

# **COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**

**Organizational Interviews from  
December 2007 to January 2008**

The **COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT** had the opportunity to learn from Vermonters across the state about specific challenges, opportunities and visions for the future. The Council also solicited input from nearly 300 state-wide organizations: groups that are in leadership positions around the state who are routinely examining specific issues or sectors, or that are unique associations and groups. The Council was able to meet with nearly 40 of these state-wide organizations, and conducted information-gathering interviews with them. The Council also held interviews with specific groups that are in unique positions in the state.

The following document includes the notes from all of these sessions. The notes are made public here as part of the **Council on the Future of Vermont** process and one of the appendices of the final report: *Imagining Vermont: Values and Vision for the Future*.

**These notes do not represent the official opinions of any of these groups, or the opinions of the Council on the Future of Vermont, but have been collected from conversations, and are the ideas and viewpoints of individual speakers.**



**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**December 6, 2007**

**GROUP NAME :Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies**

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

- VT means civility. Less hassle with government than other places. Quality of life.
- Vt has a history of adaptation, a history of resilience, a sense of coherence. We have a history of being 'Frontier' and the values that are associated with that.
- Vt is independent and we rely on others when we need to.
- VT means people who are in touch with the physical environment.
- VT means a certain level of tolerance "one of the more tolerant places on the face of the earth." We often deviate from the norm and do things our own way, but there's a privacy here so that you can do that. It's reciprocal – if you can do your own thing, you let your neighbors do their own thing too.
- There is an openness about Vermont. There is a sense of passion for community that gives us a common base and gives us a rallying point if we need on. Community values are acted out every day by Vermonters.
- Vermont has a human scale about everything – community, landscape, history, government, etc.
- "Vermont reminds me of what Maryland was 50 years ago." A feeling that other places that used to have this essence have lost it, and Vermont has the opportunity not to lose it.
- "We're quirky little state."
- "We're different, by God!"
- "It's the last stand of the Yankee." While we recognize the importance and take pride in the difference of the state, we also know the battle is essentially lost. A lot of people in their hearts feel Vermont is the best place to live, but you have to pay dues to live here.
- "We're defending the Alamo", but we don't want to get into a danger of believing in our own myth and resist change just to resist change. We need to look back at what we've got all the time.

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

- A challenge is not accepting this 'Camelot' mentality – that the specialness of this place is fixed and we have to protect it. We try to protect our 'perceived perfection' but we need to know what it is that we're protecting.
- Vermonters used to be, originally, a big family – it created a boundary and a set of values about taking care of each other, having tolerance for each other, and while this foundation is still there, we can't stay as we are. "I don't have any worries for my family, my kids, to come back here and make a good living."
- Climate change is real and will have effects that people just barely are beginning to realize. There will be economic change, and there will be 'significant lifestyle changes'. While Vt has gone through big changes in the past, it will take a concerted effort to adapt to this.

- The challenge is how to preserve our human scale communities and provide economic opportunities to allow people to live there.
- If Vt is a ‘great place to live’ how do we deal with people taking that to heart and moving here? “ They already are!”
- Planners need to anticipate this and plan for smart growth over time.
- There is the potential for the decline of the middle class and expansion of economic divide between haves and have –nots. The source of this missing element ties into issues of poverty and availability of family values/skills. There are bad starting factors for youth – the correctional facilities and trends in VT are a challenge we should address.
- There is a trend in civic engagement at the local level – and an accompanying challenge of how to foster leaders and encourage this involvement. Getting people to work for the local community. “People have to have the feeling for it.”
- Climate change will bring all kinds of new agricultural opportunities. It will also change forest and provide different value added industry.
- ‘Selling Vermont’ is an opportunity. We have to go with our strengths: working landscapes, conservation of quality of life, local products and leadership. An enormous opportunity comes in certifying things as VT made, organic, bio-dynamic, etc, so that all our products and our cultural and arts economic opportunities have the VT brand.
- Infrastructure is a priority. We’ll need real creativity because we won’t have out of state money to handle our problem areas. We want to deal with social equity and an aging population. We will need to solve our water and wastewater challenges.
- We have to build telecommunications technologies to preserve community – it’s a challenge and an opportunity. We would need to do it in a way that preserves a sense of community and utilizes the newest technologies. We need leadership around this.
- We have an opportunity to promote and understand our culture and history. We don’t do enough to talk about our successes of regulation and business that support entrepreneurship. We concentrate on the ‘bad side’ of the effects on economic growth.
- There is a challenge in the lack of young people stepping up into leadership roles, but perhaps this can be turned to an opportunity where people will come to VT specifically because they will have an chance to make a difference.
- We should focus on the knowledge economy.
- The population issue is key – what is our reasonable threshold?
- Racial diversity is a challenge – Vters are perceived as racist. How can we move forward with that?
- “We’re also seen as smug!”

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

- Infrastructure development, especially around telecommunications and transportation.
- Enhancing civil engagement and training for the next generation of leadership.
- Maintain civility throughout our communities.
- Institutionalizing the inquiry process (how are we doing? What does VT mean? Are we achieving what we set out to achieve?) We need to reflect AND measure progress.

- Affordability – we need to reach social equity, and this is a major issue.
- Communication and Dialogue – we need to continue to share what we think across many levels. The size of the state enables us to do that. We do think of 600,000 as a community.
- Green technology should be a priority for the state as we move forward as an economic growth potential.
- Better coordination should be a priority – we need to not do things in a vacuum.
- “My town voted to eliminate town meeting. Lots of us think that’s a major loss.” We need to keep the places and structures where people who don’t know each other can come together and talk.
- Small communities lack political value in our existing structure. Their voices are lost. A priority should be set on the issues that come from the local level and the structure should be changed to make sure their voices are heard.

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

- Unfettered development; Vermont is being sold piece by piece to the highest bidder. We see our communities being sold off – we need to study how kids who make a living and stay here are able to do it so that we don’t have to lose our working landscapes.
- Reliance on property taxes is making our communities a place where we can’t afford to live. Property values that are going up as well.
- We’ve preserved land in our town and that makes for higher costs and we have tried to support affordable housing in response. However, this doesn’t have the response we’d like.
- ‘All Vermont is my community – it’s hard to think at a small scale.’ The size of our state enables us to think like a community.
- Constantly amazed by the ‘skills that come out of the woods’ in our small towns. There are brain surgeons and tree surgeons tucked away in the woods, but they all have a sense of pride and attachment to our little towns.

# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

## Vermont Network Against Sexual and Domestic Violence

April 29, 2008

Background: The network's core services include shelter and advocacy for victims of sexual or domestic violence and a 24 hotline.

### **What does the society look like that has no sexual or domestic violence? What would it take to get there?**

- The "Vermont Approach" is a good one. It was developed through questions to engaged stakeholders, particularly around sexual violence. Some of the seven strategies detailed include media representation, educating communities, families and individuals, leveraging resources, and coordinated statewide leadership. It contains measures for societal and structural change.
- There is a foundational assumption that sexual and domestic violence have been institutionalized in our society. We need to dig deep into the roots to eliminate it.
- I don't expect to see an end to it in my lifetime. It's like racism. One of the exciting things is that historically our resources have focused on individual response. But now the work is evolving more globally around social change and the relationship between different kinds of oppression. "We think more and more about the intersection of oppression."
- "How do we respond not to individual acts, but to the bigger picture?"
- It's not just about what is going on in a person's home. For the most part, there are few formal or social consequences, like societal ostracism.
- In some ways, the state got ahead of the culture. For example, if a man is arrested and convicted of violence, he is sent to an intervention group. But there are no social consequences for his action – at work, at home, in the community. The realm of consequences is small – maybe between the man and his probation officer.
- The number of convictions is very small.
- In some ways we are all complicit in making violence acceptable. Look at anything you see on TV. It is everywhere in the media.
- Another speaker observed "In my lifetime, I think we can make a dent in the social acceptance." She likened it to racism, where it is unacceptable now to "say the 'n' word. It would be great to come to a place where, when women are around, not to say the 'b' word."
- 

### **Is there a trend in Vermont around S/D violence?**

- The bigger context in Vermont is how do people experience this within the particulars of their life? Victims are often poor, immigrants, disabled, or LGBT.
- The number of people we work with has been pretty stable over the last five years. Prior to that, the numbers had been going up.

- It is difficult to gauge the number of people who need services. Traditionally, very few victims contact domestic or sexual violence organizations.
- Two thirds of the money available for services is earmarked for the criminal justice system, rather than victim services because of the source of the funding. Therefore, in some ways, our thinking was shaped around the funding source – criminal justice. However, most victims are not involved with the criminal justice system: that is the place of last resort.
- The victims’ needs haven’t changed. They need housing, good childcare, transportation, economic assistance.
- In 1999, none of the programs offered transitional housing. Now, about half of them do.
- Advocacy around housing and economic needs is new, and that is a trend around the country as well. If advocates had been driving since the beginning that would be the focus. “If people could put their lives in order and move on, that is more useful than involvement with the criminal justice system.
- The culture sees this as a private issue.

### **What do you think are the sources of these trends?**

- Personal freedom is a factor. People are uncertain if they should get involved.
- New Englanders and Vermonters are close-lipped about things.
- “Patriarchy is the radical answer. We see power, control and oppression across the board as the roots of violence.”
- I am in my late forties, and almost everything I grew up leaning about domestic violence is wrong. We were taught the victim is poor; the victim really wants violent treatment.
- The fault was placed on the victim and they fit a certain demographic. If we accept that the victim is at fault, we don’t have to deal with the perpetrator.
- This movement has raised awareness, but we still have people asking, “Why doesn’t she just leave?” rather than “Why does he do that?”
- Older people are less resistant to the idea that there is gender bias. Young people feel it is incorrect to assign bias, that we are all equal. So for them, it’s not a women’s issue – it is a human issue. “We are all oppressed.”
- Since the Reagan era of ‘pull yourself up by the bootstraps’, it is viewed as a personal problem, not a societal one. There is a sense that victims need to take responsibility for themselves.
- 

### **Is there a connection between the use of technology and access to pornographic images that is so easy now and S/D violence rates?**

- Media doesn’t so much create and shape; it reproduces what is already there. In fact, media may be more amenable to change than some other systems.
- It is an additional way for perpetrators to carry out tactics. Very young children – 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade – have cell phones, online access.

- The primary contact can be email and texting. Online contacts can transfer into real world abuse.
- On the other hand, technology can provide support for victims, through online support groups, for example.
- We don't have much evidence around how victims use technology.
- "The media is neutral to me. There are so many examples of girls gone wild, that the media may not create, but rather perpetuates existing stereotypes.
- Media by its nature can be exploitative. (A discussion ensued about a television show that sets up and captures sexual predators in a live show.) "It is hugely popular, but salacious, rather than educational. Many of the men appear to be developmentally disabled, and in a way, they too are being exploited."
- Conversely, media can be used to change the way we think of things. For example, anti-littering and anti-smoking campaigns. We are getting more savvy of using that force in a positive way.
- The lessons of public education campaigns can't be applied directly to domestic violence, because the costs are so different. Drunk driving was once acceptable and now is socially unpopular. People ask why we can't do that with education around domestic and sexual violence, but it is so different.

**So many of the victims are young children or youth. Why is that and is the priority different in addressing this age group?**

- The highest rate of sexual violence occurs between the ages of 15 and 23, and for domestic violence between the ages of 18 and 24.
- However, we only see the people who have sought help through the system. Many people outside those demographics have not called us. It is hard to define who is being abused and who isn't.
- There are lots of factors and variables.
- "Who is defining our sexuality? The expectations on young girls are outrageous."
- Part of it is an 'autonomy thing'. Young people are not quite there developmentally.
- People with disabilities have high rates of abuse due to "the constructs of privilege and oppression." People with disabilities, people of color are vulnerable. It is about vulnerability and power.

**As regionally based centers, what are the challenges you see at the state and local level?**

- In a Department of Health report focused on domestic violence, the number one issue was affordable housing. It is at the top of the list for domestic violence. Maybe not at the very top for sexual violence, but still on the list.
- The biggest challenges are economic support, affordable childcare, transportation, justice system responses and a livable wage.
- The family court process is also very high on the list. We have started a program of surprise visits. We always knew what happens post-separation, but now we are seeing it in surprise visits. Investing in a good attorney can be the biggest difference in the lives of children.

- Many people cannot afford good attorneys, and there are few available.
- There is a lack of community support around issues. One participant recalled a disappointing process in trying to open a shelter, and ostracism of a former victim who spoke out.

**Vermont is associated with certain characteristics – rural, small, labor-type jobs. Do those characteristics affect the populations you deal with or reactions you receive as opposed to more urban areas? Is working in Vermont unique?**

- “Vermont is a little different” But most of those differences are positive. It is a liberal, progressive state despite having a persona of physical and emotional toughness.
- Working with the legislature has been an incredible experience, because we have a legislature that wants to work with us. They want to be educated. They want to work with us. “We have an incredible legislature.”
- The Governor recently attended the opening of a center and gave what amounted to an advocacy speech. That is very unusual.
- Vermont’s size can be a double-edged sword, but for the most part it is a great atmosphere. Vermont programs are grass roots and careful in their approach and really embrace the voices of survivors at a deep philosophical level.
- A challenge is the lack of anonymity in Vermont. The media doesn’t publish the name of the victim, but they publish the name of the perpetrator. In a small state, that makes figuring out the victim pretty easy.
- There is a problem of outreach. How do reach out to people who aren’t coming to the center? In an urban area, you can put a flyer at a bus stop where people will sit and look at it. But will they really see a flyer on the bulletin board at Shaws?
- A lot of strategies that other states use don’t work here.
- People do hold on to the “Vermont ideal” of helping your neighbor, whether or not they always put it into practice.
- Because Vermont is so small, we have many border communities. We are trying to partner with programs over the CT. River in New Hampshire, but with very limited success.
- We are a network, and they are a network, but there is little sense of reciprocity.
- In this case, a centralized government is a good thing. The Burlington-Montpelier corridor is very progressive and that connection means a higher change of getting funding.
- Small rural communities struggle with lack of staff. They are trying to do crisis intervention while learning how to write grants.
- In some ways, it is an asset to be a director and be close to the work. You are not removed from the stories and the people.
- There is a lack of resources for the work that we do and for complimentary resources.
- The grant process is very competitive, so you end up competing against similar organizations. Town and cities set aside money for animal shelters, but not for domestic violence victims who need shelter.
- Volunteers do much of the work. The average salary for a director is \$29K. That is below the livable wage.



- We need more flexible resources. States with a decentralized government can design programs that are more responsive to area needs. Our money has a lot of restrictions.
- There has been a jump in incarcerated women in VT. Most of those women have experienced domestic or sexual violence. We need programs to work with women involved with the criminal justice system.
- A couple of factors contribute to the rise in female incarceration. A change in drug laws provide for mandatory sentences. Also, women are now arrested for assault even if they are not the primary aggressor. There is a sense of “if I bring him in, I will also bring you in”, so nobody gets charged.

# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

## Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger June 23, 2008

### 1. Is the issue of childhood hunger in Vermont more acute than it was 10 years ago, or 50 years ago? And is there a worrisome trend as we look to the future?

- Yes, statistics show that it is growing and more acute now than previously. Food and fuel crunches are constantly escalating this.
- The US Census has data on hunger; there are 18 questions there about food security, and there was a Vermonter poll question last year. One third of Vermonters reported that they could not afford a nutritious diet. 5% could not afford food at all. 14% said that they depend on low quality food. Obesity rates, cheap food are not good for you. Hunger and obesity are often linked.
- There are record numbers in VT seeking assistance. People visiting food shelves is going up – (16% increase since 2005) – and middle income families are now using the food shelves. Food costs are rising without rising salaries or state and federal benefits.
- The trendline is that the federal programs haven't kept up with inflation at all.
- Trend of people over income eligibility who seek assistance; they fall off the cliff and can only go to food shelves. People are lucky to get 3 days of food a month.
- There is *fragmentation* of food services. There are no focus groups on hunger in Washington County – although there are telephone 211 services.
- There is no one-stop shopping for families in need, no place to get a list of available services even in a local area. 211 telephone is the best bet for them now.
- There's no 'HUNGER CZAR' who centralizes the information. *Should there be?*  
YES!
- Kids have a hard time because obesity, poor grades and other results follow from poor nutrition. There is a strong connection for kids with the physiological. The pathways in the brain are limited – neurological growth is limited.
- The programs are cut but the reasons why are never explained.
- Another trend is that we are focused on energy food system. The donations from major corporations have decreased – they used to give food shelves 'mistakes' – but now they have less and less of these.

### 2. With all the wealth in our society today, how is childhood hunger possible? Are there economic, social, cultural or other conditions that are increasing or perpetuating childhood hunger?

- There is a movement to look at asset building – building equity
- Benefit cliffs are big problem for us.
- Since parents and divorce are conditions that lead to this. Childcare subsidies are also not keeping up with inflation – we are missing the most important years for nutrition.

- There is a disparity in wealth; VT has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest disparity between rich and poor.
- Folks with purchasing power under \$70k have lost their purchasing power.
- Job growth is a condition – what kinds of jobs can we offer? The service sector in which people work multiple jobs with not enough time to focus on nutrition.
- How can it persist? It's hard for people of middle income to see it and to understand. People in hunger hide it “if your kids are hungry then you've done something wrong.” People see it as a failure of individuals rather than a failure of the system.
- The two income groups getting further and further apart. Food discussion in the state is led by the ‘localvores’ and more high income people. Some localvore people don't understand the issues of the poor. There is a disconnect between local food and lower income people.
- “Food stamp challenge”: in which people tried to live on food stamps but it's very very difficult. (except for one woman who owned her own greenhouse).
- We think we feed kids with waste, on starches rather than the best food. Dented cans and cast-off foods (such as pumpkin pie filling) instead of highly nutritious and fresh foods.

### **3. Is childhood hunger invisible to most Vermonters?**

- Childhood hunger is not invisible, but it's hard to recognize. We don't have children starving, with the classic images of starvation; skinny arms, bulging eyes (“People don't look like they're from Africa”)
- Hunger is not starvation – sometimes it's obesity. You can't SEE underdevelopment either.
- The hunger and nutrition assistance programs are not seen as part of the public safety net.
- School food services; are not understanding that food programs actually help to increase school performance! Nourished children are not recognized as a value – at schools there'd be a “conniption fit” if you had to subsidize food to even 25k. (Swipe cards can eliminate the stigma at some school lunch programs but the stigma issues remain.)
- Policy makers don't imagine that people working hard can't put food on the table. The poor don't want others to know that they can't feed their families.
- The social structures and economy have changed but policy makers cat from a paradigm that's outdated.
- People are more apt to use LIHEAP (heating assistance program) or Doctor Dynosaur than they are to use food stamps. People feel bad because they can't feed children.
- Pediatricians don't know what to do about it – they don't measure it, don't really talk about it. Mostly they don't know a bout it.
- The political atmosphere is a gridlock that undermines all sorts of programs. We are in the middle statistically on hunger (of all the states) but our numbers have doubled since 2002.
- 

### **4. There was a major strategic planning effort that VTCECH has led this past year. As we look 20 years into the future, will we have advanced a solution? Will childhood hunger in VT be solved? What are the key elements in this solution?**

- There are things we know work but we are headed in a scary direction in terms of the growing needs.
- We need fully funded federal nutrition programs. The short term crisis – especially around food and fuel won't be solved even by fully funding these programs, however. If you have to decide between food and fuel, you're going to get the cheapest food you can.
- Education will be critical.
- There will be improvements in the next 20 years. The idea is to put hunger at the center stage. Washington and Chittenden county studies have led to the idea of galvanizing hunger programs in these towns and regions. The studies assessed but then concentrated on actually addressing the hunger in Washington and Chittenden Counties.
- School meals, childcare meals, Women Infants and Children (WIC) program, summer meals – all of these programs need more systematic support.
- Agriculture policy – we need to produce our own food and have it go to people here. The challenge of local purchasing is big – people are trying to connect local foods, especially with schools.
- Most farmer's markets can't take food stamps – but these are growing fast and about 9 of them now can take food stamps.
- Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) for schools and day cares are important. But so much more is needed. We need coordination around food shelves – some are only open a few hours a week and so can't really take fresh veggies (because they'd rot). The Food Bank is setting up a gleaning program where the excess can be taken and given away – but coordination is needed.
- There used to be prison gardens- struggling families of prisoners would get food from their relations in prison – prisoners would produce food for their families!!
- We need to get diverse stakeholders around the table. Resolving fragmentations of service is very important; we advocate for programs and policy in state and federal level.

**5. What does the fact of childhood hunger say about values in Vermont? Are VT values a condition that perpetuates childhood hunger or are they part of the solution?**

- They are both! Independence can mean that people are reluctant to take help, to ask for help, or want to ensure they can do things on their own. “spit and bailing wire” “don't take federal money.” This keeps people from reaching for help and keeps others from recognizing the needs. To solve our problems, you need to look at the next generation and we don't have the resources to raise a healthy next generation. We need to work our way out by dealing with the children.
- But, neighbors care and keep positive values around helping out locally. We have a VT Scale – “we're in a unique special place.” We can be in touch with leaders and can make things happen here – and the basis of this is our small communities. In many towns the community is the school, what would happen to a town that's lost its school?

- There is a value of agriculture heritage. “food is really important to our identity.” And “food is loaded with a lot of emotion.” It would be good if all our food organizations could come together.
- There are turf issues; there are two kinds of fragmentation. One is around organizations and the other is around levels of government and variety of programs. Our mission is to unite services.
- Everybody knows we’ve had the worst 8 years in our history for funding at the federal level. The federal moneys have just dried up!
- We should harness the energy of the localvores.

# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT MARCH 30, 2008

## Vermont Center for Independent Living

VCIL Mission: “Citizens with disabilities working together with dignity, independence and civil rights.”

### 1. What does Vermont mean to you? What common values do Vermonters share?

- A feisty sense of independence. This connects with our mission of independent living. Calvin Coolidge. There is a dedication to independent and community based living for people with disabilities.
- Any person should be able to work.
- One speaker mentioned the 1928 floods and Coolidge speech.
- It is so hard these days to think ahead because of what’s going on in this country.
- In Vermont, we have an independent “right thinking” populations, but these are hard times.
- What I would most like to keep is the sense of community and sense of fairness – that’s very precious.
- Transportation is a major issue – a huge issue. Helping people to be more productive is important. It is harder and harder to make ends meet.
- Vermont is going in the direction of being stratified. People can’t buy land or a house anymore.
- We can’t romanticize the past. Size and scale have meant that people of different classes would bump up – would meet – that’s less and less true. People used to be able to buy a “dump”. Now all housing is skyrocketing. Comfortable communities of the past are splitting up because of differences in wealth. There is a very different shape to the community.
- Everyone in the old days was part of clubs – the Grange, Knights of Columbus, etc.

### II. Looking ahead through our lifetimes and those of our children, what challenges and opportunities do you see for Vermont and especially for VCIL and the people you serve?

- Jobs are harder to come by.
- Finding a way to promote access and employment is difficult.
- There is a dilemma – what is the most cost effective way of implementing our mission?
- Divergence of class. High-income people are pulling away from us.
- We want to be on an equal footing with jobs, transportation, and want to be part of community life.
- The demographics of disabilities and aging are changing. People use to die of some disabilities; now they survive and want to participate.
- Accessibility of public spaces. We need new approaches to design.

- Disability demographics for younger people: head injuries and genetic disabilities, mental health conditions, post-traumatic stress. The projections indicate that there is growth in these.
- I work with deaf communities and the problem is transportation. Some are on fixed incomes and can't afford a car. They can't get out in the evening or work during the day. The lack of transportation leads to isolation – people are unable to gather together.
- The blind are fairly well served and the public is fairly well educated around issues. But 70% of the blind community is unemployed.
- 60% - 70% of the disabled are unemployed. There is not enough funding or technology.
- What is a reasonable accommodation for someone on the job? There is a general lack of understanding of how to make adjustments. There is a lack of planning for how to include people.
- There is infrastructure for support to help someone survive, but not a lot to give impetus to take risks that are required to move on.
- Seed money that can eliminate dependency is well worth the investment, but as a society we are shortsighted.
- A priority is to educate people to act strategically with investments that lead to socio-economic productivity.

### **III. Are there opportunities in technology and communications that have the prospect of advancing independence and helping people to participate and contribute more easily in the future?**

- The computer is the greatest thing. The computer allows disabled people to work from home and this will improve over time.
- The blind community had the ability to have emails read back to them. You can have the NY Times or anything read to you. There is a different keyboard vocabulary to get away from the mouse.
- We can build these technologies into the work environment.
- VCIL does some of the work to help bring adaptive technology.
- VCIL is part of “Adaptive Environments.” We help people use adaptive designs including technology to expand civic and employment opportunities.
- TTY – a telecommunications device for the deaf allows people to use a phone. Typing is not obsolete. There is a videophone that uses a relay service with a web-cam and an interpreter. However, it requires high-speed access and so is not universal in Vermont.
- One woman I work with was totally isolated. We finally got video.
- People expressed frustration with the Department of Labor web site.
- Limb replacement is a technology opportunity. The Iraq war is pushing new technologies. One person wants a new arm – that's \$30,000. We look to when it is standard, affordable and purchasable under Medicaid.
- I am not impressed with the blind guy who climbed Everest.
- Computer chips and prosthetics can help people with neuromuscular disabilities, but how does this connect to the lives of ordinary people? There is a threat in something that thinks in terms of Social Darwinism that must be countered by humanness. “Not everyone is going to be perfect.”

- Social justice. What if the wealthy can get advanced prosthetics or have organ replacements and live to be 140 years old, while others may lack the basics needed for survival? (Cochlean implants were mentioned)
- VCIL has made sure that there is public access. Vergennes has made itself an accessible city. It remains respectful to history, but accessible, for example with the theater and liquor store.
- New movies are not captioned for the deaf.
- Principles of design need to be considered.
- Frontier of biomedicine presents a great potential for enhanced treatment of conditions. But cost and affordability are critical challenges. Will we have a strong sense of equity?
- Technology has tremendous ability to bring us together, but it has also contributed to isolation. TV has broken down community meetings. There are less of the interpersonal organizations that unite people.

**IV. Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of services and advancement of independent living in the future? Why?**

- “Depends on funding. Everything else is there to do it, but it depends on public will.”
- “Huge progress has been made. People used to be hidden away.” More progress is going to take investment.
- Costs are the big challenge to realize opportunity. We have “underrated people.”
- “ I’m optimistic when I hear the drive that we have.” but where is the money going to be channeled? Is it going toward ‘freedom for others’, or is it going into an ‘equitable society?’

