

# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

## NEWPORT/ORLEANS COUNTY

### Community Forum Day Notes March 27, 2008

The following notes were collected from focus group meetings and forums throughout the day spent in Orleans County. These notes are in raw form – reflecting much of the inflections, quotations and feelings of the attendees at these meetings. Below is a list of the meetings that occurred on March 27th. For anyone in Orleans County who did not get a chance to come out to forums on the 27th, **CFV encourages you to contribute online at [www.futureofvermont.org](http://www.futureofvermont.org) and share your thoughts on our future.**

- NEK Info, Strategic Communications in Glover
- Lake Region Union High School student panel in Orleans
- Newport City Renaissance Corporation and guests in Newport
- Community College of Vermont, students and faculty in Newport
- Jay Peak Ski Resort staff in Jay
- Gilman Housing Trust in Newport
- Northwoods Stewardship Center in East Charleston
- Evening forum, open to the public at North Country Union High School

**Local hosts and sponsors include:**

North Country Union High School  
Newport City Renaissance Corporation  
CCV  
Lake Region Union High School  
Gilman Housing Trust  
Northwoods Stewardship Center  
Jay Peak Resort and Jay Peak Area Association  
NEK Info  
Northern VT Resource Conservation and Development  
Northern Vermont Development Association  
Orleans Northern Essex Community Partnership

**Facilitators:** Paul Costello, Sarah Waring, Steve Gold

**Scribes:** Paul Costello, Laurie Zilbauer, Steve Gold

**Listening Team members:** BethAnn Finlay, Judy Gordon, Travis VanAlstyne, Christopher Kaufmann Ilstrup

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**NEK Info**  
**March 27<sup>th</sup>, Glover**

Scribe: Laurie Zilbauer

**I. What does Vermont mean to you? What common values do Vermonters share?**

- Vermont is a liberal place that tries new things and the rest of the country looks to what Vermont tries.
- Vermont has a nice position nationally, gay marriage, etc. Vermont is the guinea pig.
- Bartering is a key part of Vermont. When there is low cash flow, bartering becomes much more significant.

**II. Looking ahead through our lifetimes, and those of our children, what challenges and opportunities do you see for Vermont?**

- Vermont needs direct flights from Europe to Burlington.
- The Northeast Kingdom (NEK) needs public transportation. Busses or Trains.
- The Canadian border crossing (I-91) in Derby is a challenge. De valued dollar encourages Canadian trading, but the border crossing restricts this. Discouraging trade.
- Educational system is reaching failure, falling far short of what is needed. Our kids can't compete in the global economy.
- School is not vigorous enough, parents aren't involved, and everything relies on the teachers.
- Our educated children are not competitive. We hear, "Let my kids be kids, don't push them that hard," but in order for them to compete with kids from California, Japan, Germany, and India we'll need to improve. Especially the literacy rates and information technology education.
- Drugs take over high schools, there are hard drugs now (heroin and meth) and everyone has tried them.
- We haven't addressed drug use effectively; we are behind the rest of Europe. Europe provides honest information about drugs and treats the abuse of it rather than criminalization. Other areas deal with drug use better, and we should look to the systems that are making progress rather than, "Just Say No!"
- We are not giving our kids the proper skills; kids instead have a sense of entitlement. Our children need to stop taking everything for granted.
- Health Care is connected to the high costs of everything. Vermont should provide statewide health care for everyone – it will be cheaper with everyone together, rather than apart.
- Vermonters need to be healthier. There are a generation of kids who are overweight and not doing enough to stay well mentally & physically. Entertainment culture that kids are wrapped up in should be balanced with wellness activities.
- Healthcare needs to focus on wellness.

- There should be a bigger effort on having a healthier society, shouldn't have to pay to fix people (surgery & drugs).
- We are the first generation of Americans to have a shorter life expectancy than our parents. What does that tell us about trends and youth?
- Need a well rounded workforce, not just the trades.
- New Employers don't come to Vermont; they don't think the qualified workforce is here. We should start with creating a competent workforce. Statewide there's a group of kids that were left behind, no new raw labor jobs or low-skilled jobs available to them.
- Academia is theoretical and is failing to provide a competent workforce. There is a lack of a practical education in colleges.
- To keep skilled workers in Vermont you need to pay enough.
- Some people are reevaluating where their job is – because of telecommuting some people can work from anywhere, but they need the infrastructure to support it.
- Job Creation
- Affordable Housing
- The prison system is failing – it's a continuation of our public school day care. Cheaper to send people to college than to prison.
- Everyone is so involved in working; people are too busy to volunteer.
- A good daycare system for working Americans.
- Fuel prices are so high - how do you keep money for fuel resources in Vermont?
- Wood milling operations in Canada are subsidized, Vermont should subsidize these processing operations as well.
- America: It's hard to balance supporting the American 'empire' with country/local needs.
- Vermonters have a huge audience in Europe; we are recognizable to Europeans (rural landscape, compact villages). Pedestrian places draw Europeans.
- Europeans see Vermont as the Other America – not the typical Americans. The tourist interest from Europe should be expanded upon, U.S. half off to Europeans.
- Vermont should emphasize its rural nature - no traffic, not a lot of people.
- Vermont is poised for tourism rather than manufacturing.
- Vermont is, "No longer locked out [as we used to be]." Open for business and new populations.
- I-91 & I-93 interchange areas are important endpoints for travelers coming up from other parts of New England. New developments and population areas will focus on interstate endpoints.
- The Notch (NH) acts as a barrier to the urban development in Southern New Hampshire and helps keep areas in Northern Vermont rural and relaxing.
- Route 5 could be a scenic route.
- Fix roads to provide for bicycle touring.
- Geotourism is an opportunity, but people have difficulty getting here [NEK].
- Vermont should buy a train to and use it to bring people to the state [from New York City].
- Trains should be looked at again to address rising transportation costs, look at Europe's transportation model.

