

Summit on the Future of Vermont

UVM's Dudley Davis
Center, Burlington
Vermont

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Final Report



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Summit on the Future of Vermont

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Summit on the Future of Vermont

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I. Introduction

The **2009 VCRD Summit on the Future of Vermont** marked a watershed point. It served as the official “report out” to Vermonters on the findings of the **Council on the Future of Vermont**. It turned their findings into a challenge to Vermonters, and especially the leaders gathered together for the day, to consider specific ways to work together to advance a positive vision for the future of the state. It shared ideas and directions with state, federal, non-profit and private sector leaders with the power to work together to advance them. It articulated the beginning elements for a five-year plan of work for the **Vermont Council on Rural Development** (and our many partners) toward developing working teams of Vermonters at both the local community and state level to address fundamental challenges ahead.



Lee Krohn

VCRD is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that serves rural communities directly and brings together leadership teams to advance policy to help address their long term challenges. The Council on the Future of Vermont was founded in 2007 and charged by VCRD with the two year mission of articulating “a comprehensive picture of the values, concerns, and aspirations of Vermonters as they consider the future of our state.”

Full societal consensus in democracy is rarely possible (or even desirable), but over the last two years nearly 4,000 Vermonters shared with the Council on the Future of Vermont a sense of unity, a common sense of Vermont identity, and key points in a common vision, below or above our differences, that provides a powerful foundation for our ability to work together to address fundamental and long-term challenges.

Over 500 Vermonters participated in the Summit process on May 11, 2009, coming from all parts of the state, from all sectors of government, business, non-profits and communities. It is exciting just to read the names (in Section VIII at the back of this report) of the diverse and dedicated team of Vermonters who devoted their energy and thinking to make the Summit a success. While VCRD structured the Summit process, it was staffed by a tremendous leadership team—they are recognized in the Acknowledgements in Section VII.

Summit participants considered the values, visions and conclusions of the two-year Council on the Future of Vermont project and worked together in fourteen task forces to define concrete action steps that could advance key elements from its final report, *Imagining Vermont; Values and Vision for the Future*.

Much of the Summit, especially the morning sessions, celebrated these Vermont assets. **Governor Douglas, Senators Sanders and Leahy, and Congressman Welch** shared their commitment to address critical long-term needs, and encouraged Summit participants, and Vermonters in general, to work together in line with common points of vision to move the state forward. **Members of the Council on the Future of Vermont** shared their personal perspectives on all that they had heard from Vermonters

through the process and all that it meant to them. Keynote speaker **Dr. Garret FitzGerald**, former Prime Minister of Ireland, encouraged Vermonters to consider the Irish success in building a “Social Partnership,” a compact among government, business, labor, and interests to advance a unified agenda for the economy and long-term public good. Summaries of these presentations are in Section III below.

Summit participants were also led through of the elements of the Council on the Future of Vermont report. The event used the Council’s conclusions as starting points to propose an underlying challenge: how do we as Vermonters look beyond short term solutions, partisanship, organizational interests, and disconnected or uncoordinated efforts to consider how we work more effectively as teams to advance long-term goals, and achieve them?

Over lunch, VCRD awarded its annual **Community Leadership Award to the Center for an Agricultural Economy in Hardwick**—celebrating for the first time a partnership rather than an individual, one which has provided transformational leadership in building momentum for their community, region, and for all of Vermont.

VCRD annual Summits invite Vermonters together to consider challenges and plan action—not just hear from the experts: democracy is not a spectator sport! The Summit on the Future of Vermont centered on afternoon sessions where participants evaluated the ideas and directions of the Council’s report and considered fourteen categorical areas for action: **Agriculture, Civic Life, Clean Energy, Demographics, Digital Age, Diversity, Economic Plan, Forestry and Industry, Healthy Vermont, Higher Education, K-12 Education, Land use and Development, Preserving the Balance, and Public Transportation in Vermont**. Notes from these working sessions form the core of this report and are included in Section IV, with their priorities listed in Section II.

The findings of the Council on the Future of Vermont and the deliberations of the Summit present a major agenda for common action toward building the future we want as Vermonters. VCRD is constructing a strategic action plan today that will incorporate key elements from the Summit priorities and Council on the Future of Vermont conclusions. This plan will reach out to Vermonters, and to governmental and organizational partners, and to many Summit participants toward implementing some of the key ideas on the Summit table.

No one process defines the future. It is up to all Vermonters to determine that future by their actions. In their Summit comments, Council on the Future of Vermont members shared how powerfully they were moved by the thousands of people they heard from and what an honor it was to be charged to attempt to pull the themes and directions from all these voices into a platform that describes us and our goals as a people. At VCRD we have been daunted and inspired in turns by this process, and are dedicated today to being useful in building partnerships to advance the finding of the Council on the Future of Vermont.

Ultimately, the Council on the Future of Vermont and the Summit findings are a call and challenge to leadership—not to a party or an interest, not just to government, or to key organizations, but to all Vermonters. As *Imagining Vermont* puts it, “We need to rededicate ourselves to the Vermont ideal of Community” —and each take a role in leadership.

II. Priority Recommendations

From the Summit Working Group Sessions

The following is a report of the priorities areas developed by Task Force groups and gathered at the Summit on the Future of Vermont on May 11, 2009. Each Task Force was asked to report back to the assembly two priority items that could move address the conclusions of the Council on the Future of Vermont project and move a vision for Vermont's future into action. Task Force groups were managed by neutral facilitators and had keynote speakers who began the discussion by exploring the challenges and opportunities in each area. The discussions were designed to cover the following questions:

- **What are the key opportunities ahead in this sector?**
- **What are the key challenges in this sector today?**
- **How do Vermonters and Vermont organizations work together to overcome obstacles and advance opportunities in this sector?**
- **What are the two priority recommendations for action that this group has for the plenary presentation and the final report?**

The Task Force groups included: Civic Life, Healthy Vermont, Clean Energy, Digital Age, Preparing for Diversity, Forestry and Industry, Economic Plan, Higher Education, K-12 Education, Coordinated Statewide Land Use Strategy, Working Downtowns and Landscapes, Demographics and Aging Population, Public Transportation, and Agriculture in Vermont. Their priorities are listed below.

Civic Life: *Enhancing the Vitality of Civic Life in Vermont Communities*

Town meeting is a part of Vermont history and civic life, but due to its once annual structure, it is becoming increasingly limited as a method of including the diversity of community opinion. At the core, the principle of connection with and communication between community members and public decision-making is still vital. New models for communication should be designed and developed, ones in which information technology can play a greater role. The **Civic Life Task Force** group put forth these priorities:

1. **Explore Regionalism for Infrastructure and Services** (such as fire departments, emergency medical and rescue services, and school boards) yet retain and nurture individual community identities. Many local and municipal service providers agree that serious discussion about merging 'services' is critical given increased need and diminishing resources. It is crucial, however, that dialogue is structured to ensure that each community involved has a strong voice and does not lose the community connection.
2. To encourage community connections, **models for celebrations, forums and enhanced community partnerships** should be identified and supported. Vermont communities suffer from plenty of divisions, but in future, the breakdown of the Vermont community will come from separations between people who live there. These successful models should then be shared with communities and regions.



Healthy Vermont: Promoting Access and Affordability

The **Healthy Vermont Task Force** group identified these priorities:

1. **Retaining and recruiting high quality health care professionals (HCPs)** is a high priority to promote access and affordability to quality healthcare. To do this, **better incentives** such as loan forgiveness, spousal employment opportunities and housing assistance should all be considered.
2. **The Blueprint for Health model should be expanded to reach all Vermonters at all ages.** To do this, payers who fund the program need to agree to accelerate its dissemination faster than the current timeline. Also, Medicare should be included as a payer to the Blueprint for Health model – action that has to be taken at the federal level.



Clean Energy: Advancing Vermont's Clean Energy Future

The **Clean Energy Task Force** brought the following priorities to the plenary session:

1. Vermont needs to **implement the goal of reducing carbon emissions by 75%** as described by the Governor's Climate Change Commission and **empower the working group established** to lead in this implementation.
2. Vermont should support VT Energy and Climate Action Network (VECAN) and Town Energy Committees and other partners in **building a statewide carbon challenge to Vermont towns:** a Municipal Energy Efficiency and Conservation Contest to lower the energy consumption in their municipality. The partners would work with the Clean Energy Development Fund to build a major award to the winning municipality.



Digital Communities: Enhancing Community in the Digital Age

To level the playing field in Vermont in terms of information technology, the **Digital Age Task Force** group emphasized the need for 100% accessibility, affordability, and use of digital technology and tools for all segments and populations in Vermont -- regardless of ability to pay. The specific priorities are:

1. The **Vermont Telecomm Authority should be supported** to fulfill its mission.
2. This can be accomplished in part by **expanding allowable use of Universal Service Funds by:**
 - encouraging federal delegation to pursue elimination in FCC restrictions on use of funds to allow broadband and cell technology and eliminate restrictions for libraries
 - encouraging state expansion in use of USF and/or creation of new fund using USF as a model for use in subsidizing broadband and cell technology
3. Vermont should also support public/private partnerships to train users to **increase productivity, information literacy and civic engagement.**



Diversity: *Preparing for Diversity in Vermont Towns and Cities*

The challenges to a state that has historically been white and homogenous are many, but changing the dialogue, making necessary policy shifts, and affirming the characteristics and advantages of a non-white, racially and ethnically diverse population are crucial. The **Diversity Task Force** group issued the following priorities:

1. **Making a personal change** is the beginning of understanding why diversity matters. Intentional behavior change at the personal level has to happen in Vermont today and into the future (examples are: take someone to lunch who doesn't look like you, start a conversation with someone new, attend a celebration or meeting of a group that is not yours).
2. **Create diverse coalitions** in the workplace and do it intentionally and aggressively, so that it will eventually become a habit of Vermont business and non-profit and policy leaders. Living in Vermont, and achieving the ideal for affirming diversity here, will mean that individuals, businesses, non-profits and government will have inclusivity in make-up, design and intent and that diversity will be seen as critical in other sectors, such as economic development, transportation, health care, and education. Diversity will support the missions of these areas, rather than being seen as something additional that they have to take on.



Forestry and Industry: *Promoting Forest Stewardship and the Forest Products Industry*

The **Forestry and Industry Task Force** group identified the need for decisive leadership and clear communication around the crisis in the Vermont forest sector. They recommend:

1. **Creating an entity or effort that communicates priorities and coordinates disparate and loosely organized parts** of the Vermont forest community. The common threats and emergencies in the Forestry Sector are: 1) Climate Change, 2) Invasive Species and 3) the lack of affordability of owning and operating working lands which is driving the turn-over, parcelization and fragmentation of lands so valued in Vermont. This entity would form strategies, take actions and speak with one clear voice about common needs and priorities.
2. **Unifying coordination efforts with the Agricultural sector.** The problems, the interests and the landowners in these areas are common, and traditional products no longer generate enough income to pay for all the public benefits from working lands. Together, these groups should **explore a mix of integrated farm and forest markets and products, which** truly reflect the value of clean water, air, scenery, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, open space and other values. Together these groups **should pursue tax reform** to enable farmers and foresters to afford and steward the lands of Vermont. Finally, the mission of these groups or entities need to be **clearly communicated to the public** so that people in Vermont are aware of their individual efforts and impacts on the working lands. These actions would close the gap between the value that Vermonters place in the working landscape and the realities of the threats that it faces today.



Economic Plan: *Building a Strategic Economic Plan for Vermont's Future*

The **Economic Plan Task Force** group identified these priorities:

1. **The Governor, current and subsequent, should state the need for and lead the effort to create a new vision, goals and economic action plan** with measures and outcomes that achieves policies and resources that support non-government, value added job creation. The Governor shall continually provide the staff and resources to distill and synthesize all the work done by CFED, the Next Generation Commission, and the Council on the Future of Vermont as a foundation for this plan.
2. *A comprehensive analysis of future growth sectors in Vermont should be conducted so that **targeted state support can be focused on entrepreneurial efforts** in those sectors. All sectors shall be supported from the plan, but a tiered response is also needed to stimulate growth.*



Higher Education: *Advancing Leadership and Commerce*

Higher education has a critical role to play in supporting most of the priorities identified in the Council on the Future of Vermont study, and already supports the state's economy and brand. A long term collaborative vision and plan for Vermont higher education will help this sector make an even greater future contribution. The **Higher Education Task Force** group identified two recommendations.

1. **Develop a broadly based consortium of public and private higher education, business, labor and government leaders who will establish a vision and action steps** to promote a bold and compelling higher education community incorporating a diversity of high quality affordable educational opportunities, well connected to Vermont's economic, professional, environmental and societal needs, and placing Vermont in a highly competitive national position to attract students, entrepreneurs and businesses. Success will depend upon a commitment by all participants to work to implement the vision.
2. Higher education institutions should work together to lower costs for students. **Institutions of higher education in the state should form a collaborative coalition to substantially moderate increases in educational costs** and overhead, such as: sharing best practices and ideas for efficient use of technology and energy, eliminating unnecessary redundancy and duplication, establishing purchasing consortia to reduce costs of goods, services, materials and employee benefits and exploring ways to optimize use of facilities.



K - 12 Education: *Renewing Public K-12 Education for the 21st Century*

The **K-12 Education Task Force** group identified two overarching goals and first steps to achieve those goals.

1. First, Vermont legislature, administration and board of education should **adopt a unifying statement of official policy** that defines educational excellence for the 21st century student in Vermont. The statement should include target objectives that all schools are directed towards and a clear work plan under the leadership of the Commissioner of Education. **This statement should come from a broad, organized public engagement process** that identifies what Vermonters most want from schools.

2. **Vermont citizens and Vermont communities should be more invested in public education** and understand how it contributes to social and economic well-being. Working models where schools are celebrated as centers for arts, culture, and events are evident in Vermont and should be expanded. Data collection and measurement of success for schools needs greater consistency and transparency as well.



Land Use and Development: *Building a Coordinated Statewide Land Use and Development Strategy*

Today there exists a state of urgency regarding the current system of land use regulation in Vermont in that it is weak, ineffective, uncoordinated and unsustainable and is leading to incremental growth that represents a disconnect between Vermonters expressed values and actions. The **Coordinated Land Use Strategy Task Force** group recommends:

1. **Create a time-limited, multi-stakeholder task force** to examine land use planning and regulation in Vermont with the goal of overhauling the current system and developing a set of concrete recommendations for legislative action. This process should be disconnected from any legislative session and could take between one and two years to complete.
2. **Develop a comprehensive public information and awareness campaign** to educate Vermonters about the need for change in the state's land use regulatory system and the potential consequences of maintaining the status quo.



Preserving the Balance: *Working Downtowns, Working Landscapes*

The **Working Downtowns and Landscapes Task Force** group recommends:

1. State government shall invest in both the countryside and community centers **by increasing funding in programs that realize this mutual relationship**: programs such as the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and the Current Use Program (Use Value Appraisal program).
2. **A bold public awareness campaign that visually communicates the consequences of our choices for the future of Vermont** should be designed and implemented. VCRD can assist in leadership of this campaign.
3. **The state shall remove vague language** from the planning and development language and transform it into a clear and directive set of standards and goals. Consistency in regulatory practices and compliance enforcement are crucial and town planners need more clear direction about development standards and practices.



Demographics: *Realizing the Opportunities of an Aging Population and Workforce*

The **Demographic Task Force** group determined that:

1. The state needs to address the issues of housing density and development in conjunction with an aging demographic. **A comprehensive understanding of the options for high density, high efficiency housing options in Vermont town and community centers and downtown areas is needed.** For people of all ages, but especially for those who are aging and need access to services, access to alternative transportation and nearby events and programs, downtown housing options are a priority.

2. To assist elders in re-entering or re-training for the work force in Vermont, flexible hours, and specialized training (especially information technology) are a priority. **A vocational rehabilitation training model would be useful** in Vermont (work place facilitators) to ensure that older workers get the specific training and personalized assistance that they need.



Public Transportation: *Building a Rural Public Transportation System*

Transportation is vital as Vermont plans for its future. This sector not only is a critical piece of Vermont's energy use and carbon emissions, but is also connected with areas such as healthy living, affordability, school bus transportation and environmental concerns. Leadership is needed in many areas to move transportation awareness forward, and the **Public Transportation Task Force** group recommends:

1. The dialogue around public transportation needs to be changed. Vermonters and leading decision makers need to know that in this state, conditions require the Transportation of the Public. **Defining "Transporting the Public" and communicating it to the public is crucial.**
2. "Transporting the Public" definition must include **providing mobility and access to all Vermonters through choices** that include bike lanes, paths, sidewalks, park and ride lots, complete streets as well as public transit systems and private sector taxi and bus services.



Agriculture: *Supporting the Progress of Agriculture in Vermont*

The **Agriculture Task Force** group prioritized the creation of an operational food system for the state that is environmentally, economically, and socially viable. These are the action items:

1. First, a broad spectrum of stakeholders from the agricultural community in Vermont must **define "sustainable agriculture" and apply strict metrics to the economic, environmental, and social aspects of agriculture.**
2. With this working definition, **investment, policy, education, and dedication of public dollars for agriculture can be targeted and focused** on those operations that embody the ideal for Vermont.
3. To achieve a goal of 75% Vermont food purchase to be produced in Vermont, **a procurement policy of state connected monies** will be established and supported.
4. Finally, an education campaign for the Vermont public should be developed. For this to occur, education, production, processing, infrastructure, marketing and energy efficiency must all be considered and supported in looking ahead.

