

**SCENERY PRESERVATION COUNCIL
PLANNING SESSION
NATIONAL LIFE RECORDS BUILDING
MEETING ROOM
MONTPELIER, VERMONT
January 22, 2008**

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sen. Hull Maynard
Rep. Deb Evans

STAFF: John LaBarge

OTHERS PRESENT: Mel Adams, VTrans - Planning
Karen Glitman, UVM Transportation Center
Marianne Riordan, Recording Secretary

The planning session facilitated by Karen Glitman, UVM Transportation Center, convened at 12:30 p.m. A summary of the discussion follows:

What is the best thing the SPC has done?

Attendees were canvassed for their opinion. Responses to the question included the following:

- Bringing the new byways program to life and resurrecting existing byways.
- Getting the byways program up and running, functioning and continuing.
- Seeing the guidelines and process hold up through time.
- Empowerment of local communities to decide what is valuable to them.
- Having spread the word to local communities and they being committed to and working on scenery preservation.
- Byways and re-designation and how comprehensive the program is to include scenery preservation, historic preservation, economic development, tourism, community development.

There was consensus the byways program is the major accomplishment to date. The group agreed they would like to do more than just byways within the realm of scenery preservation (cell towers, other projects) and not doing this is frustrating. It was noted the SPC is broader than the byways program though the SPC has been mainly dealing with byways. Facilitator summarized evidence of the success of the SPC and the byways program is that communities are embracing the program now, but at the inception communities did not know what a byway was and were afraid of potential negative impacts (Act 250 review, regulations).

What is the desired outcome of the planning session?

Attendees were canvassed for their opinions. Responses to the question included the following:

- How to make the SPC and staff a dynamic team.
- Focus outside of byways as well as within the byways program.
- Recognize the moment of growth in that the byways program is up and running, competent support staff is in place so the time may be right to refocus on other SPC tasks, big picture items such as the vision, the direction to take.
- Define the roles of the SPC, Byways Program Manager, and staff, especially in light of changes in the normal operation of the byways program and the SPC due to the growth in the number of byways and budget restraints.
- Establish a clear vision, clear goals for the SPC, define roles of staff (i.e. handling just byways and/or larger SPC issues), role of the SPC in directing the byways program (advisory role or active review of applications and re-designations), define the relationship of the SPC and staff.
- Establish a definition of staff recognizing that VTrans staffs the byways program and all other tasks are not funded by the transportation program. In other words John Labarge is the program manager for a significant portion of what the SPC does which is the byways program.
- Set a vision for the byways program and the SPC itself.
- Be deliberative with the Governor's Office and legislature on what it is the SPC feels it should be doing so the right people can be involved. Be aware there are no funds for anything except byways.
- Get clarity on how the SPC can function aside from byways. The SPC without staff can develop a vision, but does not have resources to develop a presence without the backing of VTrans to talk to the legislature or other state divisions/agencies (Tourism & Marketing, Economic & Community Development) regarding funding.
- Develop a team approach and develop a strategy to bring other parties (regional planning, nonprofits, other organizations) to the table to do a better job of addressing all scenery preservation issues besides byways.

There was consensus of the need to work as a team and to work on scenery preservation goals beyond byways. Outstanding issues include defining staff's role to a policy board (SPC) and staff's role with funding through resources. The byways program manager's role is in supporting the SPC. The SPC was created statutorily by the legislature many year's ago. The opinion of the current Governor on the SPC is not known and should be solicited. Clarity of how visionary, advisory, or reactive the SPC is relative to byways and VTrans is needed.

There was discussion of confusion about scenic byways including scenery preservation (landscaping, historic buildings) and the ability to have funding and staff support from VTrans and Tourism & Marketing versus the singular focus of byways with support staff and funding from VTrans. There was question if there is an active council in the state without staffing. There may be inactive councils that have staffing (Governor's Climate Change Council). Comment was made that perhaps other tasks the SPC wants to pursue actually fall under the broader realm of byways.

Vision of policy governance board, such as the SPC, and the role of staff

A list of the functions provided by the SPC and staff was drafted. There was agreement there is overlap in duties in some areas.

The SPC provides the following in general:

- Policy direction
- Community outreach
- Support in a general sense (a policy board needs to support and listen to staff, and benefit from the technical and administrative capabilities of staff; avoid micro-managing)
- Communicate information from the communities to the board and staff
- Review and evaluate grants
- Run public hearings and get feedback on byways
- Be a technical resource and empower people out in the field to explore their own communities and areas of interest
- Preserve the Vermont scenery broadly

Staff provides the following in general:

- Work with local coordinators
- Seek and promote return on investment into the byways program via tourist money
- Work with regional planning contacts who then work with local organizations on corridor management plans
- Communicate information from VTrans and other state divisions/agencies or the legislature relative to byways

It was stressed the Governor needs to be informed the SPC has been charged (statutorily) with the completion of tasks without funding or staff support. SPC's role in the byways program in working with VTrans is primarily communicating in the review and oversight of applications and the application process. The role of the SPC is policy unless there is flexibility (funding) to do other tasks. VTrans can only support the federally funded byways program embodied with federal guidelines. Other issues should be pursued by the SPC and funding should be sought from other state divisions/agencies associated with scenery preservation. SPC members need to make a conscience decision to pursue these matters regardless of staff support or the lack there of. There was clarification the byways program is a "bottoms-up" program run by the local communities. Policy or vision for a community's byway cannot be dictated by the SPC.

There was discussion of the challenge of maintaining the program when funds are limited. It is necessary to find out what is expected from the SPC by the ANR, DPS, Governor's Office, and other divisions and to inform them of the SPC's expectations. It was noted the legislation for the SPC was drafted when legislation on billboards in the state was drafted (over 40 years ago), and the byways program was resurrected at a time when there were funds available (not the current situation). The SPC brings expertise to

the table and can apply that expertise to the byways program. The program can still grow within the realm of what is fundable. Tasks must be pursued within the context of the statute. It may be possible to leverage some of the byways resources. The focus of the SPC is byways and the opportunity to do broader scenery preservation.

SPC expectations of the program manager include timing, organizing SPC meetings, identifying issues and opportunities, presenting alternatives (pros/cons and recommendations), implementing the program in cooperation with the SPC, developing a strategic planning document to identify scenery preservation as a whole and the byways program as a portion, maintaining the partnership: SPC – Byways Program Manager – VTrans.

SPC role includes site visits, contributing historic knowledge on matters, marketing the program and the byways, prioritizing tasks, drafting an annual work program to set priorities and allocate resources, defining short and long term expectations.

In summary:

1. Scenic byways is the core, but the SPC wants to do other tasks. VTrans role is only with byways.
2. Work as a team. The program has grown and moved from facilitation by the SPC to having a facilitator on VTrans staff.
3. Define short and long term expectations.
4. Within the byways program the SPC can be involved in natural resources planning and environmental planning.
5. VTrans supplies funding and staff for the byways program only, not the SPC in general so if a project is not byways related then VTrans cannot support it.
6. Communicate with other state divisions/agencies about the potential role of SPC beyond byways projects.