

**Healthy Roots Collaborative Advisory Committee Meeting**

**March 16, 2023 - 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm**

**NRPC Office 75 Fairfield St, St. Albans, VT 05478**

**Call-In Information:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87640341868?pwd=VCtZOHdrMmFySUpDVVkw08yUWdhUT09>

**Meeting ID: 876 4034 1868**

**Passcode: 932011**

**One tap mobile**

**+13092053325,,87640341868# US**

**Attendance:** Cassie Fraser, Emily Alger, Peter Jenkins, Lauren Weston, Jess Graff, Tim Smith, Bethany Remmers, Christine Porcaro

**Goals:**

- Re-connect and engage in-person!
- Set up ideas and organization around future SWOT analysis
- Fruitful discussion around community connections, resources and ideas as it relates to housing article

**CHECK OUT:**

[2022 HEALTHY ROOTS ANNUAL REPORT](#)

Times	Agenda Item	Action
1:00 to 1:45	<b>Article Discussion:</b> <a href="https://vtdigger.org/2023/03/09/housing-challenges-in-northwestern-vermont-run-deep-study-finds/">https://vtdigger.org/2023/03/09/housing-challenges-in-northwestern-vermont-run-deep-study-finds/</a>	-Peter connect Irene (Islands in the Sun) with Alex
<p>Cassie shared that the article was not necessarily new information but was appreciative that there was optimism shared at the end of the article. Jess added that the housing study that they are referring to was not including the last two years of data which is a worsening situation. Jess shared that she was hoping the article can be used to increase public awareness on the topic.</p> <p>Emily added that she knew that there were unmet needs but as someone working in conservation, land use, and planning and as someone who is following village growth in South Hero, this article was still good information for her. She added that it is interesting to see what type of housing is needed and the mismatch between the majority of housing that is being built which is single family housing and that is not necessarily what is needed. Jess added that this is</p>		

good news for land conservation because this information will hopefully prevent sprawl and increase multi-unit housing. The overall theme is that housing needs (downtown/multi-family) match conservation goals (open space).

Peter highlighted the needs of single-person households in the article.

Lauren shared that the article made her think about community wastewater issues. She expressed that it is critical in our region and that there needs to be a plan in place especially in areas with limited septic capacity. The article also made her think about farms and farm families and everyone living on the farm in different houses. Lauren also mentioned the lack of conversation of migrant farmer worker housing. Jess shared that there is funding and support available for farm labor housing. Jess added that perhaps HRC could provide funding access information to farmers as it pertains to farm worker housing. Christine asked Emily about H2A worker housing on the Islands. Emily shared about housing at orchards/farms on the Islands and how that changed over time.

Jess added that farms who are no longer using farm labor housing could use VHIP funding to convert that housing to a rental. Emily asked if there are restrictions attached to that funding if the farmer needed to convert it back to farm labor housing. Jess responded that after 5 years, they would no longer need to offer their rental as homelessness preference, so it would not necessarily be an issue.

Lauren shared some personal frustration around not being able to find housing in Franklin Co. And Jess shared that Franklin Co has some of the oldest housing stock in the state.

Christine asked Jess about individuals and families being housed in motels and what that situation will look like after March 31<sup>st</sup>. Jess shared that funding in the Budget Adjustment act extends the adverse weather conditions that covers housing in motels for April and May. A 2<sup>nd</sup> allocation will cover through June but only for certain populations (illegal eviction and catastrophic loss). Half of the current population will have to leave at the end of May. After June, motel housing will revert to pre-pandemic eligibility which is adverse weather conditions related. Jess added that she has not seen promising conversation of extension after June. This encompassed 80-90 households in Franklin Co. She shared that they are currently doing surveys of the population to assess the need for camping equipment and trying to triage individuals for whom camping is not an option. Jess also clarified that the transition housing program does end on March 31 and that what is being extended is the Adverse Weather Program. She also added that 80% of people exiting do not have a back-up plan.

Peter shared curiosity about food for this community and asked about the motel food distributions continuing. Jess said that Alex, their Food Access Coordinator, is currently transitioning food shelves to PantrySoft and will be providing food boxes instead of the weekly meals currently provided by Everyone Eats. She added that there is currently not a plan for food outreach at encampments.

Peter shared that in a conversation with Irene at Islands in the Sun, she had expressed interest in food boxes. Jess said that Alex is meeting with CIDER and is hoping to increase food access in that area. Jess shared to put Alex in touch with Irene to see what connections can be made.