III. Summit Speakers

Governor James Douglas:

Governor Douglas welcomed attendees to the Summit on the Future of Vermont and thanked the Council on the Future of Vermont for their two years of work. He shared his perspective that Vermont has a lot to lead from and at the same time many serious challenges. To rally the people of Vermont together and to do what it is that they need done is the most important challenge of all.



Maria Blais

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Senator Bernie Sanders:

Senator Sanders called on Vermonters to take action together to advance the work needed now to meet the needs of out children and children’s children. Sharing a strong sense of the momentum in Washington, the Senator called for aggressive action in line with the long-term challenges of energy, global climate change, agriculture and the need to build the green economy of the future. He pointed to Vermont as a place that has terrific assets and ideas to lead and he commended Summit participants to take action.

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Senator Patrick Leahy *(via prerecorded video)*:

Senator Leahy thanked and praised the Council on the Future of Vermont for their two years of work reaching out to nearly 4,000 Vermonters. He also thanked the farmers, the business people, the working Vermonters who shared their ideas. He talked about the previous processes, like the report in 1929 and the others in the 1960’s and 1980’s. Like Vermont town meeting, these public processes are a part of the history of our state. He shared what he sees as the importance of building from these historic values, such as stewardship of our environment, our community strength, the freedom and unity we stand for. And although we can pass on an idea, we have to also face the realities and we want people to be able to live and work and raise their families here. During the Senator’s life, he’s always felt that it’s his responsibility to make Vermont a better place. Whether we’re business owners, farmers, students, we’re dealing with today’s pressing challenges. We have the opportunity to take on these challenges – together. We together get to define Vermont as the place where we can grab the opportunities of the future.

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PROCESS OF CFV AND FINDINGS

Paul Costello, *Executive Director, Vermont Council on Rural Development*:

The Vermont Council on Rural Development is charged by the Federal Farm Bill to help coordinate rural policy, to help federal, state, non-profit, private sector and regional interests come together, coordinate services, work together strategically, and support the self-defined progress of rural Vermont communities. We follow local leadership, and we build structures to help people both at the local level and in policy circles work together to define priorities and line up to accomplish them.

For years we had heard in both arenas the call for a statewide vision, a renewal of our sense of common purpose as Vermonters. In our policy work we continually heard about the political challenges of building short-term answers to long-term problems ranging from global warming or transportation infrastructure funding to the cyclical challenges to the agricultural economy. In communities, Vermonters told us they felt disconnected from what happens in Montpelier and they wanted more communication. In the end, the Board of the Vermont Council on Rural Development determined to establish the Council on the Future of Vermont to set long term markers around the key goals of Vermonters in our time.

Sarah Waring, *Program Director, Council on the Future of Vermont, VCRD:*

To reach out to Vermonters we designed a process that included the following elements

1. regional public forums– one in each county at a central location with easy access for the general public.
2. focus groups in businesses, churches, schools, with member associations, artists, farmers, veterans, seniors and minority groups, hosted at their locations to make it easy for them to participate.
3. interviews with over forty statewide organizations who regularly look at Vermont as a whole, in areas like environment, civil rights, planning, business development, agriculture, education and more.
4. testimony from panels of experts in the Council’s monthly meetings.
5. polling and statistical information about Vermonters’ values and concerns run by the Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont.
6. trendline research and historical analysis by the Center for Social Science Research at St. Michael’s with fourteen public issue areas.



Lee Krohn

We also had creative partners such as the Young Writers Project, who sponsored a writing contest for students with Northfield Savings Bank that had over 350 students writing about the future of Vermont. We have also been lucky to work with the Vermont Arts Council and the Art of Action project, where local artists have been commissioned to create their visions for the future of Vermont. These artists are here today and we encourage you to talk to them and learn from them about their visions for Vermont in 20 years. They will also be taking part in the workshops this afternoon and adding their ideas to this process.

We had hundreds of other contributors: people who wrote or called us to share their ideas. This was a project that sparked the interest of thousands of Vermonters – in total we heard from around four thousand. We layered all these inputs together so that we could consider the hopes, fears and priorities voiced by Vermonters next to the quantitative poll and trendline data. All of the materials are online at www.futureofvermont.org.

The result of all of the work is the report: *“Imagining Vermont: Values and Vision for the Future.”* We believe that the depth of these inputs added together may make this one of the most extensive evaluations of perspectives on the future of Vermont in the state’s history.

Sarah read the Values Statement, crafted after speaking with and learning from thousands of Vermonters about what they value in the state today, and Paul summarized the conclusions from the Council, both can be found in the final report: “Imagining Vermont” at www.futureofvermont.org.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT



Maria Blais

Members of the Council reflected on what they heard from Vermonters throughout the past two years and shared their thoughts about the process and findings.

Chris Graff, Vice President, National Life Group: It has been a great privilege to be a part of this Council. We were focused on the future, and yet we often heard people say they wanted to prevent the future. We heard people say, “Keep Vermont as it is.” And “don’t make us like everyone else.” A high school student told us “People are intense about being Vermonters.” The common values may be obvious – it really took us two years to come up with this? But this report reaffirms what is important going forward. I also took away a rekindled appreciation for the optimism of Vermonters. In a season where we are seeing a lot of cynicism, people have faith in Vermont. Without fail, they would thank us for what we were doing. But really we were just taking the temperature of Vermont today, and the work begins now for building the future.

Paul Bruhn, Executive Director, Preservation Trust of Vermont: The unanimity and level of consensus was pretty remarkable. This long process showed that Vermonters from all walks of life, all income levels, all ages and all parts of the state recognize our essential character – the working landscapes, our small scale, our sense of community, our natural landscapes, our village centers and downtowns and places we connect with each other. In spite of challenges, this is our quality of life, the basis for our Vermont brand and the core of economic development. But this is only for the moment. The question is whether we can become good stewards of this character, or if we become more like anywhere else in the USA. Vermont will suffer if the choice is either unrestrained growth or the status quo.

Bill McMeekin, Retired, TD Banknorth: As you might suspect, there are some differences out there and Vermont is not a herd mentality. For example, in Franklin County there is concern about agricultural run-off, rivers and streams, Lake Champlain, economic development and tourism. This becomes a regional challenge that requires the state and sometimes a federal solution. But if we move to Windham County, we don’t hear about agricultural run-off, but we do hear about nuclear power. It is part of the uncertainty we all have about the source and the cost of energy going forward statewide. But if you live there, there are safety, tax base and job growth issues with strong advocates on both sides. It’s a statewide issue, but a hot topic for people in Windham County. Part of our work was the Vermont in Transition book – and this is an excellent benchmark for many issues that Vermont has – from per capita

income, gender wage gap, college enrollment, and many others. In short, you'll learn something from this about Vermont.

Laurie Zilbauer, *Senior Planner, Northeastern Vermont Development Association*: I would like to share the youth perspective and tell you about high school students from Lake Region High School in Orleans County. Students reflected on Vermont values, rural life and small town community. But they also expressed desire to get outside the state, to explore cultures and experiences unlike what they grew up with. The research that the Council commissioned found that while many people go outside the state for college, the state still imports more students than it exports. The older generation is conflicted: they feel it's good for youth to leave, but are afraid they will never return. In my opinion, the solution is in our results: to maintain the values they hold true, maintain a landscape that makes them feel at home and maintain a community they can feel a part of when they return.

Charlie Smith, *President, Snelling Center for Government*: The greatest concern I had about this project was that we'd only hear from the people who show up. But the staff put an enormous amount of effort and energy to reach out to groups and constituencies that don't show up – so my concerns were alleviated. During this project we heard that Vermont is an 'idea' and not just a place. In my mind it's about Freedom and Unity and that idea can tie to how Vermont leads in the future. It's a model of our history, but it reflects a paradox that is alive and well today: Vermonters have a strong belief in individual freedom, but have an ethic of interdependency and a strength of community. The idea has to do with shared values, a shared sense of history, tradition of democracy, stewardship of land and resources for the future. It would be naïve to imagine that Vermonters speak with one voice – we not unified around big ideas – but there are common values around civility and fairness and community.

Emily Stebbins, *Strategic Planner/Analyst, Office of the Vice President for Finance & Administration, University of Vermont*: The scale of this effort has been incredible, but we call on Vermonters and ourselves to do quite a lot of work. I'm on the local planning commission and have a sense of how much work it takes to have long-term collective decisions and implementation. It is difficult and important to keep people engaged over the long term and it requires leadership to take people through the process and make decisions together. Without good overall plans, sometimes things don't move forward when they could. When I see all the plans in our report around education, transportation, agriculture, economic development I feel daunted. But we've made a good start at gathering Vermonters and laying the foundation that we have to meet together. I look forward to it.

Ellen McCulloch-Lovell, *President, Marlboro College*: Many people talked about history, culture and natural resources and how intertwined they are and how our culture is constantly expanded by artists and innovators and creative people. We really believe in our own creativity and are sure we can be a laboratory for the nation. Vermonters are concerned about how we make it, with what values, what ideals and kind of leadership. I feel confident about Vermont's chances.

Wanda Hines, *Co-Director, CEDO Burlington Legacy Project*: It was terrific to be at the table here – it is so important that we are all at the table. The increased ethnic and cultural shifting across the state is something very important for the future. We built this process and they came out to share their ideas and concerns. Racial and ethnic diversity has not historically been an issue in this state, but people are experiencing instances of racism. They are concerned about the structures that we need to put in place to support new and emerging populations. They know that we need to hold onto values and culture as they are, but at the same time celebrating and affirming others to come along with us. Vermont residents celebrate the value of tolerance, and I am very proud to be on this Council and be a Vermonter.

Steve Gold, Retired, Vermont State Government: It surprised me how eager the hundreds and hundreds and thousands of Vermonters were to participate in this process. People want to be involved and that desire characterizes out state as a special place. There is a prevailing sense that Vermont is a home to these people. It has the qualities of home, including the civil discussions that can be held. There are many issues that we face together today, but the importance of civil, intentional, inclusive and constructive process is paramount as we look to the future.

Cheryl Hanna, Professor of Law, Vermont Law School: I was interested in how we live the structure of government that we've all committed to. I was heartened by how much Vermonters value the way we do democracy. Government, non-profits and a very committed private sector all exist here and are concerned about public good. This commitment to democracy is real here today. But it's important to note that the way we do democracy is under threat – many Vermonters have to work two or three jobs and have less time to work in their communities, many new Vermonters either aren't familiar with our structures or don't feel welcomed into them, and youth may not be excited about the ways we do democracy today. I come away with the sense that our greatest challenge and biggest opportunity is to bring as many people into the fold as possible; we need to continually redefine democracy and we can be a leader for the nation and the world in how we do it.

Kara DeLeonardis, Executive Director, RU12? Community Center: *I'm proud that we reached so many diverse Vermonters and heard so many voices in this project. Vermonters feel like this is a unique and special place and think that because of our small scale, so much more is possible here. We need to continue to be a model for here and other places and encourage the engagement of communities to keep Vermonters here. There's a lot more that unites us than divides us. For example, I was struck in one focus group with lesbian, gay, transgender and bi-sexual people in Vermont where we heard about the challenges in transportation, job availability, and economic growth – the same things we heard elsewhere. So it's clear that we all have to be in this together.*

Félice Rivera, Vice President for Communications, The Vermont Community Foundation: *The most striking thing about the body of work produced here is the overwhelming sense of hope that people have. It's recorded in all the notes, all the documents – it seems that any issue we have in the state will be tempered by the stories of positive progress and the things we can do here, locally, to make change. It is a gift to believe that we as individuals have what it takes to make progress in our communities. The most satisfying part of being a member of this Council was the realization that hope is something that exists in every corner of the state. Not evenly, but its always there if you get enough people talking about what it takes to make our communities and places better. It seems to be a defining characteristic of Vermont as a state, but we must use it as a spur to help us think positively about the future. We must and we can aim high.*

Greg Stefanski, Executive Director, Laraway Youth & Family Services: *My reflection on this process is that we don't talk about the future long-term as much as we should. But I want to ask every one here: what role can I play in the future of Vermont? I encourage you to think about this because this should guide and provoke us. One of my hopes is that we'll see this work infuse itself in the educational process throughout the state – in curriculum and structure. In February of 2008 we met with the VFW group in Hyde Park. These veterans were so passionate about the challenges of new veterans coming home from Iraq, the youth today being respectful of people in service and many others. But they weren't just concerned; they were active – they were greeting veterans at the airport, they were first responders to the family needs of veterans and they were actively engaged in hosting dances at their VFW Hall for the youth. They were not satisfied with the challenge, but moved to grab the opportunity. Whatever you come up with as an answer, I hope that you will respond to that call.*

Richard Mallary, Retired, U.S. Congress, Vermont Legislature: *I've had the chance to be around for many comprehensive planning efforts for the state. They have real and lasting value in helping us discover who and what we are. The research is good, thorough and instructive, the ideals and dreams and aspirations have been recorded. But many of the ideals we heard are widely at variance with the data we heard and the realities that we face in the state. We have done our best to reflect the dreams, but also to temper them with the realities of the day.*

Brian Keefe, Vice President, Government & Public Affairs, Central Vermont Public Service Corporation: *It's important to note that this process continues and doesn't stop with the report. For me, this is about family stories. My family has members who haven't figured out how to come back to Vermont – how to make it work financially. But we also heard people who said that they were willing to go broke as long as they could continue to live in Vermont. We also heard stories, that same day, about small businesses that have had to move away because they couldn't afford the costs. And we heard from an interfaith council about the free services they provide to needy people and how the government in many cases is not able to provide those services. So, the civil discourse that we've had around these issues is important and my hope is that we can find some real and constructive solutions to help people face the tax burden and realities of living here.*

Fran Voigt, President and CEO, New England Culinary Institute: *In the past, other reports like this have resulted in changes in Vermont. I would like to issue a challenge to all of us that this report results in changes. There are hard facts that we have to deal with: Vermont has the smallest gross state product in the nation, the cost of living in Vermont is the ninth highest in the country, ten percent of our population lives below the federal poverty line in 2007, 50,000 Vermonters received food stamps in 2008 and the number in shelters increased significantly in recent years. Also, the per capita tax burden is high when you look across the country. Vermont's home ownership is above the national average. We have one of the best educated populations in the country, but the average income in the state is just approaching the national average. Agriculture, although synonymous with the Vermont brand, is no longer the economic backbone of the state. This information is a call to action for all of us who are trying to create a new Vermont.*

Tom Debevoise, CFV Chair, Upwey Registered Holsteins: *Speaking just of agriculture, the most important finding in this report is that Vermonters love farmers. But Vermonters have a very shaky and incomplete idea about what farmers do and how they think. Farmers regularly think out 20 years, but we don't always do that as a society.*

PLENARY SPEAKER

Dr. Garret FitzGerald, former Prime Minister of Ireland:

"I've never heard so many people speak so briefly but so inspiringly before. The work of the Council is extraordinary. You set out to consult people and turn their ideas into something for the basis of the state. The key elements that you have are really strong local democracy and a deep concern for the environment. We lacked those in Ireland, but I will share some of the ideas that we implemented in Ireland in hope that some of those models may be useful to you here."



Lee Krohn

Dr. FitzGerald described the transformation and modernization of the educational system of Ireland and how the changes there were instrumental in educating the workforce that helped draw in the economic development that made Ireland's the fastest growing economy in the European Union for almost a generation. He then shared the story of his role in the development of the Social Partnership in Ireland that served as the foundation for addressing the crisis Ireland was in during the early 1980s and building economic momentum. The Social Partnership in Ireland combines the labor unions, management and government to plan for, invest in, and benchmark changes in Ireland's economic and social life. The government of Ireland and its partners were able to put together a plan that worked aggressively in two areas: to support internal and local businesses and build relationships with external and international markets. The partnership made deals that set government and industry on a path to growth at a time when Ireland was in economic stagnation and losing its youth to emigration. As part of the plan, the government of Ireland enabled tax breaks for industry and soon had eight or ten major software development firms move to Ireland, which became central to the growth of the high tech economy in Europe. Workers flocked to Ireland and incomes increased. A housing boom occurred. Now many of these successes are halted because of the international recession, but Ireland put the structures in place to start.

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END OF THE DAY:

Congressman Peter Welch *(via prerecorded video)*:

I want to thank all of you whose hard work is reflected in the Council on the Future of Vermont report. Your efforts show us where we are today and will serve as a valuable guide as we chart the future of Vermont. I also want to thank the countless Vermonters who took part in this project. We are in a period of tremendous change. Your report confirms much of what we know about ourselves and our state: we value our communities, our landscape, our independence and our liberties. We believe in hard work and in self-sufficiency. We are community-minded. In each of these we may be considered traditionalists.

But make no mistake: this report affirmed a Vermont quality in every corner of our state. Vermonters see opportunities in all of our enterprises to innovate and to lead--we must consider how to make the most of these qualities. Preserving our way of life, the unique beauty of our land and the strength of our communities surely are of paramount importance – but we must not simply cling to the successes we have enjoyed as a state. We must continue to seek opportunities to innovate and excel – and to demonstrate and communicate our successes to those outside our borders.

IV. Working Group Reports

Summit participants registered for breakout sessions in the following 14 work groups: Agriculture, Civic Life, Clean Energy, Demographics, Digital Age, Diversity, Economic Plan, Forestry and Industry, Healthy Vermont, Higher Education, K-12 Education, Land use and Development, Preserving the Balance, and Public Transportation in Vermont. Work group sessions opened with a brief presentation of issues and opportunities within each focus area by a leading expert in the field. Each group then spent time evaluating the current status of their topic in Vermont today, considering the challenges the sector faces, and developing a set of recommendations that could help Vermont realize the opportunities in the sector.