**V. Including this important area, but also in general, do you have a sense of Vermont priorities, or a guiding principle that should be part of our vision for the future?**

- I believe we have the money, but we need to educate more people in the state about handicaps, in the NEK for example. About abuse and spousal abuse, isolation, etc. in the NEK. People can’t work at home but need education. It is the key.
- Shifting the way we look at disability. “We talk of Special Education as a burden.” More and more we are looking at it as part of human diversity and we must see it not as a burden, but as contributing to and benefiting society.
- The priority for education should be around freedom to realize economic potential. “Freedom means the opportunity to advance one’s economic potential whether you are disabled or not.”
- We need to think more about planning for interpreters, etc.



## **COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**

### **Organizational Interview**

#### **GROUP NAME: Board of Directors, Association of Africans Living in Vermont**

**1. Part of our purpose in this project is to learn from Vermont residents about the values that are present in our state. What is your experience with the values that Vermonters seem to have in common? Are there values that you have seen in your interactions here in the state?**

- To the new people, they are accepting of them being in Vermont. They are good listeners, they like to listen and learn something new. They respect what you say, they will listen, digest it, and understand what it means. They are open to new ideas.
- People here in Vermont are friendly, compared to other states. If you have a problem with your car, people in Vermont will stop and ask if you need help. But in other states, such as CT, people will not help you if you ask, even if they're also black—he asked “how much will you pay me to give you information.” Very nice, especially young people.
- I find a sense of community here, and friendliness—the first thing I noticed. They're proud of their state, and its uniqueness. Independence. The
- People are tolerant. Some experiences I've had, even if they don't know how to behave, their neighbors are accepting and help them try to fit in. Law enforcement agencies are not rude, will take time to explain, and give you second chances before they will go further. Neighbors are very open, they will reach out to you first directly before they go to the police.
- Vermonters are more welcoming, they want to make sure that everyone feels very secure. Can live together freely and interact together. You see more people helping each other.

**2. In some of our earlier conversations, we've heard that self-sufficiency is one of the most important goals for newly arrived families and individuals. What works best to support self-sufficiency in the state? What hasn't worked well?**

- What hasn't worked well for me so far, is that people don't have time to learn the language before they have to try to find a job. They are often laid off after a few months because they don't know the language. Employers are looking for people to be more efficient in a short time. The support offered (8 months) is not enough time to learn English and find a job that can support your family, even if you are trying

hard. If parents don't understand communication from school, they won't be able to focus on their children and address problems at school.

- Two pieces not connected: say limit of English, but then after you go through school, you're not accepted. The negative part is that if you come to the U.S., they say that first thing is to have the language, to open the door. But then even if you do go to school, and get your degree, and learn the language, then when you are done, there are jobs here but they are not offered to new immigrants—you have to go out of state to gain experience. Who loses? Vermonters. There's no opportunity to see how the government is done, how laws are made.
- I interviewed and applied at Hannaford's four or five times. I find that they don't really try to understand you or know you first. They make assumptions. I realized that they didn't hire me because of one question: "what's your plan for the future?" I said, "if I learn this job, my goal is to develop this job in my country." After that she sat back, and I realized that was the wrong answer. Now that they've hired me, the manager has told me that they knew all along I was qualified.
- People here don't talk about the larger world – just Vermont and the U.S.
- Self-sufficiency means earning enough money to provide for their families. It comes down to 'what can we put in place to facilitate that.' One large part is the language. We can do more to help people overcome the language barrier more quickly. Better job preparation for interviewing skills, preparation. And part of that is educating the employers that Vermont is becoming more diverse, with different backgrounds.
- Training should not take place in an empty space. You have to show people how things work here. If you come from Africa, people think that here life is very easy. But then they come here and they see that it's not. People must sacrifice their time and teach refugees how things really are. Volunteers must go in-depth—not just point out the locations of the store, the bank, the health center, but really show them how things work.
- It comes down to understanding the other side too, the perspectives, assumptions, and preconceived notions of the refugees.
- The positive thing I found when I got here—I had English and the best host family before I moved to my apartment—how to balance my checkbook and know how much was in there before writing a check, and how to manage both a checkbook and a debit card. The other thing was that I don't have to show anyone my documents, except law enforcement and others in the proper setting. And I was advised not to get a credit card unless I was very very sure I understood how things work here financially. Refugee staff are very overworked, with very large caseloads, they are always focused on the new arrivals, and do not have enough time to continue working with people who have been here longer.

**3. In terms of the state population, Africans and other non-white ethnic groups are in the minority. Are there public perceptions you encounter in the state that help or hinder the work you do?**

- : People often don't trust minorities. They think we are unable to take care of ourselves. They don't give people the opportunity to show what they are able to do. Give them the opportunity to express and take care of themselves. The other thing, if they see you are black, they see you as in need of support. Which sometimes is good, but it shouldn't be assumed.
- It goes two ways: sometimes it's good, sometimes it's bad. It's good like when you're the only black person in the company—you stand out, you're recognized. The bad thing is that people assume you are unable to do the job.
- The majority white population does not get much news or information or perspective from the minority community – they have not much to relate to. I don't feel any different whether I'm among a mixed, white, or black group. They assume that if you are black, you should be feeling different, out-of-place. That makes me feel that they don't know much about outside Vermont, about my different experiences. You can see the difference between people who have and haven't been outside in the larger world.
- When I was back home, I saw a white guy surrounded by black people. When I came back here, I understood how people here saw me!
- I can understand people not trusting you in a leadership position, because people haven't seen minorities running an association in Vermont. When we want to step up and lead or run something, it's difficult because it's not part of Vermonters' experience.
- Sometimes it's easier when dealing with people who have been outside the U.S., they can communicate directly with you and tell you what they think, instead of saying, "are you OK?"
- In the media, Africa is portrayed as being very poor and incapable of governance. We have plenty of capable people, but the problem is leadership and corruption. But many people in the United States do not understand that. For example, people who have been here a couple years, they have jobs, they are getting ahead, they are employing others, they are helping the country—that is good for. If we come to the conclusion that all men and women are equal, as it says in the United States Constitution, let's be equal. Let's keep that dream alive.
- I'm trying to understand whether VT is satisfied with the trend of young people leaving Vermont—to keep young people in Vermont. This is happening in our community.

- I see that people don't want this place to change. Sometimes you feel like you are in the middle of nowhere. We're far from everywhere.

**4. In many of the conversations we've had around the state, people have told us that Vermont is very tolerant, but not very diverse. Is there a clear strategy for supporting and celebrating diversity in the state? What does it look like to you?**

- The problem is that we need diversity all over the state. Because of the economy, most jobs are in Burlington, so refugees are settled in Chittenden and Washington County. If you live in Barre or White River Junction, you need transportation and there are fewer jobs.
- Let other people come from other communities and do their cultural stuff. Bars, dance clubs—they don't play music from other countries, they only play U.S. music. Once a month, they could play other music! When they do state championships or soccer games, let other communities participate. It was very difficult for our African team to join the soccer league, but then they kicked us out! We could learn from each other, and it would give everybody the same chance.
- Lowering taxes would invite other people to come and settle here. Black History Month—open it to the new community members, like the African community, to share their culture and participate in events. For example, designate the month of June as a time to celebrate the African diaspora/refugee community and educate Vermonters about other cultures (African colonialization, African history). Even if only once a year, it can be an eye-opener.
- If I go to City Hall, and apply for a space to host African Night, they will ask me for a million requirements, and they know that I will be unable to do it. But if I could do it, I know many people would come! There are people here who volunteered in the Peace Corps who miss Africa and the traditions they learned. It can give us a chance to play African music.
- In the schools we could include curriculum that teaches other cultures—in Africa, we were taught U.S. history! A to Z! And not only U.S., but Russia, Asia, everywhere. Here in the United States, the histories of other countries and regions are not taught.
- Not even geography is taught!
- : Americans think Africa is one big country.

**5. Housing, jobs, and livable wages seem to be in Vermont common issues that affect long time residents as well as recent arrivals. What are the strategies that are most effective in reaching these goals?**

- Transportation and location. We settled one family in Barre, but they made only \$6.50 or \$7 an hour, and there was no public transportation. In Burlington, they made \$7 or \$8
- We have to work on transportation, especially because of our winters. More late-night hours. People need transportation 24 hours a day, or at least until midnight. Not everyone can afford to have a car. I used to work on Shelburne Road, and the manager would schedule me to close at 2am, and I'd have to walk back to North Avenue on foot.
- We need more housing units on public transit in more affordable areas around Burlington to make it easier to commute, such as from Milton or Hinesburg.
- The work wage is also very low.
- Personally, I would not focus on wages if things are very expensive. The schools should think about how to train students for the future, how to work with the colleges to keep students in the area.
- Vermont just doesn't have a lot of big businesses—it's a small economy.
- More internships would allow people to gain skills and ideas, even if they didn't get a job afterwards—they could open their own business. I would also like to see reduced taxes. It's hard to start a business, we pay a lot of taxes—business and property taxes. It makes you think twice. We are thinking about the environment but we are suffering in our pockets.
- If you don't know anyone, and you come in and get lost. To make the place more diverse, you need newcomers to come in and get oriented to where to go, how to get a job.

**6. In your mind, what is a 'Vermonters'? Would members of AALV ever think of themselves as 'Vermonters'? What would it take?**

- A Vermonters is someone who likes skiing, hockey, fishing, hunting. Not soccer. At work, that's all people talk about: fishing and hunting, that's it. But I don't do any of that stuff. But I don't do what people in Vermont do. To be a Vermonters, I'd have to start doing what people in Vermont do. I'd have to go for skiing, fishing, etc.
- Vermonters like to talk too much, like Africans. They like to have multiple meetings, and talk forever, but never decide—like about the Circ Highway. They don't like to move quickly.
- I don't think that's Vermonters' problem: it's the rich people who come here in the summer and the winter who really decide whether or not to build that road.

- Before they make a decision, everyone in the community gets to weigh in, even if it takes a long time. I see myself as a Vermonter because I live in my community, and I know I can rely on my community—we are not lost.
- If you go out of state, and people ask where you are from, you say, “Vermont.” A Vermonter is someone who has decided to live in Vermont. I try to see as myself as a Vermonter now, and I’m wondering if I’ll still be a Vermonter if I move out of Vermont. So far, with my job and my family here, I’ll remain a Vermonter. But if my children decide to leave after they finish college, I’m not sure. For my kids to say here, they’d have to feel that they fit in—I like soccer, they like basketball. Some things they like are more popular elsewhere than here. To keep them here, you have to identify all those things that keep their interest. They don’t want to watch a game, they want to watch life.
- When I drove taxi, I’d pick people up at the airport, and they’d ask me, “What the hell are you doing here?”
- A Vermonter is someone who has a stake in Vermont. If Vermont is going bad, that hurts them; if things are going good, it’s good. They have a stake, they’re involved, they have a family, they’re involved in the school. I am close to thinking of myself as a Vermonter, but not yet. I feel I’m not involved enough yet. It would take chairing an association, or having a project succeed: having a stake in something that makes me feel like I’m going to make this community better. Hopefully I’ll get there, and be able to call myself a Vermonter.

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

**GROUP NAME : CVCAC Headstart Policy Council**

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

- Oneness, friendliness, good place to raise kids.
- Small, community oriented, friendliness, safe
- Homey place that's connected to where I wa born.
- Community and neighborhood support is huge when someone has a hardship. People will work to 'get the word out' about all kinds of things: thru newspapers, radio, calendar of events. There's farmer's markets and special events.
- Fresh veggies and Vermont grown foods! Keep ourselves as a state for ourselves is important.
- Fiscal responsibility – not to over competitive like other places, but moderate.
- There's a mystique here too – self sufficient, hard working and frugal.l
- Keeping 'the old way and caring for historic places'
- Strong sense of independence – regardless of party line, people think their own things. VT has been a pioneer in some issues.
- "We're okay to share but we're not gonna boast."
- Maple syrup.
- Value of open land – no billboards, lots of rural areas, small towns. VT is less commercial.
- Another respondent thought this was negative – people in VT care more about the environment than the economy – she said "when it comes down to Walmart or wetlands, you know what's gonna happen."
- Vermonters rely on ourselves – 'made in VT sticks'
- People that are running for politics – they are friendly and they are close to you – accessibility to government, to bankers and real people in big businesses.
  - A few respondents talked about how frustrating it was for a bank in Barre to have changed to automated teller, even when you go inside the bank – that you can no longer talk to a person.

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

- Challenge - Seems like its changed – but now I'm concerned about people coming up to dictate here. Today you don't wave at people even.
- Challenge -We've turned to tourism to survive.
- Challenge - Society – you've got a lot of dangers out there for kids (the 'kids on the street' came up a few times, especially for children in Barre).

- Challenge – money! Cost of living. Flatlanders and their money from a higher cost of living area means that real estate prices are unattainable for us. Costs are driving us out and houses are being flipped for outrageous prices.
- Wages haven't kept up in Vermont.
- Vermont has a lot more jobs, which means that a lot of minimum wage jobs happen. Cost of living is higher because tourism is such a big thing here.
- It's a catch 22- we need it to be rural, but it costs more to get here because of transportation. We're taxed on shipping to get products here! Our legislators are hunting our own economy (shipping in and out is taxed in VT).
- OPP – higher paying jobs. There are tech jobs in other states that students go out to get – why not get them here?
- Challenge – people are better off living off the state. Those people on the edge stay on state aid because it's easier and better.
- OPP – we need hang out places for kids – there's no facility here for them to use. And parents are driving an hour or more to go to work.
- OPP – we need public transport to help this problem.
- Challenge – Vt was safe, with good family values. But now there are lots of people wanting change “our greatest export is our kids” and job for job our wages are low compared to other states. Not only that, but taxes here are very high.
- Challenge – childcare- statewide we're meeting on 60% of the need for childcare. In nine years the subsidies for childcare haven't been raised – it should be more affordable for low income parents so that they can get out to jobs, etc.
- Challenge – better housing. When you're living day to day you have to struggle just to meet the minimums and you can't save up or put anything away.
- Affordable vehicles, affordable accessible childcare, affordable state college and family friendly policies were all items that were generally agreed on.
- Student and school population is declining so there's a student teach ratio problem that makes budgets crash – it's a symptom of people leaving.
- Family friendly policies were seen as a big opportunity: education for employers to learn about how these work – and if people aren't aware of their rights as an employee then they let the company squeeze them – but how are we to be aware? “Usually when you get a job you have to sacrifice family time, benefits or sleep.”
  - Example of Green Mtn Coffee Roasters: better than Walmart, gives paternity leave and it's employee owned, with an open door policy to employees and the budget and everything being transparent.

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

- If you're a little person, you don't have a say.
- Employers that come to Vermont have to be required to care about the employees here.
- Getting jobs that people WANT to do, and that make good business sense – this is what VT should look for.
- Education – there should be more programs in schools about how to get further education, how to get a good job and how to run your own business.



- Incentive programs – in schools that showcase the high achieving students.
- Don't make it easier and better for people to stay on state programs – make it better for them to get a job and get out.

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

- Entrepreneurship – supporting our cottage industry is how we grow and maintain our identity – especially in the Kingdom. There was a workshop (that I missed!) that taught candle making and other skills that were important – we can learn these things and start our own businesses.
- 'Across the Fence' program is great because you learn more about what's here. These things need to be more advertised.
- \*\*As an action item for the policy council – we could take this conversation to our parent groups and encourage them to go on to town meetings. We could build these things in our towns that we talk about here. – Take this discussion to your parent groups!
- Town meetings are a great place to go with petitions from citizens.
- New parents are much more involved with kid's lives – if we want to encourage them to continue the values of VT – there's less of a 'Headstart mindset' as kids get older (*this was a distinction between parents being involved with young kids but not with older*) Parents are harder to reach out to because PTA and stuff doesn't really function.
- My experience with public school is that it isn't the same in terms of parent support as Headstart – we make a real point here, and we never give up trying to get parents involved. Vermont could learn something from how Headstart operates – it keeps people involved! It's a model that works.
- Health care is a big challenge for our communities – all of them. Mental health services especially are not often available.
- I wish we had 4-H and FFA in my community – some have it, but we don't. (*didn't capture town of speaker*).

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**March 5, 2008**

**GROUP NAME : UVM Class on Sustainable Community Development**

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

- Clean air.
- Strong sense of community that you don't have in the city where I'm from.
- Buy local doesn't exist in cities. The idea of community extends to our food.
- "life is calmer and people are nicer"
- "people are independent." Lots of people like to keep to themselves and are proud of their independence. Vermont is culturally independent "more independent than the rest of national culture."
- There's an entrepreneurial spirit here.
- People are proud of the name of Vermont. People want to be associated with the name.
- People are creative and open to new ideas.
- There are strong ties to the outdoors – recreation and farming.
- There's a consideration for others in the form of social justice. People here care about things happening to others – both here and around the world. There's a global awareness.
- There's 2 Vermonts, really. Chittenden County and then rural VT. Rural VT is conservative, close minded and more politically aware. Chittenden county is progressive and different. There's a tension between these two but the identities are very different.
- There's also a tension between Vermonters and tourism. We want to balance between serving the tourist industry and keeping VT the way WE want it (which is without people driving around).
- "People in Vt are sensitive to change." Whatever the change is – wind turbines, or highways, or school budgets.
- There's a divide between the rural poverty and urban bustle – there's rural depression, drug and alcohol abuse. But there's also lots of cultural traditions that are true to VT outside of Chittenden county – woodworking, crafts, etc.
- VT is seasonal and it slows down in the winter – especially urban Burlington! Seasons define the state; leaf peeping, mud season, etc.
- "Vermont is a staging point for the future" for the way the country should be – better business practices and a template for sustainability.
- Vermont can do this and manage it because of its small scale.
- Vermont is a good example of an ideal scale for planning and development work.

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

- a. C- Burlington is growing but it doesn't have the capacity to do so.
- b. C- Population increase – small communities are forcing development.

- c. C- The emigration of youth and lack of opportunity for people to stay here. How will small towns survive and sustain themselves if the youth leave?
- d. C- providing health care for average Vermonters.
- e. C- it's an expensive state to live in. Not a lot of jobs, and not a lot of money, so locals can't afford taxes and then get displaced. This is a major challenge.
- f. C – “VT is the worst for education. I read somewhere that we spend more on jails here than on education. What does that say for us?”
- g. C – Property taxes are one of the highest in the country and it may lead to only elites being able to live here (*professor gave example of taxes on house in NH and in VT*).
- h. O- Developing the local economy is the key opportunity.
- i. O – more training and education in the trades in high school so kids don't fall through the cracks. Not all kids should be on college track – some because they don't need to be, some because they can't afford it. It's all we ever heard in high school guidance “go to college!”
- j. O – Vt could attract more businesses but we need to keep the small scale here.
- k. O – Vt is a place where “outsourced executives” could do their work – it's out of the city and it has a high quality of life that is good for families.
- l. O – Strong renewable energy economy could grow here.
- m. O – business paradigm that supports our town plan and social good rather than increasing money. In other words, we should be actively recruiting businesses that give their employees the chance to be local leaders and will fit into a town plan for development.
- n. O – building a new energy infrastructure when our existing contracts run out.
- o.

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

- Participation is key – inclusion of people. The foundation of the future should have shared goals and common interests from all the people. Cornerstone of the problem of non-participation is inequity which undermines accessibility and knowledge. With accessibility and knowledge people feel empowered to participate.
- “I know this may sound smart-ass, but I think marijuana should be legalized. It would prove that we have a state with a strong government – another thing that differs us from other states. There's a lot of money in the trade of marijuana and the state should capitalize on it.” Windmills, power generation and independence also differentiate us.
- We should link businesses together in clusters to support their mutual growth. This will create innovation in progressive economic sectors.
- People react to change here; instead we need to just MAKE it happen – like windmills. If we want to move forward we have to do these things.
- Invest in education – when you have a population capable of thinking creatively you can get people involved in change.
- Affordability – if we can't control rising costs people won't be able to live here.
- The rising cost of heat is especially ridiculous and we can't afford it. We could have a population decrease because of costs. Government needs to take the lead in insulation for houses so that we can counter heat costs.
- 

### **IV. Thinking ahead in your lives, and given the background of this class and the things you**

**study, is there anything in your life you think you'll have to give up or change?**

- We are going to have to sacrifice driving as much as we do.
- “Consumption rates for everything are just not sustainable.”
- Certain foods will become either too expensive or non-existent in our markets. Speaker gave the example of having pineapple in the winter in Vermont.
- There will be a lot more Community Supported Agriculture and local seasonal foods.
- We rely on small numbers of plants and animals we live on – a small fraction of the actual diversity of these things that exists on the planet. Relying too much on one type of seed or grain (such as corn) is not a good idea. We need to diversify the seeds and types of food.
- Sacrificing our military supremacy on the national level is something we'll have to do.
- A lot of people don't connect to the community – people don't want to have neighbors. They live out on their own on purpose, and now sprawl is a problem because people don't like other people around. People are selfish about their space and they are going to have to give it up – it's deeply rooted in our American culture.
- But at the same time (another speaker) people want a place to call their own. “Someday I want to live on a little piece of land”, and there's nothing wrong with that. There's a root to our selfishness in American culture that comes being rooted in a place.
- Once our resources get more and more scarce, we'll want to get to know our neighbors more.
- There's an attachment of rights to monetary value.

**V. What does a sustainable community look like? Is there a model for development? If so, who creates the model?**

- It's important to people to create a 'sense of place' and a base of interest so that we can dedicate ourselves to something.
- A sustainable community is one maybe where we're not independent from other places and resources – self-sufficient – but where we at least pay for all the impacts of the things we consume. We pay for the wood, wherever it comes from, and the pollution caused.
- A sustainable community model depends on the people who live there – the community itself should create the model.
- There's a lot of working towards the public good and people have to step up to create a model.
- A lot of people don't know where to begin – so it's good to have an outside resource like VCRD to help them get started. The outside group can serve as a guide.

# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

## LARAWAY SCHOOL students and staff

March 29

(compiled from notes during the day of March 29 and from a school assignment from February 13. The comments include two staff people who were a part of the conversation as well as the ideas of the students themselves.)

### 1. What does Vermont mean to you?

- A unique place with a strong sense of purpose and community.
- Beautiful, conscientious about development, good democratic participation at local and larger levels, preservation of history, outdoor sports and exercise.
- Not a lot of opportunities.
- It's nice and the fall foliage is really nice. There are a lot of natural resources.
- It's a really nice place to visit in the winter and fall.
- It's very unique
- It means a lot more trails in the woods.
- Fun, wintery, snowboarding, basketball
- I think it means freedom and farming, green mountains and somewhere from where I'd never move.
- A home
- Green mountains.
- My home.
- Life. Everything. Family, friends, school. Skiing.
- Sports,
- Deer, wildlife, hunting, camping, family, school, friends
- Maple sugaring,
- 

### 2. What common values do Vermonters share?

- Clean environment
- Locally produced food, take care locally with a world view
- Love of the land, farming, local food and animal products
- Keeping it green, independent political thinking, civic involvement
- Early to rise, hard work
- The farms
- Agriculture, clean environment, the farms
- Skatepark, public transportation
- We grow our own food
- Jobs, air, school.
- Snow boarding
- Farming, hunting, doing things together

- Forestry, active – outside activity, working and having at the same fun at the same time. There should be more programs for logging that also show that you're a hard worker.
- I'd like to be a zookeeper – I like animals. York beach Maine, amusement park and zoo are there. We don't have one here.
- Want to work with kids; day school or preschool. Have to go to a college and have to do work 150 hours. There's work around here for people working with kids.
- I would like to be a vet – dog, cat, domesticated animals
- Hard work!

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

- CHALLENGES: keeping college grads here, connecting with global culture, improving literacy.
- Money, time, raising a kid, living in Sheldon
- Keeping our environment clean, getting more jobs, and more money
- Getting up in the morning, going to school, finding jobs
- Have more stuff to do
- Work, school, adults
- War, gas, cars
- More laws, stricter systems and more houses
- Health insurance
- Gas prices are going to be a problem – not just for VT. I can't walk from Eden to Johnson for school.
- Bio diesel or electric cars – that's a lot cheaper and it's not as harmful to the environment.
- Mass transit – but also a challenge because the population is so low. There have to be a lot of people using it, but getting people to it and schedule is a big challenge.
- Even when you work with kids, travel is a problem.
- Challenge when living in a village – there might be a community area, a general store. But you're living on the main road without a lot of bypasses so heavy trucks, and people going too fast. So more village downtown living – but the infrastructure goes right through the villages, and raising kids it's a real concern. Rte 15 is the most traveled highway in the state.
- Fix the roads! Fix the frost heaves.
- Forestry – there aren't enough trees and the woods may not be there. But I'd like to own my own forestry business.
- OPPORTUNITIES: lead in a small market economy, lead in 'green' economy, community based cultural life.
- Contracting, school, college and jobs
- Farming, construction and logging jobs and a good education
- Getting to go to college, living and having a clean environment
- Snowboarding, biking, learning
- New technologies, new cars and more cool 'shtuff'
- If someone wanted to become a pro snowboarder – VT would be one of the best places to do it in the US. There's no snow in Hawaii or places like that.

- SNOW – a challenge and an opp – you get to sugar, but you sink through it when you get the buckets, but you have to dig people out of the snow.
- Cold is also a downfall because the buckets had frozen.
- Sustainable forestry – also have to grow your own trees.
- For Day Care – there’s a big need for it now. People can’t stay home any more to take care of kids, so you’ll have to take care of them somehow. Day Care is a necessity because two jobs for parents these days.
- Cell phone is the most common way to communicate.
- I don’t want flying vehicles in the future! That’s scary. Aliens.
- Change is hard for people especially rednecks.
- 

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

- Healthy local-based economy, more tech training and apprentice-based education programs. More walking and bike paths in rural areas.
- Skate park in Sheldon. More stores in Sheldon/around Sheldon.
- Public transportation money for schools. And more skateparks
- A clean environment in Vermont and healthy food
- Work and learn together
- Take it one step at a time.
- Think about others – it’s a lesson to people about what they actually want or need.
- More cell service in Eden. We need a way to lower phone bills, and everyone’s paying two, so we should just switch to cellular.

