chair John Russell inquired as to any additions or deletions to the agenda, hearing none, moved on to the next agenda item.

9:34 a.m. Minutes – August 31, 2023, Regular Meeting

Chair John Russell inquired as to any corrections or changes to the draft meeting minutes for the August 31, 2023, Regular Meeting. Hearing none, requested a motion.

At **9:34 a.m.** Jamie Stewart moved to accept the minutes of the August 31, 2023 Regular Meeting. Mark Nicholson seconded the motion. Chair John Russell inquired as to further discussion, hearing none requested a roll call for the vote. The motion passed.
8-0-0

- Aye: Chair John Russell; Michael Keane; Kim Gobeille; Mark Nicholson; Mike Donohue; Jamie Stewart; Rachel Smith; Sen. Thomas Chittenden
- Nay: None
- Abstain: None

9:36 a.m. Public Comment

Chair John Russell inquired as to whether any members of the public present wish to provide public comment or announcements, hearing none, moved to the next Agenda item.

9:37 a.m. Community Recovery & Revitalization Grant Program Applications:

Abbie Sherman summarized the procedures for CRRP review and the requirements that the Council will consider.

Town of Greensboro, Wastewater Infrastructure Project:

Dan Predpall, representing the Town of Greensboro, presented the project to the Council. The town has failing and underperforming onsite septic systems which are located near Caspian Lake and the Village suffers from poor soils and high-water tables which is not conducive to individual septic systems. Predpall stated that CRRP will make the project more affordable and ensure future success for the town. Predpall provided details regarding Greensboro Nursing Home stating that the current septic is problematic and is preventing them from expanding. In addition, Willey's Store would like to expand their business and provide a café and restroom to their customers, but the store currently only has a small holding tank for their employees. In order to expand the store would need to connect to municipal wastewater. Predpall also provided details regarding Rural Edge which will create up to 24 new units of affordable housing but would need to connect to municipal wastewater to make such a reality.

Heather Chase joined the meeting at 9:41 a.m.

Angie Farrington summarized the staff review of Greensboro's application, noting that many of the septic systems in Greensboro do not meet the State of Vermont Environmental Protection Rules. Willey's General Store has been presented to meet the business development project criteria. The town has also presented Rural Edge with plans for an affordable housing development. Both projects require access to a public wastewater system and the CRRP grant will help to reduce the overall project cost and is essential to the financial success of the wastewater project. Without CRRP funding, Greensboro may need to reduce the project service area to reduce the overall project cost, however, this would decrease the number of users resulting in an increase in user rates and the project would remain unaffordable. The Town of Greensboro's states in their application without CRRP funding the annual user rate is unaffordable for the Town and thus the wastewater project will not occur, but for, CRRP funding.

Town of Greensboro adjusted Grand List growth from 2011 to 2021, as calculated by the Tax Department and the Joint Fiscal Office, is 1.6%. While this ranks them at 89 out of 259 towns for growth, it still indicates stagnant growth as is faced by the majority of Vermont. Only 18 Vermont towns have seen growth of 3% or greater, with just 5 seeing growth greater than 4% over a 10-year period.

John Russell asked the Town of Greensboro if they would see additional businesses coming to the Town once such wastewater infrastructure is put in place. Dan Predpall indicated that other businesses are interested, and have been interested in the past, but the lack of a public wastewater system has hindered that development from occurring. Dave Snedeker spoke in support of the project on behalf of the NVDA and noted the project's importance to the community.

At 9:50 a.m. Rachel Smith made a motion that the Council find that based on the documentation provided by the Town of Greensboro for their "Wastewater Infrastructure Project" that the project:

- 1) Clearly requires substantial public investment over and above the normal municipal operating or bonded debt expenditures;
- 2) Are public improvements which are integral to the expected private development, that being business development by expansion of an existing business within the project area which will create new, quality, full-time jobs that meet or exceed the prevailing wage for the region and affordable housing by creating new units within the project area which meet the affordable housing definition as defined in 24 V.S.A. § 4303; and
- 3) That "but for" the CRRP funds, the project would not occur as proposed in the application or would have occurred in a significantly different and less desirable manner.

And therefore, the Council recommend the Interagency Team approve the Town of Greensboro CRRP application. Michael Keane seconded the motion. Chair John Russell inquired as to further discussion, hearing none requested a roll call for the vote. All voted in favor and the motion passed. 9-0-0

- Aye: Chair John Russell; Michael Keane; Kim Gobeille; Heather Chase; Mark Nicholson; Jamie Stewart; Mike Donohue; Rachel Smith; Sen. Thomas Chittenden
- Nay: None
- Abstain: None

Town of Milton: Infrastructure Expansion to Brault Property

Corey Parent, representing the Town of Milton, presented the project to the Council. Parent stated that the Brault property, located in the heart of Milton, is currently a very large undeveloped lot. The Town is requesting CRRP funds to help extend 800 feet of water and sewer from Bombardier Drive to the Brault property to provide a more densely placed housing. The extension of water and sewer is anticipated to create an additional 38 units of affordable housing. Parent stated that extension of water and sewer to the Brault Property is a part of a larger project, where the town is constructing a municipal public works/facilities building and extending critical infrastructure to the building and that but for funding from CRRP, the town would need to modify the project which would result in less or more expensive housing units.