- Innovation opportunities from high transportation costs, “Necessity is the mother of invention.”
- New energy resources, new energy conservation technologies.
- Providing school choice would have a good effect on the real estate market.
- Vermont hasn’t completely lost the community interaction, but we need to continue local events and get the most out of them. Vermont population size is positive but and its still difficult to coordinate anything.
- Second home market drives a portion of the economy.
- Vermont is protected from becoming overtaken by second homes because of the harsh weather.
- Trade and local credit is a good thing. It helps people make it through the winter.
- Vermont should develop new Hydro facilities.
- Small scale wind power fits Vermont better than commercial scale wind.
- Alternative energy can be a big boom for our economy.

### **III. What should our priorities be as we work together to realize your vision and prepare Vermont for the future?**

- Vermont should be branding itself towards a European interest, “not typical America,” and “economical.”
- Why do we keep trying to export goods? Vermont’s small businesses model should balance the economy, combine tourism, local economy, & rural Vermont image.
- Economy should be about building opportunities; if it is expensive to travel or the cost of individual transportation increases, this can creates incentives to find alternatives (car pooling, busses, trains, etc.)
- Vermont should adapt to change, must find opportunities in these changes.
- The world that the kids are heading into is a very different world [from previous generations] and we need to teach the kids based on an unknown future. We need to provide an education with global viewpoints instead of an American-centric view point.
- Vermont should focus on attracting a qualified workforce that is willing to live here.
- Vermont has to retain its rural character – once you lose it you can’t get it back. Nostalgic New England only remains in Vermont.
- High speed internet, jobs are dependant on it.
- Jobs are about supply and demand, create savvy with people as the workforce commodity.
- Infrastructure is a must as it supports new jobs and opportunities for new business.
- Community involvement has limits to attracting new local people. The local leaders are aging. There needs to be a changing of the guard. In some places the older generations are ready to hand over the baton. There is a realization that their generation is done and the next generation needs to be involved. Next generations needs to be embraced to maintain community involvement. This is symbolic of change and following through with reinvention.
- We need active, creative, and innovative minds; need to develop active engaged brains.
- Change public involvement in state affairs; allow the public to identify their priorities through revised income tax forms that prioritize where you want your money to go. This

model provides accountability to the top and gathers democratic input on a yearly level rather than just an election year.

- Keep our capital local – pay attention to where you spend your money.
- Wherever it makes sense to do things locally we should – doing business face to face is important.
- Any solutions should be based on bioregions – a local focus to keep transportation costs down.
- We should balance purchasing locally and outside.
- We'll need to adapt to eating locally as food costs change.
- Every plan to enact change at the local level needs to start at the bottom. More local control and volunteerism.
- Human waste and agricultural waste should be treated together.

**IV. We've been talking about Vermont, but how does this discussion concern the future of your community?**

- Changes are happening in the culture, in town government, and civic engagement. Locally we have to be willing to give up some things and be okay with this. Things will always change – what are you doing to adapt?
- Local education needs to revamp the school board.

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Lake Region Union High School Student Panel**  
**March 27<sup>th</sup>, Orleans**

Scribe: Laurie Zilbauer

**I. What does Vermont mean to you? What common values do Vermonters share?**

- Wilderness, people have a chance to get away from the city life.
- Vermont is peaceful and calm, not much going on.
- Kind of the “same old thing” going on.
- Vermonters don’t like change, Vermont should get more civilized.
- I like not having a lot of people around.
- Small towns have a sense of community, everybody is connected.
- More people are moving here, there will be a loss of forest land and hunting areas.
- Vermont’s winters are one of a kind - skiing, outdoor recreation, snowshoeing, etc.
- Vermont is associated with the changing seasons in general, five seasons.
- Vermont’s weather is tough. No typical spring.
- Vermont has a natural beauty.

**II. Looking ahead through our lifetimes, and those of our children, what challenges and opportunities do you see for Vermont?**

**CHALLENGES**

- People think that more stores will ruin the mom & pop stores, but we should have more options for retail and jobs.
- Challenge more population can be more of a burden, can get too crowded, traffic congestion.
- Cell towers & Wireless Internet are a challenge because we don’t have them!
- Trees are scarce, “ I like Vermont’s beauty but natural environment is threatened.”
- Beauty and Natural environment runs economy, has both good and bad consequences.
- More retail, might bring more jobs, but might bring more people.
- It’s expensive to live here because the main goods are so far away (Burlington).
- Only options for entertainment/activities are bowling and movies, we should have more activities, dance clubs, something else to do. Like IROC, it has good activities, but it’s too expensive it can barely support itself.
- Not enough parks, there should be parks with things to do for all age groups.
- Vermont loses it opportunities, a lot of Vermont products are sent out of state to bring in goods it doesn’t have. Keep some of the money local.
- Vermont needs good paying jobs, more job opportunities, good money exists in larger cities.
- Vermonters want better access to high tech jobs, but the companies don’t exist.
- Vermont has a lot of jobs to just get someone by. Not many high paying career jobs.

- Vermont has a lot of manual labor jobs.
- We'll have to move to get a good job, "follow the money."
- I'd like to stay in the NEK after college, but I don't think the job outlook in the NEK is that great.
- Vermont has more colleges per capita than any other state, but not many of the graduates can stay here.

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

- Vermont has an opportunity to attract more people, become more civilized, developed with more stores, and more local goods.
- Vermont has an opportunity to expand economy, balance industry and rural atmosphere (tourism).
- I like hub system, larger regional centers with smaller villages and very rural areas outside the regional centers. We should build on our existing regional centers.
- Vermont is very safe, benefits of not being populated.
- Burlington is a great small city and still close to the rural areas.
- Renewable resources are a big industry and rural areas can utilize local resources.
- Opportunities include Wind turbines, farms and agricultural production.
- Vermont can be a national and international pioneer for models to address global warming.
- Address global warming issues.
- Vermonters feel secure, so you want to raise your family here. Have your kids feel secure.
- Vermont should use what we have to attract people and jobs, positives like safety, environment.
- It would be beneficial to have more people.

