Members Present: Tim Arsenault, Chair; Stephen Dotson, Joel Bluming, Gretchen Haverluk

Absent: Roger Turner, Edie Mas, Robert McBride, Laura Sibilia, Lynn Barrett

Staff present: Susan Westa

Others: Bonnie North, New WRC Commissioner, Rockingham

Presenter: Curtiss Reed, VT Partnership for Fairness and Diversity

Meeting convened at 5:35 PM

Everyone introduced themselves and we welcomed WRC’s new commissioner, Bonnie North. The Chair, Tim Arsenault suggested we hold the minutes until after our guest presentation.

Curtiss Reed, Executive Director, VT Partnership for Fairness and Diversity: Curtiss began by telling the story of Fred Harris and Pop (James) Taylor who brought people from all over the county to VT to ski. His overall message was, people won’t just come to VT, they need to be invited. If we want a more diverse VT, we need to reach out to people where they are now and let them know why they would want to come here.

Curtiss’s organization has a vision for VT’s multicultural future. It is especially important now to bring new folks in with our rapidly changing market place. He talked about what we’re missing if we don’t, including the significant value of what African-Americans spend on travel, etc. The question is how do we retool ourselves to reach this market? We all should be reaching out to folks wherever we go – conferences, etc.

Curtiss shared information about the VT African American Heritage Trail and about JAG Festival in White River Junction, an African American theater group. He said that the western ski resorts are marketing to blacks and that there are 44 million blacks within 8 hours of SoVT. Curtiss said the state is doing a lot but now the communities need to step up. He also noted there are some simple things we could do to make VT more welcoming, including taking down confederate flags.

Tim asked how do we incorporate these concepts into our regional plan? Curtiss said he would help us develop appropriate policies and strategies. One suggestion was to invite brownfields folks up to learn,
visit and hopefully stay and the same goes for other interests such as wastewater. Curtiss is currently helping Brattleboro hire a new Human Resources Director. 6 of 7 applicants are from communities of color. He is also doing trainings for Select Boards, etc. (did Bennington).

**Minutes:** Minutes of February 21st, 2019 were approved on a motion by Gretchen, seconded by Joel, by a unanimous vote. Minutes of March 14, 2019 were approved on a motion by Stephen, seconded by Joel, by a unanimous vote.

**Community Development Committee, Purpose & Objectives Statement:** The Committee reviewed final edits to the updated draft Purpose and Objectives Statement. Susan said she incorporated one final suggestion and added a new item #10 which addresses wastewater and water infrastructure in our villages and downtowns. The Committee unanimously approved passing the final Purpose & Objectives statement onto WRC’s Executive Board – moved by Joel and seconded by Stephen.

**Guilford Library:** Isaac Wagner is working with the Town of Guilford, helping them develop a VCDP grant application for an expansion of the Guilford Library. He requested a letter of support, which Susan drafted. The Committee approved the April 11, 2019 letter on a motion by Stephen, seconded by Joel, by a unanimous vote.

**Updates by Topic Areas:**

- **Brownfields** – Susan provided an update on the Brownfields program. She attended a state quarterly meeting with EPA, DEC and other RPCs, as well as a BERA meeting for Robertson Paper Mill in Bellow Falls. No new projects have come in although she is expecting a couple soon. The Saxtons River project received additional cleanup funding.

- **Housing** – Susan met with Elizabeth Bridgewater from Windham Windsor Housing Trust. She will be speaking at WRC’s Full Commission Meeting on June 25, 2019.

  Gretchen said that Dover and Wilmington applied for an MPG grant to do a housing needs assessment and implementation plan but they were denied. They towns are moving ahead with the study on their own.

- **Infrastructure** – Stephen let the group know about the Rich Earth Institute’s celebration at Club VT in Putney, which includes a “Piss-off” contest and comedians.

  Gretchen said they are doing a feasibility study looking at expansion of water and wastewater infrastructure on Rt. 9. Joel discussed the Water Feasibility Study in Jamaica.

- **Economic/Community Development** – Gretchen said that 71 projects were under review for inclusion in the CEDS.

- **Recreation** – Stephen share information about a Trails meeting at the Retreat Farm. Multiple partners are looking at connecting trails with downtown Brattleboro.

**Sibling Region Subcommittee:** Stephen gave an update. He said the Committee is making progress with potential Swedish partners and the Subcommittee had a Skype call with Sweden. They continue to reach out to potential partners in other regions, as well.
Other Business/Next Meeting: The Committee decided not to meet in May. The next meeting will be on June 13th at 5:30 PM.

There was a motion to adjourn by Joel, seconded by Stephen and approved by all at 6:54 PM.