# VOREC Steering Committee Meeting

**August 18, 2017**

**Rockingham Town Hall, Bellows Falls**

**Those in Attendance:** Mike S., Josh Ryan, Sarah Lang, Craig Whipple, Marc Sherman, Trey Martin, Amy Kelsey, Jeanne Gervais, Crew Simmons, Bill Supple, Hal Ellms, Wendy Knight, Frank Wollington, Tim Tierney, Dave Furman, Jessica Savage, Frank Stanley (phone), Shane Prisby

Minutes from July: Add Frank Stanley, Dave Furman, GMC staff, full VOREC representation

Minutes approved as amended (Addition of names)

Grafton Executive Summary Discussion: recommendation to GOv by 9/15, take them to regional summits, executive summary could be used for recommendations, we do need to also create a report. Proposal for planning committee help with drafting the report: accepted.

**Discussion:** Wendy: at what point do we want to bring in the Grafton group? Send to attendees after approved today.

Drew: discussed in car, agreed that conference was great and positive, and since then crystallized that the three-legged stool of business, participation and stewardship is solid, now we can convey that, and it now is about harvesting specific ideas from our contacts/constituents, lots of soft targets, but we want to have specific asks for Governor by Sept. 15

Mike: affirming of us being on to something, those pillars are valid, and there’s a lot of buy-in.

Mike D: nothing from out of left field, good group make-up

Josh: need to work on vernacular, be inclusive in language and content (skiing and riding, motorized, etc.) Be open to the wide spectrum of recreation and needs to be included in public documents

Dave: diversity in participation, all the different activities and open to overlap and inclusivity

Josh: Farm Way: she advocated for farm, built trails on farms, need to get her bought in to the idea

Marc: diversity of participation and socio-economics, first one will be set of silos people making comments in and how they will fill in. Benchmarking against other communities who have attempted these efforts. Need resources from state to make this happen, and justify this investment (other communities that can prove the success). Need to figure out a funding source, how can we justify getting it? Don’t have access to it, create the direct link between investment today and pay off tomorrow: health, recreation tourism, sales and use tax benefits

Mike: came up a bunch in informal conversation, how do we justify choosing to invest in this? Massive positive impact. Make a case to invest in this sector.

Marc: huge health savings, we believe strongly in need to invest in this idea, but the belief isn’t enough. Need to justify it.

**Add Strategy/Action to Create Justification for Resources: show economic health benefits, environmental awareness and connectedness, economic development benefits. Add to text about benchmarks needed in this regard.**

Drew: initial conversation about three priorities need to be balanced, then in reflection, vast majority of conversation was about participation. Light on increasing business opportunities at the event: need to add this in more

Marc: with a little extra push and incentives, can create huge opportunities: lots of trails near town, encourage someone to open coffee shop nearby by offering a grant.

Drew: primary consideration to offer incentives to OR businesses, like Frank the Welder.

Mike: expected more business ideas, want us to all make sure we drive at that.

Wendy: from ACCD, heard a lot of business conversation. So much is happening with economic development that synchs with this: we need to start educating people about opportunities already happening. Need to know what ACCD is doing

Mike: How do we do that? Before next meeting to get information out to VOREC

Tim: already existing trail hubs, lots of examples out there, they can be enhanced, economic development corps will put emphasis.

Shane: asset mapping: what are we already doing? AOT, ACCD, tying existing initiatives together, slicing off from existing efforts from the state

Trey: magnify on Objective 1: Executive summary needs to be more specific, need to understand development corporations, etc. Want to go beyond ROI with just economic and other benefits: stewardship and conservation: there are lots of monetary values associated with conservation and needs to make that jump out

Mike: need to make some tweaks to this document as is, and go further. People send edits and thoughts to Jessica, Wendy will help.

What is the take of people who were not at Grafton?

Amy: it’s what we’ve been talking about, struggle with 40,000-foot view, still at that level, waiting for actual concrete steps

Dave: surprised I didn’t see how reliant this economy is on the overall economy. Other companies looking to come here, it’s not the outdoor companies that are here, it’s someone who wants to move or visit here, what other things are here? Integrating with overall economic development is essential. Going to the public perspective: hard sell in that OR investment takes away from the economy, not contributing to it, so focusing on overall economy is vital.