### **III. What should our priorities be as we work together to realize your vision and prepare Vermont for the future?**

#### **LAKE REGION PRIORITIES**

- School is a community on to itself; size creates a good education (student teacher ratio). You can talk to the teachers, know your teachers. Principal knows every student's name. Keep schools small.
- There should be JROTC, introduces military life, basic training and develops leaders.
- Schools should provide for more language education options.
- High Schools should require four years of Physical Education.
- Sports should be emphasized, or allow PhysEd credits for team sports.
- Improve scheduling: Not enough time to complete some classes and there are scheduling conflicts, student have to choose one class over another.
- Schools should have Community Service requirements; it benefits the community, teaches volunteering, and provides for leadership.

- There needs to be more opportunities to see different job opportunities (especially for women in traditionally male jobs).
- Indoor track, fix track.

### **VERMONT PRIORITIES**

- Save the Woodlands.
- Vermont is a homey state, you know everyone, know your community. Maintain this atmosphere.
- Vermont should have more small airports, and community based businesses.
- Vermont should have an amusement park.
- Support year-round tourism. Tourism supports so many other industries and it's based on our natural environment.
- School expansion; school should provide facilities for the whole community. Local sporting events bring the whole community together.

#### **IV. We've been talking about Vermont, but how does this discussion concern the future of your community?**

- West Charleston needs to take care of their roads and have fair road services.
- Orleans will die if Ethan Allen leaves. It's a one industry town.
- The opportunities for Orleans employment should be small chain stores. Businesses come in and die to quickly, its hard to serve a small population.
- Barton has no economic industry and limited high paying jobs (only teachers and pharmacists). Barton challenges – tax base.
- W. Glover has high retail costs because of location and small scale.
- Coventry only has a diner and 1 store. Coventry's challenge is having local goods, high-speed internet.
- Irasburg has only 1 store, challenge is its size, not a lot going on.
- Barton's challenge is local residents' income capacity & there is nothing to do.
- Irasburg could attract a little more businesses; it has a local school, more ATV trails.

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Newport City Renaissance Corporation and guests**  
**March 27<sup>th</sup>, Newport**

Scribe: Laurie Zilbauer

**I. What does Vermont mean to you? What common values do Vermonters share?**

- Vermonters are independents; don't like to be told what to do, both from inside Vermont and from outsiders.
- Vermonters have resistance to state initiatives.
- Vermonters are Resourceful.
- Lack of billboards and lack of intrusions from ugly development. Blessing. Opportunity and great draw.
- Significant amount of people that are very hard working. Working at least two jobs is common.
- Vermont has pride. It's a pride of hardworking characteristics, mostly from the older generations.
- Vermont has a reputation of being humane and taking care of its needy.
- Some young Vermonters work to support family and provide transportation. Trading education to support the family is accepted here.

**II. Looking ahead through our lifetimes, and those of our children, what challenges and opportunities do you see for Vermont?**

**CHALLENGES**

- Younger generation isn't very resourceful, need hand holding. Have a real immaturity. School system's push for self esteem has created a generation of neediness.
- All young Vermonters have different education needs, some only need three years of high school and go straight to college and some just need five years of high school.
- Young Vermonters need to build a passion for a career; currently they feel their options are farming, construction or logging.
- So many Vermonters have two jobs to get by, most are overworked.
- Economic conditions are worrisome. Squeezed populations.
- The youth don't have Vermont's hardworking pride and they rely on the state agencies for help.
- Young generation has a sense of being taken care of, a sense of entitlement.
- The state social systems are known and ingrained, younger generations know what they are entitled to from the state system. Creates a cycle of poverty.
- Education system doesn't teach financial literacy. There is a lack of financial literacy, especially budgeting and planning to meet your life goals.

- Vermont needs to break the cycle of generations in poverty, especially the lower third.
- You can live as well on welfare as if you were out working.
- State benefits are a disincentive to advance yourself. Students say there aren't jobs here, so why bother?
- Lack of population is there enough people?
- How to generate enough traffic for businesses and find the right creative people in the area?
- Local artisans want to have the business but they don't want to do the work.
- Need more tourists to support area businesses.
- We want new development (Wal-Mart) to look like it belongs here. Vermont isn't looking towards long-term sustainable development.
- NEK has agricultural "stink" and it affects the second home market and tourism.
- Vermont and its businesses don't have the capital to change or adapt quickly with new helpful technologies.
- It's a challenge to attract effective teachers – issues are affordable housing and pay scale.
- Railroad traffic may be good and bad. May bring new populations and might be too many people.

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

- Our cultural heritage is unique, especially the French Canadian heritage. We should take advantage of our connection to the Quebecois.
- Capitalize on tourism, jobs –higher paying.
- Opportunity for the area to become more bilingual and provide specialty tourism areas. Geotourism is a bonus asset. The geography, seasons, lakes, outdoor adventures, plus bilingual area could be a European draw with a low U.S. dollar.
- Tourist Mecca's have diversity and Vermont can provide all of this diversity.
- Build off of tourism to support other areas of the economy and build off that with new innovative technologies.
- Extend the airport attract the corporate jets to come in, support the CEOs of businesses that want those services, i.e. Fed Ex and shipping elements.
- Population is small; have to make sure there is a market for a small business. Depends on the market. An aging population has certain needs which may create different/new kinds of businesses.
- Vermont being "Green and Clean" is important to preserve what brings people here.
- Opportunity to renew the railroads and rail travel, truck traffic on the roads are hurting the State Routes.