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SESSION:

Agriculture: *Supporting the Progress of Agriculture in Vermont*

Presenter: Roger Allbee, VT State Agriculture, Food & Markets

Facilitator: Chuck Ross, U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy's Office

Scribe: Katlyn Stillings Morris, UVM PhD Student

Secretary Roger Allbee's Opening Comments:

- Vermonters value a working landscape. One goal should be defining a working landscape.
- People think of VT as: cows, open spaces, farms, clean economy, cheddar cheese, Ben and Jerry's, maple syrup.
- Agriculture is changing in VT: growth of local, organic, CSAs, farmers markets, cheese, energy, new vineyards, culinary tourism, VT Fresh Network. But also a 1937 report on agriculture shows similar concerns then as today: the state was concerned about farmers getting a fair price, land use trends, agricultural education.
- Antiquated pricing system doesn't allow farmers to earn enough.
- In VT agriculture, one sector can be pitted against another (wine versus dairy).
- Public wants a working landscape, but what does that mean in practice? Do our policies reflect our goals with regard to land use? Is VT land going to be available and affordable for productive use in the future?
- Economic development: We think of IBM, GM, but what about agriculture? What tools do we need for agriculture to be part of economic development?
- Do our land-grant institutions focus on research needs of state? How do we tie research, education, technology, and economic development in a systematic approach? Do we have a strategy to keep our working landscapes profitable and engaged?
- We lack a coherent strategy for VT agriculture.
- Farmers markets, dairy industry are strong.
- Can we support environmental stewardship better?



Maria Blais

Key challenges in Vermont agriculture today:

- **Pollution and waste** (manure and food scraps): Consumers should have to take some responsibility for the cost of dealing with agricultural pollution and wastes and not leave it only

on producers. How can we position VT agricultural products to earn money for farmers but also to include price of backend issues (waste management, beyond just the cost of producing and transport) into the product price. Ben and Jerry's succeeded in creating a green product that people feel good about paying a higher price for a social/environmental mission. This is an opportunity to integrate systems of production, marketing, and waste/nutrient management. Farmers should be paid for ecosystem services.

- **Food system illiteracy:** more of us need to understand where our food comes from and be committed to eating local, which is possible in Vermont. All VT schools need gardens. Education reinforces the "buy local" ideal and changes the expectation of the price.
- **Technology:** all Vermont farmers should have access to high speed internet.
- **Lack of coordination of efforts:** we must present a united front as farmers and advocates. Also better communication is needed with farmers to encourage recreation and education on farms.
- **Prioritization of agriculture:** no money was included in the stimulus package for agriculture.
- **Next generation of farmers:** Young people can't make a living farming because it's too expensive to own or lease land, and because of family (discourages it, disagrees on how to run farm, older generation not willing to give up farm). Also there are a lack of stories of the different ways to be a farmer (how to pull it off) so not enough new farmers are being attracted to the business.
- **Economic vulnerability:** Farmers are price takers who can't control price of product.
- **Financial literacy** and management is necessary for farmers. An understanding of inputs and costs of farm is necessary.
- **Farm labor and housing**
- **Regulations** are an impediment; and environmental issues often treated as punitive and not preventative/proactive. Farmers need to make enough money to deal with production, debt repayment, and environmental regulations. Also, food safety regulations are antiquated.
- Vermont is not farmer friendly with regard to **financing**.
- **We're not looking regionally** in our agricultural sales, we are TOO local. We shouldn't stay too local because our dairies are vital and we have to sell products beyond Vermont. Local may mean regional -- for consumers in Boston and New York, local might mean Vermont. This can be a strong marketing tool.
- **Marketing** products as "green" has turned into just marketing schemes; we need these labels to be authentic and based on strict metrics to account for environmental degradation.
- Billions of pounds of milk in Vermont need a market. This is an ongoing problem.
- **Immigration** reform is affecting farms. 50% of VT farm workers are Hispanic.
- Lack of universal **healthcare** in a dangerous profession is a problem.
- Aversion to new **technologies** is a problem.
- **Stigma** of working on a farm: Everyone wants to own a farm, but not be a farm worker which is where you need to start.
- **Food security:** All Vermonters should have access to food.

Opportunities ahead in agriculture:

- **Food hub model.**
- Connecting demand and supply in local agriculture, addressing infrastructure needs (processing and distribution).
- Play to our strengths of **scale:** middle scale farms can best meet ecological and economic goals, better than small or large scale farms. Value-added products are the key.

- **Integrate crop and livestock:** We need more systems that integrate crops and animals, which reduces fuel cost and is more economically and environmentally feasible (Examples: Butterworks, Boyden Valley). This can be at the individual farm scale or at community scale.
- **Social marketing and branding:** We have an opportunity to market and brand Vermont dairy products as rbst free, organic, etc. based on social and environmental criteria.
- **Agritourism:** the public face of agriculture. We have a huge market in our region (60 million people) for tourism. Farmers are the original environmental stewards. Agritourism educates out-of-state buyers too.
- **Education** to create food literacy reinforces the buy local model.
- Changes the expectation of price: Other countries spend a larger percentage of their budget on food. Education helps change the expectation of the price.
- Educates consumers elsewhere.
- Cultural opportunity: community and family values around food.
- Good agricultural education may incubate the **next generation of farmers.**
- **Policies** can support farmers to produce products that Vermont is not yet producing, through market analysis and contracts.
- **Technological development.**
- Investment in food hub infrastructure.
- Research at higher education, including how to market our products.
- There is a need to recognize the full value of agriculture beyond economic production alone, through **policy**. Products beyond food are highly valued too, like the scenery, but farmers are not rewarded for these services and need some type of subsidy to support agriculture.
- We need more investment in land protection. The state needs a **policy** (rather than a program) to tax land based on its use (homes, versus agriculture, versus forestry).
- We should use the momentum of legislature from Farm to Table bill.
- Vermont agriculture needs to go beyond just the Department of Agriculture and the focus on local foods, to also be addressed by **economic policies and other policy connections** outside our small networks.

The group identifies the major themes to be:

- Financial viability
- Education
- Branding
- Policy
- Next generation of farmers
- Values

How do Vermonters and Vermont organizations work together to overcome obstacles and advance opportunities in agriculture?

- Food cooperatives can connect with producers, processors, and transporters to maximize efficiency of regional food system to meet the demands of consumers for local foods. We should support the Vermont collaborative culture so we each know our role.
- Tradition of innovation and entrepreneurship in Vermont is a strength: VT Fresh Network, FEED.
- We already have a Vermont brand and quality product. We do a good job marketing our agriculture.



Maria Blais

- We have some policies in place (Act 250) to support agriculture as a community.
- We should emphasize all elements of food system including production, distribution, marketing, education.
- We have the highest per capita organic farms in U.S. and highest per capita expenditure on local foods, and have an appreciation of environmental stewardship.
- Vermont is great at getting people together to share ideas and build relationships, but we need to invest more on technology so everyone has internet available.
- Hardwick has brought community-focused financing opportunities with a social mission.
- We celebrate local agriculture.
- We develop good ideas but we need to do better at importing ideas and knowledge from beyond our borders.
- We grow great food.
- Agriculture will continue to struggle environmentally, but we do have solutions like the Farmer Watershed Alliance.
- We are good at information transfer and non-formal education.
- We have excellent agriculture advocacy groups in the state.
- Community banks are extremely supportive of agriculture. Small and medium-scale funding is available and banks are playing a role in Vermont agriculture.

Goals and Action Steps:

- A goal is that the average age of farmers decreases through education and assistance programs.
- We must protect the Vermont brand, through quality and as an aggressive supporter of environmental issues. Link food safety, environment, and marketing (an article about blue-green algae in lake is devastating to VT agriculture).
- We need to set a goal for how much energy use, how much revenue, how many farmers, how much food production.
- Let's produce 75% of Vermont diet by 2025; Vermonters spend \$2.6 billion on food each year. VT is capable of feeding 1.2 million people with healthy food.
- Zero soil loss. 100% capture of food residuals.
- Double the amount of Vermont jobs in agriculture (currently 7%, increase to 14%). This must include livable wages.
- Increase farm energy efficiency by 30% by 2020.
- Every K-12 school will have a garden and compost project. Farm to school program, curriculum and local purchasing.
- 75% of state food dollars (for state-funded institutions-schools, state house, Dept. of Corrections) should be spent on Vermont foods by 2025.
- Make the commitment to land use a tax policy and not a tax program.
- Recycle 5-10% of human nutrients back to agriculture.
- No empty trucks: we need an efficient agricultural transport system.
- Invest in technologies that allow Vermonters to purchase local foods (e.g. EBT card readers at farmers markets).
- ***Define and incentivize an operational food system that is environmentally, economically, and socially viable. 1) DEFINE: Reach an agreement on what "sustainable agriculture" is; apply metrics to the economic, environmental, and social aspects of agriculture. 2) INCENTIVIZE: through investment, policy, education, and dedication of public dollars to state agriculture.

- ***Procurement policy of state connected monies will drive us to the goal of 75% Vermont food purchase to be produced in Vermont by 2025.
- Implement an education strategy that supports these goals.

For this to occur, we must boost our education, production, processing, infrastructure, marketing and energy efficiency and use our dollars as a leverage point to drive this change.

SESSION:

Civic Life: *Enhancing the Vitality of Civic Life in Vermont Communities*

Presenter and Facilitator: **Jolinda LaClair**, *VCRD Board Chair*

Scribe: **Claire Wheeler**, *NE Grassroots Environment Fund*

In general, the discussion revolved around these themes:

- Many of the challenges are also opportunities.
- Strategies on how to get folks involved in civic life/engagement.
- Dichotomy of the two Vermonts (natives v. flatlanders; new generations v. old; Chittenden county v. Vermont; etc.).



Maria Blais

What are the key challenges in this sector today?

- Staying power – the idea that if you are new, you have to prove that you can stay.
- Native Vermonters also have to overcome assumptions from new Vermonters (that they are not as smart, etc.), so the acceptance of natives versus newcomers must be a 2-way street. So far today, this topic has revolved only around the natives accepting the new people, but that isn't the complete picture.
- There is too much "bowling alone" in the state .
- Distrust by the people of governance that is not at arms length – people demand government be as close as possible in order to keep an eye on it but this gets in the way of regional collaboration, people want to hold LOCAL people, policies, etc. accountable – this is also an opportunity.
- Difficulty of getting people involved – it works one-on-one or face-to-face, but what other modes are out there for outreach or recruitment?
- Lack of public transportation gets in the way of civic engagement.
- Newcomers are speaking up more than the older generations – what about the voice of the natives?
- Newcomers to towns can afford participating in the vitality of the community, children of older Vermont generations can not afford to be as engaged in programs that cost money, and yet they are the ones who have the history/tradition/experience of being a young Vermonter.
- Defining the meaning of "we" – are we one entity or are we made up of individuals opinions and how this is expressed (town meeting vs. Australian ballot).

- Technology is resulting in a lack of public interplay, for example in town governance because anybody can watch it on TV so not many people are showing up to the actual meetings.
- Young adults are not given enough opportunities to be engaged – the older crowd is already engaged from having lived here for so long but more outreach needs to reach the younger adults.
- Over-engagement can be a problem – too much obligation and being asked to do too much, over-extended.
- Keeping out-of-state Vermonters in the loop – many people who grew up here or have lived here for a while and are now in other parts of the world still identify as Vermonters and have a vested interest in the decisions being made and the state’s future, but how do we keep them involved or keep them on our radar?

What are the opportunities in this sector?

- The intimate size of Vermont makes us unique and allows us to do many things other states can’t do.
- In the larger cities and towns, it’s very easy to engage and involve new people, but this is harder in the smaller towns.
- Small scaleness means members of a community are looking out for each other, youth can’t fall through the cracks if everybody in the town knows them, shared responsibility.
- We identify as Vermonters – a state identity is opportunistic, and so are the unique qualities of each area.
- People hold Vermont very near to their hearts. Even if people leave the state they still think of it as their own – huge VT pride.
- There are new models of engagement to explore (Orton Family Foundation examples: using art to engage, putting HS students on town boards, etc.).
- Big emphasis on using art to bring communities together.
- Like Bernie said, economic power/wealth is not so much of a driving factor for the state or the public (VT vs. Wall Street, businesses in VT are socially conscious, civic life is more valued than wealth).
- Mutual sustainability models in many towns – (ex: the town needs the college, college needs the town).
- Openness.
- There is an inherent unity between natives and flatlanders = both want to be here.
- Things move more slowly here, people pay attention, go through and pay attention to process.
- Technology is another way to reach out to youth and stay connected (ex: VT could use cell phone companies to send out text message alerts about local events and initiatives).
- Technology being used effectively at the town level, allows for innovation and how we engage citizens.
- Healthy celebrations – investment in performance, galleries, inspiration from the arts.
- Human contact is what feeds everything else.
- Recognition and thanks to those that are engaged and doing the work is key.
- Cultural history and heritage feeds identity and is a crucial component of civic life.

How do Vermonters and Vermont organizations work together to overcome obstacles and advance opportunities in this sector?

- Connecting interested people with enthusiasm and encouragement (but also with no obligation), feeding the need for people to be together, creating a welcoming forum.
- Creating partnership models (example of Circus Smirkus and Revere, MA – the mayor pays for CS to come to town, then local nonprofits get profits from the show and publicity and also recruit attendees, the mayor then recruits folks that attend for city boards). VT has a big opportunity for this 3-way partnership model since we already know everybody.
- Challenging nonprofits to partner with other nonprofits that they don't know or aren't familiar with, then using uncommon partnership for informal discourse.
- Sparking unusual partnerships through storytelling, finding common thread.
- Focusing on INVITING, not expecting, people to become involved.
- Guaranteeing the program or initiative in a community regardless of outside factors (funding).
- Peacham Collaborative – town coming together to overcome disadvantage of small-scale municipal work.
- Getting students and youth in a prominent place (on town boards).
- Getting groups together to express needs and hopes to figure out where to collaborate and how to fill gaps with the resources that are already available.
- Involving people in projects where they think they can make a difference, where their vision is going to result in action.
- Giving power to the people – a certain amount of power has to be wielded by people in order to get them to go to things – the farther away it seems, the less engaged they are likely to be.
- Giving people permission to have the discourse or get the yelling out of the way to figure out what we all have in common in the case of adversity; town meeting is a structured forum for dialogue, but there need to be others.
- Going to the people first to get them involved – if you want them to be involved with your initiative, go to the meetings and houses of the people you want to participate first and become involved in what they are doing.
- Meetinghouse model – link with the cyber and local communities. Each town should celebrate what they like in their town and put it online and turn it into a celebration. Then social issues can be addressed because everybody already knows what's up.

Define Goals and Action Steps

- To maintain identity and to break down divides through informal values-based unusual partnerships, celebratory conversations and actions. (*Divide Examples: Flatlander v. Natives, Chittenden county v. Vermont, Young v. Old*).
- To explore regionalization for infrastructure and services and simultaneously retain and nurture community identity.
- To name the things we're doing right in these discussions too so we can hang onto them (its clear we're doing something right – so let's make sure to maintain that).
- To maintain the connection between our civic life and our physical environment – the land that we're attached to.
- To pick given opportunities to create these celebrations – multi-modal ways of connectivity.
- To maintain cultural heritage – what we value and the places and concepts we value are all of this.

- To allow people to become involved without obligation (ex. front porch forum – use technology to get involved and see what is available).

Regionalization Discussion

- How do we engage beyond the single community? There are lots of VT hubs (Montpelier, Brattleboro) for the towns surrounding, but they might not identify or be asked to identify with the hub.
- County government exists to fill these economies of scale/holes in other states, but we choose not to use it.
- VT has distinctive geo-political regions, which address particular concerns. There could be efficiencies and effectiveness if we think outside of this.
- Regionalization gets murky (identity versus infrastructure/services) – building on town identity, not what we have.
- Regional partnerships are essential – current local systems and structures are not going to work in 20 years if they are demonstrating now that they aren't working.

Intergenerational Discussion

- There are intergenerational issues to settle – older people who have huge resources of wisdom and we need to access that, and another generation that has a whole different perspective and our communities need to adapt to that (not vice versa). While we must support some (older), we must also adapt to others (younger) and not always expect the younger generations to be the ones to adapt.
- Children and their joyfulness, playing, exploring, needs to happen so that they know that its their community and their Vermont – these are the children that will come back or stay b/c they grew up with the same core values and the same heart that Vermont is their home.

