Windham Regional Commission
Community Development Committee
Meeting Minutes: February 21, 2019
Location: WRC Conference Room

*Members Present:* Tim Arsenault, Chair; Stephen Dotson, Roger Turner, Gretchen Haverluk

*Absent:* Joel Bluming, Edie Mas, Robert McBride, Laura Sibilia, Lynn Barrett

*Staff present:* Susan Westa

*Public:* Shelly Huber (Town of Newfane Select Board)

*Presenter:* Josh Davis, Executive Director Groundworks

Meeting convened at 5:35 PM

Minutes of November 8, 2018 were approved with a motion by Roger, seconded by Stephen, by a unanimous vote.

**Groundworks Collaborative:** Josh Davis presented information about the new seasonal overflow shelter they are preparing to build on South Main Street in Brattleboro. The new shelter, which includes a more seasonal beds, a day shelter, a food shelf and support services, will be built adjacent to the existing drop in center. The drop in center will be converted to office and support services meeting space. Although there will be significantly more space than is currently available, there will be no room for future expansion. Groundworks is currently fundraising to support construction which is scheduled to begin October 2019.

The group asked questions and discussed some of the issues surrounding homelessness in Brattleboro. Josh said there is always food available for those who want it in Brattleboro. He discussed the huge impact the opioid crisis is having here. Although opioid deaths are down in most of VT, they doubled in Windham County this year. Josh said that the biggest issue here is the supply and the area is saturated with opioids.

**Community Development Committee, Purpose & Objectives Statement:** The committee reviewed and proposed edits to the Purpose and Objectives Statement from 2011. Roger sent suggested edits prior to the meeting. Some of the proposed changes are clarifying and others will provide more information about the committee’s charge. Susan will make suggested edits and send them around to the committee for their review and approval prior to the March Executive Committee Meeting.
Updates by Topic Areas:

- **Brownfields** – Susan provided an update on the Brownfields program and subcommittee, who met once in January. She said that Marion Major has been a huge help with the transition. The subcommittee approved a new project (new to WRC, previously with the state brownfields program), the Thermal House in Brattleboro. This project will receive funding for additional Phase II testing. Susan and Marion also submitted an Assessment grant application to EPA on 1/30/19. WRC will find out if this application is successful in the spring.

- **Recreation** – Stephen is working with the Retreat Farm to make the meadows more accessible to the community.

- **Economic/Community Development** – Shelly said that Newfane is looking for a Community Development person to help them with senior housing and community development in the villages (without sewer and water infrastructure). She was also looking for information about how to include a project in the CEDS. The group explained how to do this and what it means.

- **Human Services**
  - **Rural Health Care** – Tim is concerned about the area being able to retain primary care doctors. A suggestion was made to address this issue in the regional plan update. Stephen noted that telehealth is helping with this but that doesn’t work without access to the internet.

**Sibling Region Subcommittee:** Stephen gave an update on the potential partnership with Hassleholm Sweden, which has come to a halt due to budgetary and other constraints. He gave an overview of the committee’s goals. They are pursuing similar regions addressing energy and resiliency concerns. He said the subcommittee is now exploring other possibilities in Sweden and elsewhere. Kerry Secrest was suggested as a link to Lithuania. Shelly suggested a more local partner, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. Stephen said that would be a better match for the Town of Brattleboro than the region.

**Other Business/Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be on March 14th at 5:30 PM. Tim suggested we invite the Rich Earth Institute to present. Stephen will ask their Executive Director if she is available. The committee discussed the need to address the lack of sewer and water infrastructure in village centers. Gretchen said that Wilmington is looking at expanding sewer and water infrastructure in their center and they are currently studying options, as is Jamaica.

There was a motion to adjourn by Roger, seconded by Stephen and approved by all at 6:55 PM.