**III. What should our priorities be as we work together to realize your vision and prepare Vermont for the future?**

- Vermonters need to leverage independent ideas and initiatives and join others to address larger issues.
- Need to move towards exploring careers and passions. Preparing students prior to leaving school for their career or continuing education, have it thought out by junior or senior year.
- Many local businesses don't make it; there needs to be major education on running a business.
- Jobs and Housing
- More consistent regionalism – address issues regionally, efforts are coordinated among towns and it's cost effective. "Vermont is at a point where we have to work together up here."
- Provide financial incentives to businesses on Main Street. Main street should be attractive physically and attractive life-style and amenity wise
- Coming from an assets based approach. What are our assets? Work off of them. Focus on that.
- Challenges are getting everyone around the same table, working with other key locals even though historically they might not have gotten along.

**IV. We've been talking about Vermont, but how does this discussion concern the future of your community?**

- We need to think of how we can make Newport more attractive? People stay in Burlington.
- Newport City needs higher end restaurants, more good restaurants.
- Need to work together to get things going.
- Local events don't reflect the locals – they are all attended by tourists.
- Expand the Airport.
- Infrastructure – VT Route 111 paved two years ago and its already destroyed.
- This is an opportunity to promote Newport City as a different place even from the rest of Vermont.

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Community College of Vermont students and faculty/staff**  
**March 27<sup>th</sup>, Newport**

Scribe: Laurie Zilbauer

**I. What does Vermont mean to you? What common values do Vermonters share?**

- Northeast Kingdomers feel they are a bit different than the rest of Vermonters.
- Everyone knows everybody.
- Enjoy the Rural nature.
- Have to drive an hour to go shopping (spend less money that way).
- Don't like civilization, Burlington, NEK is different than the rest of the state.
- Vermonters care about environment.
- The state offers great educational opportunities and job options.
- Vermont's outdoor activities attract people.
- Vermonters have access to nature.
- Vermont is safer for kids and families.
- You'd have to go away to notice how Vermont hasn't changed compared to the rest of the country, how it cares about the environment, and how there is no sprawl.
- No Billboards
- The seasons offer continued beauty.

**II. Looking ahead through our lifetimes, and those of our children, what challenges and opportunities do you see for Vermont?**

**CHALLENGES**

- Higher education is really expensive here.
- Lack of jobs.
- Drug and Alcohol abuse is extreme – nothing to do. Kids are bored and have nothing to do.
- High schools don't discuss drugs or sex enough.
- Real life education doesn't exist – leadership isn't taught.
- Vermont employers don't try to recruit or offer incentives to stay in the state.
- There are a lot of people living off the system. People will have more kids to stay on the system longer than to get off and start jobs.
- There are not a lot of values taught about working and keeping jobs.
- Crime and drugs all of a sudden caught up with the NEK Region. There are much harder drugs here now.
- How can we balance being proactive about issues and also support privacy?
- IROC is a great community facility but the costs don't fit the community's economic level.
- Vermont drives too many businesses out. Needs to find a way to allow for more businesses and opportunities for job creation and affordable housing.

- Not enough minimum wage jobs.
- Bringing cultural opportunities to the state.
- Vermont is repellent to diverse populations.
- Vermont doesn't market itself as well.
- Is there a next generation of leaders? There are, but there's nothing here to keep them here. I don't see them staying in Vermont. No proactive recruiting of young professionals.

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

- Wal-Mart is an opportunity for low cost goods.
- Vermont's forests and farms provide wood products, organics and specialty foods.
- There are opportunities to diversify the state and connect with other cultures like French Canada.
- Vermont should have more arts programs; it supports jobs, diversity, and culture (music and dance programs).
- There are opportunities for resorts.
- We should promote regional development, like the convention center, hotel, and retail complex proposed for Newport City. It will support regional areas, like Jay Peak, Newport City downtown, and other rural towns.
- Vermont needs venture capitalists that give back to the community and incorporates the community vision into major regional projects.
- The other side to the "more development" issue is the lack of public infrastructure. Vermont needs to keep track of those impacts.

### **III. What should our priorities be as we work together to realize your vision and prepare Vermont for the future?**

- Younger generations need to be taken care of first. Education of the younger generations & need to focus on Dare programs. If we don't take care of the younger generations, there will be nobody here to provide for us.
- Need transportation system improvements. Better roads.
- Need major infrastructure improvements. The roads all of a sudden went. Hard on our cars.
- Vermont's "no change" atmosphere hurts the state. Vermont's ability to not welcome changes has become detrimental and created stagnation.
- We should blend the old with the new, balance change with preservation.
- Older Vermonters and previous generations resist change, new population, and new ideas. We need to change this sentiment.
- Tax burden is great considering what we have here.
- New generations run the family business because they don't know anything else. People continue to run rural businesses just because they need it to survive.
- The cost of higher education wasn't an issue in the past, because of local jobs or the family business. Now a higher education is needed if you want a career or even just a good job.
- Vermont ignores and stifles their working poor.

- Vermont's a great place to come back to, but I can't start my career here.
- Jobs - Vermont's an old boys club, its all who you know.
- Technological infrastructure is needed and is a requirement to attract businesses. Cell phones, high-speed internet.
- We need affordable activities – like IROC for the kids.
- Local towns have issues with business development. You need a permit to build a dog house in Lyndonville. Coventry's pursuit of zoning is seen as a deterrent to businesses.

