

**SCENERY PRESERVATION COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
NATIONAL LIFE BUILDING
FOURTH FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM #1
MONTPELIER, VERMONT
May 7, 2007**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jill Michaels (Chairwoman)
Diane Gayer Lew Sorenson
Tordis Isselhardt Matt Langham

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sen. Hull Maynard
Rep. Deb Evans
Danielle Fitzko

STAFF: Peter Gregory
Tom Kennedy
John LaBarge

OTHERS PRESENT: Mel Adams, VTrans
Marianne Riordan, Recording Secretary

1. CALL TO ORDER and APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Jill Michaels called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. Introductions were made.

Approval of Minutes of March 8, 2007

MOTION by Matt Langham, SECOND by Tordis Isselhardt, to approve the minutes of 3/08/06, with following correction: Page 2, second line - capitalize the “m” on Mad River. VOTING: unanimous [Diane Gayer not present for vote]; motion carried.

2. BYWAY DESIGNATION REQUEST –STONE VALLEY CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Rutland Regional Planning Commission was not in attendance to present the management plan. The Council discussed the submitted document. Tordis Isselhardt made the following comments on the management plan:

- The long list of partners is good.
- The proposal would be stronger with more focus on the geologic history.
- Editing is needed in Rutland City history portion (i.e. When did the stone industry begin? What is ‘Slate Valley’? The plan should clarify the reason for the byway to be focused on stone valley.)
- The Natural and Scenic section could be reorganized and better written.
- Explain the mention of Proctor.
- The introductions to towns need to be balanced. The description of the source of the town of Poultney is very lengthy.
- The themed routes and themed interpretive products are good.

- The connection with Route 30 to the Molly Stark Scenic Highway is good.
- Lots of space devoted to the history of Bennington City which is not part of the proposal.

Tordis Isselhardt noted if her suggestions make the proposal stronger, then they should be done otherwise the proposal is acceptable as is. Ms. Isselhardt will forward her comments on the plan to Peter Gregory.

Low Sorenson mentioned adding some emphasis for the potential of possible future connections (i.e. recognize that Hubberton and Castleton are not supportive).

Matt Langham spoke in support of the plan as submitted.

John LaBarge suggested the “transportation, goals, and strategy” section be amended to state the byway will be to cooperate with the Agency of Transportation to maintain the quality and function of the roadway. Also, compliance with federal MUTCD and Vermont state law for signs should be stated. On Page 42, the plan says needs are identification but these are not included. If the needs are supported by the town then they should be added to the objectives.

There was discussion of connectivity. Matt Langham felt the length of highway for designation is significant itself. Jill Michaels spoke in support of the idea of connecting all the byways in some manner.

The review criteria for the byway application and proposal were reviewed. Tentative dates for a site visit followed by a public hearing were set for Wednesday, June 6, 2007, at 2 p.m. or Thursday, June 14, 2007 at 2 p.m. The applicant will draft an agenda.

3. SCENIC BYWAYS GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS AND RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SPC AND THE STATE BYWAY COORDINATOR – Discussion with Mel Adams

Low Sorenson commented the mission of the SPC is broad with regard to scenery preservation. Resources to fulfill the mission are only in one section of the annual work plan. The work program recognizes other tasks, but there is no funding support. The SPC is staffed by VTrans and by contract with Peter Gregory and Tom Kennedy (regional planning). The inception and history of the SPC was briefly reviewed. There was agreement the role of state byway coordinator and the SPC needs clarification. The SPC is advisory to VTrans.

Mel Adams recognized the breadth of SPC’s role is broad with regard to land use and planning functions and there are no resources allocated. If a way to resource with state versus federal money could be found, more could be done with less constraint than is attached to federal funding. This scenario is unlikely because state funds are very limited. The status quo is expected to continue with the same level of support from Peter Gregory and Tom Kennedy. The link to regional planning should continue. The byway coordinator has a statutory and administrative role in coordinating with the Federal government and the applicants with byway grants. Communication, marketing, and

outreach should stay with regional planning commissions. Technical questions, application procedures, and coordinating with the FHWA should stay with VTrans staff (byway coordinator). A peer committee in VTrans reviews grants. It is preferred to have people who represent the community of interest also do a review. It was noted federal discretionary grants in transportation have become earmarks by Congress. Having the SPC rank byways applications, not the byway coordinator, is also preferred. SPC should establish its own criteria of review, then rank the application and the byway coordinator will submit the application. There have been many last minute changes this year from the FHWA and the U.S. Department of Transportation on criteria and application due dates. Having more lead time for application review and scoring is desired. It needs to be determined how much time the SPC needs to review and rank applications. Due to time constraints if an application is not complete, it should be bumped to the next cycle. After SPC review, the byway coordinator needs additional time on the application. The byway coordinator has administrative responsibilities, and provides coordination and assistance in submitting scenery preservation grants.

Mr. Adams discussed the contract with Peter Gregory and Tom Kennedy. The contract drives the work plan approved by the SPC which integrates direction from SPC and VTrans. John LaBarge (byway coordinator) approves the contract. Mr. Adams noted FHWA is getting audited so documentation is needed on how U.S. DOT money is being spent. There may be much oversight for the next few years.

There was mention of the economic impact of SPC work and potential funding from Economic Development and Marketing. Tordis Isselhardt noted some issues the SPC has been asked to consider include cell tower locations, signs on roadways, and windmills Tom Kennedy noted the SPC is copied on Public Service Board applications. It may be necessary to advocate more with ACCD because the SPC may need to provide input. Mel Adams agreed VTrans can look at possible support in the future from other agencies for signs. VTrans can serve as a resource to advocate for the SPC for more ability to do what it hopes to accomplish relative to land use development, public service issues, holding more council meetings, and having more staff report. Mr. Adams urged the SPC to remain neutral, remembering the effort is not to preserve the landscape of Vermont but to advocate for the landscape of Vermont to be used appropriately.

4. UPDATES

Byway Summit

John LaBarge reported the byway summit had a good cross section of participants. There was good feedback and lots of discussion. Signage was a big issue. There was much confusion about matching funds. Guidelines and consistency are needed. There was support for holding a summit annually. The idea of forming a state byways organization was mentioned at the summit. There was not much support or participation from Tourism & Marketing. It was noted Vermont has very limited exposure on the national byways website. The opening celebration for the Route 100B byway was mentioned.

FY07/FY08 Implementation Grants

There is no update on dates.

National Conference

SPC members, support staff and VTrans workers will attend.

National Byways Survey

Diane Gayer reported questions are under development for an economic impact survey. Two intrinsic qualities will be targeted including natural resources and historic resources. Ms. Gayer will find some specific resources and requested any information on investment of funds into natural resources and historic properties. John LaBarge suggested contacting guide services in the Connecticut River valley for information. Brochures, booklets, and such can also provide information. Mr. LaBarge mentioned signs need to be posted identifying the Connecticut River valley.

VISTA

Tordis Isselhardt noted the VISTA publication had a byway organization matrix that may be helpful.

Sustainability

Sustainability of byways needs further discussion.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:02 p.m.

RScty: M.E.Riordan

Tseptn: JA