**Council on the Future of Vermont**  
**Radio Call-In show on WDEV with Mark Johnson**  
**4/30/08**

**1. We are here to gather key points of your vision for the future of Vermont. What is the future we really want for our children and grandchildren?**

- We are getting taxed out of Vermont. We can't live here if taxes keep going up.
- There's a tradition of hard working businessmen. Who is Ethan Allen? He and his brother were businessmen, not \_\_\_\_\_ farmers. We need to reduce the size of government. It's growth has exceeded the growth of the economy. We need to be more pro-business; we can't rely on tourism or state jobs.
- There's a bill in the Senate that would allow farmers to grow hemp. This could be a great thing for Vermont.
- In statewide surveys we need to define the terms we are using. For example – affordability is a big term that gets tossed around a lot, but we don't know what it means and in what context. We define it as 30% of our expenditures on housing.
- Thanks for having this conversation. We all have personal perspective and ideas but the most important thing is to hold this conversation that we Vermonters we have our ownership of our comments and destiny. We can have a legitimate conversation. Having grown up in a community where the neighbors shared in work and pitched in to help each other in times of need; today I see a lot of individual efforts and then export services from a \_\_\_\_\_. There interconnectedness is diluted, but the strings are still here to pull. Sustainability will result from shared community.
- Vermont has restrictive regulations on agriculture. VT makes it difficult to have family enterprises outside dairy. Beef, poultry, \_\_\_\_\_, all have too much regulation. Vermont has fallen into overregulation; most states allow sale of raw milk. In VT its only 60 gls/day. Wineries are another example; you can only have 4 people at a time sampling your wines – this is an incredible restriction. We have to decide whether we over-restrict or encourage small scale family enterprises.
- Politics – we are a country pretending to be a state. We have the same architecture and compliance as large state but still are fierce about our local governments. So we spend more per capita on government – for example – we have to get permits from multiple places. We need to decide what things should be state and what things should be local decision. We need to eliminate the layers of government and eliminate inefficiencies – we have too many school districts, for example.
- Loss of community. The future of community radio and community businesses – there's a push for consolidation, consolidation, consolidation! I worry that accountants can rule the airwaves. I worry about the future of local businesses – the 'fabric of Vermont and the quilt of Vermont'. Think of the loss of local bookstores in bookstores in Burlington. WDEV is the 'electronic neighborhood' that connects people who are 'bowling alone.'
- The accessibility of everyone – especially political leaders. It means so much psychologically. You can approach government the way you'd buy a hot dog in New Jersey. Howard Dean was listed in the phone book! The day I'll be sad is when there's a



security systems in the statehouse. That would make you feel that this isn't the way it used to be. We don't want to lose the small town.

- On the permitting process; Dean had said when he was governor that he had 'instructed his people not to give water permits.' Fascism can come from something as small as water permits.
- Community is something I hope to see in Vermont in the future. Barre is going through a transition – we're wrestling to save the downtown against big boxes. What we used to do is build housing downtown, build high buildings downtown, create the need for shops downtown.
- We aren't going to be able to drive to Williston anymore. Housing downtown is very important, since energy costs are going to change mobility. We'll need to look at ways to live without having to commute. We'll need to look at high rise type development. Building taller in Vermont.
- Public transportation is something that's very important. Vermont is small and needs to focus on public transportation. The Marble Valley transportation – the board here should include riders, but right now it doesn't understand the ridership needs.
- I hope that people are talking to high schoolers? My son is going to leave Vermont, in part because there's no cell service, no internet. The kids in Vermont need the connection and ability to connect to commerce. "The Vermonter can't afford Vermont." This is sad that my son will move on. He's so great for this state, but he says that there's nothing here for him. We need to get VT up to the technology standards. "what if everyone didn't want telephone poles?"
- Complexities! We won't have cell phone coverage without regulatory change.
- The more they change the more they stay the same. The Lt gov in 1960 said that young people were leaving the state and that we needed more non-profits. The growth in the state budget is unsustainable. People are working for the state, etc – and we're going into a situation where we'll have an elite class and a low class and then the middle class will disappear.
- We need to empower the local communities. We need to empower the grass roots. Give them the ability to advance local efforts. VCRD really does a tremendous job at helping local groups succeed. Working on broadband is an example.
- Robert Putnam on Bowling Alone book – we do our own self dividing. We need to find identities that are beyond race (like coffee! Coffee is unifying from VT Coffee Company).

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**GROUP NAME: ARTS ACHIEVMENT DAY**  
**April, 2008**

**V. How has being in VT affected your work as an artists or arts organization?**

- The scope of where we live and the ability to communicate – vt is small and our communities are tight, so we can do our work as orgs easier.
- I moved to vt to be an artist. I knew it was a good place to come and haven't been disappointed. Incredibly well connected and inspired to be here.
- Breadth and preponderous-ness of the artists in our communities that can teach, inspire, work with people.
- The real natural beauty and spirit of VT – you can hear yourself think and breath. It's a healthy nurturing space and it's reflected in a lot of our art work – visual, sculpture, etc.
- Recently moved here – and the reception that I've gotten here is amazing. "Here people really respect the work more than just what's hip."
- Vermont is so great in the art and with many artists. I'd like to have an extension of international art exchange program – I'm thinking of Chinese artists and VT artists going there.
- Vt – beautiful village, great group, but there's a thrift side of VT and we're not able to support ourselves there. There's a limited market and being isolated.
- Sense of community is incredibly important to me as an artist and at the VAC. The natural beauty of the state informs my paintings, etc but I also agree that it's very hard to make a living as an artist here in the state. I'd like to see marketing outside of the state be easier.
- I'm an artist and a teacher – I have young kids, I'm at Island Pond, at Lyndon State and doing a photo community quilt. The funding for arts in the schools and arts education is really serious and it hurts the artistic communities.
- There's a real entrepreneurial spirit in VT – people aren't afraid to get things off the ground. Especially with the demographic shift that happening; we ask ourselves how we'll keep people here. We need to capitalize on that entrepreneurial spirit and nourish it. A challenge that we have in BTV and I'm sure throughout the rest of the state is Space – real issues with artists have to work with.
- 25 yrs ago moved here hoping to build my own home and do my art. Instead we started picture framing business and we love the quality of life in VT – all my employees are artists. It's wonderful, but money and the taxes run a small business under. The Community is great, the people are wonderful but I don't know how to do this without taxes.
- Chandler Center has the opportunity to present arts with great enthusiasm; hundreds of us are all volunteers. This would not happen in a big city – everyone is too busy to give up precious time for the arts.
- In Middlebury Center for the Arts – there's a smallness in size and in personally. You know people in a way that you can't when you live in a giant city. There's a distinct spirit

of cooperative work across VT that's different from competitive work that you see elsewhere.

- There are so many artists! There are always artists available and excited to be there.
- People may market Vermont art – but part of the future is to put dollars there. But we also market our quaintness and certain style about VT art that doesn't fit everyone here. We need to broaden the portrait of Vt artists.
- There's a stereotype of VT artists outside VT – a general sense of what Vt art.
- You have to get outside the state for sure. But artists need space and living conditions – Artists need artists around them; even though they work in isolation. We're not the cocktail set, but you have to get us out of isolation.
- We're celebrating our 20<sup>th</sup> season at City Hall with Lost Nation Theater. I've been thinking a lot about where we started and where we are now. The support for arts have increased with renovations, volunteerism, etc. We're doing a fall tour and three of the venues are almost brand new. Community is something that people think is ideal – you have to really connect with the audience in a 150 seat theater and that for me is a metaphor for what works in VT – human scale. As we continue to grow over the next 20 years, we're going to continue to trust in that value of community that we have and we need to continue to work at that.

## **II. Given these impacts/affects, what should be nurtured and supported for arts and artists in VT?**

- Space! Young folks and performing arts and dance...
- The most important thing is that 'artists say it's hard to make it. It doesn't matter what state you're in'. so Marketing is PARAMOUNT.
- The human scale is what's important to my vision as an artist, but to hear how the arts education is being cut – that has to stop. But we have to have the balls to stop it. The future of the arts in Vt start at K and 1 and 2 and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades. Keeping people here after they graduate isn't as important as having them come back. We need to keep the arts in ed from K up, so that they have something to come back to.
- The Cartoon School in White River Junction is new, masters degree program. The theater program, the school and a TipTop bakery with studios is turning around a faded town. I would love to see state policy that encouraged this sort of thing and deliberately put money into arts schools, studios, rehearsal spaces in depressed areas in the state.
- We do not have an arts college in this state. We've got to find a college here that promotes the arts; Bennington does, but we need an arts school or arts college in this state.
- I'm a recent mover to VT and am taken by the scope and breadth and depth of the artistic communities here. I think the state has a responsibility to nurture and develop the arts field in the same way they do small business for example. The state has a responsibility to help develop working business models where they could be sustainable for the next generation.
- We should get an arts seat on the legislative committees. We're about to tour a show on crime victim services, civil rights, etc. The arts can be a part of solving solutions in prisons, etc. We need a seat on to advise if we're going to be part of the solutions. The arts can have a huge impact on the social services in particular.

- A lot of artists make their way through teaching. It would be great to have some support for artists who teach through the school year, it would be great to have support for the arts education to be support through the teachers.
- The natural environment. It isn't necessarily connected to art, but it's a real resource here for us and so it should be a role in partnership.
- I think projects like the Puzzle and the Palette programs makes the arts available to everyone and at the same time promoting the arts. A little support to people through grants as well is very important – gives great publicity and shows support.
- People who are lay person hobbyists are more likely to take an interest. And we need to encourage the lay person roles so that more people have the opportunity to support.
- It's easy to focus on the arts and arts education. But we need to focus also on reaching out beyond ourselves, beyond America. We need to think about our other places, cultures, other worlds. The arts as an educative bridge between cultures.
- I've wondered if it's been considered to use micro-loans to start up help artistic work to go. There's a lot of young people coming to VT – we want them here to start these businesses, but a micro-loan would be great because it enable people to do this.
- I think that the state has an obligation to push this data out. When artists enrolled in economic development, then they COUNT. When they are a part of the database, they have a place at the table.
- Teaching art and language together – and this way children are learning art and language together. Chinese, Japanese and Korean culture packages to do this.
- Another argument for art and also math and education. Art is really critical in using design to learn the technologies, visualize the data, etc. We need art to get people to be able to picture some of the coming changes in technology, math, engineering.
- If you get the state behind it – you could use artists as volunteers to teach young people, especially some of the troubled ones. Something that like would provide VT with a lot of publicity and raise awareness.
- Technology is changing the very nature of art. The Cultural Economy is going to rely heavily on this.
- As arts presenters, we're often the flatlanders, and our challenge is to reach those who are not. If we knew how to draw in the plumber, and the farmer, we'd have a better way to do this.
- We have to acknowledge the fact that this is a bit of an 'us and them' state. I've always felt this 'us and them' thing. Even in an academic community we feel it. There's people who've been here a very long time, and how do we reach these.

### **III. Do you have a vision for the next generation?**

- We talked about what the state should be doing – but we should take that a step further down to the community level. I live in Waterbury and we have our own issues that we're not going to share with anyone else! If we can get local places to make arts acceptable on a street level – just a sculpture at the local public place – then people are thinking about it. It's not re-creating the past it's just keeping it alive, but making it move ahead.
- In Brattleboro, we have a collective of young people who have taken over the space and call it the Tinderbox. We make a particular point of engaging these young people – it's

incredibly vibrant. But we need them more than they need us. We really try to engage them.

- My feeling about young people leaving is that I think they should go for awhile. There's an isolation in VT so they should get out. I think it's vital that they go, and while some won't come back, I see the political, global, climate situations continuing the way they are now then lots of people will come here.
- I grew up here but I came back three times. This is the best place to be and anyone with any sense figured that out! I've been doing theater for a long time. When I can't do theater, I'd like a job encouraging people to work together more; to find ways to collaborate. As a group we can make a bigger statement than individual arts orgs.
- I'd like to pick up on the environmental issue and the technology issue. I think those are major things for this state, and I think we could make a difference. I can imagine people in arts schools, sculptural professions; I can see people here having a lot to say about what windmills, new houses, etc, would look like.
- I envision a future in VT where everyone has broadband and it works, but our TVs don't. Instead of having highways built all the time, we have light rail transport on their old railbeds – we need to change the way we conceive of our society as literally driven by the oil industry. It's going to take some major changes in thinking about the way the society goes.
- I moved here as a teenager to be a part of a traveling theater. I went out and worked, but I'm back because that picture of theater is very weakened. They've lost what they were saying and why. I think none of us are able to imagine what the future will actually bring. We need to replace the resources that we've been using with the resources of our brains. We only use a small part of these brains, and we're meant for something more. It's important for people to get together and have other people to come and see it. Kids in the future will have to figure all this stuff out and we have to encourage our kids to go quantum leaps beyond where we are. We have to foster that. But if kids can take these skills that they are learning, and cross the gaps that exist – that's why I came back here to do this.
- It's so important to look at our economy today and realize that kids can't make it as a logger or farmer, but in essence the arts are essential to our future economy.
- I think we have to take a larger charge of our destiny. In particular, we have to think about the resources. We as arts orgs always fundraising for others. As a model for fundraising, we should look at the venture capital market in green market. We should have an arts directive in investment – if a percentage of the money that is outside of Vermont could be brought back into VT. I mean investment – a business model.
- I think that what the arts can do in Vt is to stop eroding village life. I see examples of small villages eroding over time. But anything that can be done by the arts to keep the villages alive – this is where the arts and the true character of the town. Through really respecting village life! The people from BTV can come out to rural areas to see this show.
- The actual historic structures are very important.
- My vision is to get that person in the government or on the governor's council so that things can actually change.
- I love a diverse environment and cultural exchange, but I'm not sure I can get that outside of Johnson, VT. For me to stay here, we need to foster as we can more diverse and cultural communities in VT. We need to be more welcoming and less homogenous.

- The arts in VT need LAB conditions – like the research triangle in North Carolina. Also the performing arts are 3-4 times more expensive to create this environment for. But arts are market driven in so many ways, it takes decided support.
- Sometimes it's a matter of embracing change – in my limited experience in VT we have a hard time doing that. We need to be excited by it and embrace the change.
- I would like to see more and more international artists to live, work and show here.

#### **IV. How do you see artists and arts orgs contributing to this vision?**

- It seems that there's a big demographic that's going to be aging. Seniors that participate in the arts have fewer falls, better vision, and a few other things you wouldn't expect. So this population would be in better health – lots with volunteer time on their health. The aging population as an opportunity for expanding the arts.
- I think expanding the national and international opportunities for artists and kids to get out and see some of these other opportunities.
- How do we use these places that are empty – and attract young artists to these spaces.
- I'd love to see a network of very small venues where artists and all kinds of events don't need to rely on their own venues but can move around. We like to be individual, but if you can have people that are moving and places that are open, we'd have a movable feast!
- Artists' space can be as small as individual rooms in people homes. Artists from outside could be coming working and staying.
- We need to help people understand the value of art. From educating little kids, to community to the market. It's up to us to help people to understand the value of what we're doing.
- 
- 

#### **Are there trends that impact the global level as a backstory, and if so, do the arts have role?**

- This is going to be a life changing time, and it might be in a bad way. Artists can see things and we have visions. I feel strongly that artists can look ahead and imagine things.
- I think we have to be careful, because if this future comes when transport and oil are hard, it could make us more isolated. We can be such a model because we're small. We have a small, accessible state here.
- Artists, and arts orgs being leaders in their community. Most of the people who are here today are because they stand up, take leadership roles and participate in the broader community.
- The artists in Woodstock began this process on Sustainable Woodstock. We're bringing this to the entire town through the arts on Earthday. Poetry, film, choir, etc – this will present the intensely important issues here.
- The evolution of American culture has been in the end an erosion of the liberal arts ideal. That's going to through us back on our imaginations. What we suffer from more than anything else is a lack of imagination. We're your people!
- We need to beef up the train stations and artists can do this! The stations are scary!
- In Denmark – they have certain times when poets or musicians are on the train.

- I think we have a language problem. One thing that the artists have to do is advocate and learn how to talk to policy makers. We're good at putting ourselves in other people's places. We need to walk in their shoes and talk in their language and guide them to a new ways of seeing what their job could be. Right now they don't get it, and they don't know how to be engaged in the arts because they don't understand.

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**April 14, 2008**

**GROUP NAME :Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility**

**I. Are there core values you hold as an organization that you think are Vermont values?**

- This is a business organization, and we try to ask ‘how does business interact in helpful ways in society?’ We’re not anti-profit, but we’re aware that business is one of the largest players in society.
- A society at peace with itself and that educates the next generation on real and ongoing issues is one of the most important values.
- Healthy people and healthy communities are essential for the economy – in other words business does better and relies on people in places that are vibrant and healthy.
- “we’re pro-choice about society. We don’t see this as a dichotomy, but in the rest of the world it is.”
- “Something has caused business to be very removed from the rest of society. Most Vermonters are actively seeking to do the right thing by their employees”
- People are confused about “how to be the good guy”.
- “It comes down to our planning horizon – we look at businesses that say they ‘can’t’ make some new idea work. The turnaround – and the reaction times – are so quick in the business world” examples included any business investment has to show return quickly, or it is not ‘worth doing’, and how the market responds to fads and fashions, not to long term trends. The cycle that is most motivating in today’s business world is the “bonus cycle”. Publically traded companies are driven by fear about traders.
- **Energy world** is going to be a major change for Vermont – energy use, our state portfolio and all this will change in less than 4 years.
- Education is another place that we believe needs investing in today for years to come.
- Vermont values – there is a fierce identification with place here. Although we’re not immune from what’s happening around us in the world, we see in Vermont that community investment is beneficiary. Unless you feel the difference on an immediate scale, people won’t invest.
- The general mistrust and adversarial relationship to business is more recent, due in part to the fact that corporations and companies in general have no connection to place anymore. They can locate anywhere. But in the Vermont the commitment to place is unique – as we’re beginning to see that. There are only 2 degrees of separation here, and that is a very POWERFUL thing for business owners. It’s a sense of behavior modification – you have to act as an upright business and you have to be responsible.
- “Vermonters in general feel shame when a business that uses the VT brand does something bad. I personally feel affronted when this happens. The responsibility keeps businesses and people in line.”



## **II. What is the major threat/threats to the Vermont economy in the next 30 years? What kinds of solutions are you looking to produce?**

- We're looking to give back. We're looking for social responsibility – although that tagline can come with a lot of connotations. We want to make clear to our members that it's not a moral imperative, it's a market imperative to be responsible to your community. We know this because we know that the profit-driven short term model is falling apart.
- “Social responsibility can be a ball and chain. Many organizations live these values but they don't wrap this mantle around themselves.”
- There is a core strategic advantage here in Vermont – you can talk to people with the same issues, and you find yourself in agreement/in harmony with others, even business people.
- “I do these things because they make me feel good. Not really trying to create solutions, but trying to make a life that I was proud to have lived.”
- There is a unique quality in the business owner. There is an opportunity that comes with responsibility. The individuals who start these firms want to do something more than just make money. “you start businesses here not because it makes sense”. There was a vision of the founders of VBSR who want more than profit.
- People who share values and a vision originally, but now there are people who see the bottom line changing and want to know more about the business practices that we undertake. They are feeling a lot of pressure.
- THREATS: peak oil, the price of oil and global warming. These things are threats to business because they affect the bottom line but they also affect the marketability of what we do.
- There's a sense of community that's larger than what we normally think about – that even the business community thinks about about – there are interrelationships and dependence on each other between sectors. VT business owners have sense of working with family and business – they work with honor. “They take a long time to decide about hiring, because it's like bringing in a new family member.”
- Supply – side economics may indicated that government won't ask anything of us as long as we produce wealth that will trickle down. But in VT, because we're so small it matters to all of us that we're here. It SHOULD matter to IBM that American Flatbread is here.
- BUT – all businesses should know that there is a limit to resources – a limit to growth, a limit to debt, to produce, to soil, to water, etc. (Another person responded) This is the job of art and artists – to show humanity its own limits.

## **III. How does the business community provide leadership in Vermont?**

- We are developing a new model for business. We are educating and proselytizing and helping our members to live this new model. We are trying to articulate and define it.
- The model has to be quantifiable – which is part of the challenge. There are people who don't see the need for sustainability measures – but you can't pick and choose what's important. This is who you are as a business.
- We try to provide a community of businesses and give them space to talk about it.

- We start the conversation within and without VBSR about the issues we see. And the more people who talk, the better!
- Another participant mentioned that these concerns about sustainability can feel elitist and that VBSR and others need to ensure that they are connecting with the real concerns of the communities where they are operating.
- Finally, one respondent mentioned that these threats and global issues can be seen as a positive force for social responsibility.

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation**  
**Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce**  
**May 7, 2008**

**1. Does VT have business values that connect to VT brand identity?**

- a. For some companies it's a marketing tool that is very effective – the majority of businesses in VT are just like businesses everywhere else.
- b. But it's a minority of businesses.
- c. When you spend time away you see that there others recognize Vt and so you see that its like this – VTers don't realize this.
- d. Experience with the workforce here and other places. The difference with the workforce and the ethics of the people here is much higher than other places. Why did Bombardier locate to the Barre area? They had evaluated different places, but the ethics of the workers that they saw was different – they chose VT because of the workforce here. Just witnessing and seeing how people act. My experience coming from Mass to Vt – very noticeable in terms of productivity and efficiency.
- e. If we look at a business with a cold eye – it is global. There may be a few niche companies that can live in a Brigadoon world where things can pass around them – but they are few. Vermonters are very good about coming together about what they don't want. But they don't come together about what they do want – and how to get there. The things that I frequently hear: I wish my kids could get a job, I wish they could buy a house, I wish businesses that paid good wages was here, and be a pretty place to live and have a good lifestyle. Alright, so the argument to the next step: have to be globally competitive – education, skills, infrastructure – etc. You build out the necessary pre-conditions about what it means and you have to figure out where you can compromise. We need to measure every objection against where we want to go – and start to make some hard decisions. We have accepted everyone's right to object but haven't made these hard choices. It's very politically convenient to 'not say no'. But you lose the prize when you get distracted.
- f. You see it in Act 250 all the time. Act 250 is supposed to weigh the development project, but there's not a way to weigh the positive economic impacts against the environmental impacts.
- g. There's a disparity between individuals and clients I work with. The thing that I hear from clients is that they decided to come here because of the reputation for innovation, but they don't find that the workforce fits what they assumed was here. There's a misconception between the companies that are hiring and the employees that people need. There are jobs here but we just can't find people to fill them.
- h. I'm the oldest guy sitting in this room and a native Vermonter. The thing that really concerns me is the sea change that has taken place. The perception of 'what Vermont is' is couched in the 40s and 50s. but that isn't the case anymore. It used tto be farms back in the woods, but now there's a tremendous amount of poverty too. How many Vermonters can afford to ski at Stowe? I skied there as a kid, but going into those parking lots today you don't see the cars from Vermont. We've let the environmental people come in here, and use the environment for their own

purposes, not for the good purposes of protecting it. Sprawl has taken place; its happened, its here.

- i. It strikes me that we've evolved into a very bifurcated population over the last 30 years. Those populations are somewhat diametrically opposed to each other. People seeking refuge – retirees, maybe unemployed or unemployable – but with a different set of goals that the people coming out of school and wanting to have a life and a job and a lifestyle. The first set carries a greater discretionary income and political will to make the change. I'm not sure we're going to get out of it until that generation dies and we'll be in a panic because we haven't put in place those jobs and that infrastructure.
- j. When do we start to recognize and promote that Chittenden County is different from the rest of Vermont? It's not rural – Chit Co is a different animal than the rest of Vt – and when do we get the rest of Vt to recognize that?
- k. Our small size and our accessibility to elected leaders is a unique asset to this state.
- l. But it's also fragile. There's always change happening – good and bad, but it's life. But the speed of change over the last few years is fairly visible to folks. People were here because of accident, or they chose to come, but people should appreciate what they have. We have to decide what we want to make this place going forward. We want to figure out what we want to preserve. Then what can we afford towards those goals? Then, are those goals attainable? We have caviar tastes and baloney budget – but if we're going on a diet we need to decide what and how we want. The margin of difference between VT and the rest of the nation isn't as wide as it was a few years ago.
- m. It's important to distinguish between new businesses and the entrepreneurial set. People who move here and have made a conscious decision to move here have a certain set of values and place it on Vt QOL. The businesses that come out of that set reflect those values. We also have a loyalty to settlement patterns, farms and open spaces, but this was based on the open space being the economic driver. Now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is not the economic driver – and we need to accept that reality and decide how to use that land and open space.

**2. Wherever we go there's a dialogue around sustainability – from peak oil folks to branding 'green' – and GBIC has taken on a leadership here. How important in your view is the 'green strategy' for the future?**

- a. First we need to be realistic – wishful thinking is not economic reality. We do have advantages in Vt like the Vt ethos. We do have a lot of entrepreneurs which is good, but first, 'green' is technologically driven. Right now its in Texas, Mass, etc. UVM does not have the technical expertise to do this – we've got to look at niches. We have to understand those limitations. We have to entrepreneurs who are not outsourcing the work to China and other places. Very few successful business people are romantics.
- b. I'm not really a fan. I don't like the idea of a state picking winners or losers or picking a business over another. We need to have laws in place that make it easy for anyone to succeed.
- c. We have to be careful about exploiting the wrong thing. When I go other places, there are states that are doing more than us – we need to be careful of hubris. If it's too broad and doesn't have a strong foundation.

- d. It's important to remember that those things we talk about – setting the foundations are important for other things too. For example, setting a research agenda, needing access to start up capital venture, you need places for people to live where they want to live. People buy houses and live where they want to. Whatever kind of economy you have it's driven by fundamental basics and its good for any type 'black, brown, grey'.
- e. GBIC did a very clever job in defining green – which is an inclusive definition. Others defined it as an exclusive 'my company', 'my business' needs special treatment. We had to get on this before it ran away.

**3. GBIC strategy talks about the export economy – are there particular things that build VT's exports – and in line with this. How important is making things?**

- a. I think it's wonderful that people at the end of dirt roads want to consult in Sri Lanka, but you don't build an economy on people at the end of dirt roads. We lost 81 jobs in NEK last week. We need to get past this idyllic view – we need to find jobs that bring in 50 -100 jobs, and stop the love affair with oneses and twosies.
- b. If there is a Vermont sense of community it has a base in a sense of equality. With the boutique high-end end of the road businesses you are creating the bifurcated economy. You will end up with split classes! Right now you have many students not graduating, and you have to have a spectrum of economic opportunity so that those who can't be there still can maintain their lifestyles.
- c. It strikes me that a key component of any economy is a sizable dose of ambition. Setting up a website at the end of a dirt road is personal goal but not an ambition. This is one of the reasons we lose so many people to other areas, be they monetary, cultural or whatever variety of reasons they have. In my 30 years in Vt – this ambition can't be fulfilled here.
- d. I might take exception to that – if we start with Mr. Watson and passion for skiing, or Ben and Jerry, Green Mtn Coffee, Burton, etc – these are here because of a passion for what Vt is to them. They are trying to fulfill a lifestyle niche and have manufacturing here. They are a big part of our central Vt and northwestern economy. There are small pieces of this happening that those people are here because of that – fulfilling personal as well as business goal.
- e. I think the next component of that is 'how do we keep the businesses we have?' We can't even give IBM the transportation infrastructure that they need – we've got to figure out some way to keep what they've got. And we have to have some way to send the message that Vt is open. My son is head of manufacturing and he says the 'word is out that you don't go to Vermont'.
- f. There is a an emerging sector of tech based and value added sector that is doing work for companies around the world right now. I want to go back to the 'green strategy' for a bit. If you peel it back we're all talking about the same things: better coordination between higher education and business, getting kids skills that will allow them to compete, improving infrastructure and communications and improving access to capital. These are the baseline tools that we need in order to begin to remedy that misconception about 'don't go to VT.' We use that end of the brand to achieve some leverage to get the strategies we need to see.
- g. Just returned from China – and my understanding is that those emerging economies are based on products that are made with inexpensive labor and transportation.

