

**SCENERY PRESERVATION COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
VERMONT STATE HOUSE
ETHAN ALLEN ROOM
MONTPELIER, VERMONT
February 27, 2006**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jill Michaels, Chairwoman
Tordis Isselhardt Diane Gayer
Matt Langham Danielle Fitzko
Rep. Deb Evans

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sen. Hull Maynard
Lew Sorenson

STAFF: Peter Gregory
Tom Kennedy
John LaBarge

OTHERS PRESENT: Bruce Hyde, ACCD/VDTM
Steve Gladczuk, CVRPC
Dan Senecal-Albrecht, CCRPC
Shelley Hadfield, Connecticut River Byway
Stephanie Venema, Moretown
Peg Marrens, Upper Valley Land Trust
Marianne Riordan, Recording Secretary

[Note: The minutes reflect the order of the published agenda.]

1. CALL TO ORDER and APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Jill Michaels called the meeting to order at 10:40 a.m. Introductions were made.

Approval of Minutes of February 13, 2006

MOTION by Deb Evans, SECOND by Matt Langham, to approve the 2/13/06 minutes with the following corrections/clarifications:

-Page 3, Item #5, Brattleboro, 1st sentence – change “not” to “no longer”, insert “previously” after the word “as”, and note that John LaBarge will send a withdrawal letter to Brattleboro for the 2005 grant request;

-Page 3, Item #6, Molly Stark, 1st sentence – change “presentation on signage” to “discussion with consultant for input on the grant”.

VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

2. BYWAY APPLICATIONS PRESENTATIONS

Upper Valley Land Trust

Peg Marrens, Upper Valley Land Trust, appeared on behalf of the application. Ms. Marrens provided ortho photographs showing the 255 acre parcel under consideration.

The property is part of a national resource protection conservation project. Route 5 follows along side the parcel for a considerable distance. Funds have been invested to protect other lands in the area. The parcel under discussion will augment this investment. The development rights have been purchased from the landowner. The landowner controls access into the area. It is possible to prevent road connections in the future. The land will remain in its present condition. Current uses are forestry related (the property is in the current use program; the state has an easement). Neighbors use the trails on the property for recreational purposes. Public access has been discussed. The property owner also owns land contiguous to the parcel under discussion. The land is a wildlife corridor (deer, moose, bear). There are wetlands and a brook on the property. Land preservation and the scenic viewshed are consistent with the scenic byway corridor management plan. The interstate interchange is at risk for potential development. Emphasis in the next five to ten years is conservation to protect the area. There is great threat of residential development (great views of Mount Ascutney). The town supports the project. There are efforts underway by the Hartland Conservation Commission to support the project (\$2,000 has been contributed to date). Fund raising will begin for additional property adjacent to the site. The grant request is \$111,000 for the Thetford land (total cost of the project is \$148,000). The cost of the development rights is based on comparable lands. Forest land before protection is valued between \$1,000 and \$1,200 per acre, after protection the land value is about \$600 per acre. An appraisal has not yet been done due to the cost. Plus an appraisal done at this time would be outdated by the time the grant comes through. The landowner has agreed to hold the land for the Land Trust for a specified time period.

The Scenery Preservation Council urged the applicant to get a letter of support from the Windsor Planning Commission and the option on the land in writing from the landowner.

Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (Lake Champlain Byway)

Dan Senecal-Albrecht appeared on behalf of the application. Mr. Senecal-Albrecht pointed out the Lake Champlain byway corridor under discussion extends from Charlotte to Milton including the train station in Essex Junction. A map and a brochure highlighting parks, museums, cultural resources, and scenic resources in the corridor are the major elements of the application. Each town will have a panel indicating their intrinsic resources. CCRPC will produce the brochure. The website for the byway will be operational soon. The website will show intrinsic resources versus information found on the Chamber of Commerce website about restaurants, hotels, and such. Solar powered or plug-in radio transmitters will provide a five minute public service message/information about each municipality/area. There is a pilot project underway with the ferries crossing the lake with the transmitters (45 minute loop of information that passengers can listen to in their cars while on the ferry). Outreach to residents and businesses in the byway will be done, including 11" x 17" newspaper tabloid and information panels describing the byway. CCRPC has been the administrator of the byway up to this point. Towns have been asked about the management and future direction of the byway (economic development, sense of place, tourism). The requested grant amount is the same as last year's request.

Diane Gayer suggested involving the Winooski Valley Park District and Jennifer Ely (for outreach). Ms. Gayer felt the application does not address the natural resources of the area. All six intrinsic values must be engaged. The applicant noted representatives of natural resource groups from each town have reviewed the information panels. Tordis Isselhardt explained a comprehensive and integrated message that is accurate and keeps telling the full story of the area must be shown. The applicant listed various committees that are involved, noting the CCRPC can continue handling the project but wanted to give people in the region opportunity for input on management of the byway.

Following further discussion, it was clarified the presentation is a re-submittal of the 2005 grant application which is waiting for a decision on funding. A complete, hard copy of the 2005 application has not been resubmitted for 2006 (i.e. as a 2006 application). The applicant stated the presentation to the SPC was done so procedurally the application can get in the queue for '06 funding. John LaBarge stated the number on the application can be updated to the 2006 series rather than redoing the entire application. The SPC stressed the 2006 application must include all items to be funded, such as the proposed information panels and radio transmitters. Discussion continued about the presentation and whether all applicants must be given the same opportunity for reconsideration. Tom Kennedy and John LaBarge noted they did not contact another applicant ("Big Idea") due to confusion about the (Lake Champlain) application just presented to the SPC.

Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (Travel Interpretation)

Dan Senecal-Albrecht appeared on behalf of the application and stated the application is for infrastructure improvements on the byway including wayfinding and directional signage on the route and locally conceived enhancements/improvements (kiosks, traffic calming, sidewalks). Sixteen trail blazer signs will be added. Brown (OBDS) directional signs will be posted for recreation areas, municipal parks and resources. The applicant provided updated letters of support for the project.

There was discussion of maintaining signs so information is current. Route 7 in Charlotte was cited as an example of out of date and confusing signs for travelers/tourists. It was noted permission from FHWA is needed to use brown (OBDS) signs, otherwise the signs will be black with white lettering. Communities are charged an annual fee for OBDS signs. Mr. Senecal-Albrecht confirmed the communities have been informed of this.

Danielle Fitzko asked about meetings with community members on the project. Mr. Senecal-Albrecht stated meetings with town planners and other staff members have been held. Quarterly meetings with the Lake Champlain Byway Council are held to provide updates on projects in the region. Tom Kennedy questioned why the "Big Idea" application (Echo) was not included in the presentation by CCRPC as it appears CCRPC is the coordinating entity for the Chittenden County byway. Mr. Senecal-Albrecht said he suggested that on local signs there be mention of local amenities including places such as the Echo Center.

Connecticut River Joint Commissions

Shelley Hadfield, coordinator for the Connecticut River Byway, explained the request for \$50,000 in seed funding for the bi-state byway (\$25,000 from each state). The grant will pay for staffing and to help the byway be self-sustaining, not reliant on federal funding. The New Hampshire Scenic Byway Council gave the highest priority to supporting the project. It is hoped Vermont gives the request for seed money the highest priority. Differences between the strategic plan and corridor management plan for the byway were reviewed (the strategic plan is essentially building on what has been learned since the corridor management plan was drafted nine years ago). Ms. Hadfield reiterated the seed money will be used for staffing, newsletters, monthly meetings (500 miles of byway across 53 communities), the website, preservation of resources, and further development of waypoint centers as information points. The proposed role of the nonprofit organization known as the Granite State Ambassadors in training volunteers to staff waypoint centers on the byway was explained.

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (Mad River Byway)

Steve Gladczuk and Stephanie Venema appeared on behalf of the application and explained the grant request for wayfinding signs to identify the byway (Route 100B through Middlesex to the I-89 ramp). Potential locations for information areas, signs, and kiosks were reviewed (five locations for interpretive signs describing key locations within the byway and kiosk locations in Moretown village, by the schoolhouse and Green Mountain Power dam, and by the country store). There are public lands available for the signs if negotiations with private landowners fail. The town selectboard will be informed of the ideas. The proposal is compatible with the town plan. The town will propose establishing a permanent Mad River Byway Committee to maintain the byway. A letter of support was given to the SPC. It was noted the letter refers to the designation of the byway and should refer to the grant application.

Diane Gayer commented the requested amount of grant money may not be enough to complete all the proposed projects. Stephanie Venema explained the plan is to start out small and work up to completion of all the projects. It may be necessary to apply for additional grants.

3. DISCUSSION/VOTE ON BYWAY APPLICATIONS

There was discussion of equity with regard to ensuring all applicants are aware of the application process, required submittals, and all avenues of available funding. Regarding re-submittal of the Lake Champlain Byway 2005 application, the SPC with the exception of Mr. Langham voted not to support including the re-submittal of the 2005 grant in the current (2006) applications due to the fact that all other 2005 applicants were not made aware of this option by the Byway Coordinator. The SPC discussed each application and evaluated them in the following categories: application thoroughness, site control/right-of-way/permits, eligible tasks and feasibility, project readiness, furthers corridor management plan, number of intrinsic values/qualities, intermodal, interpretive, feasible local match. The resulting scenic byway 2006 application rankings are as follows:

<u>Project</u>	<u>Ranking</u>	<u>Brief Explanation</u>
Connecticut River Seed Grant	1	Lots of coordinated effort & support
Connecticut River Interpretive	2	Lots of coordinated effort & support

UVLT Hartland/Windsor	3	
Mad River Byway (Rte. 100B)	4	Some tasks ineligible, such as bumper sticker. Project readiness was a concern.
Lake Champlain Travel Interpretn.	5	
Lake Champlain "Big Idea"	6	"Cash poor" (no cash match effects national competitiveness). Lack of coordination/integration with byway.

The SPC discussed the importance of having all groups on the byway coordinating with each other on behalf of the byway, citing the apparent lack of this within the Lake Champlain byway.

4. UPDATES

Route 100B Designation

Tom Kennedy reported there was good attendance and lots of support at the Transportation Board public hearing on the Route 100B scenic byway designation. The Vermont Transportation Board approved the designation on February 16, 2006.

Route 100 Planning

Discussion with Steve Gladczuk is needed regarding planning for the designation of Route 100 as a scenic byway.

5. NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS

Next Meeting(s): April 17, 2006, 1 p.m. – 3 p.m., location TBA

Agenda Items:

- Link on website to signage information
- Brochure update -Tom
- Barbara Harding – Lake Champlain Byway
- Bruce Hyde – The Quad
- Work Program Review

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Deb Evans, SECOND by Danielle Fitzko, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:22 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by M. Riordan, Recording Secretary.

“To Do” List from 2/27/06 SPC meeting:

1. John LaBarge will immediately send a withdrawal letter to FHWA on the Brattleboro project for the 2005 grant request.
2. John LaBarge will inform applicants of the 2006 application rankings and why they ranked as they did.
3. John LaBarge will tell all 2006 applicants the deadline (Friday, March 3rd at noon) they have to re-open and edit their applications with the suggestions made by the SPC.