SESSION:

Demographics: *Realizing the Opportunities of an Aging Population and Workforce*

Presenter: Patrick Flood, VT Agency of Human Services

Facilitator: Chip Evans, VT Workforce Development Center

Scribe: Fred Schmidt, UVM Center for Rural Studies

Two Actions Agreed to by Consensus

- 1) Keep Elders in the workforce providing them with income, volunteer opportunities and social connections, help meet labor/skill shortage, helps balance worker to retiree ratio.
 - provide technical assistance to employers in how to do this
 - flexible work schedules
 - help elders master IT
 - utilize adaptive technologies for accommodating elder workers



Maria Blais

- 2) Create housing options for Elders in downtowns to keep downtowns vital, reduce the need for daily transport to services, and provide daily social interaction, and human scale living.
 - encourage multi-age, elder friendly housing through zoning regulations
 - make creative re-use of existing housing
 - work with banks to develop appropriate financial instruments
 - develop a structured home share system to match elders with those who can co-house and meet some needs of elders

Patrick Flood's Opening Comments:

- “Can’t talk about elders without talking about the whole age and service spectrum. Certainly we are an aging state, but there are as many positives as negatives here.” Adding to the elder demographic is the fact that we also have a huge group of baby boomers following in their tracks, “like me, and many of us here today.”
- There are huge implications when you think about what the population will look like now with those boomers aging in place. Actually there are more elders moving into the state than are moving out. “Young-elders,” still tend to move out, maybe to Florida, AZ, etc. Frail elders start coming back – many move here to be with/near their children or simply for Vermont’s renowned quality of life. This is, for the most part, a positive phenomenon. These elders who move back are a resource; they create jobs, a market for services. An aging population brings up the specter of folks needing lots of care and service consumers – which is not necessarily true, but as folks in their 80s age, they will have special needs. We need to plan and think about this, but it’s not necessarily the driving challenge right now.
- Other positives – these elder will be productive, may well work full time, in addition to being a cohort demanding services, and will contribute in many ways to the richness of the area. They have skills and can make major contributions to the economy and culture.
- Youth out-migration is an issue, but many of them will come back, attracted by life quality and simply that this is a good place to raise a family. In and out-migration problem will not be a major issue. We can talk about the looming problem as much as we want, but need to remember that the folks coming back will be in better health than previous generations. The following example would suggest that they will create a demand for new (or at least unanticipated) services and activities: who would think an elder would be snow boarding. Just because the elders will live longer, doesn’t necessarily mean they will be dependent on the larger society for health services. Of course some areas will continue to be problematic, such as transportation. Crowding and traffic issues on the highways and main streets of Vermont is an issue right now.

What are the key challenges ahead in this sector?

- Chip Evens mentions the following issues from the report: aging, shrinking youth population, return of youth, in- and out-migration, return of elders (issues of their support), a high level of work force participation (VT high in the nation, households often with two parent workers, and elders working characterizing an aging labor force). Issues may well focus on those associated with needs of an aging population. Example: limited system for skill transfer from elders to the youth.
- May grow over the segmentation of life, e.g. work to 55 or 65 then change gears. Need a more balanced life, avoid the stress of the mid-age focus on work; blend the edges of life’s experience. Expose people to being more productive when older as well as living life more fully when in mid-career/family.

- The interaction of living with extended families. Are we more focused on extended families in the northeast? Do young people tend to move out of the region? Extended families are more normative in rural regions, but the role of aging folks with a nuclear family. The concept of warehousing elders may be challenged by more planned anticipated forms of family, inter-member support and housing.
- This whole area of extended family roles and delivering services needs to be explored. Flip-side of independence, is inter-generational, family based DEPENDENCE. Has Vermont something to offer here? This is a value statement. Family independence and free-standing adult roles, is a cultural thing. Is there something to work on here?
- Sensitization of the market place to the needs of elders. Make the marketplace take on greater sensitivity to needs of elders – seating, sound, climatic control. Get more aware of elder needs and how to serve them better and accommodate their perspectives in approaching them with new technology.
- Cultivating and wooing elders as potential leaders. Do more to prepare senior citizens to be more engaged in local government, make them more prepared to be involved in civic engagement.
- Challenges of ageism are alive and well in our culture. Need to get over the ideas of what it is like to be older in this society. Need to see elders as those with wisdom and those who hold the cultural legacy of our culture. Forgetfulness feeds into the myths of aging in the US.
- Need to slow down as a society. If we can slow down, we can spend more time with elders. The whole cultural thing has to change here.
- Issues accompanying the use of new technology – e-mail, PCs, automated cash registers. Need basic IT scores. Info technology – even a cell phone. Skills in these areas provide employment opportunities and facilitate social connections.
- A waiting list for an entry level IT course in Vermont – long waiting lists of folks mainly in their 50s looking for work. (An opportunity is allowing folks to be part of a social network through twitter, face-book, etc.).
- Another issue is dealing with the time and energy spent on health care. To age longer and healthier will cost money. Spouses may be only source of support services. And inadequate or non-existent income.
- Scary item is the potential cost of an illness, no idea what certain things will cost, especially when you are responsible for paying the partial or full health cost.
- Colleagues who are also dealing with elders with declining health. Aging mid-career folks who are responsible for the health care of parents or elder relatives.
- Travel “crossroads” include bus stops, train stations and especially airports, all of which are going through changes due to the shrinking economy accompanied by budget cuts. For example are not friendly to elders – e.g. limited seating, elimination of staff who service elders (wheel chair wheelers, Pullman services, etc.) Just part of the transportation system, including public buses, metro, etc.
- Austria has free transportation for older folks, and in Germany there are special staff on trains to address needs of elders directly.
- Public transportation in Vermont is a particular issue because of rurality – e.g. dispersed population, lack of critical service mass.
- In terms of design also consider housing “footprints.” The average house is not designed for elders. Inadequate and ill-designed housing. Multi-level homes are a problem.

- Don't underestimate expense of loneliness, helplessness and boredom. Dr. Thomas sees these as the critical dimensions of life contributing to low life quality.
- Rust-out versus burn out (underutilization of elder skills).
- To make a livelihood out of providing care services for elders (especially those who want to age in place) – need to make this area of the labor force more attractive.
- Tale of two cities – always those who golf, create, go into old age with resources as opposed to those who don't have good health and/or the resources to live the good life.
- Loss of a sense of community that includes the elders – especially in the winter when elders may spend lots of time inside, not plugged in.
- Here Vermonter's small scale may be an obstacle to keeping elders plugged in. Also there is the cumulation of plenty of folks available to support a given service.
- Special services for disabled elders, folks. Sources of support? What will happen to these funds and supports in the future? Vermont has lost its training school. Number of kids with disabilities is increasing, elders with disabilities on the wane. But still this is an area needing exploration.

What are the opportunities ahead in this sector?

- A huge pool of potential volunteers – legislators, selectboards, school boards, non-profit boards.
- Skilled and talented, “proven” workers, are in this pool of elders with work ethic, dependability and soft skills.
- They serve as role models to show up on time, get along with others, work as a team, and get the job done.
- Opportunities for multi-age, multi-skill job mixes. Interaction across the generations will characterize the new labor force.
- *Elders* bring to our economy both a role as potential consumers of tourism services, plus they can work in this industry as well.
- People will stay engaged – with a few accommodations, we can help them stay engaged. Some new supports are needed – both an opportunity and a challenge.
- A recent Grafton conference on “a mature work force” identified an agenda of issues and opportunities and is an excellent resource on this topic.
- Our aging workforce is well suited for some occupational areas that are not physically demanding, but many jobs in Healthcare, IT, hospitality. What ergo-matic devices are available to avoid lifting to keep workers functioning as they age? We, as a culture, have some mental blinders on when dealing with elders. For example, when someone reaches 65 we are shocked that they show up for work.
- The baby-boomers create some market niches. If it weren't for the Baby Boomers I wouldn't listen to classic rock today. Maybe we need a new kind of college to educate these elders as to new skills, etc. (Elders don't want to mix in with these young people. Follow their interests with targeted training).
- Higher education potential – college towns are becoming a retirement destination – this raises the potential of doing something with college towns (VT has at least 20 college towns to develop.) Seniors who may take courses for personal development.
- A new niche for seniors who want to get exposed to new possibilities like Facebook, My Space, blogging, etc. These IT platforms can generate good skills for building social capital; help elders maintain contacts, support systems. But who has the time? Elders do.

- Volunteerism – one form is mentorship. A theme area – mentoring across ages, across many vocational niches. A spiritual opportunity or real benefit when elders can be integrated into other communities – sharing their perspective, etc. The more we are exposed to frail elders, we learn certain ecology of life – the birth and death of life – which enriches us to see “these ways of being,” and thus the situation better prepares us to lead a more full life of our own. Awareness of life style differences enhanced here.
- Aging a time to be more creative – learn about the arts, go to school, learn an instrument, garden, appreciate nature, crafts, etc.
- Elders are also Consumers of the arts, VSO, eating local foods. They represent a market niche. (Special niches for food products with attributes that elders need, e.g. high calcium needs, and for example they are a market for high quality heirloom furniture).
- Elder cohort as an economic/demographic niche. Chip has a case from WV where a state agency group uses elders with experience in the hospitality industry to advise restaurant and B&B owners how to make their business successful. In NC they have strung together a network of B&Bs with crafts folks and looped them around a 3-4 day trip where you connect elders with crafts people (who may also be elders) and promote tourism and markets for craft products that do not require crafts people to travel to shows.
- What about legislative jobs or roles in local government – taking over running the government. Have we an aging legislature who either are elders, or are close care providers who are sympathetic to the elders as a recipient of special services.
- Opportunities like the senior corps business advisors. More development of this theme is necessary.

How do Vermonters and Vermont organizations work together to overcome obstacles and advance opportunities in this sector?

- Great example in Hardwick where multi-org cooperation focused on a community garden has created a platform for elders to train, share their skills in a community government. Side effects get elders involved in good food, healthy exercise, social networking, etc.
- Work with Vermont Adult Learning – Adult to access computer resources at a common place.
- Listing of the available services – if we can recruit more workers, employment may solve lots of issues, e.g. isolation, money, interaction with others, plus it helps the rest of the community/society through the service they provide at work. (Reduce the dependency ratio). May actually get some health service through their work.
- Retention piece – how can we develop a rapid response team to respond to those who loose their job between 55 and 70.
- An example where they ran a group of workers through a hands-on information technology skills workshop.
- Match up places giving away resources e.g. computers, linking resources to people. Companies like UPS who refurbish computers – a cheap way to outfit programs with a good piece of equipment.
- Think up a program that encourages developers to build elder friendly homes – maybe a tax incentive, but also educate on the small things a builder can do to make a home more accommodating to an elder. Note the advantage of building these features in when a building is first constructed as opposed to rehabbing it later.
- Using elders as volunteers in the museums, arts, etc keeps them in the loop (with other elders) while exposing them to the creative arts.

- Visual bloggers – teaching elders information technology (elders are a great audience for this form of technology as they are a repository of experience and have great stories).
- Designing legal and financial advice and technical assistance that has built into it the capacity to help elders plan for the future.
- Issues of smaller keyboards and audio-capacity for elders – e.g. accommodate failing sight, touch, and audio. These 3 senses alone need to be accommodated and responded to by the health industry. The new generation of technology doesn't share an appreciation of the limits elders have.
- School programs where kids from schools interview elders (sometimes now documented on cell phones) are good in keeping elders connected.
- Long discussion of "Home Share" programs, (*Italics represent scribe's comments - it was clear that folks weren't particularly familiar with the home share and co-housing efforts now going on in the state. There is/was some mis-information reported here, but all in all this was a major topic of concern for this group and further exploration of organizational and programmatic alternatives, at a community level, was a topic for action and held a major part of the participants attention. Topics, below covered issues of community support for such housing efforts, issues of appropriate design and management, and a lot of focus on appropriate location of facilities for elders in appropriately scaled projects located in downtown areas, even in smaller communities with only a small commercial core.*)
- Multigenerational and co-housing where space is shared. Need multi-owner model as well. Could look for places for elders to go during the day. What goes into elder housing? May be places for elders to interact with one another.
- Co-housing may well be inter-generational as well. (Downside – cohousing is expensive, need to buy into). Addresses isolation, etc. Examples on East Avenue in Burlington, one in Montpelier as well. Had zoning issues. This is for people who don't want to give up their home – e.g. Burlington's Home Care situation.
- NERC – a national group that promotes this co-housing activity. One way to deal with the development of communities more responsive to the housing needs of elders. Finding caregivers who will locate in a home in a rural community.
- Can local or state government facilitate these in house care activities? Design is to bring care to people so they can stay in their home as long as possible. Can Vermont promote these?
- Looking for a matching mechanism, matching elders with needs to situations (and support) that can help them stay at home. It is noted that often in Vermont we lack the critical mass for specialized services. This starts with the "special" needs typically found as we age, but goes on into the specific and less apparent health challenges experienced by smaller numbers of elders.
- Explore other programs to help ease the transition of elders from their homes to other, more urban housing situations.
- Elderly transportation – (SST) issues of Medicaid and other forms of transportation oriented programs. CiDER, a volunteer rural transportation system in the Islands, has worked for over a decade to try to accommodate elders through the design and location of a facility for elders easily accessible to CiDER's transportation services. A program with an informative history.
- A program in Maine? Where elder's car is turned into a pool and someone drives. Rides for Life – (like the good news garage).
- Can change transportation or talk to regional and local planning about building and location of elder housing. CIDER in South Hero has worked on a program like this for a decade. We need to do more of this for elders in Vermont.

- Universal design – all housing should be built with UD in mind. Need to consider tax credits and other incentives to approach the introduction of Universal design to all public (and maybe private) housing efforts.

Define Goals and Action Steps

(Several members wanted to make sure the recent Grafton report was referenced and seen as a resource to further this conversation).

- Need an effort across the state that deals with universal designed homes as well as developing downtowns appropriately. Take a look at high density and high efficiency alternatives for housing involving downtown in all towns with a residential/commercial downtown. Make it possible for folks of all income levels to move into appropriate downtowns in well-designed facilities, near services, etc.
- Work place facilitators – part of a larger effort to reunite elders with jobs in the work force – flexible hours, specialized training (especially IT). Consider this a workforce area to explore. An approach that facilitates getting elders into their new (or old) roles. A vocational rehab type person for elders. Model would be the German train worker who is assigned to help elders travel. Return on investment would be huge. Work place facilitators.

SESSION:

Digital Age: Enhancing Vermont Community in a Digital Age

Presenter: Tom Evslin, VT Office of Economic Stimulus and Recovery

Facilitator: Heidi Klein, Snelling Center for Government

Scribe: Ann Lawless, American Precision Museum

Tom Evslin’s Opening comments:

Tom Evslin introduced the challenges. We are not yet in the digital age, but we have the opportunity to be, provided VT Telecom Authority can compete successfully for ARRA funds. We may have to redefine our goals. We want broadband everywhere; everyone has to have it, and we must overcome economic and training obstacles. If we piggyback on the power grid we won’t need a separate grid.

We need “scads” of access and capacity in homes and schools, and one pressing situation looms before us, e-health initiatives – the need and ability to record digital information in home health care and coordinate with doctors’ offices. The VT Telecom Report gave us lots of choices, but Vermonters are bad at making choices. It’s easiest to preserve the status quo, but that must be recognized as a choice too. One approach is to socialize the cost of providing services, similar to building and maintaining roads, and the provision of rural electrification and telephone systems. The value of a network increases exponentially with every new person or site added. There will be work involved to convince some of the extra benefit of inclusivity. The stimulus money has to be spent quickly; therefore we need to make choices quickly.



Lee Krohn

What are the key challenges in this sector today?

- Among the session participants, there appeared to be varying knowledge about the state's plan and our group took quite a bit of the time available to develop our own priorities, which Tom agreed conformed to the state's plan (this in itself could represent a similar challenge among the population at large). The group came up with these goals:
 - Affordable to all
 - 100% use – by all segments of the population
 - Mobility – the focus should not be on broadband alone; cell phones are essential
 - Safe and secure – maintaining privacy is important
 - Training provided for use and productivity
 - Additional capacity to strengthen downtown and village centers
- Vermonters who already have access to high-speed digital technologies are using them in many excellent ways – community websites, Front Porch Forums in Chittenden county area, other models in Brattleboro. **The group reconfirmed that the present, primary goal should be to develop the infrastructure to provide access for all.** The variety of community uses will result automatically.
- Physical infrastructure is distinct from policy infrastructure, which we need to revisit. Telephony was intentionally decoupled from access and this has led to adverse effects – the privatization of cable.
- Provide training for productivity.
- We must ensure that digital access improves civic life – it's not a certainty that it does so effectively. Technology has a great potential to connect us or to isolate us.
- Our small scale is a challenge because the high cost is not appealing to private development.
- We need to cut through wasted time and effort.
- Community is the undergird, and fortunately Vermont is good at community – digital community rides on top of that.

What are the opportunities ahead in this sector?

- VT can be a model.
- Mesh networks (meaning devices, energy, traveling in decentralized systems – the internet, for example) are more resilient and innovative than “authoritative or hierarchical” systems such as phone or the electric grid.
- We are well positioned because of the stimulus fund opportunities, AND we have a plan.
- Cell technologies seem to be a promising direction for providing wide bandwidth.
- Digital tools can be used to enhance community connections by locating free access and training opportunities in community centers, libraries and town gathering spots.
- Digital tools can help to form new communities – communities based on shared interest rather than common geography.

How do Vermonters and Vermont organizations work together to overcome obstacles and advance opportunities in this sector?

- Keep the technology agnostic – build in the idea that the technology will continually evolve.
- Choose platforms and technologies that align and promote common values.
- Create incentives to promote use.
- Different technologies may be needed in different places.

Define Goals and Action Steps

- Goals: Ensure 100% accessibility, affordability and use of digital technology tools for all segments and populations (young, old, rural, urban) regardless of ability to pay, in order to level the playing field in accessing information and resources.
 - Action Steps:
 - Support and expand use of Universal Service Funds (USF).
 - Use public/private partnerships to offer training to improve use, productivity, civic engagement, and information literacy.
 - Give users the choice of where any extra funds will go.
- Federal level:
- Encourage our DC delegation to expand use of funds to cover what is now called information services.
 - Disconnect the federal mandate, which obligates public libraries to utilize search filters on public access computers, from the use of USF funds. For example, a person researching breast cancer will be unable to access sites with the word “breast.”
- State level:
- Encourage expansion for subsidized broadband and cell beyond and/or similar to “Lifeline” Telephone services, \$10/month for those on limited budgets.
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SESSION:

Diversity: *Preparing for Diversity in Vermont Towns and Cities*

Presenter: **Hal Colston**, *NeighborKeepers*

Facilitator: **Sarah Waring**, *VCRD*

Scribe: **Joe Speidel**, *Federal State and Community Relations, UVM*

Hal’s Opening Comments:

- The cost of maintaining the dominant culture’s privilege is their humanity. Injustice is about “just us.”
- Who is being developed? Who is being manipulated?
- Who owns, who produces, who consumes? Who gains? Who pays?