Bill: Business focused on OR, which would be great to develop more OR businesses, getting them back, but It’s a stretch. Brand level: tough to get them here. Can do more with small and start-ups, attracting businesses outdoor rec. b/c of QOL. Increasing revenues and decreasing costs

Wendy: ACCD perspective: leveraging OR for overall economy

Bill: dealer.com signed up for VPF program, really paying attention to this

Sarah: S VT Young Professionals group: need friends, jobs and OR

Marc: once infrastructure gets built, people get excited about it

Drew: OR sector is the one we are authorized to press.

Betsy Bishop from VT Futures Project: president of VT Chamber of Commerce, spearheaded VT Chamber Foundation: looking at econ future of VT. We have social justice, environment and business needs strengthening

Betsy: partners with VTDM, vacation guide. VT Futures Project: introductions. Help businesses thrive and grow the economy. Need to base our decisions in reality. What are we going to be like in 20 years? We work in a two-year timeframe, no long term policy. Clear vision of where we’re headed so that we can know where we’re going. Demographics: less Vermonters and we’re getting older. How do you change the demographics of our state and bring more people here? Economic dashboard: vtfutures.org. Very data based but not difficult to understand. Six key buckets: economic activity, demographics, workforce and talent (others). Pulled from independent sources: then figured out how we are doing? Standout econ indicator is quality of place. Pretty good but need things to be affordable (housing etc.). 2 years ago put out dashboard and figured out where we were. January: put out vision for 2040. Asked people about the data around the state, asked whether they were on task, then came up with vision statement for future. Passed out growth targets.

Defined mid-sized businesses: 50-499 employees (federal). Local definition is 20-200 employee companies (communities can really handle it). This will help our downtown and local economies thrive.

Increasing workforce is one of the biggest challenges

Housing starts only 1250 in 2010: Marc: is 1000 units in Chittenden county disproportionate to the rest of the state?

Betsy: Need to go to communities and understand what it will look like in localities. We as a state need housing in x place with employment plan in y place.

Sarah: is housing broken out into affordable housing?

Betsy: not yet: that’s phase III. We need to take into account what the customer wants if we want them to come here.

Drew: required at planning commissions to ID locations for 3% growth for housing, so already done in some places

Betsy: will plow new ground in places where it hasn’t been done, need to focus on economic development

Tim: need community buy-in, Betsy agreed, b/c it’s key to how this works in VT.

 Setting goals is key. Econ dashboard: published in 2015, updated in 2016 to benchmark. Not much had changed in economic activity (want to drive wage growth, need productivity to increase for that to happen), innovation and entrepreneurship (start-up rates dropped a little, but other states started doing more, so need to focus on that), workforce and demographics: workforce shrank by 3400 workers, need to add 25-60-year olds here, infrastructure: pretty ok, but access to broadband isn’t that great. At the root of what we’re trying to do: social justice, environment strong, need economic growth piece. Reaching out to create collaborative effort, business groups as well as colleges and universities, RPCs, reached out to VNRC, Sustainable Jobs Fund, VBSR, AARP, Let’s Grow Kids, can’t just be the business community in order to sustain what’s good about VT. That’s why she’s here: how can our work inform each other’s? Rutland county adopted and adapted data, workforce collaborative in various locations, CEDS talks about data dashboard as way to measure progress.

Workforce supply gap of almost 11,000 workers needed per year. No one collects the number of HS grads or college grad retention. Workforce recruitment is key: employers can’t find workers. Need to tell people outside of VT that we want them here, need economic development marketing money. Secured $200,000 twice to write and publish marketing plan. Can we ask our tourism businesses and marketing campaigns to invite people to live and work here? Tourism magazine promotes Love Where You Live. Let them know if there are people with this story. Digital deployment plan as well.

Need hard demand study: what does that demand look like (types and numbers of jobs)? Need to target folks that have a drop of Vermont in them. Put up wall at business conference: Why Vermont? All about community, QOL and family, nothing about business. Best strategy might be to admit that jobs are not our strength, appeal to people who want to put those QOL things first.

