Windham Regional Commission  
Community Development Committee  
Meeting Minutes: March 14, 2019  
Location: WRC Conference Room

*Members Present:* Tim Arsenault, Chair; Stephen Dotson, Joel Bluming, Lynn Barrett

*Absent:* Roger Turner, Edie Mas, Robert McBride, Laura Sibilia, Gretchen Haverluk

*Staff present:* Susan Westa & Emily Davis

*Presenter:* Emily Davis, Village Sanitation Pilot Study

Meeting convened at 5:30 PM

Minutes from the February 21st, 2019 meeting were tabled since only two members present had attended.

**WRC Rich Earth Institute Collaborative, Village Sanitation Pilot Study:** Emily Davis presented information about the pilot study which is looking at alternative wastewater systems in homes in Westminster West and West Dummerston. The feasibility study will provide a pathway for innovative wastewater solutions, such as urine diversion or composting toilets, which can help address aging septic systems that may impact ground and/or surface water quality, human health, and the financial ability of home and business owners to properly maintain and update these on-site systems.

Stephen Dotson, who works for the Rich Earth Institute, said it is estimated that one third of New England septic systems may be failing and this will increase with climate change. He also said that we need to stop washing away our waste with clean water. Emily said these alternative systems reduce the overall volume of waste. Donated urine is being use on agriculture fields, first on hay and now vegetables.

This project was partially funded by the High Meadows fund. The pilot contracted with an outreach specialist who conducted site visits with homeowners and works with them to develop wastewater plans.

The group asked questions and discussed some of the issues surrounding wastewater in the WRC region. Joel explained the Jamaica wastewater situation and how it’s limiting economic development in the village. Lynn asked about the pilot and if going home to home is the most efficient way to go. Emily acknowledged Lynn’s concerns and noted that the long term goal is to get state buy-in to change the regulatory system to promote innovative systems. She said that the final report is due in May/June.
Tim noted the importance of incorporating this discussion and lessons learned in the Regional Plan Update.

**Community Development Committee, Purpose & Objectives Statement:** The committee reviewed final edits to the updated draft Purpose and Objectives Statement. Susan said she received one more suggestion from Edie by email, to incorporate the wastewater and water infrastructure discussion. She will reach out to Edie for a draft statement. Otherwise the group agreed with the suggested edits. Susan will forward the new P&O statement to the Executive Committee Meeting for their April meeting.

**Updates by Topic Areas:**
- **Brownfields** – Susan provided an update on the Brownfields program. She has been catching up on EPA quarterly reporting and project coordination.

- **Housing** – Lynn asked if there is one housing plan for the region. The group discussed the various groups working on housing. Stephen mentioned the Ecovation Hub which is working on green building techniques in Windham, Cheshire and Franklin Counties. He said they are organizing a summit to address a whole range of impediments, like infill opportunities on small lots (60 people will be invited).

  Joel said they are manufacturing tiny homes in Newfane. Stephen shared a tiny house village concept being explored in Bellows Falls. They think they can build the village for $30,000-40,000/unit with a shared bathing house.

- **Culture and Historic** – Lynn stressed the need for funding for the arts. There was a discussion about the importance of addressing diversity in the region. Tim suggested having Curtiss Reed from VT Partnership for Fairness and Diversity Commission, come speak at our next meeting.

- **Economic/Community Development** – Susan shared the Northern Boarders Regional Commission funding opportunities now available for all of VT.

**Sibling Region Subcommittee:** Stephen gave an update. He said the Committee is working on a potential opportunity with another Swedish community and other countries, including Lithuania. The next committee meeting is 3/19, at which there will be a Skype call with Sweden.

**Other Business/Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be on April 11th at 5:30 PM. Tim will reach out to Curtis Read about presenting.

There was a motion to adjourn by Stephen, seconded by Lynn and approved by all at 6:35 PM.