Key opportunities in this sector

- Diversity helps to better prepare our children to participate in the global community.
- Make diversity an economic development issue, not just a social justice issue.
- Opportunity to better engage the leadership in various sectors in the demographic shift that is occurring.
- An opportunity to add to the common wisdom with multiple voices heard from.
- There is an opportunity to name our identities and to not be hindered or limited by them.
- Need to think about diversity in the most inclusive way, including categories other than race (eg., religion).



Lee Krohn

- Opportunity to address implicit bias in a way that engages people in the conversation.
- Opportunity to embrace individuals vs. tolerate other cultures.
- Celebrating cultural opportunities (festivals, foods, music).
- Providing students diversity training to promote respect for people with different backgrounds.
- Radical hospitality and to share stories about our backgrounds.
- Embrace individual values and incorporate them into the community (Freedom and Unity theme).
- Push leaders to talk about diversity and what that means as the demographics change in the state.
- To see the needs of communities of color reflected in public policy and structure.
- To understand that people of color in the state of Vermont cannot be stereotyped; they have different socio-economic, political, and other characteristics.
- To practice the Platinum Rule: Treat others as they would like to be treated.
- To affirm difference (vs. tolerate).

Key challenges in this sector

- People who are looking for an opportunity to look down on others for their difference.
- To acknowledge our commonalities instead of our differences only (i.e., in religious groups).
- Opening up an honest conversation with people, without alienating them (i.e., with students).
- Dominant culture leadership, White privilege (and its invisibility and unawareness).
- To convince people of color to come to Vermont to get involved in being speakers/presenters because they have heard relatively negative things about the state.
- To not have people see diversity as a separate initiative but as part of other conversations/efforts.
- People see diversity as sometimes getting in the way of getting the best person as a new employee vs. seeing diversity as part of getting the best person.
- Engaging leaders in policy, procedures, change around “moral purpose,” exploring embracing diversity and inclusion (i.e., in hiring practices).
- Lack of access to resources or capacity in terms of leadership.
- Getting emerging leaders engaged in the conversation and in positions of power.
- Bringing one’s message to the conversation regarding what I want without having to change the message to fit what others are expecting or would understand (assimilation).
- Economic barriers: loss of jobs, meeting basic needs, raising a family in Vermont, not having time or resources to participate in civic life in communities.
- Challenging White supremacy culture; “People of color spend too much time making White people feel comfortable.”
- To not see the differences such as race and ethnicity as the primary identifier in each other, and /or to not see it as important.

How do Vermonters and Vermont organizations work together to overcome obstacles and advance opportunities?

- Getting diverse groups of people together, not just those who disagree.



Maria Blais

- Support leadership in communities to construct and contribute to paradigm.
- Networking these groups (strength in numbers; where are gaps; facilitating that structure); then, do big events (Pride this year could use help).
- Aggressively recruit for difference – change personal behavior.
- Diversify power structure (boards, commissions, volunteers, network HR departments to recruit for multiple jobs (for partners).
- Libraries – community discussions.
- Digital connection – Front Porch Forum.
- Invite people in –go to them.
- How to set the table – who’s inviting, who is setting the agenda, how do you co-create? Meeting people where they are.
- Getting to know what will make coming together successful; know people.
- How do we assess the agenda setting – how do we learn implicit behaviors?
- Comprehensive engagement plan/system.
- Bringing communities into schools and bringing schools into the communities.
- We can do the work, but we need the tools.
- Diversity as a thread through everything we do.
- Don’t tokenize.
- Systemic change – build relationships; understand common language or create new one.
- Create a movement.
- Brattleboro – no bystander language.
- Focus on strengths – living in community that affirms difference and is fair.
- Marketing the solution not the problem (social norming).
- Diversity is a word that people don’t understand.
- Media – way to communicate that people understand.
- Leaders – how they speak to promote an understanding of diversity.
- Making diversity accessible – coax people into change.
- Policy shifts – teaching teachers about anti-discrimination and diversity awareness (frame it in a way that people will understand).
- Relevancy (i.e., left-handedness) instead of alienating people.
- Having it speak to me (what’s in it for me?).
- A lot of mission overlap in non-profits – strength in coalitions and groups, because of relationship building (helps to build a sustainable structure).
- Putting ego aside.
- Empower media to put this out there more – illuminating/celebrating difference.
- How does oppression affect me? Translate that to the community – media breaches.
- Positionality matters – success from building relationships and creating common language.
- How do we re-think democracy and diversity?
- Vision statement – then having/defining how diversity helps that.
- To diminish fear – make truth be familiar – visual art – commissioned artists traveling show – love unites us.

Define Goals and Action Steps

- Call to action that diversity becomes a lens for future action (policy and deliberative).

Pick two themes to bring to the larger group

- A. Personal, individual action we all should take (i.e., go to lunch to know the “other”).
- B. Same principle for organizations, businesses, policy: reach out to groups that are other – structure for intentional, systematic, inclusive
 - Conversation across difference –
 - Intentionality and inclusion
 - Have lunch with someone different
 - Don’t walk by; cease and desist problem behaviors (response is both top down and bottom up)
 - Dialogue to action and trust making (study circles)
 - Community buy-in
 - Diversity and equity working groups
 - Support new and emerging leadership
 - Networking within group
 - Networking to other groups
 - Networking to business/service clubs
 - Common language and diversity in all sectors

SESSION:

Economic Plan: *Building a Strategic Economic Plan for Vermont's Future*

Presenter: **Frank Cioffi**, *Greater Burlington Industrial Corp*

Facilitator: **Pat Moulton Powden**, *VT Department of Labor*

Scribe: **Rachel Erin Schattman**, *Center for Sustainable Agriculture, UVM Extension*



Maria Blais

What are the challenges in this sector?

- The high cost of private investment. The tax burden in VT is too high to attract businesses. Lower taxes would create a more diversified tax base, and therefore a healthier economy.
- Access to capital is a big barrier
- Not forgetting about local communities as we participate in the global economy.
- Transitioning from a manufacturing economy to → ???
- Youth unemployment and the difficulty in creating new jobs to retain young people.
- Aging entrepreneurs/ entrepreneurial replacement while creating capital and keeping investment and ownership local.
- Talking about the need to have an economic plan without being negative. We need to facilitate a cultural shift around VT being an unfriendly place to do business. There is a lot that’s good about doing business in VT, and we need to be sure we’re representing that good stuff when we go out into the world.
- It’s difficult to come up with one economic plan for VT when there is no one single VT economy. A state plan should grow out of a collection of regional plans.

- Vermont lacks “economic tools.” (Tools should be used not just to bring in new businesses, but also to encourage businesses that are already here to stay).
- There needs to be a cultural shift so that the public doesn’t see incentives for businesses as “corporate welfare.” We need more education for the public around economic issues.
- There is a lack of clarity around “creative economies.” What are they? How do we measure them? (Other people in the group seemed clear about what they were).
- We don’t know how to measure success, even when we achieve it. What does a decent set of measures look like? (Someone else chimed in that the state has 2 economists who know how to measure things like this!).
- Too many VT companies are owned internationally.
- We need to develop a single statewide economic plan that demonstrates a unified will.
- We lack leadership in the state around economic issues. Is this due to the 2-year political cycle? That cycle compromises political will and staying power.
- We need to clarify structural problems, ideological barriers, and *find common ground*.
- We need to focus more on tourist industries. They represent untapped potential.
- If we could work on the health insurance issue and make it not the responsibility of businesses, this would serve as a significant draw to VT.

What are the opportunities ahead in this sector?

- We can pick some winning industries to support (like we did for value added foods and captive insurance before).
- The public is ready to move towards a single payer health plan. This would be a possible way to bring money into the state and improve wellbeing.
- The term “Value added job creation” could get at some important issues while losing the baggage associated with the terms “growth” and “development.”
- We could go back to manufacturing (in green technology) and concentrate more on the digital technology industry.
- There is lots of potential to invest in local businesses, and this can help support preservation of VT village centers.
- VT is doing really well in the analytics industries (including exporting these services).
- Further developing energy conservation efforts and businesses would align with core VT values.
- VT cares about natural resources and the environment. We should capitalize on this when we are picking our next “winner industries.”
- We should build on current educational infrastructure to create a model of VT for both informal and formal education.
- There are opportunities for publicly owned general stores in communities.
- Local food and local food production can allow us to retain economic value and invest in our own energy and food future.
- There is more opportunity to focus on exporting VT products.
- There is opportunity to look hard at public policies that inhibit private investment.
- We should invest pension funds in training and enhancing the sustainable energy systems. We will then have a guaranteed return on our investment!
- Our energy contracts are about to expire. We could look at alternative energy systems and combine them with new education programs.

- We can look to Denmark for inspiration. They are almost independent of foreign energy sources.
- We can create a hospitable environment for new industries to take root. To do this we need to ensure access to capital, provide education, and invest locally.
- We can think regionally. We can cooperate to provide support for new entrepreneurs.
- We should create a level playing field to facilitate economic security for all.
- We have an opportunity to be leaders in rural development. We should capitalize on buying local and export VT products as well (local production for local use including biofuels).
- Creative economies are opportunities as well.
- We should focus on import substitution along with local investment.
- Social partnerships need to be facilitated by a neutral party that everyone can agree with. That same group needs to do an impact assessment.
- We should preserve the health of our natural resources (the lake).
- VT is a good place to live and attracts business owners. Schools are also good.
- We should further develop mentorship between experienced and new entrepreneurs.
- Climate change mitigation is an opportunity.

How do Vermonters and Vermont organizations work together to overcome obstacles and advance opportunities in this sector?

- Work to create a draw for young people.
- The conversation should start at the legislature, but should be highly influenced by grassroots input. Social partnerships need to be somewhat closed doors so that things can get done.
- We should come together around common interests.
- Town plans should articulate the economic plan for themselves (beyond land use issues)—the response from the room was that towns don't have the resources to provide the expertise needed to do this.
- Develop consensus in regions among communities by building a common vision. Define these regions (too small and we compete, too big and we lose touch with what matters).
- We should build leadership to keep the conversation keyed towards economic sustainability and stabilization. The legislature should mandate such a commission. The governor should set the agenda and provide the resources.
- Communities should lead and bring things to the legislature.
- The people in this room are the ones that need to do it! Don't just go home and forget about this conversation.
- We should focus on the small businesses in our communities, but we also need to be representative of the state.
- We should start at the local level and define goals.
- What about the "WIRED" model used by Ohio and Maine. Then we could solicit federal funds for start up of new industry. Others note that there is a new version of WIRED that goes along with the Sectors Act (stimulus money) or we could access workforce investment monies, those discretionary funds the governor has access to every year.
- We could model something on the "Next Generation Commission" — a partnership between state government and the private sector).
- An example of a partnership is the "industry and education centers of excellence." This project is a collaboration between the department of labor and department of education. The program focuses on building skills relevant to the hospitality sector and green building.

- WE have to think about our horizon of impact. We have to assess after a year, but realize that the biggest impacts could come about long afterwards.
- We need to include the philanthropic community in this discussion.

Define Goals and Action Steps

- A small group should take the existing and past economic planning efforts done around the state and summarize their findings. The governor should head up/support/initiate/fund/provide staff and resources to distill and synthesize existing report into an action plan with measurable goals and objectives within 10 years. It is necessary that the legislature also buy in to this plan.
- Simultaneously create opportunities for local planning and information gathering. Broaden this process to a regional scale.
- Scale responses appropriately to problems: bigger problems need solutions that stem from a larger area/group of people.
- Be inclusive of the sectors you wish to support.
- Get good data and measures we can all agree on.

SESSION:

Clean Energy: Advancing Vermont's Clean Energy Future

Presenter: [Richard Sedano](#), *The Regulatory Assistance Project*

Facilitator: [Paul Costello](#), *VCRD*

Scribe: [Ginny Callan](#), *NE Grassroots Environment Fund*

What are the key challenges in this sector today?

- Transportation is 40% of the Vermont energy picture and is not being addressed, and use is increasing in the state.
- Regarding the issue of biomass for energy, maintaining forests for production needs to be a part of every project.
- Low income Vermonters have the worst houses for efficiency and energy losses and are the least able to pay for improvements.
- Energy costs will continue to increase over time.
- Out of state energy contracts are running out. Should they continue to be a part of Vermont's energy production mix?
- Financing the infrastructure needed both for small and large systems, how you do it and who pays for it?
- Infrastructure is a challenge, don't plug new fuels into old systems.
- Stimulus funds need a 50% match which can be difficult, and these funds will only be around for a few years. What happens after that?
- Funds to do energy audits can be a barrier for consumers and business people alike.
- The cost divide between alternative energy resources has become wider



Maria Blais

- Cost of global warming is not included – it is shortsighted to not include them along with other hidden costs, such as the cost of nuclear waste storage, etc.
- Landowners do not want to commit to logging contracts and for more than one year.
- Public transportation is not cost productive, where is the financing?
- Currently energy costs are not included in products that we consume, this information could be part of education campaign (such as for bottled water).
- Need a productive continual discussion with all the energy players, how can this process be kept going?
- Regulation can be both a barrier and an opportunity, such as rate design.
- If the economy gets worse and some of the larger users, such as IBM, close or continue to reduce production, the costs will be passed onto to the remaining rate payers.
- There are too many ideas and not enough capital – focus on what has the best payback, it needs to be prioritized.
- Are best management practices for forestry that includes continual replacement of the forest being followed?
- Low costs should not be the only driver for projects.

What are the opportunities ahead in this sector?

- Education about energy efficiency actions is a key opportunity.
- Thermal heat energy (Biomass) and community based energy systems are also an opportunity.
- Smart Grid and smart meters are an opportunity.
- Stimulus funding is a short term opportunity.
- Clean green power must consider all costs including dismantling.
- Plug in hybrids with clean renewable power.
- Vermont has 80 local energy committees to tap into for potential programs to connect neighbor to neighbor.
- Cap and Trade system offers opportunities having VT and Hydro Quebec that are low carbon producers.
- Diverse portfolio needed, including wind, but can be contentious. A new independent review panel or board is proposed with criteria for siting projects.
- Diversity in portfolios is vital and once paid off is low in cost to maintain.
- Offer rate-payers cost options for various power options and include the embedded costs.
- A 20-year view for power purchase should be taken.
- A battery storage project is an opportunity.
- Switch grass as a power resource is an opportunity.
- High gas prices change the way Vermonters drive and should be taken advantage of.
- Vermont should develop ways to produce a gas stamp card for low income Vermonters in times of need.
- Engaging youth in their energy future is a key opportunity. Some youth groups have become active but we need more.
- PSA's in VT are needed to educate consumers on efficiency – there are not enough now.
- Employer's can offer incentives for car-pooling, using public transportation, walking, biking, etc., and should not offer free parking which is disincentive.

How do Vermonters and Vermont organizations work together to overcome obstacles and advance opportunities in this sector?

- Larger groups, such as SERG (Sustainable Energy Resource Group), serve the smaller local energy committees – regional energy summits are an opportunity for groups to collaborate and work together.
- Respectful communication is needed and a neutral ground. A Neutral Ground website was proposed as an idea to allow for continued communication and discourse between groups.
- Engage youth more and reach out to High Schools.
- Need more free services available for communities to move forward.
- Town-wide energy challenge, engage youth to take part in energy saving efforts, include legislator's etc. in more systematic programs and support.
- Build on VECAN and other partnerships with potential ways for additional funding or awards for local energy groups.
- Clean Energy assessment districts could be developed.
- Community energy committees could start up energy projects.
- Community energy municipal planning / integrated resource plans community resource group serves 13 VT municipalities (Stowe and Burlington separate) and could be used more.
- Annual Green Energy Expo collaborative with vendors, non profits, energy committees etc. could be held regionally across the state.
- Leadership is needed and projects are slow and not coordinated.
- 25 X 25 committee is a resource with national vision. The VT committee (in state power production) includes 15-20 members. Develop an energy assessment of the state and an implementation plan to get to the goal. Generation and efficiency focus (think tank model but not a lot of \$ available).
- Better Building By Design 2-day event. 1200 people attended, great event and should continue.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy and think boldly, move forward on what we agree on with coordination, innovation and pilot projects, and avoid duplication. Don't let what we don't agree on become a barrier.
- Need more state support for these projects including funding.
- Indicator and measurement information needed annually. Need annual reporting do we have that now? No, but every other year PSB reports to the legislature on this but only on electric generation.

Define Goals and Action Steps

- **Key Priority by Energy Group: Govs commission on climate change made recommendations and VCRD developed Rural Energy Council platform. Climate change committee now making recommendations for a 75% carbon reduction by 2025. We need to empower this committee to:**
 1. **Convert all state buildings to thermal, co gen and district heat done by 2025.**
 2. **Funds need to be in place for these projects.**
 3. **Public finance report.**
 4. **Wood needs to be available and secured and sustainably harvested for these projects.**
- Build internal structure to monitor goals.
- Change energy rules.
- Need statewide programs for energy usage with incentives to reduce, declining block rates.
- Consumers need information and it affects usage such as meters in the house to show usage, part smart grid idea to motivate them to use less.