Angie Farrington summarized VEPC staff's review of the application, noting that Milton presented a 38-unit development to meet the affordable housing criteria. The development consists of 18 single family homes and 10 duplexes and will be developed by Sterling Construction. Without public water and sewer, more land is required for individual septic and wells, significantly reducing the property's development potential. If a private developer were to be responsible for the full expansion of infrastructure, it would drastically increase the costs of each housing unit.

Farrington provided more details regarding the larger project Milton mentioned. That project's total cost is estimated to be \$6.5 million. The project still has several outstanding items such as electricity and natural gas that have not been realized at this time. Milton stated that the usage of CRRP will assist in lowering the usage of the town's ARPA and sewer funds which will in turn be used toward the construction of the municipal town garage, as voters approved a bond not to exceed \$5.5 million. Milton outlined that any additional outside funding is critical to the success of the larger project to ensure the Town can stay within the approved bonding limits by leveraging their remaining ARPA and water/sewer funds.

The Town of Milton's adjusted Grand List growth from 2011 to 2021, as calculated by the Tax Department and the Joint Fiscal Office, is 2.9%. While this ranks them at 19 out of 259 towns for growth, it still indicates stagnant growth as is faced by the majority of Vermont. Only 18 Vermont towns have seen growth of 3% or greater, with just 5 seeing growth greater than 4% over a 10-year period.

Jamie Stewart questioned VEPC staff if the Council has the ability to take into account other projects that are occurring within the Town now and in the future when considering the "but for." Abbie Sherman stated that they can consider other projects that are in the works, and similar situations have been considered for other CRRP applications..

Sam Andersen from GBIC commented on the importance of Milton in Chittenden County and the Town's efforts to support additional development. The proposed infrastructure would maximize development of affordable housing which is desperately needed in Chittenden County.

At **10:05a.m.** Kim Gobeille made a motion that the Council find that based on the documentation provided by the Town of Milton for their "Infrastructure Expansion to the Brault Property" that the project:

1. Clearly requires substantial public investment over and above the normal municipal operating or bonded debt expenditures.
2. Are public improvements which are integral to the expected private development, that being business development by expansion of an existing business within the project area which will create new, quality, full-time jobs that meet or exceed the prevailing wage for the region; and

3. That “but for” the CRRP funds, the project would not occur as proposed in the application or would have occurred in a significantly different and less desirable manner.

Therefore, the Council recommends the Interagency Team approve the Town of South Hero’s CRRP application. Mike Donohue seconded the motion. Chair John Russell inquired as to further discussion, hearing none requested a roll call for the vote. All voted in favor and the motion passed. 9-0-0

- Aye: Chair John Russell; Michael Keane; Kim Gobeille; Heather Chase; Mark Nicholson; Jamie Stewart; Mike Donohue; Rachel Smith; Sen. Thomas Chittenden
- Nay: None
- Abstain: None

10:07am. VEPC Policies & Procedures - 2023 Amendments

Abbie Sherman, Executive Director provided a summary of the edits that were made to the VEPC Policies & Procedures, noting that once approved they would be publicly posted on VEPC’s website. The procedures were last revised in 2010. After some discussion, Chair John Russell inquired as to any corrections or changes to the amended policies and procedures. Hearing none, requested a motion.

Jamie Stweart made the motion to approve the VEPC Policies & Procedures- 2023 Amendments and Mark Nicholson seconded the motion. Chair John Russell inquired as to further discussion, hearing none requested a voice vote. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

10:30 a.m. Executive Director Updates

Executive Director Abbie Sherman provided the following updates to the Council:

- **2024 VEPC Meeting Schedule:** Abbie presented the 2023 VEPC meeting schedule. October 31 was selected to hold VEPC’s annual retreat, and the Council requested looking at holding the February 29 meeting at the Statehouse.

At **10:40 a.m.** Jamie Stweart made a motion to approve the 2024 Meeting Schedule as amended. Mike Donohue seconded. Chair John Russell inquired as to further discussion, hearing none requested a voice vote. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

- **VEGI:** Sherman provided an update to the Council regarding VEGI applications noting there may be two new VEGI applications brought to the Council before the end of 2023. Sherman also noted that the 2023 initial applications approved will need to submit their final application before the end of 2023.
- **TIF:**

- Burlington Downtown: The adjustment of the share of education tax increment to be retained is in the works and should be updated by NERMC soon.
- VEPC staff and council members have completed South Burlington and City of Burlington fall monitoring visit. VEPC Board members were encouraged to attend and outlined the importance of such visits.
- Sherman shared some ideas that are currently being discussed for VEGI and TIF.
- Abbie Sherman reminded Council members that the Annual VEPC retreat will be held on October 26, and to please RSVP by October 6.

At **11:15 a.m.** Mike Donahue moved to adjourn the meeting. Michael Keane seconded. Chair John Russell requested a voice vote. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

Minutes taken by Angie Farrington: 9/28/2023

Revised by Abbie Sherman: 09/29/2023

Approved by the Council: 11/16/2023