**IV. We've been talking about Vermont, but how does this discussion concern the future of your community?**

*The topic area was covered in the above conversations.*

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Jay Peak Ski Resort Staff**  
**March 27<sup>th</sup>, Jay**

Scribe: Steve Gold

**I. What does Vermont mean to you? What common values do Vermonters share?**

- Vermont means authenticity: small communities, agriculture, tourism/recreation
- Vermont values agriculture and farming
- Vermont means a four part economy: agriculture, education, recreation/tourism, manufacturing
- Vermonters value the beauty of the land and water
- Vermont means a value in the team approach
- "Vermont is what the USA used to be ; the NEK is what Vermont used to be"
- Vermont means rustic/bucolic/tranquility
- Vermonters value knowing your neighbors
- Vermont means safety - you don't have to lock your doors or car
- Vermonters take pride in living where there is privacy but also where the community will help the individual or family that is in trouble
- Vermont shares values of the social liberal which is reflected in our laws and concern for neighbors and in our healthcare and progressive taxes
- Vermonters value fiscal conservatism: self-sufficiency and planning for the future
- Vermonters are protective of the community - e.g. tourists: come, spend your money, go home (don't stay)
- Vermonters share values of honesty, integrity, vulnerability
- Vermont means "unmanufactured"
- Vermonters value village life
- Vermonters value and love the outdoors, participation in the landscape, embracing the seasons, the dramatic seasonal changes

**II. Looking ahead through our lifetimes, and those of our children, what challenges and opportunities do you see for Vermont?**

- C - Vermonters resistance to contemporary technology
- C - Preservation of land and waters and at the same time improving economic well-being of all Vermonters through energy generation, infrastructure improvement, IT infrastructure development
- C - Preservation of the combination of our lifestyle and culture and maintaining our landscape with its open land and clear waters
- O - Retaining our sense of the whole state as a community through making the

"Information Highway" available to everyone which will lead to improved economic life without changing our geographic life

- C - Pressures of being surrounded by 60 Million people to keep the state as a community
- C/O - the Vermont brand
- C - Job creation: problematic border issues e.g. Canadian business interaction, local travel; information technology
- C - Electrical power supply: elimination of VT Yankee and Hydro Quebec
- C - Rebuilding and developing the transportation infrastructure
- O - North country business opportunities: economic energy between Quebec and VT
- C - Lowering property taxes
- C - Better marketing that understands the customer for VT small businesses: IT addicted outsiders need to be directed as to alternatives
- Higher education grads leaving the state

**III. What should our priorities be as we work together to realize your vision and prepare Vermont for the future?**

- "Information highway" development "to every acre" of VT
- Build a sound economy by having an education system that trains every Vermont youth. Change the funding mechanism for and access to career centers and require all Vt students to participate
- IT development to have the jobs that will keep college grads here
- Preservation and promotion of the VT brand
- Making post secondary education affordable for in-state youth
- Recognize that the youth will leave the state but develop an economy that provides them with the ability to return
- Nurture clean source of electricity (specifically nuclear, hydro as in Yankee and Hydro Quebec) because we need affordable energy on a large scale in addition to small sources (wind, solar, small hydro)
- High tech. jobs, because they are concealed from view and thus enable preservation of the land and water

**IV. We've been talking about Vermont, but how does this discussion concern the future of your community?**

**This question was not answered.**

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Northwoods Stewardship Center**  
**March 27<sup>th</sup>, East Charleston**

Scribe: Steve Gold

**I. What does Vermont mean to you? What common values do Vermonters share?**

- Love of the artistic and the arts, especially those that are Vermont oriented, e.g. nature, wood work
- Value the bucolic - open hillsides, pastures, farms, forests
- Value small communities
- Value small schools
- Value democratic town meetings
- Value involved communities
- Share a common love of green, clean and clear - lots of water, trees, meadows
- Value conservation - Northern New England is similar in this regard, but VT lets people come in and experience it - accessibility to what has been conserved
- Value independence
- We like what we have and are not interested in major development
- Our independence promotes our understanding of the need for diversity in sources of energy and power; we have a window of opportunity given climate change
- Value our connection to nature; we understand society's "nature deficit disorder" and its consequences, through our involvement with agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation, gardening, nature appreciation
- There is a dissonance in our approach to nature: Disney nature park vs making a living from the forest and land; i.e. natural resource economy divergence
- Value building connections- finding common ground on specifics and important issues
- Value encouraging small family farms rather than agribusiness
- Value ecotourism
- Value practicality and innovation; comes from being involved with the land and includes the element of sustainability

**II. Looking ahead through our lifetimes, and those of our children, what challenges and opportunities do you see for Vermont?**

- C - Wanting to keep things "the way they have always been"; anti-regulation and pro-freedom e.g. personal property rights
- O - Need to establish local economy orientation and practice - we won't be able to drive to Costco
- C - Transportation infrastructure needs
- C - Energy sources
- C - Lack of time: we are all too busy, especially parents with children and both

having to work to support the family

- O - Availability of telecommuting and using IT for meetings, etc., rather than having to travel in person
- C/O - Globalization downsides: energy consumption; problems with food and other product quality vs local economy re: energy, food, quality of life promoted through technology
- O - VT can be a model of "human scale" - demonstrate that there are alternatives to big corporation and big gov't dominated lifestyle
- C - Keeping open land in the face of population growth - people do want to come here
- C - Water management - water will become like oil and we're using it up - issues are sources and quality
- O - Hemp farming
- O - Increases in energy costs will promote local economy opportunities, especially if we develop regional resources like regional food processing centers and mobile slaughter houses
- O - Organic farming will help support water quality and local economic success
- C/O - Manure leaching and pollution vs methane generation and electricity generation. Small farms need regional manure processing facilities
- C - Providing a living wage of \$14.80 an hour for all employment, especially service industry jobs in recreation industry
- C - Increasing land values are driving Vermonters off the land and young people cannot afford to own land
- O - Establishing commonly owned land with shares purchased in it
- C - Housing development - 2nd homes vs primary homes; 2nd home owners do not contribute to the community process except paying taxes, but those homes do raise land values; eco-tourism fuels this negative process
- C - Healthcare needs and lack of insurance for many
- C - Schools: small local schools, which research shows work best, are disappearing; we're going in the wrong direction
- C/O - Health of the population and the forests; forests can't be taken for granted; biomass initiative may lead to the exploitation of the forest for short term gain; our forests could be a lot healthier
- C - The increasing economic division - wealthy vs the rest; working people vs non-working people e.g. retirees, wealthy, second home owners
- O - Avoiding corporate ownership of VT will enable us to survive upcoming huge changes in energy and economy
- C - The major world economic changes will impact the US and VT
- C/O - Fear of "socialism" vs European model e.g. Swiss - public subsidies and high taxes
- C - Need for public transportation in rural areas
- O - Hemp farming vs corn for fuel and many other uses