- **Second Key Priority by Energy Group: Harness Friendly Competition. Town challenges event could be across borders with utility collaboration. VECAN could organize but would need staffing and grant support. Build and award system work with the Clean Energy Development Fund.**
- Red Sox fans verses Yankee fans compete?
- A Carbon shredders program now exists through the Low Carbon Diet (LCD) program.
- Demonstration a home area network with VEIC link to social networking site for individual action now happening.
- Clean Energy Assessment districts – good to have 12 or so in the few years.
- Embedded costs should be taxed and included in costs and should be reflected in price. Could show on energy bills if embedded costs were included.
- Permanent Funding for existing energy grant programs.
- Market mechanism needed to condition public behavior based on public goals.
- Dynamic process or time sensitive costs critical for plug in hybrids market based approach/ there could be negative reaction to this.
- Electric bills could show how users compare to other users in their community or like sized homes etc to lower use, but this could potentially also bring about a back slide
- Have carbon taxes to show real costs.
- Social equity for all Vermonters needed, balance and action steps for that.
- CT Clean Energy Fund model such as solar arrays and Smart Power.
- Transportation group now in the process with AARP in the lead, they are developing guiding principals that should be supported.
- State incentive for transportation for both state and private employees.
- Utility bill donation program for solar panels to be placed in schools.

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SESSION:

Forestry and Industry: *Promoting Forest Stewardship and the Forest Products Industry*

Presenter: *Jonathan Wood, VT Agency of Natural Resources*

Facilitator: *Meg Mitchell, Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forest*

Scribe: *Kristi Ponozzo, Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forest*

What are the key challenges in this sector today?

- There is a need for **public education** on the science of Forestry.
- There is an incredible **lack of awareness of definition of working landscapes.**
- It is expensive to do business in Vermont – it is **not possible to work on just a local level in a global economy:**
 - We cannot **manage ecologically sustainable landscapes without subsidizing** (similar to what they do in Europe).



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- We **cannot compete** with less expensive **imports**.
 - There isn't a similar **local-vore** movement for forest management.
- **Certifications** (SFI, FSC) are all in their infancy and they are more “feel good” efforts than actually doing much – certification is not a magic bullet, just a marketing tool.
 - The global market is forcing forest products into certification.
- We don't necessarily need to plant trees, but there is a **lack of good timber to harvest**.
- Many landowners have to log too frequently and too much (for economic purposes) for it to be **economically sustainable**.
- Most lucrative use of land is often **development**.
 - Many landowners do not need to cut trees on their property to survive.
 - We are fighting the mindset of people wanting to chunk it up and sell.
- **Incentives** are not reaching the landowners.
- Wood products are not carrying the **price for the services** they provide like clean water and clean air.
- What is a renewable resource?
- Although we value Forestry, we are **taxing people off the land**.
- Do I have a place as a small-scale logger? It is nice to be a part of the whole process.
- We don't know if the general public realizes we have, and what is, a **working forest**.

What are the opportunities ahead in this sector?

- **Naked Table** project – local wood, local mill, local people making, local food, going to local houses. This connects people to the project and the process and the environment.
- **Walk in the Woods** project – This gets people out to familiarize them with natural, working landscapes – They get to connect the dots.
- Carbon **sequestration and certification** are value added incentives.
 - We are all aware of **climate change** – this is an issue where we can engage people.
- Logging techniques like **cut-to-length** harvest for use.
- **Current Use program** – is working, but sometimes not focusing on where there is a lot of common ground and pooled support opportunities.
- Wood Energy – **biomass** is gaining support.
- The **water** in this state is a product of great Forest management.
- We want to encourage young people to be loggers and farmers – we put out a lot of policy people from our schools, but what about the “dirt” loggers.
- We have to have a net return: what is an **acceptable level of return** and a policy that helps us get there.
- People buy land in Vermont because you cannot put a price on it.
- We need to get all the different groups who work on Forestry issues together and teach, educate, conserve -- **there is a lot going on**.
- We have **common ground** – we need to define and focus on that – climate change, invasive species – these are collaboration opportunities that can change our long-term view.

How do Vermonters and Vermont organizations work together to overcome obstacles and advance opportunities in this sector?

- Connect around **biomass**.
- We need **working groups** prior to formulating the policy.
- **Forest Round Table** is open to the public and it can facilitate lot of needed input.

- We focus on what we can agree on, common threats, like **invasive species and fragmentation**.
 - Turn to positive approaches like adapting to **climate change**.
- Focus on the **unity** part of “Freedom and Unity”.
- We need to encourage **landowner cooperatives** that combine purchasing power, share management, education, and resources, and shared dividends.
- We can use **carbon credits** – sold on the commodity exchange – and not cut trees as often.
- Create a bridge between two or three communities with things like the **Northern Woodlands magazine**.
- When something is scarce – people start to listen.
- Disasters bring everyone together.
- Keeping forests as forests unites our common interest – organizations are still not in that mode and issues like wilderness make it very black and white.
- Coordinating efforts for policy.
- Foresters/loggers are dedicated to **work that is a lifestyle** – we need to restructure compensation.
- We need to gather people and keep the dialogue going.
- A recent study of disaster resources revealed that **to be successful an organization needs a highly reliable network** and organizations with clear and decisive leadership, communication systems – these systems need to exist in the Vermont Forest Products industry.
- There are many different organizations doing similar things (Vermont woodlands) but no **common thread** holding them together.
- We need a partnership between **art and stories** like Vermont Folk Life association and digital stories.
- What are the values a landscape produces and what do people want to see a forest or a landscape produce? We can start with a survey.
- Connecting the dots about the challenge and realities of what is good.
- Development easements or conservation easements can be designed with flexibility.

Define Goals and Action Steps

- We need unity and clear and decisive leadership – we need coordinated efforts under one entity.
 - We need an on-line clearing house for information
 - We need to help people connect the dots with digital story telling and education.
- We need to build on common alliances with others working in similar industries – agriculture, energy, biomass.
- We need to focus on all the products that trees and forests provide – there are new and emerging markets and opportunity for other types of forest policy.
- Tax reform (current use) – we need to taxing appropriately.
 - We need to restructure compensation for sound forestry practices.

SESSION:

Healthy Vermont: Promoting a Healthy Vermont: Prioritizing Access and Affordability

Presenter: *Susan Besio, Office of Vermont Health Access*

Facilitator: *Steve Gold, Retired VT State Government*

Scribe: *Elizabeth Ottinger, Vermont Public Television*

What are the key challenges in this sector today?

- Multi-state, cross-border issue – living in one state but working in another can create access challenges.
- We need better coordination between hospitals not only within the state, but with hospitals in other states (in the border state areas).
- There has been a loss of public programs (e.g., tobacco cessation program) due to funding reductions.
- Pre-existing condition regulations prevent some from getting the care they need.
- The low numbers of primary care providers in the state and great recruitment challenges – large number of vacancies and some have remained open for 2 or 3 years.
- Medicare payments/reimbursement – Vermont has some of the lowest rates in the country
- Universal access – decreasing the number of uninsured Vermonters from 7% to 0%.
- Increasing insurance enrollment numbers for 19 to 25 year-olds; encouraging younger people into the voluntary market will lower costs for everyone.
- Creating a culture of prevention – some use the emergency room for medical appointments instead of managing their health care on a ongoing basis.
- Limited physician office hours can cause people to go to the emergency room – there is a culture of people wanting care when they want it combined with some physicians not wanting to be on-call on the weekends or after business hours. We must change our system of care and how we think about it.
- Unemployment & poverty – if you don't have a roof over your head, it's hard to be healthy.
- Access issues for people with disabilities (e.g., modifications to buildings/facilities, font/text size on documents, interpreters).
- Frail economy – it's an alarming sign when a hospital is the state's largest employer.
- High taxes in Vermont create a heavy burden and can impact health care choices.
- Two Vermonts – disparity in distribution of physicians throughout the state. We need more health care providers in rural areas.
- Health literacy – a bridge between patient and physician is needed; the two speak different languages.
- Obesity – many lead a sedentary life in Vermont because of the climate – we need to do a better job of integrating physical activity into our schools/education system.
- Children's hunger and access to good nutrition – many children are not getting good nutrition; we need to increase meal programs in child care settings and also ensure that elders are provided with opportunities for good nutrition.



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- Summer hunger challenges – many kids are locked in during the summer because camp is not affordable for everyone and both parents are working; we need summer food programs for kids, or an extended school year.
- Shortage of nurses – we could fill in some of these health care gaps if we had more nurses.
- High cost of health insurance for individuals and businesses, especially small businesses.
- Lack of focus on / resources for treating people comfortably at home with home health care services.
- Moving to a single payer system – single payer health care would increase access, but it's not as comprehensive and people would have to give up services they are accustomed to receiving.
- All of the challenges we've discussed cost money to address. Once the national stimulus money is spent, how do we continue moving forward until federal health care reform comes through?
- Caring for our aging population – the oldest of the Baby Boomers are now 63 years old.
- Teenagers binge drinking.
- Drug-resistant communicable diseases.

What are the opportunities ahead in this sector?

- Focus on prevention with nutrition – kids not eating healthy in child care situations; mal-nourishment – it should be easier to find information and access nutrition services.
- Prevention education would ultimately save the system money; currently people are getting lots of tests but the issue is that they need to eat better/more healthy.
- Enroll everyone who is eligible in safety net assistance programs (e.g., Catamount, which is not fully utilized – there are 20,000 Vermonters who are in need and are eligible but aren't enrolled).
- Support providers with electronic medical record systems and information sharing – help providers learn about the advantages and implement systems.
- Build a coordinated hospital health care system that brings together community hospitals and academic learning institutions/hospitals.
- Stop reading and writing reports and take action – we're a small state and a little information sharing can go a long way toward cutting costs and improving service (e.g., Tele-health, spousal program and ambassador program in the NEK).
- Offer incentives for medical personnel trained in Vermont to stay in the state after they graduate (e.g., UVM medical school graduates).
- Eliminate “administrative waste” by integrating and consolidating by using technology (e.g., health information exchange).
- Eliminate “clinical waste” by implementing meaningful payment reform.
- Build on the positive community networking and mutual respect that exists in Vermont – bring people together, talking and doing, start with what's already positive to move health reform forward.
- Serve as a role model for universal health care – we are a small state and a healthy state, if it can't happen here, where can it happen? We are well positioned and have traction, good collaboration with the legislature, and a new administration at the federal level. NOTE: Caveat raised that Vermont is unique in that we don't have inner cities, racial diversity and other aspects that would make us a “model” state for a trial with universal health care
- Ensure people can stay at home and receive in-home health care.
- Simplify the system – most people don't understand how our current system of health care works.
- Look at other successful systems of self-management – use families managing disabilities care as a model. Individuals need to take more responsibility for their own health care and be educated as to how to do that.
- Leverage the current national health care reform movement to move things forward on a local level.

How do Vermonters and Vermont organizations work together to overcome obstacles and advance opportunities in this sector?

- Involve stakeholders in health care reform from the beginning/planning phase. The Blueprint for Health is a good example of how this can be accomplished effectively.
- Have more “Vermont-centric” discussions about what benefits the people of Vermont; develop a coordinated health care system through partnerships and collaboration among hospitals.
- Close the “disconnect” and have meaningful discussions to create greater collaboration between the different arms, or cultures, among the health care provider organizations and entities: i.e. the Department of Health, which addresses public health issues, hospitals and providers.
- Create opportunities to encourage “health literacy” – people need to take more individual responsibility for their health care. Help Vermonters identify their role in their own health care and understand that their participation and responsibility goes beyond simply paying bills.
- Develop a strategic plan for the state – we need to take a more cooperative and collective approach. Plans are being developed regionally, but we need a comprehensive statewide plan.
- Focus on consumer education about the cost of a visit to the emergency room vs. the cost of a visit to the doctor’s office; other consumer education is needed related to prevention and how visits to specialists can drive up costs for everyone.
- Increase consumer education on how the health care system works (e.g., the role of a Primary Care Physician); our current system is difficult for many to navigate.
- Increased health and sex education for high school students – include health insurance education and why it’s important to have health insurance.
- Create a statewide plan, using the Blueprint for Health as a model – this model has overall support from the state but is implemented at the community level.
- As we move through health care reform at the federal level, we must develop more accountability at the state level to mirror what’s happening nationally.
- Leverage the changing environment at hospitals. Hospital leadership has been fragmented in the past due to competitive business models, but the environment seems to be changing and we have an opportunity to bring these groups together to talk about how to work collectively to address mutual challenges – the time is ripe.
- Recruitment and retention of medical professionals is a shared challenge, presenting an opportunity to work collectively, pooling resources to find solutions.
- Bring the business community to the table to help address issues in health care – the business community is absent from today’s discussion and they have a captive audience with their employees that needs to be used.

Define Goals and Action Steps

- **Goal:** Retain and recruit high quality health care professionals. **Steps:** Develop effective incentives, e.g., loan forgiveness, jobs for spouses, eliminate tax burden.
- **Goal:** Spread the Blueprint for Health model throughout the state and include all ages (children are now not included). **Steps:** Bring Medicare into the Blueprint as a payor participant, ask health care carriers and payors to expand their financial commitment in order to speed up the timeline for statewide implementation, include children as customers.
- **Goal:** Increase access to healthier food and better nutrition, particularly in childcare settings and for seniors. **Steps:** Increase reimbursement rates for nutrition services; expand child care licensing requirements to include quality of nutrition.

- **Goal:** Increase collaboration between hospitals to create a regionalized health care system. **Steps:** Develop a working group and ask VAHHS (Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems) to lead the process.
- **Goal:** Consumers become educated and engaged in their own health care management (translate education and knowledge into action). **Steps:** Educate kids in high school about the system and importance of health insurance; offer incentives for people to take a more active role in their health care management; general consumer education about the cost of emergency room visits; expand primary care hours beyond Monday – Friday, 9 to 5.
- **Goal:** Equal access for people with disabilities. **Steps:** Ensure that medical facilities are physically accessible - VCIL (Vermont Center for Independent Living) is available for technical advising and assistance.

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SESSION:

Higher Education: *Advancing Leadership and Commerce*

Presenter: *Ellen Lovell, Marlboro College*

Facilitator: *John Bramley, The Windham Foundation*

Scribe: *Kate Elmer Westdijk, UVM Office of Community-University Partnerships*

What are the key challenges in this sector today?

- High cost to students and burden of debt (particularly due to decreased public funding).
- Not all VT high school graduates are choosing to go to college.
- Current range of options for youth are paralyzingly complex – need to make a clearer road map.
- Youth are leaving the state.
- Don't have (or aren't displaying) the numbers to demonstrate how many VT residents attend our institutions and then stay after graduation.
- There is a lack of jobs for youth in Vermont – many youth would like to stay and can't.
- We also need to prepare students for the jobs that don't exist, not just the ones that do (e.g. Liberal Arts, Entrepreneurship).
- Costs of doing business in VT is increasing – need to contain those costs.
- Need to gain support of policy makers by increasing outreach to them and by demonstrating impact of Higher Ed on public (not private) good.
- Policy makers tend to focus on K-12 and private higher ed at the expense of overlooking needs of public high education. There is an assumption that Higher Education should pay for itself.
- There aren't enough dollars in the state budget even if they would allocate them to higher education (therefore perhaps we shouldn't invest lots of energy there).
- Today's students have less patience for traditional 4 year degree model.
- Large Land Grant institutions have not caught up with 21st century needs for outreach.
- Tendency to forget about non-traditional training sources (e.g. tech centers).
- Accreditation system stifles creativity



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- K-12 and Higher Education aren't communicating to allow proper alignment of the two systems.
- There is duplication of programs and efforts.
- Higher Education has a culture that doesn't lend itself to efficiency.

What are the opportunities ahead in this sector?

- Youth are entering VT to attend our colleges resulting in a net gain of youth.
- Examples of youth staying, particularly as entrepreneurs, and making significant contributions to VT economy.
- Education impacts all of the key goals of the Council on the Future of VT.
- Attract veterans to higher education using the post 9/11 GI Bill.
- Secure income by getting more students to enroll in Higher Education (focus on parent education).
- Higher education plays a key role in educating citizens for democracy.
- Support Higher Education to build the skills that the state needs to fuel its economic development.
- Provide options to minimize impact of education debt on our youth (e.g. loan forgiveness programs).
- Focus on policies that will reduce operating costs for higher education (such as health care, energy efficiency etc.) rather than going to state for handouts.
- Focus on a vision of what VT will need in the future, and organize Higher Education to contribute to it.
- Collaborate and diversify to meet the new education needs of students (customers) who are looking for relevant, engaged learning opportunities versus a traditional experience.
- Organize our institutions to take advantage of efficiencies and create the flexibility to transfer between VT institutions to meet their needs.
- Allow smaller, more nimble institutions to lead on creative solutions.
- Collaborate, rather than compete, on fundraising with all institutions.
- Provide funding/incentives for youth to attend non 4 year programs.
- Sustain high quality of life in Vermont (in addition to jobs) so that youth want to live as well as work here.
- Demonstrate our value to the state by collecting data on youth staying, particularly as entrepreneurs, and making significant contributions to VT economy.
- Higher Ed institutions should cooperate to support training in key VT sectors (Art, Green Building).
- Train entrepreneurs
- Provide introductory engineering education to VT students BEFORE college.
- Stop trying to keep youth here – welcome them back after they have had out of state adventures.
- Recruit entrepreneurs to higher education the same way we do athletes.
- General need to align higher education programs with state economic development directions (train students for jobs we want, and create jobs that students are trained for).
- Create value added experiences to get students into VT businesses and organizations as part of their education (internships, study "abroad" in Vermont).
- Create opportunities for faculty to get together across institutions and disciplines.
- Capitalize on current generations interests and abilities (in areas of technology, self-directed learning, etc.).

