Meeting convened at 5:30 PM. Everyone introduced themselves. We unsuccessfully attempted to call Laura Sibilia so she could join us by phone.

Minutes: Minutes of August 8th, 2019 were approved with a correction on a motion by Joel, seconded by Lynn, by a unanimous vote.

Broadband Infrastructure Discussion
Broadband Meeting in Wilmington – Joel and Susan attended this meeting in September. They shared an overview of that meeting, which included a recommendation for towns to enter into Communications Union Districts.

Lynn suggested that WRC do a story about broadband on BCTV, which would also be posted on YouTube. Both Tim and Lynn are interviewers on BCTV. Susan will discuss this with Chris. Lynn also invited the group to the BCTV Producers Party/Awards night on 10/24 at 6:00 PM at 118 Eliot St.

Susan shared an overview of a broadband meeting in Readsboro who is receiving technical assistance from ValleyNet and the Center on Rural Innovation under a USDA grant. Susan said that Brattleboro is also researching and discussing options for broadband.

Today Chris and Susan met with Carole Monroe of ValleyNet and Rebecca Huenink of the Center on Rural Innovation. WRC is developing a BIG (Broadband Innovation Grant) application with the assistance of Carole and Rebecca. If successful, this grant will provide funding for a feasibility study and business planning. WRC’s role will be community engagement, while Carole and Rebecca will provide technical assistance. The first step will be to identify exactly where coverage is needed most, what towns are interested in participating and the role a Communications Union District or multiple districts in the WRC region.
Updates by Topic Areas:

- Brownfields – Susan let the group know that she and Gabby Ciuffreda, Brett Long (VTDEC) and Bill Colvin (BCIC) are presenting about the Putnam Block at next week’s Southern New England Planning Conference and in November at the Northern New England APA conference.

  Susan also provided an update on the Brownfields program:
  - A Phase I ESA will be conducted on a property at 22 Gates Pond Rd. in Jacksonville that is currently a residence and office building.
  - Saxtons River Park and cleanup is complete. Bonnie noted that a Celebration is planned on 10/22 at 4:30 PM
  - New England Youth Theater – Susan just received a complete Part B application and sent it on for BS&L for their review and recommendation for a cleanup loan. The Brownfields Steering committee previously approved a grant loan combination.
  - Red Clover Commons Phase II – Susan expects a Part B application to be submitted this fall.
  - Groundworks – The asbestos cleanup work funded by WRC/EPA is complete! Now they can demolish the existing dilapidated building to make way for a new shelter structure.

- Housing – Susan noted that the new Snow Block building will have an Opening on 10/29 at 4:00 PM. This new structure in downtown Brattleboro will provide lower income and market rate housing opportunities.

  Susan also said that the state’s Housing Bylaw project, which is being undertaken with the Congress for New Urbanism is underway. They asked the RPC’s to complete a housing barriers survey and are hosting a week long charrette in November. Bonnie said she would like to know more about this since Rockingham is currently working on housing.

- Cultural and Historic – Bonnie shared the challenges the Bellow Falls Historical Society (BFHS) is facing with the Grist Mill, which need a lot of work and a new roof now. The BFHS does not have any funding. They are doing a structural analysis in conjunction the Preservation Trust of VT. Tim suggested BFHS reach out to the Windham Foundation. Joel said that Jamaica has a similar situation with a hole in a mill building roof.

  Tim told the group that the Jonathan Hunt House (past lieutenant governor) in Vernon, previously own by Vermont Yankee, will be taken over by a new nonprofit the Friends of Vernon Center. The challenge will be developing plans for future use that generate some income.

- Recreation – Joel said that there is a national mountain bike organization developing trails in Jamaica State Park.

- Infrastructure – Susan said that the VT Community Development Association is hosting a conference called Improving Community Infrastructure on 11/5 in Brandon.

- Economic/Community Development – Susan let the committee know that WRC will be functioning as a Local Development District to provide administrative services for grants from the Northern Borders Regional Commission. Since there were no successful grants in our region
the last time around, we will work on a statewide project, VT Business Roundtable which is focusing on job creation.

Susan attended a meeting about Opportunity Zones which provide investment opportunities in economically depressed communities nationwide. Brattleboro and Bellows Falls worked with BDCC to develop a prospectus to attract new investment.

Susan also attended a meeting this week about the Working Communities Challenge, which she was involved with in Connecticut. The goal of this program, which is being led by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, is to change systems in order to bring people out of poverty. Susan is meeting with a group in Brattleboro to discuss submitting a letter of intent. Bonnie asked Susan to send her information about this effort.

- Human Services – Tim said that Michael Smith has been appointed to lead up the state’s Human Services department.

Tim reminded us that we should add a Community Input section to our agendas in the future and asked if there was any additional input from those present.

**Sibling Region Subcommittee:** Susan said that the committee did not meet last month but continues to explore options and funding sources for a potential partnership with Sweden. The committee is meeting next week, 10/15.

**Next Meeting:** Andrea Ansevin-Allen from USDA is willing to attend a CDC Meeting in November or December to provide an overview of their grant opportunities. November 14th does not work for some Committee member. The group discussed other options and suggested that Susan reach out to Andrea to see if she could do 11/5 at 5:30.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Susan Westa, Senior Planner