**III. What should our priorities be as we work together to realize your vision and prepare Vermont for the future?**

- Population management; transportation development can assist in directing where population grows
- Incentivize diversity and self-sufficiency businesses, local energy production
- Education of our children on where energy comes from and what is needed to preserve the lifestyles they've grown up with, in particular making IT available
- Focus on pragmatic ways to address issues; e.g. benefits laws re employment (ie health insurance, lowering workers comp. Etc.)
- Conservation, esp. regarding energy use
- The legislature needs to develop a common vision for the future of VT: sustainability, local economy, living wage, healthcare - "A Declaration of a New VT"
- Sustainability in ecology, energy, agriculture, etc. ; focus on the local, small business - anti-global = pro-local
- Access to capital for economic development of small business using natural resources sustainably
- Free healthcare with a focus on prevention
- Support for the Arts
- Communication- forums like this - need quality facilitation to find common vision and shared goals
- Outdoor recreation - support for access for health, fitness contact with nature

**IV. We've been talking about Vermont, but how does this discussion concern the future of your community?**

- Encourage methane generation for farmers
- Reach out so everyone has a "seat at the table"
- Charleton needs to develop a town plan
- Develop alternative and new markets for wood products
- Support/Address diversity of voices - "everyone speaks"
- Local newsletter

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Gilman Housing Trust**  
**March 27<sup>th</sup>, Newport**

Scribe: Paul Costello

**I. What does Vermont mean to you? What common values do Vermonters share?**

- Hardworking; we have a ‘common denominator of being raised on farms here’.
- We don’t like being told what to do.
- We’re committed to families and strong work ethic. But Vermonters are also frustrated that they may not be able to sustain themselves financially here.
- Vermonters are independent.
- Vermont used to mean a safe environment – it WAS safe; but now you can’t do things you used to be able to. “I don’t know that I would walk Main Street alone at 9pm at night”.
- VT used to be a good place to raise a family.
- Independence. Living in a small village, hard to convince people about new ideas. Some people don’t want ‘change’. Old New England Yankee sense can sometimes be a roadblock.
- VT has an abundance of natural green space. The ability to raise kids in reasonably crime free and safe environment exists here. Kids can play outside if they want.
- VT has a sense of history – “coming from the West Coast there wasn’t much history there. It can be a shared asset or a liability.”
- “Historical aspect sets the pace for development, activities in a town.”
- A bit of divide around Vermont identity – there’s a contrast between preservation of downtowns and history versus the big box stores and commercial development.”
- “We have highest unemployment in the state here”
- The value of dialogue is important in VT – it’s open and we get both sides of the issue.
- There’s a feeling here of being “a bit separate from the United States.” You are stepping into a different place with a different mindset. There is a tendency not to look at what impacts come from the rest of the world nor at the need to change to adapt to these impacts. We’re internal looking.

**II. Looking ahead through our lifetimes, and those of our children, what challenges and opportunities do you see for Vermont?**

- “We need to be asking: What’s your sustainability model? Because in 25 years there won’t be anyone here anymore. There’s a loss of population in Vermont.”
- From a business perspective in terms of our organization – where will Gilman Housing Trust be – there’s a need to do more senior housing in the future.
- Big box stores of a certain size could produce 500 jobs – low income jobs – but there’s no housing for these people.

- There's an idea of shifting from mobile homes to modular. Can Gilman become a developer of an affordable model like mobile home? We need to rethink mobile homes because they depreciate so fast and undermine family equity.
- Housing stock in Vermont is in such a dismal state. It's very hard therefore to attract families or those the state would like to attract to move here.
- There's a dramatic rise in energy costs – that “historic” housing stock is going to become a huge liability because these big old drafty houses are not efficient for the future. Energy bills will exceed mortgages. Houses weren't built with this assumption years ago.
- Wages, incomes and jobs can't keep pace with these costs. The growth in employment is on the low wage end.
- We have to compete with other states when we're attracting people to come here, and there is a lack of safety coming here – drugs, fear, tenants here lock their doors.
- Also there's the travel issue: “I drive to Burlington to shop!”
- Shortage of housing or shelter for folks in transition; “We see a mom and her kids living in their car.” Transportation is also a challenge.
- The costs of construction are higher than other states because of the climate. This is more of a challenge regionally – “unlike Burlington, the market here in the northeast kingdom doesn't provide people who can afford this construction.”
- We need good paying jobs. There's a loss of jobs overseas. This whole area has an economic divide that's getting wider and wider. There's also a brain drain happening here: “My daughter wants to leave. The braindrain is going in the wrong direction.”

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

- There's an unmet opportunity in being close to Canada. There's business, tourism and employment to be had by leveraging this asset.
- Seattle turned itself around with SmartGrowth and the states of Washington and Oregon has successes. Investments are an opportunity that they took advantage of, and made the right choices to be at the forefront of green revolution, green building and energy development.
- IRELAND – this is an example of a country, small scale, that also used to have brain drain. The government made tough decisions and made fundamental changes to turn this around.
- Vermont needs cooperation and investments and tough decisions to turn around our trends.
- We need to chose a direction and stick to it and stay the course.
- “I don't see many opportunities. The only things you can do... a state or federal job will pay enough to cover a \$400-500/month but you can't live on what you get working at a fast food place. People can't get enough food when they are on food stamps. There's a lack of transportation.”
- Tourism – Jay Peak and Burke – these will provide more opportunities. They are growing more like Stowe now with year round economic ideas coming along.
- The downtown renaissance group has done a lot. They've quit focusing on the negative and moved ahead on the positive.
- There's a real propensity to dwell in the past rather than the NEXT frontier. Then getting over stumbling blocks is a challenge. Often people here say “we can't do

that”, but we need to be so much more forward thinking. Energy costs are an opportunity to rebuild our downtowns, for example.