- Understand and be transparent about operating costs within Higher Ed as a way to move toward strategies to control those costs.
- Leadership must commit to bringing related sectors together regularly to create mid and long term plans. Labor, business, government and education need to get together and agree on common vision and strategy – learn from Ireland model.
- Explore regional versus statewide collaboration.
- Upcoming AVIC discussions on Higher Education consortium.
- Involve faculty, provide them with information, and develop their leadership skills.
- Provide more leadership training opportunities for all Vermonters.

Define Goals and Action Steps

- Create and Support Higher Education Consortia:
 - Both within and across institutions
 - Labor, business, government and education (both K-12 and Higher Ed) need to get together and agree on common vision and strategy – learn from Ireland model.
 - Connect and include faculty in visioning and strategic planning for Higher Education in VT (and provide leadership training for them)
 - As combined voice to lobby to policy makers
 - For efficiency and cost containment
 - Brainstorm creative funding models (e.g. loan repayment programs)
- Demonstrate Higher Education’s value to the state (with emphasis on citizens!) by collecting data on youth staying, particularly as entrepreneurs, and making significant contributions to VT economy.
 - Be authentic.
 - Youth and education advocates should improve Higher Education access (e.g. expand/enhance opportunities to bring K-12 students onto Higher Ed campuses)
 - Invest in authentic outreach to VT communities (Vermont Campus Compact).
 - Adapt to trends in higher education – student desire for learner centered teaching that traditional faculty are not well equipped to offer.
- Commit to cost containment for seeking opportunities for efficiencies. If we truly are committed to the public good, affordability and efficiency must be a priority.
 - Create and charge CFO consortium to identify efficiencies for cost containment.

SESSION:

K-12 Education: *Renewing Public K-12 Education for the 21st Century*

Presenter: *Armando Vilaseca, VT Department of Education*

Facilitator: *Charlie Smith, Snelling Center for Government*

Scribe: *Karyn Vogel, Snelling Center for Government*

Armando Vilaseca’s Opening Comments:

- Decide as a state what we want out of our schools. Right now it’s a moving target.



- Schools can only do so much.
- It's about kids not about you and me. Decide what kids must know and be able to do when they leave school.
- Vermont schools are very successful.
- Walk through most public high schools. Looks the same as when we were kids. System doesn't allow change. Don't blame teachers. Administrators and others are making the decisions. Educational leaders need to change system to meet the needs of kids.
- Armando sees kids being bored. Not every classroom, not every situation. Teacher standing in front, kids listening. This system can't continue.
- Armando's son is emotionally unengaged in high school (Essex). He blew off writing NECAP. Doesn't see connection between learning now and between his future as a human being. H.S. is just a requirement to get to college.
- Until colleges and universities start valuing what happens in high schools, nothing will ever change.
- How should a H.S. look? Not kids in a classroom all day long. Teacher is mentor, facilitator, and confidante. Distance learning, community college courses, internships, music, sports. All these activities should bear credit. Not just regurgitating info. Armando feels his son has wasted four years.
- How should schools spend the limited money they have? Biggest return on investment? Sustainability.
- Middle school: no longer a mini high school but dealing with needs of kids that age. How do you give them a hands-on experience in the community?
- Elementary: very forward-thinking right now. Looks nothing like our schools did.
- Personal connection is the single-most important thing or kids don't care about schools.
- How to deal with declining student population? Costs continue to be driven up (additional requirements put on schools). We have to make decisions about school district consolidation, maybe closing some smaller schools. Small schools may be the center of the community, so this is difficult. 64 districts, each with no more than 4,000-5,000 or less. Still can be the fabric of the community.

What are the key challenges in this sector today?

- Education isn't in the values section of the report. Concerning to more than one person in the group that it isn't there.
- Get some people out of the way and hold administrators accountable (from a superintendent).
- There is a lot of system inertia, although there are individual bright spots.
- Home life can be difficult for students.
- Some students lack basics, which are the building blocks to advanced learning. School has to deal with this issue.
- Middle school to high school transition is often difficult. Kids who were engaged start to fade.
- Revisit the Vermont Standards. They aren't experiential standards. To engage the community, they must be brought up to speed.
- Armando: June 10 National Common Standards coming out for K-12, with a common assessment maybe to follow. How can we have all these different curriculum developed by different orgs, etc.?
- The future won't wait while we fix today's problems.

- Country is changing so rapidly. Should we have national standards? Be careful what you wish for, because things are changing so fast. We are flying the airplane and building it at the same time.
- National standard is worrisome. It might hold us back from the kind of adventurous education we could pursue here in Vermont.
- Some schools are not welcoming to parents and other community members.
- NH public school choice experiment. Emc2, very open. Challenges continued to be student assessment and accountability in this open model. Hard for school people to evaluate community resource people, etc. Schools need to think about this.
- Challenge to decide what school is NOT. Social problems is one of our biggest costs. Management of disruptive kids is a huge problem.
- Many kids become disengaged in high school.
- Time is an issue. Teachers, superintendents, parents are all so crunched for time. Not the most productive situation. How do you get to a place where people can be their most productive? Everyone seems to be sucking wind.
- Technology has to be employed in a way that it hasn't been in the past.
- There are so many priorities that there aren't any priorities anymore.
- Schools are now all about quality control, post NCLB.
- Schools are not good at handling people who approach schools with their various agendas.
- Our consumer society thinks schools need to be all things to all people. Be something for every kid instead. That is more important than the total structure of schools trying to address every single need. Individual Learning Plans? Figure out how to do it cost effectively.
- Education isn't valued by the greater community. Educators aren't valued as professionals. They should be able to use technical educational language. It would take too long to use shared language.
- Takes a lot of time and skill to engage volunteers. If a volunteer has a bad experience because they had to sit somewhere without anything to do, etc., and that will spread like wildfire.

What are the opportunities ahead in this sector?

- There are examples of experiential education that work; students say they are transformational. Travel, service learning. Example in the Himalayas. Some A students, some not-so-good students. Students bring their high school tuition with them so it works out. VAST program for kids who want more scientific knowledge. Bring tuition to VTC.
- We have to agree on what it is that we want schools to do. Or is that the right question? Are schools what we want? You think of a bricks and mortar image, students are passive. Let go of "school" and use words like "learning," "citizenship," "responsibility." Engage people about the learning process instead of schools.
- Community can use school building for community purposes as well. Utilize it for creative programs, strengthen it as a community center.
- Teach environmental education in schools again. NCLB caused this to be put on hold. People could be better prepared to make land-use decisions. Place-based education movement is promising, as is No Child Left Inside. Get them out there. Federal and state programs are available to help with some of this.
- How do you manage to expand when you are faced with a contraction of students and resources? There are rich opportunities for students to pursue interests outside of school. Have a traditional structure, but have a quest for nontraditional opportunities. One thing that

confounds educational structure: how do you utilize these opportunities within the existing cost structure? Ireland's solution was based on transformation of the public education system. Education was adequately funded, a much higher percentage of wealth. This won't be solved through conflict, but collaboration, and making decisions about what we want for our state, then solve it through education.

- Appreciated civility in the public forums held by VCRD. How do we educate our community about our school systems? It is hard to get around the debate about costs. We can open up the floor to talk about provocative questions: do we even want schools? Innovate. Use a community conversation that goes beyond a cost conversation to values, imagination.
- So many resources can be drawn in from communities to benefit schools.
- High School teacher: Lots of good things going on in school, excited to go.
- Use PR in communities to communicate and get people involved. People who are involved with schools give them a high rating; those who are not (seniors, etc.) do not appreciate the school and focus on the cost. Effort to promote the value of the school and educate is successful in St. Johnsbury—it is saving the school.
- Community Volunteer Resource Manual. Free survey to get resources from community. A report for teachers to aggregate the community volunteers and resources. Huge response – huge book. If you ask the community, they will respond. (Kathleen Kilbourne, Parent Information Resource Center). Endless benefits on many levels. First build a relationship, then other conversations happen more easily.
- Vermont Historical Society. Community Partnerships. Worked with 33 communities doing a historical project with their community. It was expensive, so they are working on a different means of doing this. Wanted Vermont history resources for all grades, not just 4th. Connecting community historical resources for that particular community, similar to the Volunteer Resource Manual.
- Vermont Statewide Independent Living Council. Developing standards-based curriculum which is experiential. Develop things like this in other areas as well.
- Tremendous opportunity for a different type of conversation with Obama in the White House.
- Talk about the bigger issue of prosperity with the community; don't try to talk about standards. Goodlad: A Place Called School. What is it today?
- Standards might not be bad. They are an end, but the means to get there can be very organic, community-based and experiential. It's a process, not an academic method.
- Vermont Standards are good. Vermont is the only state with a sustainability and a sense of place standard.
- If schools invite parents in, they will come. You have a very diverse group of experts. Then you can do great things with kids.
- Technical Centers – an integration model – was tried. Very successful when student didn't have to choose one or the other. Choose an individualized model for students. VYCC, business schools, etc. It was working but then it all fell apart, due to lack of cooperation from teachers, administrators. Had waivers from Commissioner Cate and it was so exciting. Still great possibilities with that model.
- Taxpayers are largely supportive of their school budgets. Do we really have a PR problem?

How do Vermonters and Vermont organizations work together to overcome obstacles and advance opportunities in this sector?

- DOE needs to use effective PR, not educational lingo. We all need to use the same language and identify common goals to help move something forward. (see last challenges bullet for counterpoint)
- Ask for help from parents, grandparents, students. Every kid in school could use a mentor. Many people wouldn't say no if asked to mentor a student. Greater willingness by teachers and schools to draw on community resources.
- People respond to the kids. Use kids to reach out. Kids are partners, not clients. Parents get involved because kids ask for it, with support of the teachers and administrators.
- Have Community-Teacher Organizations instead of Parent-Teacher Organizations.
- Change public school system, not just public schools. Use PR to change the perception of community members about what a school actually is.
- Using PR is putting the cart before the horse. First develop concepts and goals and transform schools before embarking on a larger PR effort.
- A second year teacher says there must be more teacher accountability. There are a lot of adults in the buildings who shouldn't be there. Fix that before we go out to the communities.
- All parts of the system need to change at the same time. Not teachers first. Need retraining, re-visioning of roles, etc. all together. It takes awhile and it takes commitment from all the people.
- School district consolidation issue. So much of what we talked about today is about local flavor, etc. Tension between local control and state/fed. We are always struggling with that line. This will be a big issue. Need to revisit this. Revisit our common goals as a state and what decision-making do we want out of our localities. Some districts work hard to communicate with their local communities. Most people in local communities feel positive about their schools but think other schools aren't any good. They've lost confidence in our educational system. We keep hearing about school failure and this affects public opinion.
- Vermont doesn't have a clear vision of excellence in education in the 21st century. Should we define that? How do we resolve the local versus state/fed values? i.e. social skills can be difficult to honor while dealing with math, reading, etc. Or the beloved "Apple Unit" in a town. Do you get rid of it because it takes time away from preparing for standards?
- Armando: we are narrowing achievement to just math, reading, etc. Public confidence is eroding when they hear their school isn't up to snuff.

Define Goals and Action Steps

- Expand PR/community confidence and understanding. Use our time to discuss things besides just budgets. Improve public perception. Music events, etc. are so much better.
- "Local" can mean all of Vermont. Define local. People are fiercely protecting their little town.
- Use a process similar to VCRD project to bring together people around education. Find ways to get into all the schools and learning centers to draw in the experts to talk about things like deadbeat teachers and self-serving school boards. Create a vision of education in the state.
- Have the public recognize the value of our public education system. This is different than instilling confidence.
- Keep connection to school district for people whose children and grandchildren no longer attend school. Elderly neighbor bragged about kids, schools, until they were out of school, then voted against school budget.

- How do you bring community in to contribute to school values discussion. Have a conduit for community to come in to schools.
- Deadbeat teachers and self-serving school boards are not the norm. This is a dangerous thing to raise in a community setting.
- Don't use PR or marketing to describe community outreach and education. These are words with a negative connotation.
- Have quality with the students. Experiences can vary. One on one relationship that is healthy, caring and appropriate is critical. It takes a village. Mentoring relationships.
- Mentor should be parent if possible. Parent is the key.
- Vermont needs to have a goal and a framework for where we are heading with education.
- Need transparency. Frame the education agenda in a way that is compelling. What works and what doesn't. Make sure teaching is data driven. Need to articulate what we fundamentally value, on or off of the standardized tests. In Ireland they are investing in education. Training is the anecdote for lack of resources.
- People in Vermont will understand the role of education in the well-being of our society. This is an endeavor that can benefit our state.
- Define the value of an education in Vermont. Have a common goal to aim for. **Unifying message from educational leadership in the state communicating the value of education.** Children need to be part of the conversation, especially the ones that are bored, disengaged.
- Proposed goal statement: **Welcome, educate, and engage parents and community members in an intentional and purposeful way (research based, already exists) giving all stakeholders a voice in maintaining a quality learning environment that encourages lifelong learning.**
- Not just "schools will." Should be broader community, universal discussion. We all need to do this. Could come from the community, not have to come from schools.
- Message to value education for what it can do for society, not just an individual student.
- Education isn't in final list but these outcomes are all based on education. Education could be more pervasive in the community. It is an outcome and a desired result.
- Learners need to be well-informed in order to serve our state well. Goal: best inform students so that they inform us. They are so much a part of this community that they want to give back.
- Transformation=focus on the individual. Flip it so system adapts to the kid and individual relates to the common good.
- Students look at standards themselves. Involve youth in curriculum development. Trust them.
- Group is disappointed that education is not listed on CFV values list.

Charlie's goals for summary:

- Broad conversation to come up with shared goal for education.
- System adapts to needs of learners for the benefit of the greater community.
- Education system is more transparent. Honest and clear about what works based on research. Drive toward things known to work and discard things that aren't on target. Positive skew. Build on what is working.
- Involve community. Include students.

SESSION:

Land Use and Development: *Building a Coordinated Statewide Land Use and Development Strategy*

Presenter: **Darby Bradley**, Vermont Land Trust

Facilitator: **Scott McArdle**, Vermont Community Foundation

Scribe: **Jessica Hyman**, UVM Center for Rural Studies

What are the key challenges in this sector today?

- The recreation industry plays an important role in Vermont's economy. Much of these activities take place on private land. Changing demographics can mean closure of land, which reduces recreational opportunities.
- A lot of Vermont is privately owned. It is difficult to tell a dairy farmer that he can't subdivide; if someone has undeveloped land in the middle of a city, we can't make him or her use it in a particular way. The challenge is getting buy-in from landowners.
- Public rhetoric is based on a set of ideals, but personal choices are often inconsistent with that vision.
- The lack of septic and water services in outlying areas is a challenge.
- To prevent sprawl we need a vision AND have guts to implement it. The economic and political will must be there, or else the conversation will continue over and over again.
- Permitting (Act 250 and local) needs to be changed to allow for denser, higher development. Act 250 and regulatory landscape promotes incremental change.
- Incremental changes in communities are happening without much oversight. People tolerate incremental change more than sudden change, but incremental change is what's eroding landscape and "preventing changes that are needed to hold on to the values that we hold most dear."
- Allowing higher buildings and denser downtowns will necessitate changes in city streets and other infrastructure.
- The words density, rural, countryside, etc. mean different things to different people in different areas. You can't put these words in regulations without definitions.
- Developers are rational people, they are responding to a permitting structure that directs them away from community cores. The challenge for permitting is that we need to look at an array of decision points in developers' minds that will allow them to develop in towns and villages.
- There is a fragmented system for decision-making and regulation.
- Local development boards have little experience with bigger projects.
- Wind turbines have a negative visual impact and are incongruous. Developing wilderness areas leads to other negative impacts.
- "Imagining Vermont" is a vision, but how do we execute that vision? We may have to make difficult choices and not take middle road.
- Not everyone wants the same thing. How do we keep Vermont the way that people want it to be?



Maria Blais

- There is a tension between ideology and reality. We say that Vermont needs to be at the forefront and set the example for the rest of the country, but there are NIMBY issues. It's hard to get everyone united and keep the state the way we want it.

What are the opportunities ahead in this sector?

- Looking at the last 80 years, we are still talking about same things. If we don't change the regulations we will be having the same discussion in 20 years.
- Downtowns and housing potential are underutilized resources.
- Everyone is talking about land use (transportation, human services, energy). This is a great opportunity to reach out and talk to each other – to look for solutions together.
- The economic downturn is an opportunity to integrate growth and development.
- Good example of how to manage growth – Vermont should look outside state for models (Washington state and Portland, OR) and recognize the difference between reality and rhetoric.
- Use permitting process to support “good” growth.
- Older populations at the core of communities are getting stronger – development will follow.
- As energy becomes a limited commodity, sustainability draws people to urban areas.
- What is the end goal? Look at what we want for Vermont, then find best road to get there.
- “If it isn't broke don't fix it; if it doesn't move, paint it.” Major hubs already exist in Vermont (Newport, St. Albans, etc.). We should promote areas outside Chittenden County.
- Recreation is a big part of the economy. We need to make it easier for people to open land.
- There is a shared sense of vision and an engaged citizenry at local levels.
- Look at companies that are successful (socially conscious business models) and determine their needs for a growing workforce.
- We need to overcome the assumption that an increasing population is negative. Urban areas are becoming more vital and attracting young and old people.
- The energy crisis promotes contraction instead of expansion.
- There is great potential to find lost space in urban areas, such as infill projects with multigenerational housing.
- There is an opportunity to reset the clock and create a model that reflects realities of today with a focus on sustainability.
- The aging population brings more people into population centers and opens up more time and space for people to become involved in communities.
- What if we get what we wish for and we successfully attract more development to existing areas and town centers? Is Vermont ready to accept taller buildings and other design standards to concentrate development in urbanizing areas?
- Transportation must be a priority.
- Climate changes, the stimulus bill, and an increased attention to local food sources are all opportunities to focus on development.
- Vermont has a large and healthy non-profit sector.
- Land use issues take years and years to address. There is no magic bullet. Development can be really good and can help build community.