When we reach these higher levels of oil, one of the legs of NAFTA and international trade falls off because cheap oil becomes a noose around the neck of the cheap products. The question is ' will we see a reversal of the workforce, the industry, and will we return to more manufacturing occurring locally – will these issues resolve themselves? I'm only an observer of oil trends, but we're struggling to come up with other resources to fulfill these needs. China is already having a downturn economically – it's not what it used to be. We've all been raised with a commodity of oil and I do believe that at some point we're going to have to rely on more regional resources that we do now because we won't be able to afford the transportation.

- h. We better hope not – because you'll reduce consumer options and choice. You'll reduce the standard of living. You'll increase unit costs. There are enormous opportunities for efficiencies that can stretch that affordability of oil for a long time. You put two people in a car you increase vehicle miles traveled by 100%, you could ban SUVs!
- i. I don't think we'll see oil downturning – the cost of oil going up will make the cost of local economy more competitive. It may rectify some of this.
- j. This opened up transportation. First, we do a lousy job in VT of moving people. We've lost Vt Transit – and we have an enormous opportunity to change that. How do we improve the corridor? We need to get to the funds that are there – we've got 40 million dollars of federal earmarks that we've had for four and a half years; why haven't we been able to use it? There is a cost effective rail strategy. The other issue we talked about is energy. All the fuel oil in Vt comes by rail car; and those cars are only loaded to 80% because our rail system isn't up to the national standards. We've got the money but it's a case of making the commitment to match the money. Come to the meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> –

**4. We're going out to communities and we're hearing a lot about affordability. People are struggling in communities throughout Vt. They talk about growing disparity between classes within towns and between towns. Does business have a role either in perpetuating the divisions between people or helping to resolve this pattern?**

- a. The word 'role' needs to be discussed. Is it the job of business to fix the economy? No, the job of business is business. If business is allowed to do its job, it will provide jobs and support that will lift up and fix that gap. If someone says – we want business to invest here or tax too much so someone else can spend the money.
- b. I would say that our business is to bring in these newly trained people – we're training Vtters to be ready for these kinds of jobs. We need to know what types of jobs we're training people for and we need to prepare them for these kinds of jobs.
- c. It's like a piece of pie. Everyone has their piece – if you want to have a bigger pie, people will feel like they are advancing, but when your piece gets smaller that's when people worry. There is nothing big on the horizon to get these pieces that are bigger. We have to have a critical mass in some of these areas – we have to develop some of this (example of fuel cell engineers). But in terms of business – this is not the role of business to take responsibility for it. Rather business's role is to grow.

- d. Vermont businesses aren't looking for the wild West. They want responsible growth, opportunities and they want fair regulations.
- e. In Mass, 15 yrs ago they made a commitment to growing biotech industries – they had the foresight to identify what that niche was. They didn't sit around and say 'we want something to come in'.
- f. The best example is the captive insurance management in the state. Something the state developed with low tax rates, etc, because we recognized those issues. Ireland or anywhere else, it's allowed people to expand in business.
- g. I think the economic development – the division of econ development – and the RDCs need to be revamped significantly. These folks don't work together, rather they all have their own fiefdom and their own piece of the pie. They really don't coordinate these efforts – we're in this mold and model that was built 40 years ago. We have too many small groups – instead we should split the state into three areas. We have not had a full time office in the closest economic engine we have to Vt which is Quebec. We need an office up in Canada to look at these opportunities. I think there needs to be a re-shuffling of these priorities within our government.
- h. The issue that Vt faces is something that a lot of rural states are facing. It's a common challenge – like 'how do you attract biotech if you don't have the critical mass' – are you looking at those other states' models? I'm struck by the fact that there is a dichotomy between the rest of the state and Chittenden County – it has the opportunities that plenty of others don't have. Every person who lives in the ten acre lots that I am a part of in Morrisville; everyone works out of their homes or out of their county. But no jobs in the county.

**5. People come back to this concept of Vermont scale – both as a hindrance and as an opportunity. Can we be a laboratory of innovation?**

- a. We move too glacially as a community to take advantage of opportunity. We'd have to have the capacity for education to evolve, we'd have to create the environment to build this.
- b. What we've become is a 'social laboratory' – we seem to want to be on the cutting edge of social trends that are going on, instead of focusing on the robust economic future. I think we have a lot of trends that are going against us. Frankly, if we don't get it right we'll look like upstate New York! The reality is that we have to create an environment where people will come here and stay here. We need low taxes and regulations that will allow people to come here.
- c. In Mass they identified the resource and the asset – the schools – and for us it's the same thing: what resources do we have that we can build on and germinate?
- d. The one message is that when business succeeds, all the social services and non-profits succeed. Business is hurting this year and we don't see the social services being supported. But we haven't done the hard work around taxation, regulations to be a business laboratory?
- e. I just think it's really important that we listen to the silent majority and not the vocal minority. I think they are steering Vt down the wrong path and the whole lot of people that need to be heard – I hope that people can see.
- f. There's a real opportunity to figure out what the next generation of NON-college graduates could do in Vermont. I don't think we've focused enough on what would

employ high school graduates instead of college graduates. There's a missing middle.

- g. Rail has a great environmental statement – I tried to get the environmental people on board with rail but although I tried, they didn't want to hear it. Their interest is not the environment, but to make a name for themselves on the back of Vermont so that they can take their interests nation-wide.
- h. I'm a legislator and I spend a lot of time door to door campaigning. I find that a lot of people have an internal contradiction about what they want. I think the most difficult thing is to reconcile the contradiction that resides in most of us; we want a vibrant economic environment but we also want to retain the Vt that they perceive. I think the work that needs to be done is around how to we resolve that contradiction. We need to be put on a path that needs to reach both of those goals. This chamber has really tried to recognize that there are divergent interests and the positions that it takes.



**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Vermont Woodlands Association**  
**May 16, 2008**

**1. How does forest management and forest products industry connect with traditional and modern values of Vermonters?**

- Maine is most forested in nation—VT is 3<sup>rd</sup>. We are part of northern forest. We need to emphasize forestry related matters. IT contributes as much as ag. But gets none of the credit. 11M contributed to ag, but very little to forest products industry. We compete with Canada for the industry. Cheap electricity and national healthcare so costs are taken care of. Crown lands subsidies. There are loans. We need to recognize the importance of the industry—we are losing jobs to Canada.
- Vt's history with forests are really interesting—they were sole source of support to early colonists but seriously abused then. Now there's a synergy of working forest—honor it but make a living with it. We don't want to put a fence around it and say—look at the pretty trees. Now our forests are back from where they were—we can't take them for granted.
- Vermonters value and relate to forest. Working forests—jobs value and a host of recreational opportunities and the natural world and wildlife that are all key values. Then there's clean water. Forests make clean water and air and sequester carbon
- Working on the land, not a one sided visual relationship.
- Working with the land—that's the synergy/
- VT values around the forest are pretty stable—we're looking to a new generation of stewards. VT is almost defined by its forests—ag. Land is shrinking but forest land are extensive. I have a deep connect to the land—and my kids do—but increasing numbers don't and are disconnected from the land and the forest. We need to get new generation connected.
- We need to connect our love of the land to the next generation
- We've prided ourselves on independence but haven't lived up to it—particularly in energy—we resist dams and wind power—we ship our environmental problems elsewhere and call ourselves green.
- No other state is as close to developing a “European Forest Ethic” as part of the culture—Germany, France, Switzerland. Held in very high esteem—we dissed them in United States.
- Worcester range is a good example. Used to be for wood and wood heat. Most people now look at it for development—homes and parcelization—Stowe expansion up the slopes of the range.
- We've lost some sense of small town community—especially down south. Land sold off, mills gone, farms gone, leads to loss of community, mostly because of people moving in with different ideas...it's happening quickly. Schools do help integrate.
- Changing demographics. Mad River Valley we see occupants have vacation homes—bring assets with them and replace the people who had to earn their living on the land or in connection with it. Used to be an economy of local enterprises but now its from investments...it's not all bad if folks have a land ethic...some do contribute back to the community.

- Boosted land prices has made investment in forest products uneconomical. Parcelization is also changing landscape.

## **2. When you look out 30 years, what are the best and worst case scenarios for Vermont's woodlands?**

- Parcelization and Fragmentation. Land value and affordability. Then there's the posting of land.
- There's a real value to Vermonters freedom to share the land and walk out in nature—that is being cut off.
- The “suburban fortress mentality” Vermont was always about open land—much more than neighbors.
- Biggest threat is changing demographics and changing connection to land—we need to encourage investment in a working landscape...Landowners own for 12 years on average but it takes 100 years to grow a mature Maple. How to get people to store investment for the long term. Are the policies from VT govt. discouraging long term investment or encouraging?
- Then there's investment in the infrastructure. Every 18 months we lose a sawmill. We're losing our markets—where do we sell, if we can't sell, we can't manage forest—and then no reason for long term investment and other uses—development—take precedent. Do we have state tax laws that will help keep long term investment and generational transfer?
- Things started changing with interstate—we are moving local costs of govt to state level and towns have challenge to finance infrastructure. Independence of towns is threatened.
- Young people disconnecting, it builds indifference—and that's awful. We can correct if we stay rural.
- Timber industry is old—loggers are old. Need young people to go into the industry. What's a young person to do—need a quarter million to get started in building a business. Capital intensive business, and limited access to that capital.
- Polarization of special interests. We lose our effectiveness to address big picture.
- Global Climate change—new question:
- People have misconceptions about climate change. The bigger problem is invasives. We have boreal forest—we won't see total change in a couple hundred years but invasive bugs, plants, and diseases. These connect to warming more than species change
- Forestry viability was issue in the legislature, to build new loans etc like state does for agriculture. FPR is looking into certifying state forests.
- Fuller's Granville bowl factory went out of business because it couldn't get enough certified wood.

## **3. What are the opportunities in Vermont in the future?**

- As a forester, it occurred to me, that I'm in the energy business. Look at value of 1M BTUs—about \$44 in oil, \$14 in wood pellets. This is an opportunity that will burst forth. We need to take it seriously. Firewood isn't for mass market. New technologies will make pellets a viable technology rivaling oil.
- New market.

- I want to see a wood pellet manufacturer here in Montpelier.
- It bothers me that Germans have come and leapfrogged over Vt because of fear of regulatory climate—they've gone to NY and NH. It will be nuts to ship to NH and then have us buy pellets back here in VT . We need to get with it. Why don't we have another wood chip plant.
- Real crisis in oil heat this next winter—we need to move fast. We can sustain. An acre of VT forest can produce a ton annually in perpetuity. This gives a market for what you want to get rid of to improve timber.
- VT perfectly situated.
- A guy in Mont. Has invented a slap-on pellet system that hooks to your furnace—it's coming!
- Why doesn't the state have a tax credit to support consumers making this decision.
- VT more than other states can take advantage of this opportunity

**4. What are some other key priorities for the future to be conserving the working landscape ( or achieving your best case scenario)?**

- A growing awareness of environmental dynamics. We need to capitalize on that. We need to exercise leadership.
- We need to connect the dots between woodland owners and consumers. Build value added chain and understanding of how the economy works together.
- Northern hardwoods—Vt has capitalized our special species—but need to promote and attract the kind of businesses that can use it here.
- Current Use has improved the quality of logs for upper end of sawlog range. We are producing better quality; we need to promote it as VT product. VT Certified Wood.
- Carbon market may also be a key opportunity. Was set up for reforestation—not useful for VT—federal laws need to include VT.
- Ecological values—providing clean water, carbon storage, etc. People need to realize that working landscape best conserves these values—it's not bad to cut down a tree.
- Value needs to accrue through the chain and reach landowners to support good decisions there.
- Middle schools and high schools shift from teaching connection to environment to career and going to school out of state and environment goes from working landscape to a preservation sense.
- They are teaching kids that the sky is falling.
- It's ridiculous. Teachers telling kids that cutting any trees is wrong.
- Property tax—hardly an acre.
- State's over reliance on fair market value is a travesty—it puts VT up for the highest bidder. Creates hate and discontent and other states have done away with it. There needs to be a simpler way to tax land so that you don't need to use 'use value'. Valuing land at the highest value that can be achieved from it is wrong and puts pressure for bad decisions.
- Use value is a bandaide
- Need tax reform to lessen the property tax situation.

**5. Some people say there is a tough balance point between the rights of landowners and the conservation values of the general public. Does Vt Woodlands have a position on this or do you have individual reflections?**

- Tension well illustrated in GMNF deliberations. Wilderness activists dominated. There's a general lack of understanding of difference between conservation and preservation.
- Conservation connotes wise use, sustainable use, not exploitative use.
- This board dearly loves the working landscape. The only way we can survive and economic policy can survive is if VT has sound economic base. If businesses leave, none of the wise use will survive. People will be desperate and cash in and leave a wake of devastation. Bottom line, keep state's economy strong, then working landscape will thrive.
- Preservation is a component of conservations; some set asides have their place
- The single best investment is in education. Avoid polarization—support in understanding of the whole. The we can work together better.
- Lessons of the land are apparent in our history—but you need to be able to read the rock walls, the species, etc to see forest not as primeval but as the result of values and past usage—past decisions of land-owners.

## **COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**

### **November, 2007**

#### **Vermont Council on Rural Development Board members**

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

- Several people noted Vermont's independence and self-reliance.
- Vermont offers a wealth of natural beauty and nurtures a love of the outdoors. Vermont has a strong working landscape.
- There is a high level of citizen engagement; it is a state that is politically and ideologically charged.
- Vermont feels like home. Part of that feeling is a sense of safety.
- Vermont has a strong sense of place. The small size of the state provides a connection to the geography and people. Because Vermont is small, people identify with the state as a whole, rather than their own town.
- Some people feel that Vermont displays a high level of tolerance. Newcomers are accepted and encouraged to serve their communities.
- Conversely, others believe that Vermonters share a general fear and distrust of the "others" – non-Vermonters. When new people come into the state, they are not trusted.
- Clean, clear, creative, cultural catalytic and collaborative – Vermont has a textual difference.
- The small size provides a sense of geography and people. People identify with their state as a whole rather than their town.
- A sense of pride was expressed. VT is first in many things such as health and the arts." We are God's chosen people."
- VT has always held firsts, for example, in addressing issues such as slavery and suffrage. This is a tradition that remains embodied - innovation in social issues.
- A participant expressed the idea that we have an insular and provincial nature. With pride and possession come pride and possessiveness. Much of what people have said is that we have traditional roots and a dynamic and changing environment. However, there is some failure to see imminent and impending threats.
- The effort to maintain economic vitality in a state that differs from other states is a challenge. VT could be a surrealistic Mecca in a swarm of growth.
- Agriculture is highly valued. Those roots contribute to the value of entrepreneurship. There are values around the land and an appreciation of the land.
- There is a contrast that needs to be noted. There is a sense of "Vermont" as a whole, yet it is also very fragmented. Different values can be found in each community, even ones that are not geographically distant.
- Vermont is socially very forward-looking – yet fiscally conservative. It is a state that is comfortable with paradoxes
- Vermont has a strong moral compass. Public decisions are "ethically and morally right".

- Vermont is still a very homogeneous state. It will be interesting to see if things change as demographics shift.

### **What Challenges and Opportunities do you see for Vermont?**

- How do we maintain what we see as common values? Less of us are connected to the land.
- A sense of inclusion decreases as demographics become more diverse.
- The state has an aging population. We need to develop an economy that will bring young people back.
- There is an increase of violence in the state, particularly in family and domestic situations, and an increase in the severity of that violence. Families are more fractured.
- It will be a challenge to maintain our uniqueness, and to understand ourselves.
- Recent childhood poverty studies have revealed serious issues.
- Many people expressed concern around the environment including pollution, sprawl, increased energy demands, and pesticide use.
- People need to make a linkage between consumer choices, the economy, wellness, health, and climate. Vermonters have an opportunity to make changes because they have a good awareness of the issues.
- There was a fear around global warming impacts, that rising seas could drive people inland to Vermont. This would adversely impact planning
- Numerous people discussed challenges around the widening gap between the “haves and have-nots”, increasing poverty and lack of jobs.
- Often, resentment of “flatlanders” is based around economic disparity.
- Being a small state with high costs challenges Vermont’s competitiveness. There are issues of affordability around health care, energy, and taxes. This creates a difficult economic environment.
- Agricultural communities could play a greater role in food and energy production. There is an opportunity to turn waste products into energy. Vermonters can look at underused products and turn them into useful resources.
- A lack of flexibility in the regulatory process presents a challenge in implementing positive changes.
- Land use development makes avoiding sprawl difficult. There is a need to change and adapt rules and regulations.
- We are challenged with finding inspiring leadership in a traditional sense. Fewer people are inclined to fill those roles.
- An opportunity exists to work regionally with Northern New England and Quebec, including the Northern Forest and projects supporting cultural integration. Having larger numbers through collaboration bring respect and clout.
- There is rising political discord
- Vermont’s quality of life has to be supported by economic vitality. Vermonters need to invest in businesses and job creation.
- VT politicians are generally accessible and clean with little corruption.
- There are economic opportunities in emerging fields such as the green industry and creative economy.

- Lack of civic participation is a challenge.
- Young adults put off having children. How can we encourage people have kids in a timely fashion?
- We do not look outside the state for jobs and revenue. We tend to close our borders and put barriers up to international trade.

### **What should our priorities be as we work together?**

- Change the way we educate people. We need to connect with young people in real and meaningful ways.
- It is important to understand and provide resources to rebuild infrastructure – broadband, water, wastewater, and transportation.
- Support a 4-year term for Governor.
- We need to connect people to each other. We are stuck behind our emails – people don't get out.
- There is a tremendous gap that divides people by wealth and education. It is essential to address the growing divide between haves and have-nots.
- Link the creative economy with the green economy. This could include an emphasis on education to provide opportunities for young people in these new fields.
- Look at how to make Vermont's infrastructure safer in the event of catastrophic environmental events.
- VT could take a leadership position in providing services no longer provided by the government. There has been an erosion of services that support people. We need to re-evaluate government in the state and the role it could play. It is important to try to elevate government in terms of community service.
- Reverse the trend of aging populations and figure out how to turn it into something positive. How can the older demographic serve Vermont?
- Invest in economic development by making Vermont a welcoming place for business.
- Welfare to work programs can be developed through business and government collaboration.
- Find ways to expedite our processes. VT still has an opportunity to shape its future, however, too much discourse can slow things down. We need to place limits on arguing – and work toward more timely action.
- This project is an opportunity to find a shared vision. Sometimes that has to take place outside of the statehouse.
- Redesign on how the public interfaces with government. We can't look for government to do everything.

### **How does this discussion concern the future of your community?**

- We need to make sure that the outcomes of process are utilized.
- Action is sometime a question of what a person represents. Are the associations that someone is involved with the right vehicles to move issues forward?
- Try to use mix of associations rather than relying on one. Respect moves issues forward – utilize the respect of VCRD board.

- Montpelier: Some communities have become gentrified. – Look at Barre and Montpelier. How do you keep things real, especially when people of means want to be in a certain community?
- Political controversy impedes progress.
- Results of this process can serve as a discussion in other community gatherings such as Town Meetings.
- There is a growing dichotomy and a feeling of disenfranchisement among many people. This process may provide a framework for more dialogue. Maybe the report will provide a basis for celebration.
- One person spoke on behalf of her generation (40s) and expressed a communal sense of excitement and optimism for what the future will hold.
- A banker noted that in his professional community economic health is important. Deposits have grown slowly. Economic equity issues stress banks, as they try to serve people with varied assets and skills. Banks are challenged to be more nimble and creative in dealing with new businesses.
- Williston – I worry about my kids and their peers. What are the values they will carry with them? They are influenced by values unique to Chittenden County, they face many Internet influences. Their set of values will be very different. How will they connect with the state?
- Someone expressed the hope that children's core values will be the same, although other values will differ. Children without an agricultural background or influence will not connect with that. But core values are making contributions and a sense of fairness.
- Technology is a societal evolution that we cannot stop. We need to think about how to use that in a positive way.



# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

## Vermont Land Trust June 23, 2008

### **1. We know that Vermont Land Trust is dedicated to the preservation/conservation of the working landscape. How do you define the working landscape? How do you ensure its survival?**

- We are shifting from the perspective of land conservation as an end goal. We are aiming at a nexus of land, cultural and community health. There is a nexus between working land and natural heritage and we aim to perpetuate its integrity.
- One goal is maintaining people's access to land. Affordable access to ag land and to forest land. Community vitality and how to ensure it? We use perpetual conservation easements.
- The easements are a baseline – they set up for conservation. The new stewardship program protects land by engaging in management; the landowner series and landowner education.
- Engaging landowners is one strategy.
- In VT people use easements to protect gathering places or town forests; areas that are particularly perilous. We are preserving the focus on these places that we connect with.
- We are very focused on the 'enterprise'. Building tools for farm succession and support for economies of ag and forestry.
- Can we incubate a 'green wood' sector? There is a connection of preserved land with the energy economy. Developing transactional process to engage neighbors; defense of easements and the land trust building legal defense funds – but we need to rest on values of the easement and its support in defending each case.

### **2. Can conservation easements hold in a future time when development necessities may need land for other purposes? What will make for a sustainable system of conservation?**

- VLT is very very careful in making land selection when we do farms or forests.
- The assumption is that people need food and people need wood. The basic attributes are categorically necessary. We work with the community in these places.
- Easements are only as strong as the community will be.
- Conserving farmland for itself was a fundamental goal – now we want to support an array of agricultural enterprises.
- Used to be mostly large dairy; we now have much more flexibility in easements for enterprises. Very friendly to value added- on farms there is a fair amount of diversification, but there is less on the forests because enterprises are rarely in the forests.
- But we can help forest products be 'green wood' (an example is Kevin Harper and Copleland project).
- We have access to hundreds of landowners; 700 farms and 1500 total easements.

- Have towns with easements done ‘better’ economically?
- We ask – what is the highest and best use – and in Vermont there is a higher value on landscapes which people preserve!

**3. Is there a changing demographic of Vt landowners who want to do conservation easements and is there a changing land stewardship ethos?**

- Definitely there are changing demographics. We did 52 easement donations last year (for tax reasons). Many are newer to Vermont but are people who aspire to live here and want to make a contribution. Folks are ‘dot commers’ or equity fund people from Boston and NY. People get the community scale, they think VT is a fascinating places because they care about VT’s entrepreneurial spirit and participatory democracy.
- Many are connected to outside dollars but are also people who care about VT. Philanthropic interests are sometimes elsewhere.
- On the purchase side: farmers are now ‘whip smart’; there are male and female farmers, they are innovate and diversifying. It used to be more multigenerational and not changing enterprises over time. Now easement sales facilitate a generational transfer to a new more creative and entrepreneurial generation or they facilitate financing a new value-added product.
- The cycle now with high mile prices is that farmers are trying to grow enterprises and less ‘trying to save the farm’. It’s fun to be a farmer now.
- Absentee landowners now want to know more about how the land works.
- There are two sides – on the dairy side expenses are rising but the next cycle could be very dangerous.
- Communities are focusing around the farm now.

**4. What are the biggest challenges and opportunities you see in the next 20 years – and what do you want to have achieved?**

- 20 year vision – we will be in stewardship. We are still buying 50-100 parcels a year.
- This is evolving. We used to just monitor them, but now we have a second generation of stewardship in which we’re giving some services. Today there is even a third level of stewardship where we actually support and nurture agricultural enterprises.
- We are seeing a change of ownership – now folks don’t have the same value or benefits. We need to work with them to perpetuate the values but also to adapt. Because of our new emphasis on ag enterprises, there are new complexities in the approval of new projects on farms.
- Access to capital is a concern. Vt Housing and Conservation Board proposed cut would have been devastating.
- Access to land for farming.
- The end – we want to achieve thriving enterprises on conserved land with big community engagement and land being values and linked. Communities that defend conservation easements.
- We have 23000 acres with The Nature Conservancy; Champion and Atlas Lands.
- Doing community projects; we are doing town forests and trails and swimming holes to preserve access. A lot of land in private ownership – and some land needs to

remain managed for other uses that are in conflict. I don't think we'll access but we will remind people of the ethic of open land.

- Food security and safety will be promoted for conserved land.
- Conserved land will also be for energy and fuel.
- Water conservation – protecting land is important for this.
- The land trust definition now holds a huge responsibility. We need to do more than monitor and enforce. We work with local partners who see projects and local trusts.

**5. Is there a contradiction in the public understanding around the working landscape and keeping it a reality?**

- There is a contradiction between the fact that we need to do battle for the funding. Part of it is a crisis. It's hard to label the loss of farms as a crisis.
- You can talk to people about it but people's purchasing power doesn't follow. We need to keep more money locally.
- There was a 'housing awareness campaign' but the conservation community in general doesn't get in the legislature the same way. Politically it is challenging to effectively carry the conservation message. There was an attempt to cut the Conservation side of the VHCB funding this year.
- Tremendous grass roots support. Sometimes people don't understand the regulatory burden. Manure smells because of how we're regulating it – there's a struggle around riparian protection. The cost shifts are put on farmers.
- Better romanticizing of farms and forests but not a lot of understanding about the work of skidders – there is a separation of Vermonters from the reality of working lands.
- There is a priority around foods.
- Local foods will become more affordable as energy costs rise.
- Wendell Berry suggests local solutions – local is where we have opportunities. The local economy scale is the level where people are more effective. Town meeting – this is where we're best at solving problems.
- I feel that the only way to solve our problem is that way. People are losing their connection to the land as the foundation of character.
- The non-profit infrastructure in Vermont is chaotic, uncoordinated and not in service to people who are generous with those resources. There are overlaps of services.

# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

## June Organizational Interview VT School Boards Association

**i. Apart from political differences and budgeting challenges, do Vermonters share some core values around education? If so, what are they?**

- Everybody thinks their own school district is the center of their activities. Either the school or the church.
- When Richard Cate came out with proposal to get rid of little schools and consolidate; people went crazy. You could put it in the common pool and say it's loss of local control, but it's much more about raising your kids in your local community; at home. They want them until they are 12 years old.
- It's a commonly held value that education really is important.
- Most towns in VT are supporting their budgets because they believe in education; it's not a sky is falling attitude. They vote for it.
- I think they care about equity and access. For each child; even though special ed budgets are skyrocketing, people still support them. And access means everyone should be able to come; it's optional for a school board to supply transport, but most do.
- There are basic things that people want.
- But there are other parts – preparation for the global economy. (example; survey of 10 kindergarten kids and every child but one had a computer even with 20% below poverty).
- District wide technology coordinator – this is supported and people know how important this is.
- It's true in VT (also nationally) 'my school's okay, it's the others that aren't doing a good job'. That's especially true of our little elementary schools. But with the high schools we're less certain if they are doing a good job.
- There's both a knowledge and a concern – if our children are our future then what does it mean our future looks like. There's a conflict! We want them not to leave, but we want them to be prepared for global.
- But if you sliced the population according to education and income, then people on the higher end don't care about having them stay here.

*People talk about Sense of Community; do school board know about this? Is it connected to curriculum?*

- Not connected to curriculum, but through the elementary schools and teachers then a lot of values get passed on.
- In Newport City; we identified it in the opposite way, how do we provide jobs for college kids to return here? We wanted to keep the tradeskids.
- 3 schools – and one was focused on farming schedule – and when we went to one school the farming culture came in and spread to the new kids. It was well accepted that this culture was brought in. The community recognized the culture and wanted to do it. Schools are representative of the values of the community.
- In Central VT there is a strong tradition of service learning, so kids are a part of community.

- Everyone looks you in the eye; there's an openness.

## 2. What are the most fundamental challenges that Vermont k-12 education faces today?

- 
- There's agreement and disagreement around skills; what the kids should be learning. Everyone thinks we should have a 'good education' but we disagree on what it is.
- Staying relevant to the children so that the students feel that what they are getting is relevant to their lives.
- Declining enrollment in VT is big – part programmatic and part bcse of funding. Particularly because of a per pupil funding.
- School is asked by society to do many more things than it was ever intended to do many many years ago. They are all good things that schools are asked to do. Meeting these challenges and finding professionals to work in small rural schools is tough – the 'base' of education just gets bigger.
- Keeping teachers is hard. Especially in southern Vt.
- In relation to globalization; we see a lot of diversity in student population but we're not able to reflect it in the staff/teachers.
- Discipline is difficult because the family unit is having a hard time.
- I think it's broader than discipline; not having nutrition, a structured homelife, etc; there are more and more kids coming to schools without what we expected.
- But on the flip side we've created a bureaucracy around schools. The bureaucracy exists and has a life of its own; it started with good intentional but now the system doesn't serve us well but because of its own weight in life. We've created a place where we have 40 kids, for this many days, for this many hours.
- For every incident we have a chain of procedures that we have to follow.
- There's a conflict in core values; community values and the need for globalization. In some school districts where there is diversity coming in, sometimes these aren't the values of the community – we want them prepared, but when it happens sometimes they have a hard time co-existing.
- The politicalization of education system since Act 60 and Act 68; when you took away the ability to raise funds locally and instead belongs to the legislature. Now they get deeply involved in what we do at local level; the sharing hurts. Fundamentally changed how education is done.
- I think there is a difference between the values in my community and what education in general is promoting. For my community it means the basics, and the skills they need to stay in town and make a living.
- Obesity is also a crisis in schools; many schools have eliminated high sugar foods.

## 3. Many VTers, especially in rural communities, identify the school as the central institution that makes a town a community. Can Vermont's small schools continue to provide quality education, competing in a wider sphere and be the link to community in small towns? (IF SO, what is the solution?)

- I think they can but I think they have to do it differently. Schools can't do it by themselves; buildings can stay open and students can go to those buildings. But the district has to open itself to other ways of learning, other methods, wider resources. It's the geography that matters to the local folks – the physical buildings. It's easy to look at a flat map and decide that some should be consolidated, but if you know those towns you know they can't be!
- I live in a town from 30 years ago. We're at a watershed around education; at the present time there is tremendous conflict between the school, what it can provide, and what the kids need in their futures. Within a decade I've heard 'I don't want my kids to go to college because they will move away.'
- We push very hard to let people know that there aren't seven islands, but resources should be shared; bussing, fueling, special teachers, kids – and this keeps a sense of coming together – I wish there were more incentives coming out of the state to do this better. You just can't exist as independent islands.
- We're a school choice district and we have relationships with high schools where you can do a student swap. I think that provides more activities – some measure of school choice could be part of the answer.
- Any attempt to consolidate a little doesn't work!
- Because of the sharing the one high school can get the kids to tennis teams elsewhere, but the state mandates that that you have to have four courts before you have a team, so one high school just can't.
- We're expanding the definition of community; they are starting to see themselves as 'kids that go to the same high school'.
- Online technology has opened doors and its being used.
- One of the barriers to sharing resource is about 'what classes are supposed to look like' there's a perception that some of these changes aren't good. The example of one room school houses holds on, the solutions actually aren't difficult to embrace.
- Some communities have a conflict over what a classroom looks like; when people see kids on the floor they think teachers are screwing around, not that kids are reading!!
- I think the pressures to stay local are enormous, it's not a question of us cooperating regionally, but even deep divisions (not necessarily acrimonious, but just long!). It works well when the people in charge decide to do these things and just move forward.
- The interesting thing is about adults – the kids don't care when they get to a union level! But it's about getting the adults to agree to make decisions about this.
- If people are given the opportunity to speak and the time to mull it over, then the decision could work – but the dialogue has to be there and you have to show them what else there is.
- 

**4. Many VTers tie the schools to Vermont's civic and community culture. What is the role of the school in instilling values and civic education in support of local community participation and democracy as a whole?**

- That's one of the primary roles of education is to instill democracy and community values. It's implicit in what we do.
- The fundamental purpose of school is to do exactly that; instill democratic values and understanding. Their own vocation will be that of a citizen; this is where schools have focused always.

- Community values are not well defined or well articulated and so as far as democracy that's true, but I'm not sure about community values.
- You see it in mission statements; our new one says we're going to celebrate our differences. This is where the reflection about the community comes.
- We have community projects and efforts; we find that's very beneficial when you want to pass budgets.
- Instilling community values is not just a part of curriculum; but it's seen more as a part of events that are extra and go between schools.
- 

**5. What should VT's priorities be for educating the next generation of VTers? What are the opportunities we can be excited about?**

- I think there's a huge leap to be made, and I'm not sure how we get there. Making kids globally prepared but then having jobs for them here in VT is the BIG opportunity. I'm not sure how we get there. The question is what can we do as communities to give him the opportunities back here.
- I think creating leadership roles for the youth in communities; my decision making to come back to Newport what about 'what can I do to be here?' Most of the time in VT you can't fit back into the community; not just the job, but community leaders and civic leaders. There need to be leadership roles within the place we want to come back to.
- But there's a major challenge with the baby boomer generation because we don't give these young leaders coming back the focus and import that they should.
- This world is changing people are interacting and info is available in a whole different way. They don't know what they don't know and we don't know what they do know – so there's a gap here around the opportunity.
- The speed of change today is a problem for the public education anywhere. Kids may be learning things and in 5-10 years the thing is obsolete. Now you change fifteen times by the time you're 47. So how do you change and function in this way?
- We have immigrants teaching natives when it comes to technology; digital natives are the kids!
- There is a connection btwen econ development and education but it's about GOOD schools. There are lots of people out there who are highly skilled, and a good place to educate their kids is what will attract people to come to VT – and I think we worry too much about kids leaving. Rather we need to focus on excellence in education; this could be the way to bring in the entrepreneurs, the jobs, the young families.
- Sometimes our business community is pretty fixed in their idea of what we should be willing to accept as desirable for 'good jobs'. Honestly most small businesses want good workers who will work inexpensively. Their interest is really in conflict with where we wanted to go.
- Education, lack of jobs and affordable housing are the triangle of challenges.
- Every town spends 100k to educate their child, and we need to communicate that we're giving that gift to our kids.
- We need to be willing to re-thinks and restructure our bureaucracy so that we benefit the kids.
- We need leaders and students in the community who think that education is the most important thing. It is the opportunities – without it, they are less, with it, they are infinite.

- We decided we needed a ‘statewide’ calendar – but we’re missing the whole point; we need flexibility for our calendar instead.
- We need to consider the perspectives of everyone when we make decisions. The business community talks to the legislators, and then regulation makers just make a decision.
- The school board association is seen as a special interest board.
- The environment in Vt around public education is toxic right now. The leadership thinks that education is too expensive and the only way to solve the problems is to cut the cost. When you get discussions at the statewide level, they are uncomfortable because we are the enemy.
- We’re in a period where we’re confused about the role of the state and what it should be doing in terms of leading, controlling education. The relationship between the state and the local leadership is not clear and it’s particularly difficult now.
- We don’t have a common vision for VT’s public education; the state board with the commissioner.
- Some of the alternative plans for the board of education was to have a broader perspective around the table; having these people around the table would actually help. You’d get a much broader input.
- The governor could be a leader if the gov chose – other than by doing it by cutting costs.
- Even at the local level you see board members that take on more responsibility.
- We talk about gathering people together to make a leadership decision; there’s a huge leadership gap and it echoes the national mindset – the fact that public sector decisions cost money make them bad. We can’t talk about the cost of education until you know what you want it to produce; and we the state haven’t figured that out.
- The shift of human services, costs of health care, all of these are in schools now.
- There are 284 school board beholden to their communities; and the communities they represent don’t always have the same values or the same restrictions. If one district is independent of another then they do wht they need to get to the minimum and they carry on. The leadership and the coordination is not there. The board of education and commissioner don’t have power to make certain things happen. This is the biggest obstacle to making education happen in VT.
- Every single person thinks about education continually.
- There are great differences between rural southern VT and rural northern VT. There’s a lot more diversity in southern VT there’s a lot more liberal view of things and it changes things. We should celebrate the differences. And the influx of out of state retirees; but now small towns are owned by other folks and it gives a whole different mix to the politics and everything. This changes the effect of schools on communities and the opportunities we can provide.



# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

## Vermont Wood Manufacturers Association July, 2008

**1. VT Wood Manufacturers Association's mission is to expand the presence of members in the marketplace, ensure quality raw materials, increase workforce creativity and viability and be responsible employers. Are there values or characteristics about Vermont that have made your work successful or more difficult in line with your mission?**

- Our advantage is that our location is strategic. Getting here from anywhere in the east coast is easy – the tourist trade is big for us. We have accessibility to markets – although our location does limit us in terms of conflict with weather and expense of fuel.
- The state needs to fully understand the numbers (i.e. economic impact) of tourism. For example, the products that I produce should be a part of the tourism numbers – and it's clear that 75% of what I make goes out of state.
- This is a state based association but it's a brand – we are defined by the brand here. We need to be more of a community ourselves.
- There is a challenge in working here- the large number of private woodland owners (someone cited 85,000 individual woodlot owners) – because the predictability of our VT supply is up in the air. If we had only 5 owners across the state, we'd have a different supply. But the advantage is that landowners are diverse, so products are also diverse.
- There is a very high percentage of Green Mtn forest and state forest land in VT (11%). This puts pressure on the rest of the forest lands, the privately owned ones, for high quality timber. We'd rather see the private landowners, and letting the private folks have the first bid.
- For me, the values about Vermont that make it easy to work here are that people are stable and hardworking – but unfortunately they are getting older and there is no pool of hard workers below – with the same work ethic we've come to expect. It's important to keep people in state for this.

**2. The success of VWMA around marketing and creating a Vermont wood products brand is well-known. Are the challenges or opportunities you see in some of the other parts of your work – specifically around the workforce, or the dependability of raw materials for your products? If so, what are they?**

- Worker's compensation and health insurance are our biggest challenges. It's hard to give healthcare to our employees because of the cost of it.
- Retirement plans go along with this.
- I think it's a challenge that 11% of our high quality timber is locked up on state lands.
- Tourism in our towns; the property taxes are through the roof, and workers are coming from further away.

- The SUCCESS of Vt Wood brand – there are distributors in VT and we have a global reach here. But continued promotion of VT wood brand is a challenge. To have everything that leaves here branded is a challenge. The VWMA’s done a good job, but the state should get behind us more – we don’t get support from Montpelier.
- There is lots of bad PR that has been created around timber and forest products. Unfortunately there is a bad public perception that is representative of the state.
- Since the late 80s, we have steered toward zero pollution – the professional services and finance sectors have continued to be the ‘child of the future’ in terms of what’s preferred for economic development.
- VWMA – we don’t tell our story well enough. We need to be able to make the connection to the values of Vermont and making the point that there’s value in having a diversified economy and products that are diverse.

**3. What is the trend amongst the wood manufacturers and VWMA’s member businesses? Do you see inclines or declines in size of businesses or their viability? If so, why do you think that is?**

- We don’t have the number of new businesses that have been created in the past years.
- We do have industry numbers, but that’s all.
- But it is trending down – if you look a year ago there was a plywood plant that employed 40 people which is now gone.
- What hurts us is the perception from the public that growth in our industry is bad news. (For example, there is a public misunderstanding that it is difficult to get wood pellet permits!)
- High end – we are trying to showcase our vendors in a high profile way. It’s hard to measure the small businesses, the state would rather have larger groups and businesses to measure. It’s easy to woo the decision makers if there are a lot of employers, but that’s just not what VT is about. (for example, there are few solid wood manufacturers like Copeland left in the country.
- By any standard the entire industry is small. It does lend itself to niche markets and flexibility.
- The main trend is that there are fewer people but same level of productivity. It’s based on cost – we can’t afford to have so many employees, so you make the other ones work harder.
- But the industry itself is changing.
- Cell service really affects the people we serve – it’s very bad here compared to ME, NH. Both buyers who come into our shops, and then want to call out to friends/family and for being able to do business.
- But advocating for this (cell service) takes an organization. We need to be able to work with others to make sure this happens.
- The internet at well – all digital infrastructure is important – wireless technology should increase in the state.

**4. What is VWMA’s vision for the future of the state? What would that require?**

- If VT was known (like North Carolina or Mass) as the place to go for quality furniture, that would be ideal. Around every corner there was a different style, price point – we could get

people to come together to coordinate the Brand (which is already strong) and get it well on the way.

- In terms of VT wood itself – I'd like to see the distance between the tree and the end producer being limited – and making sure the landowners also thrive.
- It is a trend that we're seeing. 8 years ago we weren't worried about where our wood came from – our focus was on 'was it manufactured here?' but now people are paying for VT wood as well.
- Realistically we've carved out a niche for furniture – we won't ever be the high throughput manufacturers – but we should get a reputation and promote it.
- And not only furniture! I feel like more of a craftsman than a manufacturer – I have a vision of smaller operations that are associated with the brand.
- I think that the promotion of the brand goes with everything else – jewelry, pottery, it's all helpful for the state.
- I'm seeing this happen now – I'm amazed to see the number of people who have found me online and are doing self guided tours through VT, but want to see a shop where we make furniture – primarily thru the internet or the VT Welcome Center.

**5. In your opinion, what is the role of forestry in Vermont for the future? What composition of forests and forest produces do you envision and what kinds of structures are in place to protect forest industries?**

- That the forest be treated like a garden – with pulp wood, pellets, high quality wood – all kinds of different uses.
- It seems like there is plenty of wood out there in the state – we would need to be able to grow (and manufacturers would pay for) top quality cherry and maple here in state.
- With the state's emphasis on environmental issues the forests would be more highly valued. Then we could harvest more sustainably and have more local wood.
- There is a disconnect between what they think is global warming and what we have here.
- I am surprised at the number of outside board feet in VT because we can't source it locally.
- The trend is that the 'environmental' mindset has been 'don't touch' the woods. But now the idea is to do it, as long as it's sustainable. There is a greater sense of how to use the woods wisely.
- Of course, sustainability – what does that mean?
- Our priorities should include Marketing, and a Cost perspective (how much it costs for small businesses to cover insurance, etc). We should try things here that are unique because we're small enough to do it. The focus of the state should be pooling the risk for small and micro businesses – self-insure or state-funded or something different.
- Vermont helps us to be more flexible. And could be known as a place for small, ethical manufacturers.
- I think it's most important (a priority) for VWMA to understand itself – the trends in the industry, the numbers and data so that we can properly advocate for positions. This is key to advancing our mission.
- Another suggestion was the Council on the Future of VT make sure to talk to: VT Forest Products Association and the Consulting Foresters Association, especially around those ideas/questions that have to do with the forests and their composition in the future.

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Organizational Interview**  
**NOFA July 16**

**1. NOFA VT is one of the nation's oldest organic farming associations and has a long heritage within the state. Are there values or characteristics about Vermont that have made NOFA VT's 37 years of work successful or more difficult?**

- Nothing that's easier is that "vt thing"; appreciation of rural life and rural values
- Because it's an inhospitable place for how ag. Has trended—bigger—it's been an asset in development of small and nimble farms
- We find niches and educate to expand them
- Doesn't work for large farms
- NOFA was open to diversity—it welcomes so much of ag. To build bridges and be diverse.
- All these people in Putney got excited and said how do we expand 'food for the people' regionally.
- Then they recognized that people in this state didn't have access. NOFA helped establish the first farmers markets. Growth since—direct sales, CSA's
- Landscape patterns in VT produces tight knit community pattern that is conducive to supporting neighborhood farms.
- People all want to support the next door farm.
- There's a real sense of place you don't have out west. Multiple generations on the land.
- Small towns close together—people come from somewhere.
- You can drive from one end of the state to another in 3 hours.
- NOFA has developed the way VT does—no money, scratch it out, make do and survive.
- A trust of real work, honest work. We excel at grassroots work...we don't get too big for our britches.
- Farmers all talk to each other a lot. They come to us—everyone knows what's going on—people build off each other and build momentum.
- Im pretty new—6 years—no real boundaries. Certifying is competitive for brewing.
- Don't we have highest educated people in the country?
- That matters
- People here have had the opportunity to think about things—benefits all of us.
- People with higher ed eat better food and are more liberal.
- There are large farms that are too large, push cows, GMOs that are going in the wrong direction.
- Independent thinking and independent businesses
- That supports small farms and recognize the virtue of smaller scale.
- Tolerants—like civil unions—attract kooks and nuts—we're like a laboratory testing ideas.

- What we have, something that others value. There's a selective process where the "right sort" choose to come here. "This is where good things in the food system are happening"
- People come to be part of something, something exciting.

**2. NOFA's goals are to increase the acreage of certified organic land in Vermont and to increase the access of local organic food to all Vermonters. What are the major obstacles in achieving those goals? Are there opportunities or structures that have made these goals easy to accomplish?**

- Transportation is a challenge on the access side. Getting low income individuals to the local markets.
- We are trying to do a lot with EBT with rural markets.
- Big challenge is that we directly compete with cheap food in the industrial food system.
- Brainwashing about easy to make processed food. We're working against that, educating.
- The big challenge is to not become like the rest of the country.
- Education around what we eat is key to helping people make healthy choices.
- Need for more meat processing and regs. That work against it.
- Some regulations interfere with farmers being able to make direct sales. Food safety paranoia.
- State attract people at the forefront of change, but others who come for the view and affluence drives up costs—become a barrier to increasing any ag. Acreage.
- Infrastructure beyond slaughterhouses, canning facilities, gristmills, etc.
- Lack of knowledge. Many people growing organically didn't grow up on the farm and don't know how everything works.
- Organic was seen as a flash in the pan, now it's seen as an economy. Need to work against the perception that we're the wackos on the hill.
- The number of us is small—can we build processing. There's only 1000 acres of organic vegetables in the state. Need for processing but they need scale for infrastructure to develop.
- Perception of regulatory agencies. Waiting for old guard to die out—who still think ag. Is just dairy.
- Short growing season. And its changing. But some things you can buy all year round—like beer.

**3. Over time, what changes has NOFA seen in the producers (farmers, gardeners, landowners) that you work with and certify? Does this change create more opportunities or challenge NOFA's work?**

- Marketing challenge—have to be happy and smiling—people skills of selling to different folks in different setting.
- Market in dairy last year drove many new folks—80 in 2007—so acreage went up but now market has changed and not all can get up to speed with different management practices.
- Localvores may not care about organic
- Big stores now carry organic...

- Recent food scares have consumers more interested in organic and that also contributes to localvore.
- Supply may not be able to meet demand.
- Buyers of Maple wanted to see organic and led to a new certification of organic.
- Some NOFA members may not choose to be certified. Small scale which are not in direct relationship to consumers may need it. Some don't and some don't believe in federal certifications or govt. involvement.
- New young farmers.
- Annual meeting really diverse 100 farmers. Huge diversity.
- A trend of 15% increase in certified growers each year. And farmers move here for the state and from the markets that welcome them here.
- Exciting to see young people excited about ag. It's respected and valued.
- Now a valued profession and attracts young people looking for a meaningful employment.
- This especially true for those who didn't grow up in farming.
- I hear a lot of trends in other parts of the country. Farms are getting more diversified here but elsewhere they are going the other way. We have educated marketplace of people who want interesting foods—some places have no familiarity with diverse foods.
- Diversification—dairy, grains, oils, exploring new crops—its' a big movement.
- Diversification from a monoculture of livestock to diversity of livestock.
- Greater demand for diversity from restaurant culture—the culinary school is important.
- There's a significant push in charitable food system to divert fresh to poor.

**4. What is NOFA's vision for the future of the state? Would all farming operations be organic? What would that require?**

- I can't imagine it ever being all organic. Never part of the vision.
- Never part of the mission to try to convert farmers.
- Supporting those who make choices.
- I do think that in a real long time scale—we have 10000 years of organic and a really brief period of industrial. We don't know. Model of Cuba is really interesting.
- Oil ran out—figured out organic. In a crisis we may well go back to organics.
- As fossil fuels go away we have knowledge and experience that can help
- 80% of the price of conventional food is from transportation.
- Local food and economy of scale will allow more people access to healthy foods as climate change advances and energy changes happen.
- Food prices will go up—accessibility is going to be challenging—food should be expensive—like 25% of our expenses.
- Education around value and extended community-wide value.
- We don't want to go down the road of trying to make food cheap
- Good food is expensive, people could afford it because they grew it themselves.

**5. In your opinion, what is the role of Agriculture in Vermont for the future? What composition of farms do you envision and what kinds of structures are in place to protect farming?**

- Big barley and hops farms—I need a thousand acres of barley
- Identify self sufficiency first. This would also provide infrastructure that would support export.
- Keep VT VT—keep the working landscape, critical.
- The culture will be agriculture
- More small farms and more people as farmers
- Lots more gardens and community gardens, more urban gardens, more housing build in use of land, not just on the land.
- I think we don't know the effects of climate change—maybe short term benefits but major disruptions, more loss of forest. More pasture, more heavily managed timberland—we should be cautious.
- Diversity of farms. It's important that we keep it affordable. Easements have changed so that may be more the case...keeps affordable for future generations.
- Diversified community based agriculture of conserved lands.
- Address the affordable food/profitability dilemma. It's really hard for the poor to afford good food
- Don't want to market to the wealthy and tourists.
- I hope that the population has more skills around growing food.
- Overhaul educational system—need to start with the future consumers. People need to understand food.
- We are losing knowledge and culture around fresh local food
- Vermont can employ tens of thousands more people if we feed more of ourselves.
- Produce and processed locally
- There are still people who remember.
- We will go back to a lot
- Grains on small farms. We can feed ourselves and a return to traditions
- Farming and non-farming neighbors sharing respect and care for each other
- Rebuilding community, rebuilding sense of place.

**Council on the Future of Vermont**  
**July Organizational Interview**  
**Vermont Hospitality Council (part of VT Chamber)**

**1. VHRC is a division of the Vt Chamber related and is a part of the National Restaurant Association. In your positions coordinating at a state and federal level, are there values or characteristics about Vermont that have made your work successful or more difficult?**

- Vt's federal delegation has made it more difficult to run a business particularly related to the issue of guest workers. It is now virtually impossible to get them – financially. There are few Vermonters and American workers to fill these jobs.
- Historically there has been a good partnership with state to market the brand. Now as marketing gets more expensive, the state has not increased its spending to match. Vermont the least amount of money on marketing our state brand as any New England state.
- As marketing costs have increase, the inelasticity of budgets has been a challenge.
- Taxation in this state is outrageous. Legislators hear it but don't do anything about it.
- Utility costs are very expensive and they are driving down hospitality profits.
- Selling Vermont as a tourism destination is a particularly “easy sell”.
- There is a lot of challenge for Vermont as a tourism destination.
- Vermont employees have a great work ethic.
- Employees need to be educated about the nuances of hospitality. Employers need support to train employees.
- Vermont offers tremendous value – compared to other mtn places – it's inexpensive. However New England is perceived as a place to go on vacation cheaply which is a challenge for Vermont.
- Vermonter's bad attitude about growth does not make doing business easy.
- A lot of hospitality facilitates need capital investment. Capital investment is not very attractive – permitting is hard and there are no advantages.
- Many of the hospitality properties (Inns) in Vermont are amazing.
- Career centers need to teach hospitality.

**2. There appears to be a fundamental conflict between growth and perception of Vermont as a hospitality destination – Is there a contradiction?**

- NO, not for people in hospitality business!

**3. What is the trend amongst the restaurants, places of lodging and other member businesses? Do you see inclines or declines in size of businesses or their viability? If so, why do you think that is?**

- With price of fuel going up, people are not going out to eat as much. Restaurants are suffering.
- Restaurants are taking the hit. Rooms are up 13%. People aren't flying, they are traveling locally – one tank of gas.
- Windsor up 37 % lodging and 27% dining. Don't know why.



- Small properties worry about being able to keep up with the marketing budgets of larger facilities. Small hospitality property owners need the strength of the state.

#### **4. Seasonal places: how are they managing in this economy?**

- August used to be family travel month. This has changed with schools starting earlier.
- Fall is still a big travel time but there has been a decline in summer travelers.
- People have less free time, less extended traveling time. It has resulted in less travel time.
- Myth – people think winter is the big travel season but it is really in the summer and fall.
- Hardworking business owners will struggle because of utility costs and high property taxes, high insurance costs.
- We still have a very low occupancy rate – 40% - can't be viable with rates that low
- Worry about small lodging properties: how will they pay their fuel bills, energy costs, insurance, wages – it is a challenge – particularly for small hospitality businesses.
- Small accommodation properties are struggling making IT and communications technology available. Consultants are high cost.
- Close to home all inclusive vacations will be rising in popularity.
- Present economy creates a hold back mentality; it is a bigger issue than fuel costs. If the state of the economy can settle, Vermont will benefit and all inclusive vacations will benefit.
- Expense management is a challenge with high utility costs, high property taxes, high insurance costs. Revenue management is all about marketing and sales.
- Growth can happen within the existing structures given the low occupancy rates.
- Canada is Vermont's market – we are in a strategic positive position
- The whole state is our brand. We need more state money to market the brand. It's a magnificent brand with so many positives to promote.
- The state and marketing budgets need agility. No ability to react to high fuel prices or other unexpected events.
- Large population in VT that can work in the Vermont hospitality industry. Workers can be trained and could make an impact on the hospitality industry.
- Vermont brand is very special – safe, green, environmentally friendly but there is an attitude that hospitality is a part-time, low paying industry. That perception does not jibe with the reality that 20% of state revenues are from the hospitality industry. We need to change policy makers' perception about our sector of the economy. We need increased appreciation of the economic impact of the hospitality sector.
- There is a strong partnership between the hospitality industry and farms. It's important to keep farms in the picture, as well as Vermont specialty food and cheese makers. It is a good symbiotic relationship.
- VT brand is so fabulous but it is challenging to be state money to support it given that the VT state budget doesn't have enough money to support it self, and, that many legislators think that Vermont doesn't need any money to promote Vermont.
- We can't rest on our laurels.
- Need to use accessibility of legislature and develop coalitions to go to legislators. We need to partner with higher education, agriculture so we have more weight and merit.
- Fuel crisis is an opportunity to increase occupancy. We can't raise rates so we have to raise occupancy so that businesses don't go out of business.