1:45 to 2:10	<b>Blue Sky Packing Update &amp; SWOT Discussion</b>	-Christine send old Strategic Plan to Advisory Committee
<p>Christine gave an update on the Blue Sky Packing warehouse space. She shared that CVOEO has submitted an application for CHEP funding to support the outfitting of the space. This funding would include the ability to hire a general contractor. There has also been assurance that the funding timeline will have an extension beyond May 30. The Abbey Group also shared that in March they have started to clear out the old building space and will start demoing in the near future. The Abbey Group also confirmed they would re-build the wall that will be torn down in the demo.</p> <p>Emily gave an overview of potential activities HRC Advisory Committee, staff and community partners could do in relation to strategic planning. One of those activities included having a meeting bringing in more people to have a SWOT analysis. Emily shared that it would be great to get feedback from advisory members.</p> <p>Tim mentioned that HRC did this around 5 years ago and added that a lot of good conversation came out of it. FCIDC went through Strategic Planning and created committees on a variety of topics and it was very informative. Emily added that it could be worth breaking up into different groups to have this discussion. Lauren shared that FC NRCD is also starting to go through the strategic planning process. FC NRCD is going to stay internal for a while to start. She thinks a more regional network approach would be good for HRC. Tim added that the strategic planning can be the easy part and that the follow through becomes the real time-consuming aspect. Lauren mentioned that SWOT also might not be the best tool.</p> <p>Jess asked if there is an obligation for having a strategic plan and also wondered if a new strategic plan would be far off from what has already been created. Emily shared that the current HRC programs can be somewhat opportunistic, which has its positives but that can also draw an organization in a bunch of different directions.</p> <p>Jess suggested that a group review of the current strategic plan would be a good first step. Tim agreed with that as an action item.</p> <p>Lauren asked who would be a part of these discussions. Emily mentioned that perhaps there can be a preliminary list created and then it would be good to get feedback from the Advisory Committee on who is missing and should be at the table.</p>		
2:10 to 2:45	<b>Partner Organization Presentation and Discussion</b>	
<p>Meeting start (1:11pm)</p> <p>Tim gave background on the history of FCIDC. FCIDC has been around for 52 years. The organization was created because unemployment was in the double digits which was partly due</p>		

to the interstate which reduced the value of the railroad which had employed as many as 1200. Tim added that this was also around the time there was a transition to more automation in agriculture. FCIDC was created in 1972 to bring infrastructure to the region. He shared that the focus has been on recruiting manufacturing. Tim added that there is still a net loss of individuals leaving Franklin Co. for work but with the need for employees these days, FCIDC sees this as an opportunity to share what opportunities do exist in Franklin Co. Through the strategic planning process, they heard that people do not want FCIDC to do more outreach for businesses to come in the region because existing businesses are already struggling to hire. He shared that they took that to heart. He said that FCIDC will not stop recruiting but they will be intentional in their outreach. Tim shared an example of this intentional outreach for high tech businesses. Tim added that they also received feedback which shared that FCIDC can plan a role in promoting the region (“Catalyst for community economic development”). Tim shared about the building FCIDC purchased in Enosburg in order to bring vitality to the area. There will be around 12 apartments and 2 retail spots. That project is looking to wrap up this year.

Tim mentioned the Agricultural Lunch and Learn taking place on March 21<sup>st</sup> in Swanton.

Lauren asked about funding that supports FCIDC. Tim shared that it comes from multiple sources: State funding, funding from the municipalities (per capita allotment), properties that they own (not traditional leases), grant work, and other grants during COVID. He added that they also have a small loan portfolio. Tim mentioned that the State of VT has 4 funds: Recreation, Arts, Historic & Economic Development. FCIDC applies for that funding and can reimburse for local projects. Bethany added that FCIDC has a small staff but they are a great community partner.

2:45 to 3:00

**Org Updates & Announcements**

Tim and Cassie shared support for the in-person and hybrid option for the Advisory Committee Meeting.

**Jess/NorthWest Family Foods:** Jess shared that Crisis Fuel is still running and also tax support is happening right now.

**Lauren/FC NRCD-**Lauren shared that FC NRCD is holding a Rain garden and stormwater talk next week on Thursday at City Hall. She mentioned that Franklin Co. Field Days need to move. They don’t own the property and aviation rules state that they have to have some percentage of their business aviation related. She added that there is a push to make the new location a year-round destination.

**Bethany/NRPC:** Bethany reminded the committee that NRPC is heading into FY’24 (so currently in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter for FY’23)

**Peter/HRC Staff:** Peter shared that he’ll be doing food shelf visits/meetings/check-ins which he has not done since starting the position.

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