- One opportunity to make net zero energy in housing development (housing that has localized energy situated on the house itself). Doing housing in village centers and real opportunities to have investments up front.

### **III. What should our priorities be as we work together to realize your vision and prepare Vermont for the future?**

- “we have to get past poverty.” Housing, Health, education are important, and we have to get jobs in here.
- Jobs. What is missing is the influx of young people coming into the trades. Not enough plumbers, electricians, etc.
- Infrastructure is a priority – roads, water, telecom, etc.
- Regulations are a priority – we need a ‘sense of reality. The government can’t have everything. Right now we throw the baby out with the bathwater. We need to have a sense of what’s necessary and what’s overboard. There needs to be timely decisions.”
- Education is a priority.
- We need to make timely exceptions for strategic priorities and pilot projects. Once there are strategic visions and priorities for the state, we need to make sure that any project that follows these can be fast-tracked and obstacles can be removed in getting it done.
- Instead of fortifying our border with Canada we should be fortifying the North American continent and be at the center of the continent, not at the edge of the US. Sherbrooke is the fastest growing area of Canada, and VT should be able to take advantage of that neighbor.

### **IV. We’ve been talking about Vermont, but how does this discussion concern the future of your community?**

**This question was covered above.**

**COMMUNITY FORUM DAY**  
**North Country Union High School**  
**EVENING FORUM NEWPORT**  
**March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

Scribe: Laurie Zilbauer

**I. What does Vermont mean to you? What common values do Vermonters share?**

- Promise of an alternative lifestyle, we have to be more organic, more humble, and more progressive to achieve financial success. “For me that hasn’t come true here. The people here are the same where I came from, in Washington DC.”
- Vermont is special because there are less of us, people are still polite here, and they greet you or nod their head. The rate of growth is wonderful and doesn’t have the ills of other places. NPR discusses the same issues and challenges all across the country – housing & jobs.
- Common values that exist are the same as any rural area; there is a civility to our survival.
- A Better kinder gentler place, less people, you know your neighbors, people are more trustworthy. More of a “Back to the Land” and subsistence farming, it was easier to do than professional jobs for some.
- Vermont’s a place like many other places, but sometimes not.
- Vermont attracts a different lifestyle, ability to change things here; you’re not caught up in the big city. Vermont represented an unclear representation, free spirited, make your own way. Not forced into a pigeonhole.
- Vermont values are a paradox, best represented in our state motto, “Freedom and Unity”. The individual has a sense of autonomy and the community has a sense of importance. Vermont has an appreciation and respect for self reliance and individuals, and still has collaboration and community initiatives.
- Concept of community is important, neighborliness, sense of community and values. Awakens your eyes to see your neighbors, you know when they need help; you know when to be involved. To be a Vermonter is to not be anonymous.
- For many people in Vermont, "place" trumps other things, like career, amenities, money. They'd rather live here and not make a million bucks. There are trade offs, and maybe many Vermonters are willing to make that one.

- There is an identity to being a Vermonter, people who are residents here are Vermonters, we live in the same harsh conditions and we don't believe we are anything else. You may not agree with other Vermonters, but you still feel you can identify yourselves as Vermonters.
- Everyone tries to make Vermont a good place and a better place, but we can still agree to disagree.
- "If you're born here you have it and when you come here you get it – It's an identity."
- It's a small state and if you are active in your field its easy to get to know everyone involved. The scale makes things seem manageable. This makes it easier to be civil and in disagreement as well. We have the opportunity to do some things that larger states have a harder time doing. If we choose to we can step way outside the box. We can do that for energy production & conservation, education, health care, and insurance.
- Native Vermonters would be more interested to help solve problems than discuss what makes a Vermonter. Vermont is a hostile environment it's a difficult state to make a living.
- Vermonter's nature comes down to questions: How do you sustain the way of life that creates those values or ethos? How to fix a government that isn't working? And/or how do you engrain the right values?

## **II. Looking ahead through our lifetimes, and those of our children, what challenges and opportunities do you see for Vermont?**

- Vermont needs to be a location for key events – should set the stage to solve problems in creative ways.
- Moving towards a livable wage rather than just a wage. Minimum wage is a challenge.
- Vermont's main challenge is running out of our key resource – people. Livable wage and jobs and housing needs to be discussed with the younger generation.
- Most young men and women have already been through the corrections system. We are doing something wrong, we are not making the connection between high school and college or their next move = career. There are too many side influences, our response in the state corrections system is extremely negative and not helpful and very bureaucratic. System doesn't support people who want to change or fix their lives.
- Support disappears after high school. Missing the transition for young people who want to come back or move up beyond high school.