- Need to turn legislature into our champions, experts. In the past we have made efforts and then backed off. We can't back off. The upside is so great and the downside is so awful.
- Workforce development, education and corrections are all interlinked and we can't lose sight of that fact.

**5. We have heard as we travel that some people are worried Vermont may become a 'playground for the wealthy' or simply a 'tourist destination' with no other industries besides hospitality. Is this a realistic or possible future?**

- The state needs to look at what they did with the captive insurance agency and the state needs to find the next captive insurance industry. We need to diversify the economy.
- Wealthy people have always traveled more and they will. They might as well spend it here.
- How can we involve the nay-sayers in our business so they prosper along with us this isn't an "us and them" situation. The hospitality industry can help Vermonters gain wealth.
- Vermonters need to understand the Vermont brand and our economic realities. They need to understand the fabric of the economy and its interconnectedness.
- Interconnectedness is distinct here in Vermont. The hospitality industry counts on the vibrancy of other sectors.
- We are all intricately tied to other sectors.
- Vermont demographics are on a collision course. We have the least number of young people and highest number of older people. We need to change that and make it possible for young people to be in Vermont.
- The great equalizer is technology and communications. We've got to have that in Vermont.
- We must have affordable housing.
- Vermont's "sense of place" is of critical importance. It's not just about tourism – must have vibrant other sectors. We are worried more about the other sectors of the Vermont economy.

**6. What about the Vermont brand – does it need to change in the future?**

- May have to change it to who you are trying to attract.
- We must create our market based on the brand – and create partnerships with what is here.
- We can build on what we have – brand is not broken
- Need to enhance the brand – find the niche and market it – get the employees to market it.
- Our greatest gift is our greatest curse – how do we maintain wide open spaces and how do we generate income to run our state and have affordable incomes, housing etc....
- How do we make the brand sustainable and manage the "big business" of Vermont
- Broadband will bring back Vermonters so they know they can be connected –
- We cannot emphasize the need for broadband enough. It will bring people to the state so they can do their work. It will make small companies. It will help diversify the economy.
- Local control is our strength and weaknesses. There doesn't seem to be the political will to tap the big questions. The brand might be stuck.
- Vermont has a reputation for not being technologically up to speed.
- There is a lot of work in the trades industry. We need to get kids to work in the trades.

- School vacations' calendars is a problem for seasonal hiring – not one school calendar for the entire state.

**General observations:**

- People have a greater appreciation for what VT is and isn't – but they are sophisticated travelers – technology is the norm and a requirement. This has changed over the last two decades.
- We are going to continue to have the wealthy here – they exist in this region and are in proximity to Vermont. And, we will also have affordable vacations as well such as Vermont state campgrounds.
- Quality of life will continue to attract wealthy – what can we do to make it better.
- It isn't just the wealthy that are coming here.
- Small hospitality properties must embrace their regions. They must keep people connected within the region and all industries must prosper.

**Council on the Future of Vermont**  
**Green Mountain Club**  
8/14/08 organizational interview

**1. The Green Mtn Club's mission is to make the Vermont Mountains play a larger part in the life of the people by protecting and maintaining the Long Trail System and fostering the stewardship of Vermont's hiking trails and mountains. What about Vermont makes that work hard for you to do or easy for you to do?**

**Easier:**

- Number of other organizations with parallel and complimentary goals makes it easier, i.e. similar to land trusts – the climate those organizations create is stronger than the sum of its parts.
- A strong volunteer base with strong commitment to values of GMC and love of VT.
- What makes our work possible is the mountains – its geography. It's what makes GMC viable and logical and we'll remain that way as long as the Green Mountains stay that way.
- We are helped by our 100 year continuity
- We are helped by VT's overall natural brand – the GMC gets support from beyond VT and a lot of people who don't live in the state care about the trail because VT is a great place to be. Geography does help us. We're fortunate in that almost anywhere you live you're almost a stone's throw away from the mountains.

**Harder:**

- Tough economy makes it tough on non-profits. We rely on donations and it's a tough place to exist like that. There are so many non-profits in VT so it's a small pot.
- It requires having more people do this for a living because it's beyond what volunteers can manage and handle. So many others out there looking for same money.
- Historically, we haven't focused a lot on money but as the economic situation gets tougher culturally we don't have "sharp elbows"
- The shift in political climate with every election – Dean was supportive but Douglas admin doesn't have the same support and values

**Neither or both:**

- We have to make sure any land acquisition is willing buyer/willing seller. We can't force people to help us help them – for better or worse.
- In order to survive a century, we've always been a very focused group. We don't try to be all things to all people, we don't get involved in every environmental issue. We're focused on the trail and hiking and preserving the mountains. For example, we are walking a fine line on wind power but we'll get involved when that starts affecting the trails. Related to that, there will be some conflicts we'll be addressing in the next couple of years. We will have to rethink our focus for the future and may need to have a broader focus.

**2. Have there been significant trends in your membership over time? If so, why do you think that is?**

- The membership average age is getting older. We've done random sampling of our members (UVM study) in 1994, 2000, 2004 and 2008 with a 70% response rate so we have good data. I believe that in the past decade the aging of our membership has accelerated. Our members are baby-boomers so as they age the average age has gone up – the average age now is 52.

- People tend to join when they get to the empty-nest phase. But with demographic overlay they is a huge cohort of baby-boomers coming up now. We don't know until we get there if we have a generational problem or not. We don't know if we are "a dying breed."
- We worry because things have changed so drastically in the past few decades with computers, the you-tube generation, generation X, and a lack of connection to the outdoors, as well as kids being interested in other sports that are "more exciting than hiking."
- We want to attract membership between 20s and 40s and need to be more proactive to address that.
- We are looking for ways to reach young people – through schools and other ideas we're throwing around.
- We as a society are getting farther from our roots that we're "from the land" and getting more "urban." Maybe \$4 gasoline has knocked people somewhat on their head. Maybe \$4 gasoline will make us more relevant because we can get to the trails easier than fly across country.
- We see some trends that are particularly VT – service learning requirements in H.S.'s – starting to look at other ways to attract people to the trail. Working with B&B's that are near the trails, etc. There are a lot of younger people who don't want to sleep out because they want to get back and check their email, etc.
- There is no trend
- Our membership hasn't moved on a lot of issues; concerned about pedestrian recreation and motor impacts on that.
- Our members are acknowledging that having the hiking trail there is connected to other things. In the 80s we became a land-trust to buy the trails. They thought of us a land trust rather than a dirt-under-the fingernails hiking club. But we are a conservative organization – most members want the long trail to be there exactly as it is and will be there for their grandkids the same way.
- We're trying to keep it that way in a changing world

### **3. What are the biggest challenges that the GMC will face in VT in the next 20 years?**

- Energy is a big one for us. VT is a state you need to heat and we use a lot of energy. It affects GMC in terms of people getting to the trail and wind power.
- There are always competing uses for land – either battling snowmobilers, wind power, etc. There's only a certain amount of land and so we will always be dealing with competing use of this land. We ran into that with northeast kingdom and people looked at us as not being supporting the land. We were caught in the middle so we have to do some serious soul-searching in the next few years and get clear on what our stand is.
- Climate-change and energy are issues that we as a society have never faced. More significant than WW2.
- Gets into fundamental issues about how we fulfill our mission. What is the ethic we promote as an organization? What does "conservation" mean?
- Physical impacts with increased storms, heavy rains, snow events, etc. How do we take a stand and what are the values we espouse. Do we embrace energy coming from a green source, how do we avoid being called hypocrites of driving our SUVs to the trail head.
- State population will change – different people because people can't afford heating costs and as a result of damaging weather. Makes less resources for us as an organization because state's money goes to other things.

- Financial resources: One of the motivations for doing a capital campaign is that we know that fed and state sources for land and support of trail crews may not exist in the future at all. Big concern for us as we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Counter thought is that it's looking harder for the next 100 years, however, then "VT didn't have a pot to piss in" ecotourism didn't exist yet. We're back where we were 100 years ago – how are we going to scratch out a living in this cold place. Simply by having a sense of place and slowing down. James Taylor saw this as the way of bringing guests and visitors into the state.

**4. The book “The Last Child Left in the Woods” describes nature deficit disorder that results from the fact that we are raising a generation of children who do not participate in activities the natural world. Is this a real challenge—even here in Vermont?**

- It has a huge impact. A combination of kids are not getting out because people are afraid kids play unsupervised; kids end up in more organized activities; harder to find time to go play in the woods with your kids; unless a parent has a personal commitment to go hiking the kids don't get exposed; harder for boy scouts and girl scouts because hard to find leaders, etc. Getting hard for kids to get out and play even in VT.
- We're looking at that as an opportunity as well as a negative. We're uniquely situated to address that challenge.
- See college kids devoted to their computer games – a lot of competition with all the technology.
- Beginning to be a movement that people need to figure out how to disconnect from the technology that if following them.
- Once someone succeeds in getting people out – the light bulb goes on that there is a world out their other than virtual technology.
- Motored recreation is competing as well.
- We have going for us a deep curmudgeon lying belief that the long trail will always be there. The GMC will never be totally mainstream. We don't need 100% saturation to succeed. There was a real concern in the late 90s that the trails were being “loved to death.” Seems to have peaked in 2000 and is going down. Not bad to have a little less use.
- Supports the importance of the land trust perspective - a way of controlling that spine, or we will lose it.
- There was a fight over green mountain parkway in the 30s(like the blue Ridge parkway) – we're still in that. The club officially were opposed to it (except our founder who was motivated by developing the state). We became very politically active then to protect it.
- Can link that to things that happened later such as Act 250 and no billboards. VT said “this is different and we want to keep it that way.” We're kind of at the core of that whole notion.
- As a group we may be quieter and not as flashy about it – we're not yellors and screamers but the core values are still there.
- Still is that urbanization impact from conversion to housing, increasing roads all have impact on quality of hiking experience.
- There is pressure to allow motorized use of trails because of ADA which which some people might take advantage of so we'll have to keep fighting against. The outside pressure of rule-making could open it up to both.

**5. We often hear about two conflicting fears for the future of Vermont – either that land will be completely preserved and protected as a park mostly to the benefit of the most wealthy, and the other that Vermont will succumb to sprawl and growth of residential and commercial development. How does the GMC?**

- We hear both
- Sounds like town meeting
- Think it will become the playground of the wealthy
- We're protecting so that people can get on the land – there are many places that people are afraid they will get locked out but if we don't do our job it will be a self-fulfilling prophecy. We got lumped in with being locked out.
- VT has a role in the US and the world in that we have a lot of public land that belongs to the national forest. The long trail is open, inviting, free, accessible – but people may see it as that we're restricting use that they can't drive ATV or snowmobile on it.
- The “locked up” word is disingenuous
- It gets back to competing uses of land – more pressure, more people fighting over uses of land. Snowmobiles and hikers are fighting over the same land. Second homes have bought up a lot of the wilderness and put up their “no trespassing” signs which puts pressure on the trails.
- More and more pressures for mountain-biking and horses too. In terms of younger people they would rather mountain bike rather than walk. As more people have high-end second homes there are more horse farms rather than cow farms. More people want to go out and trail ride.
- There is a move with forest service land for fee for use. Fee for parking, etc. We want to make sure that we continue to say to Forest service that our parking lots need to be free for use. State Parks are fee for use. But there are care-taker fees.
- Groups are getting more organized – the mountain-bike users.
- We have to balance the fear of being a wealthy persons playground with how VT can stay accessible so Vermonters can still afford to stay here. Hiking is affordable and right there at the front door of most kids. If we can accept a pedestrian landscape then there are a lot of things we can do with it that fit well with hiking. Open to hunters, fishermen – it's an inclusive opportunity for all. We are the true traditional use group of Vermont. Maybe the people that move to VT are seeking something traditional.

**6. Are there global or national trends around forested landscapes that will affect Vermont and that GMC is looking ahead to and preparing for?**

**What are the priorities you see for the state?**

- I'm a big believer in localvore agriculture. There is a unique opportunity For VT in terms of its progressive way of life. A lot of VT is that way and the way it used to be – village culture, local agriculture. VT can serve as a model for a lot of places. We've been on the cutting edge of a lot things – Act 250, for example. It should be a priority for VT – deglobalization moving toward localization.
- Localvore has pulled our community together. Everybody growing their own food, the farmer's market, people supporting people. A huge group of people living off our land and off our neighbor's cheese, etc.
- It's a very old thing and a very new thing at the same time.
- That's the reason I live here but there are challenges with that.

- Trying to preserve community. Fighting AOT because we're trying to preserve our village to preserve community. When you have that you "give a damn" you get more involved. That is being lost in VT. From the top down there are policies that foster this attitude. It gets right down to culture and people. We are losing our empathy for our neighbor.
- VT stands a good chance at doing well as we contract – relocalization can be intentional rather than painful.
- We need to become a wired state. If every cell service had to share every tower we could be pretty close.
- We need to have high speed internet so people can connect for meetings with video cams, etc.
- More people are working from home because they are appropriately connected. Use gas to get to trail head but not to go to a meeting.
- We, as a state work, can work on these things proactively now. It's important that we don't panic and do use common sense – i.e., junk pile against composting (zero common sense).
- Aimed at policy makers – telecommunications, but transportation is the pressure-point. How we view our transportation infrastructure. We have to think ahead and not think of roads in the traditional way. We are stuck in the automobile model of transportation.
- Going along with that is mass transit. In Europe can get to trail heads by bus. Here you have to have a vehicle. We're cutting back bus schedules.
- It's crazy we're not building an infrastructure that can survive.
- The balloon can either get popped and we'll be forced or we can gently let the air out with planning and policy with the intentional move toward a more sane transportation system.
- How do we articulate these values as they pertain to our mission? How does the GMC use our perspective to affect the future of the state?



**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**University of Vermont**  
**Office of the President/Strategic planning team**

July, 2008

**1. Do Vermonters share common values? How do the values of Vermonters connect with the mission and values of the University of Vermont?**

- Anecdote: we had a seminar for faculty in the honors college at UVM and one job was to design a town in VT; designed around a business that would locate here around a mythical business (solar panel manufacturing). Every single group had as part of its plan a Community Forum. We were joined by BTV's planner who mentioned that in Boston every 'plan' included a high rise building. Faculty connected to the working landscape.
- Our faculty and our community including our students are in many ways in the forefront in thinking about food systems that draw heavily on a sense of place and locality. A lot of work that's going into places like Hardwick (center for sustainable ag, tom stearns, andy meyer) – supported by UVM. Above all and in the forefront – the ordinary working stiffs of UVM (students, faculty) are committed to being on the cutting edge of this.
- Grew up in the NEK – undoubtedly there are overarching values. VT has changed so much over the last 40-50 years. The working stiffs (not at UVM!) but in the mill or the business. They want to make a living, enjoy their weekends, like the sights. There are pockets of folks providing leadership and thought. But its still for me hard to define values beyond superficial values. We say lots of things as humans and we follow through on many fewer.
- I don't think about food systems as simply about agriculture. The seminar was transportation, health, environment; it could have been about food systems too. They are about systems thinking, the economy, health, affordability; things that aren't on the minds of distributors.
- The common values are at such a high level of generality so when you start to decompose them you start to find conflict of priorities and values. Its not like you can say its one thing even there. They are so high level that they obfuscate a lot of the differences when you bring it down. On a high level; commitment to community, human scale, independence of thought, practicality and practical knowledge. These tie deeply to the work of UVM going back to when it was run by congregational ministers and then transformation into a land grant. We are the school of John Dewey and the state of just and moral.
- Some of the stuff I've been preaching for a long time hits a lot of trip wires between the business people who feel like the environmentalists are anti-development. And environmentalists who don't care if you lose youth because then you won't have crowding and they don't think hard about health care and support for community.
- In town meeting people tend to find out that they may have the same values, but they have different ideas about how to get them done or whether we should do them at all. It'll be interesting if we define the high values but we don't have a sense of people talking citizen to citizen.
- In a way I'm disappointed in some of the questions that are most important to me. I believe passionately that higher education is the bridge for a viable future for VT; I wonder why a question wasn't asked about higher ed. It seems to be a huge buzz in the nation – the way

the Center for Rural Studies Survey Results are portrayed has a huge piece missing around higher education – I have a big problem with it. [This was an express concern with the *Looking Ahead* report and how it may have missed higher education as a subject and economic sector.]

- All the teachers in Chittenden County were asked “are you preparing the students for our past or their future?” You have to ask how well informed the individuals are – if they don’t see how the sands are shifting, global and national economy and how things are working – it’s foolish to think that we can recreate a 20<sup>th</sup> century way of life in a 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- That type of telecommuting environment wasn’t necessarily captured in the survey – but it builds on the rural heritage.
- I’m probably super sensitive because my budget is being cut by JFO – and I see a comment that Vermonters are worried about paying for education for young people.
- Adding topics to consider: e-connectivity.

**2. Vermonters worry about the demographic prospect ahead—particularly about the loss of youth. What is UVM’s role in developing an economy that responds to the “imperatives of the future” in ways that connect to VT values and will provide for the future success and prosperity of the state?**

- In terms of the loss of youth; I’ve often said we are the biggest engine in the state of reversing that. We award 36% of all bachelors’ degrees in the state. If higher education is the third largest economic engine then UVM is half of that. Our data show that we’re retaining a lot of none residents for a period of time and lots of them make lives in VT. In terms of job creation and supporting entrepreneurship we’ve tried to be more intentful and purposeful to support enterprise creation and job creation. We need to create opportunity for them and jobs for them. We need to bring the expertise here and we’ve been a key player in working with young entrepreneurs in terms of intellectual property. Some of this has been the myriad ways of faculty working in their own ways. Not only in attracting youth here to study, but to create an environment here where they want to stay. If there’s a quality of life to keep young people here, we have a major role in making that happen as well. UVM is a major institution in that regard too. There’s a lot going on that goes to retaining youth. Now we’re very intentional about it.
- I don’t know the numbers of youth loss- but I’m one of them that came back 20 years later. UVM provided for those folks who stayed and continues to provide for them a place where they have can rich entrepreneurial opportunity so that they don’t just work for someone else. Getting out there and seeing the world – Vermonters can argue about nothing forever and be happy about it. We’re just happy in the argument and you don’t have to come to a conclusion.
- Part of building the quality of UVM is getting the best and brightest youth to stay here. We’ll have more than 600 VTers here; as we become more selective this will be more attractive to youth – instead of being their safety school.
- What we’re trying to do at my college is that the objective of engineering is to go out and create jobs. What we’re trying to do now is engender a creative place where our students aren’t just going out to get great jobs. This goes to different way of doing education; they were driven by solving algorithms in the past. Now we are opening them to history, literature and more things.

- We talk a lot about the triple bottom line in the Gund Institute: people, \_\_\_\_\_ and the planet. We're partnering a lot with the state to build an agenda around climate change and environmental understanding in the state. We want to be able to redefine environment.

**3. One of the issues that we hear about in policy conversations is that Vermont is challenged by long-term issues but government operates in short-term cycles. As you look to the future, are there clear areas that need long term strategic planning and investment? It feels like UVM has successfully tied vision and values into a working strategic plan and is building investment and making it happen. How could the State of Vermont achieve that?**

- I think the issue that Snelling Center has been looking to address in the gubernatorial terms is a real obstacle. They have to run for office every other year, even if they are easily re-electable. People felt that for UVM there was a revolving door in the president's office. I think for the state it's really tough; I love what Dom is doing and the vision that he just partially articulated for you. But if I were changing out my engineering dean or making him run for his job every other year I couldn't see the sustained development of flesh to the bones. It does take a lot to build a long term strategic plan for the state. How do we get the general assembly in a bi-annum to think about funding pre-K better? There's no question that there should be 10-20 year plan for agriculture, for energy. It's not so clear that any governor would set their own plan, their own vision.
- It's a little easier at a University; you can sit down with deans and faculty and create a strategic plan. Would they ever let themselves?
- Maybe VT should adopt a Parliamentary system because then they could sit down together and create a strategic plan.
- Without touching the UVM process; there's a lot of discussion around roads and infrastructure around crumbling roads and bridges. There's also a lot of discussion around schools. From a climate change point of view; what about not funding the road system – and making a decision to invest in education and have a different kind of transportation. We're doing things the way we've always done them because that's all we know.
- Andrew Meyer thinks that VT will feed the rest of New England.
- What if the state decided to preserve the state as a park; and everyone paid a toll at the start? Or we declare the whole state to be a theme park and charge 300 dollars a day.
- I would just change one word; change preserve to conserve.
- The question is; will you be able to get to Hardwick or not? Can they get to Boston? Will there be access to Jay Peak and the 100 million dollars investment there?
- The one thing I noticed is that Dan has been somewhat fearless but with a consciousness that needs to get the things done that have to be done. For me it's about a very consistent message for the last 7 years and then fearless decisions to break some traditions and create new ones for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Consistency of message has really helped UVM to be a very big player.
- Paul: a governor may look at how he's going to deal with challenge rather than leverage funding beyond what the taxes are. In government I wonder if there's way to do that which we haven't explored.

#### **4. How does UVM view its educative role as a sentinel to the public regarding issues of fundamental ecological and historical import?**

- My opinion of universities' role: two roles: first the creation of knowledge and the second is the transmittal of knowledge. In so far as the faculty, grad students, etc, they are doing it in a way that has direct relevance to the state of VT and beyond – its an implicit role.
- UVM's educative role; it's research based learning. We're teaching here whether it's on campus or it's the outreach folks in the field. We're providing an opportunity for research based learning both for our students and the public.
- A lot of it is about applied knowledge – when you have extension services working occupational safety on the farm – this is very much the application of knowledge. Obesity in rural towns – if you don't eat better your health is suffering – that's a sentinel role.
- We've been working trying to figure out the charter for the VT climate collaborative. We agreed that we could have that collaborative work through the 39 recommendations that the Gov's Climate Change initiative; how do you triage them and do a cost/benefit analysis of the recommendations? My idea is that we have to do this in a scientific and research based way rather than having our advocacy groups yammering at us about what's 'right'. We have to help in a research based way to educate the state about the most cost effective and practical ways to leverage public policy.
- Engineers can't really bring the science to bear on a situation without understanding the human side.
- My vision for UVM in the sentinel role in the climate change collaborative; can we with a small population and tight connection to ag and politics? The other states do need help to deal with this – and VT can be a model for nation to do this.
- This is more than sentinel – its about being an exemplar and seeing farther than other people.
- I think believing that its so help to make it so (idea of VT as a lab for rest of the country). I don't think it's a pipe dream. It is possible for a place that is small and leverages the advantages of its small scale to provide the template for others. It was on this campus that Marsh invented the idea of majors and electives. It is a very powerful thing and it came out of VT in one swell foop. Why not?
- I think Vt is a unique state and we have a lot of opportunities here to be a model – but one of the things that would concern about leading the way as a model. There is globally a mass migration to urbanization. We might be able to lead ways in terms of rural behavior – the mass population is urbanizing. How our lifestyles and our approaches translate to other places will be somewhat limited because of the fact that our demographics are shifting.
- We've had friends come from Detroit, Lansing – they come to VT they are expecting REAL rural. They see it as suburbia. They see it as an extension and expansion of suburbia.
- We had five people come in from RMI and a lot of the themes were about modeling the solutions for the non-urban world. That's not a negligible thing – many many people are living there and the more we make it viable the more we may make it attractive.
- Even if the exact solutions aren't exportable, then perhaps the ideas or models could be exportable.

- You've got to assess it before you can disseminate it – for example the community justice system in VT is quite unique. People can learn from research rather than getting the experiential testimony for people in Vt. It seems like there's great opportunity to be the evaluator for these things.
- We hired last year a great faculty person who does energy, public policy and complex systems. We're looking for someone this year who does transportation and energy policy. We're looking at it as a systems perspective. The entire thing is embedded in a system – we're hiring people in this area and looking all across – looking for biofuels. We're a small institution, a small school and we're focusing on high quality people who can make a difference.
- We're able to attract the people we want and we've developed this new way of doing things – its bringing people in who are excited about the new way of doing it. We've gotten rid of departments in the engineering school. The Rubenstein School also doesn't have departments.
- It's not on the cards to do away with all the departments – but the unity of knowledge idea – that you can't solve the problems or think capably about the problems in the world today without bringing many systems to bear. The concept of unity of knowledge is part of Dan's vision statement. It speaks specifically of unity of knowledge as one of the biggest parts of the new UVM.
- I am extremely optimistic – I am often optimistic even in the face of evidence to be otherwise. I do think UVM plays a critical role in the future of VT – VT can't succeed without UVM and UVM can't succeed without VT. I worry that we're in danger of having our whole model collapse. We're raising tuition 6% a year. We only net about 3.8% a year – the cost of education for out of state students will run over 50k a year. All of the doctors, researchers, etc depend on the outside dollars. I don't think UVM will survive without massive public investment. I think this is a major problem for private and public education throughout the system. Trinity, Goddard, Marlboro merging; all of the little schools are really in trouble and we are too. If I'm going to be a sentinel about something – it's really in the interesting of the state for me to sound a warning that we will price ourselves out of the market and then the people of the state won't have a UVM.
- Dan's solution: one of the weird things about this state is that we're just about dead last in pre-K and in post secondary, but we're just about first in K-12. These are dollars that the people of the state are spending. The education fund today is 1.4 billion dollars and higher ed is getting 85 million. VSAC gets 18 million – even if it were all spent here it would just be subsidizing the tuition payments! If VT double from 85 to 170 million dollars it would be tremendous. If we moved 2% for five years we would be very adequately and competitively funded with respect to operating budgets. The dollars per pupil may still be at the top of the nation. I do think higher ed is the bridge to the future. There was a time when people need a high school or 8<sup>th</sup> grade ed, but this is the time when at least half of the people or more need at least an associate's degree.
- How could you do it for keeping K-12 having quality education? If you brought them all together and brought an integrated view about education and human capital, this would be great. I've talked to Senate education and others – I'd like to see a discussion that both develops a short term intensive look at where we are and that keeps long term over time. Thinking holistically about VTers' needs almost from birth way beyond college. I remove my churlish comments from before.