How do Vermonters and Vermont organizations work together to overcome obstacles and advance opportunities in this sector?

- Stimulus funds should be used to help small towns to expand sewer and water. Counterpoint: we should promote use of grey water instead of developing pure water systems. Water conservation is easier than energy generation.
- Set goals then evaluate if existing regulations fit.
- Support for local development review boards.
- Find way to incentivize property owners to keep land open.
- We need to get behind good projects. The key is not just knowing what we want, but recognizing it when we see it, sharing success stories and learning from them.
- We need to acknowledge that there is a balance between appropriate and necessary development and appropriate and necessary conservation. We need to acknowledge that there is tension between those interests. What's the best way to step back on a regular basis to examine current state of tension and identify the best steps? A regular, systematic, and neutral evaluation is better than gathering every 20 years and asking what happened?
- The CFV process and document has brought people together to overcome obstacles and advance opportunities. We need to continue that conversation and create statewide working groups to work with local and state decision-makers to make vision a reality.
- Vital downtowns are most successful when there's a partnership among non-profit organizations, small businesses, start-ups, etc.
- We need to get past the disconnect between ideals and actions. We probably can't have everything we want. We have to agree to reprioritize some of our values.
- Focus on diversified agriculture instead of "save the dairy farm."
- Look at change from the ground-up, supporting and replicating "Hardwick-like" models. Foster innovation in ways other than regulation.
- Foster local leadership and entrepreneurship.
- Look at strong schools as economic engines. Where are they located, how are they supported, and what is the source of the community support?
- Need to increase awareness about resources for local board training (regional planning commissions, state funds, etc.).
- Create an environment where development isn't a dirty word. Look at successful downtown development and how it can make a positive difference.
- People need to speak to each other, work together on shared problems, and achieve something together. The Council on the Future of Vermont process had a lot of people talking to the council, but not necessarily talking to each other. We need a mechanism for different polarized interest groups to communicate and work with each other.
- Need a champion (individual or organization) to take the lead at local level.
- There should be a process to get to coordinated planning and regulations that support good growth and allow people to participate and take ownership. This should include private developers, non-profits, and state organizations.
- Each person in this room needs to step outside him- or her-self and find partners. They should reach out to developers, preservation groups, and recreation groups and work together. Taking the energy back to communities will allow participants to "put your money where your mouth is."
- The current system is ineffective. It is incredibly complex, redundant, and fossilized. We need to create a sense of urgency in order to plant seeds for change at the state, regional, and local levels.

- Need to articulate what current situation allows for; what could be if the status quo continues. The public needs to understand the problem.
- Need more flexibility for growth centers.
- Create a state of land-use regulation in Vermont (a companion piece to VCRD's earlier publication). Form a task force to evaluate the current system and make a proposal for legislative action.
- Target spending for the land-use goals we have now by making sure the money is going to the right places.
- Start a public awareness-raising "we're sleepwalking into the future" information campaign.

SESSION:

Preserving the Balance: Working Downtowns, Working Landscapes

Presenter: Gus Seelig, VT Housing and Conservation Board

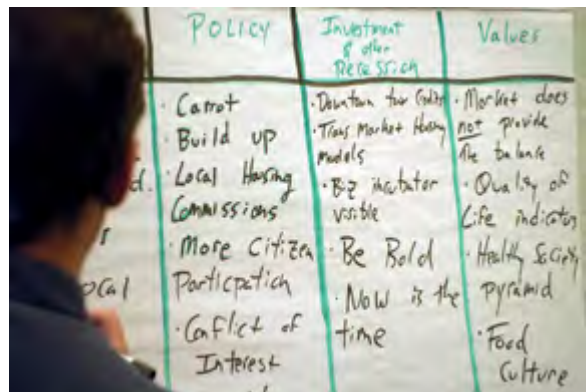
Facilitator: Peter Espenshade, Vermont Community

Foundation

Scribe: Barry Lampke, Champlain Initiative

What are the key challenges in this sector today?

- **Education/Communications**
 - Lack of meaningful public dialogue about land use decisions early in the process results in 11th-hour participants rejecting/approving development proposals. We do not understand sources of resistance.
 - Many people lack perspective about our communities' history in order to determine their future.
 - Regional tensions and lack of clear responsibilities for many decisions make implementation of land use and economic development plans a challenge.
- **Policy**
 - Many people involved in permitting processes find it difficult to say "no" to proposed projects.
 - The Act 250 process has decreased citizen involvement in the name of permit reform.
 - The Act 250 process does not adequately address potential conflicts of interest.
 - There are not adequate disincentives for scattered development outside towns and village centers.
- **Financial Investment**
 - There are not adequate state financial incentives for downtown revitalization.
 - While crisis is a good time to take action for the future, the recession makes it difficult to make, or even maintain, investments in this sector.
- **Values**
 - We have lost what it means to have a local food supply and culture.
 - The market does not provide a balance, so we need other tools/strategies to accomplish our goals.



Lee Krohn

- Our food supply system is broken and many people do not understand the many economic, environmental and cultural benefits of a strong local food system.

What are the opportunities in this sector?

- Develop and use Quality of Life Indicators to guide land use and other decisions.
- Public schools must integrate education about the consequences of land use.
- Communities must use different tools and strategies, including build-out analyses, to encourage public dialogue about land use decisions.
- State government should support innovators in the buy local and local food movement to encourage their replication around the state.
- Use this time to boldly revise land use laws, and don't be afraid to say "no" to development that does not match the scale, location or character of our state planning goals.
- State government must increase investments in downtown and village center revitalization.
- We must encourage trans-market housing models and formation of local housing commissions.

Define Goals and Action Steps

- State government will change the "mays" in the Planning and Development Act back to "shalls" to meet our state land use goals.
- State government will invest in both community centers and the surrounding countryside. We want both to be strong, and not "balanced" against each other.
- The VCRD shall provide leadership to implement a public awareness campaign that visually depicts the report's vision and demonstrates the consequences of our choices.



Maria Blais

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SESSION:

Public Transportation: *Building a Rural Public Transportation System*

Presenter: **David Dill**, *VT Agency of Transportation*

Facilitator: **Karen Glitman**, *UVM Transportation Research Center*

Scribe: **Bart Westdijk**, *NE Grassroots Environment Fund*

David Dill's Opening Comments

- In reviewing the conclusions of the report: they were simple.
- Investing in infrastructure: roads & bridges have serious deficiencies. Money is needed to fix it. There currently is a boost in funding through federal programs. This won't solve all problems but right direction. There are less state dollars, but extra stimulus money.



Maria Blais

- At the state level there is an increase in sales tax on retail price of gas. This brings 22 million in state dollars (includes a 3 cent charge for diesel). Federal formula funds require a match so there is a need to increase VT income.
- There is an interest in longer-term plan for bonding. This is heading in the right direction. Stimulus money will keep us going with bonding for longer term and federal decision.
- An opportunity is to join with municipal and school providers. Affordable systems are needed, but the devil is in the details. Key drivers are that a program needs to be reasonable and affordable, not just for the consumer but also for the state.
- Affordability: Vermont is already a leader in financing [no other state's rural investment is more per capita (\$10 for VT)]. More public highway funds. Limited money from FTA, Vermont has more than doubled public transit budget. Money from the transportation bill is going to public transit, but this is taking it away from roads & bridges.
- 75% is flex source. Public transit is fastest growing of all budget components and competes with other needs. The point being made is not that we've done enough, but we do need to consider affordability for VT & consumers.
- Gas price up = public transit up. Was \$4 trigger to get out of single car? What is incentive for consumer? What is the impact for the wallet?
- Economic Development: having alternatives to car travel is essential for development of new businesses. Great incentive if transport is affordable, this will get new businesses to locate in VT
- Pillars of discussions: Current finances, Growth rate of public transit, Demand outside of public transit (schools, roads, etc.)
- There is a need to go outside the traditional public transit. It is not possible to provide additional services to meet all needs (for example elderly & Medicaid population). Alternatives: Go VT, provides more flexibility and options, = tri-state carpool and vanpool ride matching program, includes park & ride lots, carpooling, vanpooling options. There is a need for one-stop shopping for transportation needs. How to hook up with others to make transportation needs work (Google is looking into an application through Google-maps to connect ride-shares).
- Vanpool: Provide capital to setup infrastructure with modest user fee to make transit affordable for user and state. Fee used as depreciation and replace van (example is federal earmark to buy vans for senior center).
- Need to find supplements to traditional channels to meet all demands. Coordinate all services, reaching out/finding out what needs are and consolidate into manageable packages.

What are the key challenges in this sector today?

- Funding mechanisms for transportation: property tax too local, need regional or statewide mechanisms.
- Predictability of funding and demand: pegged to gas prices makes it very volatile
- Culture: expectation that alternatives mimic reliability and ease of car.
- Land use: few options available to walk, bike; feel unsafe, no infrastructure to sit down, take breaks.
- Differences throughout the state: few pockets of density and rural landscape poses challenges for alternatives like walking and biking (as does weather).
- Hard to engage service provider: for example Medicaid providers could 'group' appointments to make shared transportation easier. Hard to change.
- Development culture: facilities built that are not on routes currently being served and don't have sidewalks, or park & rides that don't have an option for buses to turn around.

What are the opportunities ahead in this sector?

- Federal re-authorization bill: this means direct dollars and as the current bill expires in September an opportunity to influence the formula that determines how much money flows to rural states.
- Tax incentives: there can be more communication around incentives for alternative transportation and fuels (for example the tax incentive for employers to use pre-tax dollars to go towards bus passes: Commuter Choice).
- Coordination/efficiency: group non-traditional people together in a bus or van and share rides to common places. Further develop tools to help people find each other (example is Google exploring how to support ridesharing).
- 'Complete streets': think beyond traditional bus-routes to encompass a whole system: bike paths, bike racks, sidewalks, park & rides, etc. The perspective needs to be on the whole person with a variety of needs and requires a multi-disciplinary approach.
- Not a niche market: focus needs to shift from 'special needs' to include everyone. Education is an important aspect. Current culture has car as teenage 'rite of passage' when turning 16. Switch to a bigger emphasis on transporting the public.
- Market approach: looking at how much money is spent on private car use, and taking that as a market for alternatives alone (Addison County alone spends \$2 million on private vehicle use).
- Focus on Western corridor: connect Burlington to Middlebury and Rutland through railroad with buses providing access to hubs.

How do Vermonters and Vermont organizations work together to overcome obstacles and advance opportunities in this sector?

- Overarching question can be: how do we decrease the cost of moving 1 person over 1 mile given the initial investment?
- There is a need to change structure and culture: the focus of 'public transportation' is often on bus; a broader definition is needed towards transporting the public through a variety of ways.
- Mobility can be split into 2: to meet the needs for people that don't have the mobility and to meet the need for people that want a different choice. There is much less consensus on the latter. It's best to focus on making mobility a common need that is in the best interest of all. For Vermont there is an additional challenge between denser population centers and rural areas.

Dialogue

- It's important to keep the dialogue going and to include transit authorities in design of Park & Rides, etc. Providers and developers need to meet at early stages. Land use planning should be included in debate (feels too siloed to have a transportation session separate from land use session at summit).
- Get buy-in from everybody that will benefit from having transportation options: it's important to look at it as a whole picture and think outside the box (transporting the public rather than more narrowly defined public transportation).
- Potential role of RPCs/CCMPO: they can be regional conveners as a lot of existing demand already reaches their office.
- There is a need to connect local, regional and statewide plans: a holistic system.

Statutory Changes

- Act250: criterion 5 (traffic criterion). Currently it encourages the accommodation of more cars (more vehicle parking = permit): criterion should be mobility for individuals: bikepaths, sidewalks, public transit, etc. Developers should have a menu to think about how to accommodate growth. Social engineering can be used to think about how to incentivize developers to plan differently (the goal of expanding public transit is a social goal and public benefit).

In working on transit issues, there are 3 tiers:

1. Transportation that is already happening, but can be made better;
2. A situation that has significant potential for transportation, but it's not there yet (for example, Danville is working on a specific smart growth policy that will make it big enough to have a regional bus stop).
3. A situation with no transit and little potential in the near future.

Define Goals and Action Steps

- GOAL: expand public transportation (defined as anything more than 1 person in 1 car). To create an alternative system: access & mobility through choice.
- **Priority Goals / Action Steps:**
 - Act250
 - Coordination/dialogue
 - Inventory of assets (map what infrastructure already exists, some maps exist but not in one place).
 - Regional: land use or transportation, which one drives the discussion? It is important to go across silos.
 - Messaging is important. Example: true cost of living in rural Vermont (inventory of costs).
 - Re-message/word twist: transporting the public (away from public transportation)" it's holistic and more than buses alone.
 - Land use, energy, transportation, environment, human services, health, housing, economic interests overlap to develop/implement culture change and look holistically at transporting the public. We need a coordinated mandate.
 - Overarching leadership is missing: there is a need for high level coordination of department that brings people together.

V. VCRD 2009 Community Leadership Award is presented to: The Center for an Agricultural Economy

Presented at the Summit on the Future of Vermont

Every year the Vermont Council on Rural Development honors Vermonters who have made outstanding efforts in service to their community and to rural Vermont. The VCRD Community Award is given annually to a Vermonter who epitomizes “dedication, integrity, and honorable service to his/her community and to rural Vermont.” The recipient’s volunteer Local Community Service has had a “Transformative Effect” on his or her community.

This year it is our honor to present the award to the farmers, producers and partners who make up the board of the **Center for an Agricultural Economy** in Hardwick. For the first time, we present this award to a group of people. These individuals, together, have accomplished something that no one could do alone. They have built a vision for the Hardwick area as a dynamic center for the future of agriculture in Vermont. They are making this vision come true through hard work, partnership, collaboration and enthusiasm. They have included a strong respect for the work of rural people, and the tradition of self-reliance and interdependence.

“The Center for an Agricultural Economy has dedicated itself to building upon local tradition and bringing together the community resources and programs needed to develop a locally-based 21st century healthy food system. The vision supports the desire of rural communities to rebuild their economic and ecological health through strong, secure, and revitalized agricultural systems to meet both their own food needs locally as well as to determine and build the best opportunities for value-added agricultural exports.”

The Vermont Council on Rural Development is pleased to recognize the Center for an Agricultural Economy and their core team: Thomas Stearns, Andrew Meyer, Warren Rankin, Linda Ramsdell, Neil Urie, Andy Kehler, Tom Gilbert, Pete Johnson, Annie Gaillard, and Monty Fischer for their service to rural Vermont with the 2009 Community Leadership Award.

Pictured from the CAE are: Monty Fischer, Linda Ramsdell, Tom Gilbert, and Thomas Stearns. From VCRD are: Jolinda LaClair, Paul Costello



Maria Blais

VI. Evening Session

Building Strategic Vision and Implementing It! Stories of Successful Leadership UVM's Ira Allen Chapel, 7pm

Facilitator: **Chris Graff**, *Vice President of Corporate Communications, National Life Group*

Speakers presented in their area of expertise in the following areas and then took questions from the audience.

- **Ireland's "Social Compact and Economic Development" ~ Economic Vision and Partnerships for Revitalization**
Dr. Garret FitzGerald, *former Prime Minister of Ireland*

- **Vermont Panel:**

- **Vermont's Agricultural Future**
Will Stevens, *Golden Russet Farm*
- **Renewing K-12 Education**
Armando Vilaseca, *Commissioner, Vermont Department of Education*
- **Vermont's Clean Energy Future**
Jan Blittersdorf, *NRG Systems*



Maria Blais

VII. Acknowledgements

VCRD deeply appreciates the sponsorship support of the 2009 “Summit on the Future of Vermont” by many of Vermont’s key leaders in rural development. The sponsors are listed on the inside front cover of this report.

VCRD is grateful to the speakers at the Summit on the Future of Vermont including **Governor James Douglas, Senator Patrick Leahy, Senator Bernie Sanders, Congressman Peter Welch, and Dr. Garret FitzGerald** of Ireland. Their presentations provided inspiration, challenge, and thoughtful analysis of the opportunities ahead.

We thank the 20 members of the **Council on the Future of Vermont** for sharing their perspectives of the process and findings as panelists during the morning session at the Summit. Council members include:

Susan Allen, *Editor, Barre-Montpelier Times Argus*

Paul Bruhn, *Executive Director, Preservation Trust of Vermont*

Thomas M. Debevoise, *CFV Chair, Upwey Registered Holsteins*

Kara DeLeonardis, *Executive Director, RU12? Community Center*

Steven M. Gold, *Retired, Vermont State Government*

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Cheryl Hanna, *Professor of Law, Vermont Law School*

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Vermont Council on Rural Development

The Vermont Council on Rural Development is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping Vermonters and Vermont communities develop their capacity to create a prosperous and sustainable future through coordination, collaboration, and the effective use of public and private resources. A dynamic partnership of federal, state, local, non-profit, and private partners, VCRD is uniquely positioned to sponsor and coordinate committees concerned with policy questions of rural import.

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