Use their data, and if there are data sets that are missing let us know.

Marc: have you looked into $15 minimum wage? Would that help fill this gap? Would we draw more people? Millennials want QOL.

Mike: we have a competitive advantage with this

Shane: not so much about coming here and getting a job etc. Gets harder to stay here as you get older and want to progress in their careers. How are we making it possible for them to invest here?

Housing is definitely big piece of that

Betsy left materials to review: follow up with her with questions etc.

Mike: wrapped up exec summary discussion to get changes to Jess

Regional Summit planning:

Open Forum, Open House, Town Hall, Input Session, Brainstorm, Vision, Public Forum: chose that one

Vermont Outdoor Economy Public Forum

Open House style.

9/12: Trey, Marc, Amy, Bill, Mike D, Hal, Tim, Wendy, Tom

9/25: Jeanne, Drew, Josh, Marc, ACCD person

10/16: Sarah, Amy, Mike D, Wendy, maybe Bill, Josh, Hal

10/24: Sarah, Trey, Wendy,

Rutland, UV, and St. Albans set up by Monday

Maybe send a different invite to Grafton Conference to get them to be super participants

Recommendations to governor will be approved electronically (based on executive summary).

Drew: PR will be script to talk about these sessions, beta test these things with VMBA members or others? Maybe Waterbury is hometown enough.

Videographer: OGE guy might want to help out if we want to interview people or something.

Hal: elephant wall

Other events and how we participate: YP meeting in Rutland, panel opportunity, 9/9

Table for Ibex sale, first two weekends in October (Cherry Street in BTV)

Drew has powerpoint: create a basic one, Drew will share and we can go use it

Wendy: NBRC grant, Wendy will send me info

Hemp Fest 9/9

Catalysts of Climate Economy same weekend

No New Business

Public Comment: Frank the Welder, came to VT 10 years ago, decided to stay and make bicycles, worst way to make a living, like to do it, growing client base, kids keep showing up wanting to make bicycles, very encouraging, got involved with Bellows Falls Bike Coop on board, some interest from other places to talk about it, almost worked on Walton Family Foundation, but lost an employee to suicide, and changed what I want to do, need to bring jobs into the area, pedal assist electric bicycles are growth sector in transportation (1 million motors made last year). Taking care of Instagram brands: small batched of bikes, 200 frames in a recent order, building next door to my shop with everything I need, I would like to use my status and put an electric bike store, manufacture, rent space for a maker space, senior machinists and fabricators etc. who could help, tons of machines around here, that plus outdoor sports, terrain is a little too severe to get where you want to go, an e assist bikes are a really good way to use the trails, fire roads, snowmobile trails, no conflict here compared to other locations, Highlands freestyle mountain park gets hundreds of visitors a week, KT, Whistler, bike parks, there is no place for e bikes anywhere just for that: specialize in that here? Limited to 30 mph, idea is to make them so people aren’t afraid of them (quiet), talked to someone with different ideas, people who are vets, seen trauma, access vehicles etc. could be great, get some race events etc. connect fire roads and trails to inns etc. tourism but also manufacturing jobs, good time for something like this to take place, handed out business cards and people can contact me.

Drew: e bikes are growing everywhere: what are the costs for consumers?

Frank: under $1000 you can convert bikes, completed ones can be $10,000, good one is $5-6000.

Drew: framebuilder> are you creating a new geometry?

Frank: immediately noticed that there is not a way to get the power to go over an obstacle, things need to change so that the motor and weight is in the right place, less gears etc.

Cargo bikes: yes made a couple

Wendy: who is your target customer?

Frank: urbanites who get off at exit 5 or 6, and have extra income.

Mike: franktheweldervt on Instagram? Yes

Annual bike show is at the end of September, that would be when we’d launch a brand. Right now need $100,000 to get into building next door, great package easy growth for area.

Drew: KT for e-bikes? What does that look like?

Frank: class 4 roads, you can get around here without disrupting traffic

Microtel right behind my shop: view of river, signage, battery charging areas, place to lock up, e-bike vacation stop, get gear etc.

Rebuilding lithium batteries etc. are great and needed tech jobs.