- I'd like to see the most effective ways to communicate with the 'public'. Doug was talking earlier about the disconnect between attitudes and actions. As an example we know that switching to CFL would reduce energy use, but we don't do it – why? There's a lot of research we know and why don't people do this?

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Organizational Interview**  
**Spectrum youth and staff**

**August, 2008**

**This was a general conversation that was relatively free-flowing as young people came and went in the Pearl Street facility. We asked about values, challenges, opportunities and priorities, but often the conversation ranged into specific and detailed stories of the young people themselves, or about the specifics of Chittenden County or Burlington or Spectrum.**

- There are a lot of resources for help here. There are places to hang out. It's great this place is here; we can do laundry, we can use the phone.
- There's a health clinic right next door. There are counselors, if you need them to help out with drug issues.
- VT is really community based – there's groups and support.
- Vermonters are helpful and we think it's important to help each other out.
- Access and connections are valuable.
- Prevention is a value here – that includes education and understanding the choices that we have. Education leads to prevention and then economic opportunity. For example, there's no stigma here about what kind of background you came from.
- If we help kids when they are younger we can help them avoid the negative consequences.
- I got out of jail on Monday. I wouldn't be out except Spectrum gave me another chance. ½ of the people in my unit were only there because they couldn't find a place to go.

**Challenges/Opportunities:**

- I believe we need more housing for people on furlough. I was in workcamp – people can't get out because there's nowhere to go. There should be more of a plan for furloughers to get out and stay and work on their lives.
- HOUSING! Section 8 vouchers are unavailable. There's inadequate housing for us and then it's too expensive. It's hard to get. Section 8 waiting list is 2 years long.
- When you are working and you're low income, most of your money goes to rent. Spectrum gives us food – I don't know how else we'd do it. Health insurance and food stamps are really complicated for someone to get.
- It's hard to keep money in the bank – you have some and then the bureaucracy says they can't give you help even though the money will go really fast.
- Right now I make eight dollars and fifty cents an hour. It pays for my rent and my phone. I need to eat at Spectrum just so that I can save money to buy food on my own.
- Things are little bit better now. There's the Chaffee Fund. (\*Children and Family Financial Education Services) – it provides help to people who used to fall through the cracks. It's for rent, education and other things – and they pay it directly to whoever needs it – they don't pay it to you.
- Difficulty of making it outside of the corrections system. There are loooooong waits to get into program – even programs for folks who are homeless.
- The challenge is beds. Mental health beds. Homeless beds. Substance abuse beds. There simply isn't space. I had to watch my friend die because he didn't flick his needle and he

injected air into his veins. I went to rehab after that and they took me in - right then – for treatment. But it's essential to have those services right then – the small window when an addict decides they will do it, when they are ready.

- We need a transition house – there's a detox center but there's no where to go after.

### **PRIORITIES:**

- “The educational process has failed people” Many haven't felt invested. It's got to be a priority. There should be new model for kids where the standard system hasn't worked – alternative programming out of school should be developed.
- We need low-income housing everywhere in Burlington.
- People can't find a place – even when they have some money.
- We need a livable wage for VT workers.
- We have a ton of services here, phenomenal agencies. But still people slip through the cracks btwn agencies and services. Because they are decentralized and not coordinated by a mechanism that makes sure that someone responds to the individual needs. For example, some programs won't take kids with diabetes. Others only take you if you're over 18, or a single parent. So what happens if you have diabetes, but are 24 and don't have kids?
- Finding the next place that can help you move forward is crucial.
- Turning 18 often means that your services are stopped.
- “This place is like my family”
- Jobs – most people want retail jobs. But you can go into the places where they have ‘help wanted’ signs and then they don't hire you. You can do everything right and even go back later and ask them – but it's really hard to get hired! And it doesn't seem like they are hiring anyone – the signs are always up. Most people want retail and not carpentry or something. They don't want really physically demanding jobs. People aren't really interested in training you or in giving you the experience you need to move up either.
- Transportation is not a real problem for us. The buses in Burlington work fine.
- It's harder to live in the rural areas for transportation.
- In some ways, certain things are getting better – others are getting worse. The job situation is getting worse. But transport is getting better. There are more and later buses.
- There's a problem of the fact that some people who lead services are also authorities that are threatening to youth – and they want to avoid these authorities. The kids and the parents think that the state is antagonistic to them.
- I never thought I'd graduate. I planned on dropping out when I was in school.
- There's an attitude that develops with At Risk and emotionally disturbed kids as well – they don't want to have to take help.



**Council on the Future of Vermont  
Organizational Interview  
Consortium of VT Colleges**

**Sept 2, 2008**

- 1. How do the young people that you seek to attract see Vermont? Are there key values here, or a brand identity, that attracts students to the state? Are you optimistic or pessimistic about our ability to attract the next generation of students, professionals, and entrepreneurs?**
  - We have students from the Bronx, from urban areas. The aspect of Vermont that is most appealing to people is that safety.
  - A challenge is that our students of color don't feel comfortable. It's not attractive to students of color – we need to attract the professional first and then the students themselves. There's still lots of discrimination and racism here.
  - The cost of living VT is a challenge, even for those of us working in higher education. There are more jobs and they pay better in upstate NY. (another individual mentioned after the meeting that many of the Admissions Recruitment officers she knows have to work two jobs to afford their housing).
  - Graduates of VT colleges can't stay here because there aren't enough jobs.
  - Vermont draws students because of its political leanings – it's seen as liberal and progressive.
  - Skiing attracts students!
  - We're a frontrunner in the green movement – we're seen as environmentally focused. Young people are getting more interested and value that.
  - Our geographic proximity to places with cultural amenities, but still being rural. There's a perception that VT is fun and laid back.
  - It's safe, secure, there's low crime.
  - It's beautiful.
  - There's an agricultural backbone that provides an identity. We're connected to a green identity.
  - We're drawing the most attention to Vermont because it is eco-friendly.
  - There's a sense of scale and interconnectedness. Many of us have strong international programs so we're very connected to the world outside of Vermont.
  - There's genuine community. There's a sense of what is 'local' and an inherent sense of community – people know someone in the network. The community "becomes your parent" when you're a VT student.
  - There's a certain kind of student that's looking for a less hectic life.
  - There are lots of retirees and halftime residents.
  -
  
- 2. As you look forward a generation, what do you see as the key challenges and opportunities facing Vermont? What is the role of higher education in helping Vermont meet the challenges and realize the opportunities ahead?**

- Well, there's a lack of funding for higher education.
- There's a lack of the 25-35 year old that are child bearing – we need to fill that pipeline for people somehow! We want to make it attractive for them to come here and stay here.
- Most of our kids come from outside of Vermont. They've got to be able to buy houses and stay here.
- There's a lot of students in high school that are told to go elsewhere. We could work better with govt, with non-profits to make sure that we're not sending them away unnecessarily. Vermont colleges can offer a lot of these programs.
- It's a common perception that they have to go out of state to get educated.
- There are not a lot of large corporations that provide the starting job here. Everyone in VT requires experience in your job or profession and so there aren't roles for kids right out of school.
- For higher education – our hands are tied because we're talking about job creation – we're not in that business.
- There's a social opportunity here in VT.
- No one wants to hire people straight out of college.
- There's a lack of investment in infrastructure: bus service, train service, being able to commute to town; we need efficient public transport.
- This is gateway for immigrants; we may not look at this as seriously as we could. But the labor pool is shrinking and we need to focus on these dedicated students who have strong family values.
- Students can be made more aware of opportunities to create and be problem solvers themselves. Right now we're just learning how to be good employees.
- We in higher education are investing in entrepreneurship – we have an education system for business – these kids have great ideas! And we get them to start their own businesses.
- Champlain College has a BYO Biz program – we're 90% small businesses here in VT and we have the opportunity to attract those kids who are interested in this to come here – it's the place for it.
- We actively recruit kids who have started businesses and will continue them.
- The environment and Green up movement is a great example of what brings kids here. It's our greatest asset and our biggest hurdle. Businesses have a hard time starting here.
- We're looking to provide incentive for small to medium businesses.

**3. Vermonters worry about the demographic prospect ahead—particularly about the loss of youth. What is higher education's role in developing an economy that connects to VT values and will provide for the future success and prosperity of the state?**

- I grew up in Maine, but came here for school. The reason I stayed is because this is where I made my adult connections. If I hadn't been able to make those here, my only option would have been to go home. If we have more Vermont kids having

this same experience – making their adult connections within this state – then they will stay here. You don't do that when you're 21 – you do it when you're 25 or 26.

- We should ALL advocate for better wages. Both for the youth and for adults. If we expect people to work for us, we have to hire at a living wage so that you don't have to work two jobs.
- The role of higher education is to build relationships with businesses and other orgs and get kids to say here. You need to know where you can go to find a job.
- There may be job, but they require experience – lots of employers are like that. They are simply not big enough for an entry-level work. Can we match up biz with curriculum?
- This should be not just for tailored majors, but career placement for everyone. It should help liberal arts and poli sci kids too.
- The public perception is that there's a lack of understanding for what higher education does. We start in the high schools with the guidance counselor – we need to change this perception.
- And we've got to remember that we have extensive alumni orgs - lots of connections outside of the state to other groups. If you make sure students get involved in their town then they know about the people and issues there.
- There could be scholarship with local opportunities. You have to stay here and have financial incentives to come and work.
- We should have loan forgiveness as policy – if kids are invested enough to stay and work here then they get forgiven. Remember that they may not yet know what they want to do.

**4. One of the issues that we hear about in policy conversations is that Vermont is challenged by long-term issues but government operates in short-term cycles. As you look to the future, are there clear areas that need long term strategic planning and investment?**

- Affordable housing (many of the younger people present mentioned this) – if you want us to stay you can't build 400k homes! By doing that you eliminate the kids and bring in the baby boomers who'll retire here. I understand why they do it that way, but we can't live here.
- Bringing in big businesses, like IBM. We need the infrastructure for this: cell phone, internet, roads and bridges.
- I wonder about Grants for kids who have made the commitment to stay here for school rather than go elsewhere.
- Taxes! This kills people – they can't afford to stay here!
- The investment in higher ed is a long term priority. It's cut every year.
- Campaign reform – young people care about issues and they need to be able to run for office to change the world – but right now it's the monied few who can afford to do it.
- Healthcare! We can't afford a pregnancy right now. In Vermont, we give money to our residents to go out of state for school. Is this the future we want to attract?
- We need to think about how to attract faculty who have two working spouses.

- The long term strategy should be for K-12 – right now there’s a very short term look on this.
- Does this conversation extend beyond the borders of VT? What makes kids outside see VT as a place to visit or to come and live in?
- Faculty and incentives for faculty with a growing population in state should be a long term goal. Especially for nurses and medical professionals to come here.
- Most colleges and universities will have a major retirement in the next few years – these people will need to be replaced and they won’t be replaced by kids in state. But when the newcomers arrive – will there be jobs for their working spouses?

#### **5. Is there anything we haven’t covered yet today?**

- Instead of looking at our schools to fix, why don’t we look at kids who are out of state who can’t afford to come back and ask them what they need.
- The things that attract students to college would attract others but they can’t afford it.
- The second homes drive the costs up of land around them. Can we equitably make a housing market that observes that challenge?
- The govt sells the state as a tourism state. It’s a pristine location, with few people. But we need to balance this – and keep it the way it is without eliminating what we came here for.
- We need to find a way to empower people. What can higher ed do? What can we do to get people a degree cheaper? We need to break the model.
- There’s a political wrangling between parties especially with our 2 year cycle. Everyone going into politics!
- The loan incentive programs don’t help create jobs.
- The business owners and the employers are treated differently under the tax structure.
- I would like for us to be recognized for what we do – bringing people here. It’s a benefit to the economy. There are events that can happen and more recognition that we have more small colleges than any other state. We also bring social, cultural and value-added events, depth and skills to VT towns with our faculties and centers and arts and culture.

# **Council on the Future of Vermont**

## **Organizational Interview**

### **Yankee Farm Credit Board**

**September, 2008**

By-laws dictate that the majority of these board members are themselves farmers. There were also two board members from outside VT – upstate NY in particular – where Yankee Farm Credit also works.

#### **1. What are the most significant challenges and opportunities in the farm community today? How do they affect the investments of Yankee Farm Credit?**

- There's an environmental challenge – in that regulations get in the way of farming and the cost of compliance with them is great.
- There's a labor challenge – we don't have a steady source you can count on. Extremely high risk from the capitalization point of view. A source for many of us is Hispanic labor force. It's fragile.
- To go back to the environmental side – Vermont has made the decision to stop spreading manure on Dec 15. This is not true of NY or NH – the regulations in VT are much worse than in MA. There's no large farm legislation in NY or NH.
- The variability of telecom access is a challenge. The high speed internet and even cell phone coverage would be of great benefit to us.
- The real question is: does VT want to be a real dairy state or one where we do it just for the image of it?!
- Vermont is 2<sup>nd</sup> nationally in percentage of GDP in dairy but this is not recognized. If you lose the dairy infrastructure you lose all the infrastructure that provides the grounds for working landscape.
- The core infrastructure is fragile – including Yankee Farm Credit! Right now the political atmosphere is not supportive of production agriculture.
- Large producers don't have a good reason to stay here in VT. They can pack up and move to New Mexico or Texas just as easily – and they do!
- We are sitting on top of the eastern seaboard and we have water! There's a huge opportunity for us here. “you can grow forage here, and grow it well.” We're four hours from a major metro area – 5 hours to another.
- You can make great cheese here.
- The capital outlay to get started in dairy is very difficult without a family stake or some sort of inheritance.
- At VTC there are forty some students who want to be farmers. How are they connecting to farms? How will they get farm land?
- The threats and opportunities are the same – there's lots of older farmers. Lots of transitions in the next few years – the threat is in the outside purchase. The opportunity is for new young farmers.
- We can't just OWN our land anymore – we have to rent and lease as we start up.
- We went from 34 head to 900 on our farm. We can't think we are all going to stay the same.

- There's a major prejudice against large dairy in the state. But really we need to recognize the interrelatedness of farm diversity.
- There's no one at UVM with expertise and passion around multi-million dollar farm operations.
- Financing the 'sustainable' ag sector is a challenge.

**2. There is significant tension today between growing 'buy local' campaign and the commodity dairy economy. Are there opportunities to unite efforts and reduce these tensions?**

- There are some opportunities.
- You need collaboration between ag enterprises.
- Yankee Farm Credit could lead to partnerships – there are vertical chains that invest in value-added through vertically integrated structures.
- One of the problems is that commodities make money by having the lowest cost, and value-added products add value rather than cut costs. They make money by building a market. They need to lower costs because once they have a market, someone else will come in to capture the mix who can produce it for less.
- The two groups need to get together when the commodity and value-added partners can reduce the costs for both.
- Both should realize that they succeed because they balance each other and need each other. This should be part of a common vision. Commercial/diversity and value-added products work together!
- There's a lot of voices in Montpelier and a confused result in the regulation.
- There should be a partnership.
- But there are also outside trends that impact this issue – non-Vermont trends.
- For example, in Barton, there's the wind issue. This is the next big thing, so dairy has gone by the boards. There used to be 21 farms on the road and now there's just mine. People don't want to see a farm anymore.
- In energy there's more and more trends towards generating energy on the farm. Windmills are going up on farms. Cow power is happening.
- It's like the time of the development electric cooperatives. Energy and agriculture will be tied in the future.
- Just imagine if you could have a 40 cow digester! There's people working on it. Right now big farms can do a digester but small can't and that's going to change. It's an increasing economic disparity now.
- There are examples of cooperative digesters around.
- The animal rights activists are becoming increasingly worrisome. PETA and the growth of pressure on animal practices.
- We don't know where the trade policies are going to take us for markets – especially in China and India – there's new dairy developments in Australia and New Zealand.
- The cost of doing business in the NE vs. the Southwest is much incredible. It's much higher here.
- Regional pricing system is essential if we want to sustain a local or regional milk market.

- Global warming is occurring. I think it may be caused by humans or it may be natural, but we're worried too much about trying to stop it – it's coming and there's nothing we can do.
- The price of feed is shooting dairy in the foot right now. We aren't reducing our carbon footprint by growing corn for gasoline! Ethanol is just as bad.
- The ag sector is getting older everywhere. Estate planning and transfer to new generation is exceedingly difficult. We should make it easier and do a distinct tax treatment for particular types of enterprises.
- Mateo Kehler is creating a scale and conglomerating distribution system – trains for feeds would be a great way to go but it is incredibly difficult.

**3. Wherever we go people talk about agriculture as a key Vermont characteristic and value. Do Vermont values support or hinder farm profitability?**

- The original VT values were appropriately captured in our state motto. We need to continue to wrestle with and make sure that we check this.
- (we were referred to their forum discussion about the values of Yankee Farm Credit online).
- Property rights is a big issue around the values question. Do we have the right to tell people what to do on their own land?

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Organizational Interview**  
**Vermont Smart Growth Collaborative**  
**June 2008**

**1. How does the concept of “Smart Growth” and the work that you are dedicated to, connect with Vermont values? Does Vermont have characteristics that make a smart growth agenda more feasible or achievable here?**

- Yes – it’s easier because we’re not as far along the development continuum as other places. We still have lots of opportunity – and we haven’t lost a lot of those common values that other places have lost. The guts that made up Act 200 are still in place – people feel the same way as they did. That’s why we’re all here, because there’s potential.
- The landscape naturally has this – we have the bones in place (working landscape, compact villages). And you can call your rep/leader/etc to make a difference.
- It’s a different scale. Vt is the like the car that’s been lapped, so it looks like it’s leading. The strong support for ag leads to this feeling – even if they aren’t part of it. It helps to add to preserving the working landscape.
- We’re very successful providing for affordable housing. VHCB was the smart growth champion – affordable housing in the right location – it’s the combination of making community and doing it for the people who need it.
- The values is interesting. Do we have a common set of values? You hear this tension between new and old – probably no one is talking to each other to hear what the common goals are. Either they’re not talking, or they use different words, etc. People come in and they are used to a less gentle way of communicating. Having the conversation of about what are the values now –
- I think the values are there, it’s just how we package it.
- The values are present that would support progress (bike and ped issues), but there’s a huge complacency in VT. We think we’re ahead, but we’re being left behind. NH has just passed a bill that leaves us in the dust. I was unable to advance a bill that had a single provision to provide a minimum of 3 ft clearance when passing a bike. No opposition in other states for protecting this. There’s a vision which is absent here, but was here once upon a time.
- Upcoming Environmental report – how Vt is being left behind.
- I think the political divisiveness ruins the decisions. “What’s best for Vt?” has been left behind.
- There is a lack of vision and leadership – the complacency is not just in bike ped, but the lack of leadership is non-partisan.
- You’re not going to go further up or learn more if you don’t have leadership. No open discussions, no sustainability because leadership isn’t there.
- I want to believe that the values are still there, it’s just been corrupted by the ‘noise’ that doesn’t allow it through. As diverse as people are, they still share those common values.



- Where there's conflict is the strong property rights agenda. We have Yankee frugality. We're an expensive state, and some of our problems costs money. Without leadership to say – where do we invest, how do we do it together? Then we lose the values.
- If played properly then these values can good for Smart Growth. The other conflict is new versus old.
- Businesses are so tied to their communities – this is a special value we can build on. All businesses at the end feel the same way.
- I've heard again and again “the political realm is so different than ten years ago”. That's really frustrating.

**2. As you think 20 years into the future, do you believe that the Smart Growth movement will succeed in encouraging strong downtowns and wise land-use decisions? What are the greatest challenges and opportunities ahead?**

- I think what's happening nationally and internationally the movement will be successful. There is a perfect storm building and if we have the leadership to take advantage of it then we can be in a better place. But we have the challenge of leadership, but we could end up being left behind again.
- If success occurs it won't come from altruism, it will come from economics. In particular, if more people start walking to work and using a bicycle; it's not going to be coming because they care about personal or planetary health, it's because of 5 dollar gasoline. It's unfortunate that decades of messaging about obesity, etc; hasn't moved the masses.
- We need to think about community based energy solutions. If you have a wind turbine on a hill and it's not helping the community below, they won't buy it.
- We're seeing an opportunity in terms of public transport – again because of the cost of gas. Theoretically the public transport will be able to run more lines, etc – but they are talking about cutting certain routes, etc.
- I don't think this is a time when you should be cutting routes, even though your ridership isn't up. It's chicken and egg. It's a good analogy – we face a lot of these here, because it's a question of who's going to initiate.

**3. Is there a common understanding of Smart Growth, its values and attributes and its agenda in Vermont, or is there a dichotomy around what it means? Could there be negative, unforeseen consequences to the advancement of a smart growth agenda?**

- There's not a universal understanding – it's used opportunistically. People use it as marketing. Development is second homes; are people going to live in landed gentry areas and McMansions. This is a real risk about how they can be brought to Vermont in a negative way.
- Smart growth is a set of principles that can guide a community. People immediately think that you're communist no-growthers. There is concern around class. One of the reasons we're tapped out is because we don't have the money here. There aren't a lot of people in the state to do what we want to do. We want more services, but we don't want more people. If we want to attract businesses, transportation options – etc – then we need a critical mass population.

- The whole workforce/labor force issue – we survey our members – can you fill the jobs in VT? Our growing employers are not having a job filling positions.
- Because of cost of living some people can't come here.
- Another big issue is that many of our personal choices come into play. We always choose convenience. In an old employer no one carpooled – but ultimately it was all about what we want – personal space. I'm an American – that's inconvenient for me; but it's really about making choices.
- Businesses could incentivize this – pay for bus passes, pay for people to go to work.
- Our settlement patterns don't lend themselves to public transport. We have a very urban model for transit instead of a rural model. We have fixed route systems that require frequent service – we run expensive buses empty instead of vans flexible. There are federal strings attached – we have models and rules that don't work here. I think it's going to naturally evolve to that. Hopefully Vt trans will be getting to that.
- If everyone can work from home, where will people build their houses? I don't like that idea! The infrastructure should incentivize people.
- If smart growth was successful then your small rural villages become more dense and bigger. I don't know how well that will be received.

**4. The Collaborative lists preservation of the “open landscape” as a key goal; how do we define it? Is it the working landscape and protected land? What is the relationship between rural working Vermonters and the ‘open landscape?’**

- Preservation is a loaded word, open space is a loaded word. I would prefer to use words like conservation/stewardship. We should use more of resource focused to get more buy because it hits the common values. Even though you use the right words, there's still a general education process to get people to same page. One of our shortcomings with smart growth and general planning is that we tackle these things in different bubbles. We haven't done it very well in synch and synergistically. There's been efforts in the last few years to bring the camps together. The two are 1. incentives for compact development, and 2. incentives for protecting the resource lands. Smart Growth is doing both.
- Open countryside is a working landscape – it preserves where important – forests, etc. we will end up re-habiting the landscape because food is also getting expensive. People are realizing they have to take more responsibility for their own sustenance – right now it may just be the higher income folks, but eventually the land will be more valuable for something other than house lots.
- There are young farmers that simply can't afford land here.
- We have a fear of density because VTers come here for rural areas. We don't do design well.
- The working landscape needs to evolve and meet the economic challenges.
- But sometimes the mindset is not okay- they are survivalists, they are hunkering down up here. They want to gobble up the land to see it as the last stand.
- It's going to take communities to survive, not individuals.
- I'm a proponent of protecting the working landscape. There's an implication of a direct resource we take and use, but sometimes the resource value is non-market. When we have these discussions about working landscape, we're at the tip of the iceberg – ecological services (watershed, viewshed, etc). until we have this information and value

the working landscape, people will always think that the highest and best use is a house – sometimes it is, sometimes it's not.

- The working landscape can't deplete resources, can't drive rural poor away, may have more small scale production, may have preserved protected parts.
- 

## **5. Are 'smart growth' principles reconcilable with growth imperatives in a society that values private property freedoms and wealth creation?**

- This society also values personal convenience!
- I think it depends on what decisions we make as a collective moving forward. What do we really value? What does wealth look like 50 or 100 years from now? Depending on what wealth looks like, it's a good way to go.
- We have to have other values too – then it's reconcilable.
- Because we see this greater good and longer term vision – if our economics lined up with our values then I don't see our conflicts at all. But right now we're at a starting point where there are winners and losers and we have to get off that. We have to internalize the real costs.
- 'Free market' is not really free. They are putting the costs elsewhere. It's not free market or true costs.
- The extension of that is that there are different kinds of wealth. Social capital, natural capital, etc. I don't think we'll ever get away from class structure and having elitism in this country. But we're looking at people buying things together, etc. it's starting to happen.
- Defining personal wealth as 'what would you have if you lost all your money?' I seem to hear it more often all the time – the word wealth is so non-vt, non-New England. Often we can't tell whose got the money, by and large it's subtle. There's a vt value here.
- We have zoning of land – which is a sign of moving toward this divide.
- I think the second home phenomenon; a lot are buying homes because they are worried about the communities back where they are. It's a valid concern that wealthy people are buying the land.
- In Maine, NH there is a view tax – there might be the reality – your home is worth more if you have a view.
- I see a real difference in Chittenden County. When I drive here I get tense.
- The VT brand – there's a lot there and we really start getting value from preserving what we have.
- We need to 'get together more than what we do.' We have access but there are still a lot of silos in the state; if this is the VT we want, how do we get there creatively and do it together? If we're not together, because there are so few of us, we will be left in the dust.
- We need leadership. And people are still thinking what they THINK they are. There are so many orgs with overlapping missions – and there's so much to be gained by sorting this out. Like VNRC being advocacy and Smart Growth Vt not being that.
- Group called One Vermont – most of the social service non profits. You just learn so much about what people are doing it makes you get out of your silo.

*Last comments/general ideas.*

- We shouldn't blame smart growth or planning for the rural landscape change. The market forces have decided this – not planning or anything else. Smart Growth is providing an alternative to be sustainable to the market forces. But planning is always an easy scapegoat to blame.
- The whole property tax thing – no one is looking at the issues; which is how do we fund education?
- The efficiency question needs to go to the non-profits, the taxes, etc.
- The law of the commons means that the commons is available to all – it's not just poor people, but wealthy people also are moving to compact living.
- The Fourth Turning – Strauss and Howe. Historians – this is an important work for us!

