Windham Regional Commission
Community Development Committee
DRAFT Meeting Minutes: January 9, 2020
Location: WRC Conference Room

Members Present: Tim Arsenault, Chair; Joel Bluming, Mike Tuller, Roger Turner

Absent: Edie Mas, Stephen Dotson, Robert McBride, Bonnie North, Lynn Barrett, Gretchen Havreluk, Laura Sibilia

Guest: Andrew Graminski, Brattleboro Planner

Presenter: Andrea Ansevin-Allen, Community Programs Specialist, USDA Rural Development

Staff present: Susan Westa

Meeting convened at 5:30 PM. Everyone introduced themselves, including our newest member Mike Tuller who is the Town of Wilmington’s new Zoning Administrator and a new WR Commissioner.

Minutes: Minutes of October 10th, 2019 were approved with a correction on a motion by Joel, seconded by Roger, by a unanimous vote.

USDA Funding Opportunities
Andrea Ansevin-Allen introduced her organization, Rural Development, which is headquartered out of Concord, NH (for VT and NH) and has multiple VT offices including Brattleboro. Rural Development has a variety of grant and loan programs for housing, business and community facilities.

The housing programs provide assistance to purchase housing and for home improvements. They provide loans to seniors who are addressing health and safety needs in their homes. The business program provides loans for expansion. There is also a rural business development grant program, which provides technical assistance. They provide grants to agricultural producers who want to develop value-added products. They have a renewable energy and energy efficiency grant program for farmers and for-profit businesses. There is a broadband grant program, which is very limited and restricted (doesn’t work well in VT) but they have a newer broadband program called Reconnect that they hope will be more useful in VT.

Andrea also presented their community facilities program, which provides grants and loans to municipalities and nonprofits for a wide variety of projects including town halls, fires and police stations, etc. Andrew Graminski asked if public restrooms would be eligible. Andrea said probably the equipment but not maintenance. Andrew explained that Brattleboro would like to replace their porta-
potties with more permanent facilities but funding is an issue. Andrea said that communities must be income eligible and that this program is very competitive. Brattleboro is eligible for a 35% grant. Through this program in Brattleboro, they have funded improvements to the Bradley House (assisted living), Strolling of the Heifers, New England Youth Theater, the Latchis Theater, the Green Street School and many more. Mike asked about funding for technical schools. Andrea said they could help, especially with funding for equipment.

Andrea wrapped up by telling everyone to call if they had any questions. She also asked to be included on the distribution list for our Committee’s minutes.

Updates by Topic Areas:
- **Brownfields** – Susan gave an overview of Brownfields program updates. She said that two project wrapped up: Saxtons River Park and Robertson Paper Mill and both had celebrations of completion. Susan also said she has been working with the New England Youth Theater and Red Clover Commons II to finalize grant/loan applications for continued cleanup work. She noted that there are a number of ongoing assessment projects, including a project in Jacksonville, Long Falls Paperboard and Unified Data. Susan said that the Brownfields Steering Committee has begun development on a new Area-wide Planning program (funded by the new assessment grant), that will look at redevelopment of an area with multiple brownfields issues.

- **Housing** – Mike Tuller gave an update on the Wilmington/Dover Housing Study. He said there is a need for multifamily housing.

- **Cultural and Historic** – Tim said that Entergy donated the historic Governor Hunt House to the Friends of Vernon Center. They are planning to do some renovations this spring and then use the house for events.

- **Infrastructure** – Susan said that she and Chris are going to lead a discussion of Village Water and Wastewater issues at an upcoming SeVEDS meeting.

- **Economic/Community Development** – Susan updated the Committee on the WR’s new Broadband Innovation Grant. She said the project kickoff meeting will be held January 16th @ 6:00 PM at the Newbrook Fire Dept. in Newfane. She stressed the importance of communities helping to get the word out and distribute the survey. The Committee suggested a social media campaign to help get the word out about the survey, including sites like Front Porch Forum and Jamaica’s Facebook page, 05343.

- **Human Services** – Tim mentioned the conflict between the state and the Brattleboro Retreat that was brought out in the papers this past weekend and the need for us to support the Retreat.

**Sibling Region Subcommittee:** Susan said that this committee provided the Executive Board with an update last month. Some committee members are planning a trip to Sweden this spring to make plans for a more formal exchange in the future. The Executive Board will review a WRC introductory letter that the committee will bring with them. They will also provide an update to the full commission at the end of the month.
**Next Meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled for February 13th. Susan asked the group to contact her if they had ideas for discussion topics. Joel suggested that we’ll probably have a lot to talk about with the broadband grant kicking off. Tim said we will also need to start thinking about the Regional Plan update soon.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Susan Westa, Senior Planner