- Restorative justice needs to grow. Every community needs a community justice center; the incarcerated need support not just punishment.
- The cost of college is expensive, free for seniors, but the young students pay a fortune.
- There is an opportunity to work for an elder community or elder care establishments. Vermont should be a place where elders can go and feel welcomed. It should be easy for them to arrive in Vermont and be here.
- There is a tricky balance here between population and transportation issues. The elderly and poor have a tremendous challenge to get to the services they need.
- We should help transport to local spots, stop fuel waste and fix management.
- The infrastructure is not here to support anything; the young students see that they don't have that. Don't have enough services to bring jobs into the area. Internet and cell service, infrastructure jobs are big now and local children don't have access to it.
- Our roads are isolating – poor east-west connection in the state.
- The State should deal with the poverty in the state and the lack of poverty.
- Vermont should come together and find the ways to bring infrastructure here and make our children employable.
- Vermont had a tremendous infusion of activity from an influx of people moving here 20-30 years ago. Vermont needs to embrace immigrants and allow for new active people. There are new opportunities to draw new populations here – immigrants included.
- There are changes in demographics, people who came in the past wanted to stay and be artisans and farmers, people that come now want to come for recreation and tourism. We are now at the mercy of the tourism economy, this is a blessing and a curse. Property sales focus on outsiders that come for only part of the year. There's a graying population – we need to shift support towards new populations and keeping people here.
- We have an opportunity to really do something about the broadband and cell service. Communications infrastructure supports jobs and visitors.
- There is a desperate need to make more small jobs rather than big corporate jobs. Small energy projects could add enormously to the job market and economy. There's a whole lot less cost to create and support small businesses.
- Challenges include state permitting and timeframes for new energy developments.

### **III. What should our priorities be as we work together to realize your vision and prepare Vermont for the future?**

- Health care and energy
- Poverty
- Changing the federal system towards business.
- We need to address the changing face of agriculture.
- We need to keep the land open for the tourists. Maintain a genuine Vermont landscape.
- Need to support forests and maintain natural hilltops.
- We want to keep what was here, but at the same time we yearn for what everyone else has.
- Silva-culture is not a priority for the state; provide the same support for forestry that exists for agriculture.
- The septic laws automatically insist you build your house on the Prime Agricultural Soils, these conflicts with our desire to keep these lands open and undeveloped. The state has several policies that contradict each other; we need to address our policies as a whole.
- We need to make a decision to keep Vermont for agriculture or for tourists. How we approach each is entirely different.
- Permitting and approval process for development doesn't match up to the current needs. Addressing the situation properly can provide for new business opportunities.
- Remove obstacles for new and innovative ideas.
- Diversify the economy and develop different kinds of jobs, instead of just keeping it beautiful. There shouldn't be just agriculture or tourism jobs.
- Vermont should move ahead of what exists now and try to be a leader of new industries. Industries that will coincide with Vermont values - green industry. Focus on providing energy in green ways on a small scale. Create an economy of small scale and different energy generation units in key research areas. Develop innovations that alleviate a lot of the challenges of doing business here.

- Vermont colleges should provide majors in new and innovative areas.
- Vermont's slower pace of permitting and regulation creates a degree of insulation from economic downturns, housing extremes.
- Security in health care is a big issue for new jobs or building a business.

**IV. We've been talking about Vermont, but how does this discussion concern the future of your community?**

- Pete's Greens is an example of a local business in the Kingdom that's made good with what's here – and found lots of avenues for expansion.
- Specialty Cheeses in Greensboro (Jasper Hill Farms & Cabot Artisan) are another example; a model for the future.
- The model of working in partnership often encourages local people to become involved. Respondent told of an example: "A few years ago I helped solicit donations for our local school. The federal government was offering the carrot of an interest free loan if the community could generate a percentage of the project cost in donations (in-kind allowed). It seemed a perfect combination. The community was invested and generous. It tapped into PRIDE, which I think is one of those defining characteristics of Vermonters. Government was involved, but offering incentives in addition to regulation. Townspeople saw the common sense in the deal and got a new school which was something people had wanted for years, but felt like they couldn't afford. The partnership was a good one and one I think we could learn from".
- Biomass heating with local resources are a model for us here.
- State Regulations limit expansion of businesses (i.e. the cost and time of going through the process), but the Arts provide a considerable amount of money and should be an economic opportunity.
- Focus on infrastructure to handle new development
- Tie intensive training on conservative energy housing to possible jobs. A new technology in energy conservation is a growth industry.
- The idea should be let's see how we can make this work, rather than a no. "Getting to Yes"
- Changing the mindset in Montpelier and the federal level. Local projects are dependant upon state and fed funds to get it off the ground.

- UVM engineering students helped design a hydro facility that must protect trout. This engaged the students to work in the community. You need to get the conservation to the people who are going to do the work and get their help.
- Youth are looking for more creative imaginative and innovative ways to provide for the community, they should own the project.
- You must define community, its no longer just a location, there are inter-dependent communities, regional, local, global, and another aspect is a sense of membership. Use a broader context.
- We need leadership and collaboration, a sharing of expertise and energy between communities. But overall it takes leadership to bring the ideas, resources, and infrastructure together.
- There needs to be a practical ability to carry things out, business government and local management.
- Vermont needs to redefine what we mean by economic growth. All growth has an economic benefit. Find ways to employ ourselves without greatly increasing the population. Improve rather than build - a healthy economy without growing in number and size.
- Try to start with change locally, with the Selectboard. Set priorities locally and mobilization on key issues starts locally and, “when it gets to the budget, it’s an important issue.”
- Communication, local and state, at all the levels of community.
- Even in the local level help isn’t there. “Tonight I need shelter. I need a place to stay. Are people going to cough up to help?”
- The key issues are transportation, health care (both on a state and federal level) high cost of living here (in terms of energy). There needs to be a realistic understanding of regulation, “sensible growth and sensible protection.”
- The NEK is concerned with how the rest of the state sees us, as a wild land that people want to keep in a certain way, their [undeveloped] area for hunting or snow machine haven. The NEK is part of the rest of the state. There needs to be a total mindset change on how the NEK is viewed.

- **KEY SOLUTIONS**

- Provide Life Planners that are voluntary and can direct a number of “life options”. This would mean helping people to write resumes, or grants, or teaching them skills so that they can do things on their own. “I see a future where you can access these people digitally – you don’t have to sit down face to face with someone, but you can talk to them and see them so that there’s a resource there.”
- More relaxed schedules for workers would open up more distribution of money and jobs.