# **COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**

## **Community Supported Enterprises Group**

### **Organizational Interview**

**10/1/08**

**Question 1. At most of our meetings around the state we've heard how important community is to Vermonters. In your opinions, what are some of the essential elements of community?**

- Interdependence - you can call your neighbor for help; in a small rural community you must be involved with all kinds of people.
- Sense of Scale - smallness
- VT is a small scale place; this makes things real
- Not about shared values but about shared need
- Concern with the erosion of town meeting; how to keep it as a meaningful institution
- Local school system, K-12, very important; e.g. Morrisville - not part of a regional supervisory union school system; sense of local ownership is critical to the community
- Small school challenge is the lack of diversity in the population and in the school offerings when we need to prepare children for the world at large
- Key issue is the shared sense of ownership in the institutions and built environment - the buildings
- VT is still benefiting from the Grange movement- now largely the buildings - Need something like the Grange movement to reinvigorate local communities
- Familiarity with faces; this continuity is not unlike an extended family, with the physical places/spaces for that to happen. This promotes accountability because we are not invisible to each other. Another aspect of this is people who stick around; this is self-perpetuating.
- Concern with VT aging demographic and that the aging are not being replaced by young people. Young people do not have the same opportunities that "we" had when "we" came here at a young age.
- Changes in the world, i.e. communications, raise the question of whether young people see the opportunities that VT has.

**Question 2. What are the greatest opportunities you have in working to design and build a community supported enterprise?**

- Entrepreneurial opportunities
- Community and school need to be attached.
- Need to teach young people how to work within the system - opportunities need to be redefined
- We are at the beginning of the community (local) enterprise
- Showing youth businesses with a social mission gives them direction and enthusiasm for the future of VT
- Food is the future of VT
- Create an engaging economic environment that will attract youth - local and sustainable

- Commitment to local as the ideal
- IT connection is critical, but VT is a generation behind in IT
- Responding to today's crises is an opportunity - local investment and micro-lending
- Should we try to reach out to VT "leavers", i.e. HS and college alums?
- How to get new arrivals who are older involved in VT communities, both themselves and their assets.

#### Statewide

- IT infrastructure
- College cost reduction
- Technical education integration with academic education
- Regulatory hurdles removed for small business - e.g. kitchen regulations, meat processing, downtown devel't \$, OSHA flexibility for historic buildings
- Transportation infrastructure within communities, not just between communities
- Local investment through local venture capital
- Local options for retirement investments
- Community loan funds to fund local micro-business
- Redefine our priorities: small is best, big is not. In fact, big undermines our communities; now we are supporting big and nitpicking small
- Statewide focus on food manufacturing and retail food services; this is not now on the "radar"

**Question 3. We have heard as we travel that some people are worried Vermont may become a 'playground for the wealthy' or become overly dependent on tourists and second home owner property taxes. Is this a realistic or possible future? What would it mean for the future of our communities?**

- Many wealthy arrivals don't involve themselves in community as volunteers
- Fuel costs will reinforce the economic divide and force poorer folks to move closer to large communities
- Housing stock issue - middle has dropped out; now we have only available bad housing and expensive housing
- Fundamental shift - the middle class is being driven out because they can no longer afford to live here. The poor have subsidies but the middle class have none, but are dealing with huge property tax increases
- This division creates an opportunity for local small business using \$ locally
- School expense increases are the driver of prop. tax increases
- There is tremendous energy and appreciation of VT among 2nd home owners and transplants, but there is danger in reaching the tipping point when community loses 1/2 or more of its population in the winter.
- Need to recognize that tourism based economy has its limits.

**Question 4. What is your vision for towns and communities across Vermont? What vital pieces need to be in place that should be invested in today?**

- Infrastructure e.g. pedestrian transpo. infrastructure
- Development of intentional community vision and principles that are overt and shared, starting with land use
- Investment in preserving the built environment in both downtown and rural areas
- Local crafts support
- local power generation - support and encouragement from the State
- Communication about "VT Values"
- HS education about investment and community development and civics
- Change priority of supporting large businesses to supporting small businesses
- State support for business changing business model - i.e. diversification from traditional models
- Concern with provision of healthcare re: traditional model of employer supported healthcare
- Change in orientation to a smaller scale across all of State Gov't to focus and support for local economies
- Communications infrastructure, both wired and wireless, across the whole state on a uniform platform
- Mandatory community service for all
- Use wealth of incoming flks for all above and use their land
- Retain community diversity: backgrounds, education levels, interests ; to preserve a balance

**final Question: How important are our sense of community and our community centers to what VT is all about?**

- YES - this is top of the list - community center and places where people congregates the key to VT sense of community
- It must be about people getting together; the internet is a lonely place
- Act 250 needs to be revised to include adverse impact on community centers and existing infrastructure
- Walmart can be the gathering place
- Story about the 20 older men who bring chairs to sit by burned out Putney General Store every day
- Embracing others differences non-patronizingly leads to increased community

**Council on the Future of Vermont**  
**Vermont Business Roundtable**  
**October 3, 2008**  
**Organizational Interview**

**1. Are there Vermont values that are foundations for the Vermont Brand and that attract businesses to the state?**

- Yes
- My sense is you have to get down to the basics before you get into the dream. The basics we have as values will be hard to afford in the future. It's great to think about 20 years from now, but we have to think about 5 years from now and this year. There's a mystique that people think that VT is special – but it's not radically different from other parts of New England. Except we don't have the opportunities that other people in New England.
- Community – I know it's cliché, but I think it's true. We value community in a way here that we don't see in other parts of the country. We value the community of our business. We have a small scale and we have to make our company a really attractive place to be and to want to stay at. That's a reflection of our chosen state.
- Value of pride in the natural environment. Retention of country side and working landscape affects the quality of life and business and it's ability to grow/locate/expand/evolve. It is deeply rooted and it's a distinction we like to draw between ourselves and other places.
- Our business is the natural environment – but I think we get hung up on it too much – we think we're going to lose an opportunity if we change it. But it transitions.

**2. What are the major threat/threats to the Vermont economy in the next 30 years? How does the Business Roundtable work to respond to them?**

- Last week – federal leg through Congress with Bail-Out plan – after the house voted against it, I heard many members wanting our delegation to know the importance of it for VT. The business leaders come together and try to act on these national and global issues. On a statewide level we try to focus on a smaller agenda – we try to bring more thoughtful discussion and do development that is smart. Thoughtful seasoned group of successful business leaders who have a longer view on issues.
- Big cost items that are affecting business – whether you're IBM, a small manufacturer, or a resort. Health care, energy and taxes are eating us away. Or maybe it's education, health care and energy. It seems to be taken away anything we do to get ahead – they undermine what we do to get ahead. Three biggest issues relative to cost. It's just a given because you have to pay it. Every time we find a spot to save a few bucks, it goes to one of those issues very fast. And there isn't a willingness in any one of those issues to prioritize and say 'that's it!' I think we're there now – that we can't pay.
- Our prosperity is threatened in Vermont. For the most part we've done a pretty good job of being a prosperous state and of sharing that prosperity across the community. 25 yrs ago all of my clients and revenue was in VT – but today 35% is in VT the rest is out of state. We no longer have VT bank clients. I worry about the economic infrastructure in VT



– the fact that we haven't added any jobs over the last six years. It seems like you open the paper and someone's moving on. I don't see an enormous flourishing of any particular sector. We just did a survey among our members – about half were optimistic the other half were not.

- When I talk with members – I see a lot of entrepreneurial activity – small cottage industries starting up which is great and important. Once they reach a certain size they run into barriers – like financing. Or once they reach a critical mass they get on the radar screen and they get acquired, or they have to be closer to market – whatever. These things are not in VT. We're great at start ups, but we're not great at sustaining and nurturing.

*Is the tax burden and land use regulations part of that barrier?*

- Often that's true, but it depends on the industry and size – when we look at it at the macro level and think about our competitiveness with different areas of the country you have some common issues.
- A challenge that's growing as the economy changes – nationalization and globalization of the economy. VT is not its own economic microcosm, so our ability to affect economic trends is smaller and smaller. Maybe education is the only thing we can control! Energy costs are driven largely outside the state, businesses are owned outside the state – things that have nothing to do with VT. That's not something we can fight by saying we don't want to Walmart in St. Albans – it's just going to happen. I'm concerned as we think about our future that we are not overly sanguine about the possibility of affecting the economic environment here in VT.
- Our experience is that we can't even control education! They complain we don't have resources for education!
- Some of the challenges are Act 60 and Act 68 – the others are about our full funded retirement with health care, etc. Maybe it's time to say we're not doing it anymore. If we don't do it, who's going to do it? We have no planning about how to keep people employed and how to plan for them to be employed. It's not allowed in Act 250 – the only thing you talk about is traffic.
- We should have an economic development plan. It's travesty that we don't. It's very challenging to create a vision when people are sparring all the time.
- There's no incentive for the little guy borrowing money to fund the process – government is not in there, the community is not in there – it's so emotional, you never get through it.
- I think one of the things we do in VT is that we demonize business. I don't know why we do that. It's really nothing more than jobs – and jobs are good because it enables so much that we have in VT – family, communities. People don't get the connection – the synapses are cut.
- It's emotional or ideological reaction.

- 3. Wherever we go there's a dialogue around sustainability – from peak oil folks to branding 'green' –the administration's "Green Valley idea/GBIC's new green strategy. How important in your view is the 'green strategy' for the future of business development in Vermont? Is it a real opportunity?**

- For the ski business, we look at our customers and try to find out what they look favorably on. If you take everyone who enjoys the outdoors – skiers commit more of their personal dollars to outdoors than any other group.
- Open land is my issue. I'm a lawyer in private practice – about 30 years – and a lot of my early practice was dairy industry or apple producers. My biggest concern is this – I think the way VT LOOKS physically is the biggest economic asset we have. We have to figure out how to keep land open – not covered with trees so you can't see the next valley. Cows and sheep as grazers or crops that are being grown to feed them. I think that all the focus on small organic farming is wonderful from an economic point of view – but it largely does nothing on the open land issue that I'm talking about – it just isn't big enough. My guess is that VT doesn't have the soil conditions to do truck farming on a large scale. It's been worrisome to me because tourism is one of our major industries than if VT does not look the same than we can't serve the same people or attract people who want to come here and work. Unless we can incentivize dairy farmers and sheep farmers to be like investment bankers.
- I was surprised that ag was that little – 2.5%! But people measure it different ways – value added, Cabot, etc, etc. But think about our dialogue around ag – it's WAY more than 2.5% of our dialogues.
- I think it's great if we can, as a community, designate 'green' as an economic opportunity. But there's probably not much more than that that we can do or are willing to do. Lots of things are claiming green – but if we picked something – say, windpower – what can we do to incent it? What will make it attractive to be here? We happen to have it naturally as part of our brand, but I don't think we've DONE anything.
- Should it be part of our strategy? Yes, it's low hanging fruit and everyone's going there. But it's not just to create new building codes – that's punitive and that's not what we're talking about. I think it means pulling up out of the weeds and looking at this economic climate, living in a remote part of the world – we have to do things smarter. We NEED our telecommunications infrastructure – if we don't get this done – SHAME on us! It's bigger than carbon footprint going to zero.
- I think if you had 5 pictures – Walmart, dairy farm, IBM, Mt Mansfield with trails, and VT Yankee – my guess is that anyone could make arguments for all of these that they were green or were not. People don't have the same idea of green. All these five things are critical to VT economy – you could probably find 30% of the population who say that none of them are green.

**4. Many people come back to the concept of Vermont scale as both a hindrance and as an opportunity. Can we be a laboratory of innovation? Does Vermont's scale make it hard to do business and hard for growing businesses to stay? What should we be doing to use our scale to our advantage?**

- Certainly agile decision making – which hasn't necessarily helped us – like reducing our education costs. The reality is it's very easy to get something done very quickly in this state if there is the political will in this state. I think scale only works for us, except for the labor supply. It certainly helps us build the brand. I think about size – although I know that democracy makes it very complicated the ability to accomplish something and have a statewide impact is there. Then politics and finding a united leadership intervenes.

- No one wants to take the responsibility for making a decision and spending political capital.
- It's limiting in terms of our ability to generate revenue – it ends up cannibalizing our priorities. We end up sprinkling money around to a bunch of stuff that gets sucked up in personnel time.
- We love 'small is beautiful' and it gets us in trouble sometimes. There's an example of we like small is beautiful and we're not going to change it – like the school district. I would argue we can't make change, we can't get control on the cost of education, we can't make change – but we LOVE small.
- I think because it's funded we love it. If you look at the town of Stowe – 18 million goes out of the town.
- That also works against large farms – we don't even like large industrial farms here. We just want a lot of little family dairy farms.

**5. Vermonters worry about the loss of youth; what should Vermont's priorities be if we are to build a strong economy for the next generation?**

- I don't think we're going to attract young people to get their start in Vermont. We have a national and international economy and young people will migrate for school, for jobs. They will migrate to start their careers. I think it is NOT money well spent to keep recent graduates in VT. I think we need to focus on making VT an attractive place to work at any age.
- I agree strongly with that. I want my kids to go away – you can count on people wanting to come back. The quality of life is here – they make their way back. We don't need to spend taxpayer money on getting recent kids to come back – we need to focus on this economy here. Whether its online business or something else – what we need to have is the jobs for them.
- When you look at what young people have LEFT after the pay check. The taxes of living here are really challenging – it's a job but then what do you have left and what will be taken away from you. Small and it's got great values – but what kind of a state is it if at the end of the week you don't any thing left – but not because the employer took it away from you!

**6. Are you optimistic that we're going to respond to the challenges ahead so that we have a dynamic economy in the future, or are things paralyzed?**

- I don't think they are bad enough yet. Until we simply can't pay our bills, then no one will listen to reality – life's too good right now, frankly.
- Breakdowns lead to breakthroughs. We're on the verge of a crisis right now.
- We have courthouses not going to be open full time and state employees who won't be paid with a pay check in their hands. (the paycheck thing will only save 70k a year – is it down to that?)
- It's easy to make a little decision, it's hard to make a big decision. I don't see any political leadership from anyone. And it's likely not to change.
- Unless we have someone who will drift into politics and by temperament is a Dick Snelling, I don't really see us changing other than just nibbling around the edges.

- I'm pessimistic – it's been this conversation and we've been impotent to really change it. I haven't yet figured out where the lever is – if you can figure it out – good for you. What is the percent of VT people on Medicaid? 26%? It says something good about our community ability to support people, but it also says these people don't have jobs.

*What would the lever be?*

- We shifted from a rural 'take care of yourself' culture – to an urban 'government takes care of you' culture. If you went back to the rural culture – then you'd find kids who could still get through school, and succeed. We're rural except for Chittenden County, but we dictate as if we were bigger – we have taxes and regulations that we can't support.
- I still think it's about driving revenue instead of reducing the cost.
- Find an economic lever. Finding the next captive insurance – citing Ireland and Oregon as economic examples – this is something we have talked about here all the time.
- We talked about education as the place for our future – but a quarter of them are not even finding their way out of 12<sup>th</sup> grade. How do we capture this group of kids and provide the stimulus for the next economic machine?
- It's totally non-politically correct to suggest that VT schools aren't doing a good job, but I don't think they are. You look at our demographics and our results compared to national results and it's not a good result in my view. If we had an economic system that focused on 'NO DROP-OUTS' – what do we have to do to link kids to the real world?
- I'm struck by companies like Dealer.com in Burlington – in 5 years from zero to 100 employees. Autumn Harp – from 50 to 250 people! I think these are entrepreneurial examples and they are by definition small (we're a small is beautiful state). Do we have the right medium in place for entrepreneurs to thrive?
- In order to spark opportunity everywhere we need the telecommunications infrastructure in place. Financing is a big criticism – it's hard to grow. We don't want to get into the place where we're picking businesses, but build a platform that supports and spans all industry.
-

**Council on the Future of Vermont  
VT Sustainable Jobs Fund  
Organizational Interview 10/22/08**

**1. Are there Vermont values that are foundations for the Vermont economy?  
Are they values that the Sustainable Jobs Fund stands for?**

- Yes and yes. Historically and I think to this day the state's economy is rooted in the land – in numbers of people engaged and employed. A core value is how we relate to the land as a source of employment and enjoyment. Our resourcefulness is one of those values we can manage into the future.
- I think no and yes. Values tend to be universal – there's nothing different about values here as opposed to other places in the world.
- I would say there are values that come to the top of what Vermonters do – because we're such a small state we have to be more entrepreneurial and more innovative. From our work, certainly that's the case.
- A core foundational value that I've observed is a belief in fairness. While the current economy may not play out in real fairness because of disparity in wealth – there is still a belief in the principle. There's a contradiction in the way it happens in reality. I think the founders got us going to think about the ways in which sustainable jobs – things that last as well as traditional sectors – these are places that come from a sense of fairness and hard work. Ag and forestry primarily – sense of hard work, fair days' pay for work, and taking care of natural resource base and you are sustained by that.
- Work ethic is high in VT. There's a can-do self-sufficiency and independence. I wanted to include innovation, but I don't think we're historically innovators.
- I think there are universal values, but as applied in VT they become shaped through the centuries. Forest values – what we care about is maintaining our forest for the future. There have been a lot of things maintained and kept in VT make them sustainable. VT is what it is because of natural resources and social capital making it what it is. The care that went into building them needs to be continued in the future to keep them that unique way. Value of hard work, community values – lots of caring and people helping each other through hard times.

*Including the fairness because of the triple bottom line?*

- Sustainable is environmental, social equity and justice and economic now and for future generations.
  - Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations. Each product you work with you have to account for ecological sustainability, social justice and economically successful. From our perspective biofuels is one possibility to change the fossil fuels – produced locally, fair wages, and organic farming – localize the production process. Making wholesale switchovers – which almost always means local everything.
- 2. VSJF supports the principles of sustainable development and the stewardship of built and natural environments. In your opinion, how well does Vermont do**

**today in living these principles? Are there key lessons Vermont needs to learn to fulfill these principles?**

- We're human. There's a lot of failure in many places in terms of the way we have built helter skelter despite our many laws. We develop policies that in a sense go against themselves. Contrary to what most people believed we would have liked to see. There's a tendency to make policy and create laws that go against what we'd like. But there's an awful lot of efforts to maintain the natural resources. VSJF is a leader and the legislature was very forward thinking in creating it.
- I think we do a fair job in some areas. In forestry for example – maybe in comparison to other parts of the country our forests are maintained well, but there's a real lack of understanding that we have higher standards or ongoing goals and increasing stewardship to aspire to. Often times we rest on our laurels that we're doing a good job and we miss opportunities to continuously improve. There may be some innovative entrepreneurs who do good things – by and large business activity is only mediocre and state govt is only mediocre. There's a continual resistance to being the best, people think 'we're okay'.
- There's a veneer of greenness that masks underlying structural deficiencies. These are substantial and very hard to address – economic, political, social, whatever. Our response and the state's response is inadequate to the crisis ahead.
- In relation to our land and resource based economy – it's never paid that well. The cost of living relative to the margins that you can make living on the land are stretched even thinner. That's what's making it very difficult – if it's hard to survive economically – there's a tendency to overextend to push more stuff through to make a living. There's a tendency to make more product to make a living (industrial ag and forestry has been going that way for years). Less in VT, but it's going to be harder to make a good living by doing it right.
- Lake Champlain is a good example of where we haven't been able to solve the problems. There are so many reasons; pollution in the lake, sewage systems, non-point pollution forever, but we haven't been able to resolve it. I don't know if it's 2 yr administrations, or not applying scientific principles. Ag is a 'sacred cow and it can't be attacked'. I'm not sure we've been able to organize ourselves to tackle the big problems.
- I still think we lack a grand vision or grand plan – the regional plan has no teeth to back it up – the town wants to do this, doesn't meet the plan – so what? In the old days our little communities were laid out sensibly (example – Bristol). We did a better job just out of our gut back when we were applying sensible values – but today you look at Rte 7 or Shelburne Rd and you think – what the hell were we thinking, even with our regs? We used to have a better handle on this; we've lost the lake, we've lost our connection to land base. But now, with an oil crisis we've turned back to the land base and we think – we can grow it! We can cut it! But, no – we should address these core needs and try to manage with a Statewide Vision in place.
- In terms of key lessons for VT – my observation is that there is a lack of connection with businesses and the natural environment. There's a difference between understanding what it means to be an environmental steward and actually BEING one. In our array of economic activities they don't often include ag and forestry. So I see traditional economic sectors not being connected to working landscape – especially about how we build our education system for the kids that focuses on understanding this landscape to education to economy. As a lesson – we understand it, but how do we make it real?

- Right now the talk and the buzz is around the ‘green economy’ – about businesses that are connected to the natural resources base or the renewables – connected to values that are important. But one of the places we don’t go is – how do you actually run a business in a green way? There’s the green economy from the standpoint of businesses that make wind turbines, and then there’s how is the business RUN in a green way. On that front we don’t do very well.
- Another component of the green economy is the low impact businesses such as software development because it can be done at home, without transport, etc. There’s a lot of stuff that’s connected to green economy – those are the larger economic worldwide generators than some of the forest, ag folks.

**3.Many of VSJF’s grants and programs focus on the working landscape – agriculture, forestry and biofuels/energy. What should Vermont’s working landscape look like in 20 years? What will happen if Vermont does not move this way?**

- It looks like now what I hope it looks like in 20 years. The difference being it would be for real. We should be growing food and fuel and feeding ourselves – having productive farms that are far more diversified than they are currently. The forests the same way. Most of our farm land is in private ownership and there’s no resource to aggregate and put them into the marketplace – it would be ideal if the landowner had some say about where it goes and how it goes and what kind of prices you’re getting. I think if the people that visited us would walk through farms, tasting cheese, seeing how forests are harvested; rolling in our heritage into real built out activities – open space and forest lands would make it more interesting for place to visit.
- We talk about the notion of sheds; energy sheds, food sheds. Food and a growing percentage of energy we consume comes from a radius around us. Some of our absolute core things we need to live and thrive should happen within a radius that is knowable, trackable and scaleable. The things we get from outside the state – we should be capturing the highest value for these. We are finding a niche market where we’re in the specialty market not in the common market.
- I see our strength as we diversify we give our producers in the state that advantage as they market to boston, NYC, montreal, etc. It’s not commodity based but specialized regional exporting.
- I would reiterate the idea of sheds – communities within a certain radius get what they need in terms of food, energy and beyond that.
- Ideally people are working more locally and not having to travel so far afield – then they can be more active, and watch out for the neighbors.
- My anticipation is for 100% renewable energy – lots of farmers and diversified ag. But commuters won’t matter because cars will either be powered by electricity or biofuels. A lot more renewable energy installations, a lot more farming. Wind towers, solar on rooftops everywhere – regional pellet facilities, biofuels.
- Forest will probably be thinner. The shed concept is about where the resources are and where the obstacles are. A natural flow that already exists and the sheds are little more intentional. Largely it’s going to look like it does.

- Big issue is in population. What kind of growth will we see? Maybe slow growth – but that could put a whole lot of pressure on forest and ag land that we don't have now. There's issues with moving goods and services around the state – we could go back to our use of rail lines both into VT and tying our markets. Tying our productive areas with higher population areas, also as tourism.
- Incremental catastrophe. Climate change, peak oil, war, economic disaster. The only way we get there is with adequate planning – and it's not happening here or anywhere.
- VT was built around land use and small scale, and we can revert to that, but we have to demonstrate that.

**4. Many people describe Vermont's scale as both a hindrance and as an opportunity. Does Vermont's scale make it hard to do business or hard for growing businesses to stay? What should we be doing to use our scale to our advantage?**

- Absolutely our greatest asset is our scale. The way the communities are organized loosely (we can reinvigorate this), and redraw the 'shed' notion for resource purposes. Because of its scale, we have the greatest opportunity to pull this off.
- We have to! We can't change our scale – geography, population, the way our civic society is constructed dictate this. We will never be good at big. We have to be good at small. Look at the rise of energy committees, farmer's markets, etc. A lot of this org and our partners are about making small work really well. The VSJF is a key organization that fund laboratory experiments and point to that direct to make this better. We're just distant enough from govt control, but not out there as renegades wreaking havoc (we can't really because our process is small and front-end loaded).
- The word RISK should be included – there's benefit to our scale and it allows us to take more risk – the risk of failure is less at the early state, because we're smaller. And it allows us to do a better job of collaborating because we can partner with other orgs. You can't burn any bridges in this state!
- One of our biggest problems with our small scale, from our small business standpoint is that unless you have crafty entrepreneurs who also believe in paying livable wages, then you only have marginal benefits. Because we have a non-livable wage culture it perpetuates. We should be able to share this more wisely amongst our small business culture.
- It's worth recording the fact that we've created a model that we've applied to three sectors and if we had more staff, more resources, etc. In the 3 sectors we've identified the ways forward for the sectors in VT – now the opportunity is to apply it to other sectors. Our market development model could be used at the state level. In each case its based in collaboration and has shown that you can get new partners.
- We were hooked livable wages at AutumnHarp and soon it became the place to work in Addison County. Whatever your reason for livable wage commitments are – at the end of the day it's good for businesses because you attract a much better workforce.

**5. Vermonters worry about the loss of youth; what should Vermont's priorities be if we are to build a strong economy for the next generation?**

- I think one of the issues is that there is an assumption that kids who are born here have to stay here – I think that's false. The kids who are here for school are perhaps more likely to



settle here in younger years. I think the colleges and universities in VT should be the focus – how do we focus and make it affordable for them and integrate them into the communities. Tuition for UVM is very high for out of staters, so we really only attract people who can afford to come.

- If you take a look historically kids have always taken off. For the last 50 years the baby boomers have been the center of the universe – that generation now is aging out and looking behind even though they never have before. People are not having as many kids! It's logical demographics – the angst about it is silly. It's interesting that now it's a big wake-up, it's been that way for decades.
- I see this as an opportunity – I flip this on the head – we're not just talking about young VTers. We are importing other youth for reasons like QOL and mountain biking at lunch. I think there's lots coming here for college or coming back after they get out of the city life. The more opportunities we have for rewarding careers – something people can get something out of.
- I would add that what keeps me here is the community I'm in. The fact I'm engaged and am a part of it – the career is very important but what keeps me here is the community. From an economic development standpoint – having strong communities is crucial.
- I'm not worried about it – I think more and more people will think this is a lifestyle people want to lead. Like Portland OR, there are other places that are like this. But people gush over the community-ness when they come here.
- Good high paying jobs would attract them.
- Jobs in things that make a difference in the world – if we create job opps in the fields they are interested in; green, socially responsible.
- From a socially responsible business standpoint there was a group of back to the landers – there was a critical mass of them and they did something different and did it together. What we're seeing up in Hardwick is the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of socially responsible business people – they meet monthly! They are looking to each other to support each other!
- When people talk about this they don't want 400k people moving here.
- Vermont is a tiny little fragment of a place – you don't expect something this size to have many more people than it already does. The issue to me is not about getting young people back.

**6. Does the Sustainable Jobs Fund have a vision for what a 'sustainable Vermont' would look like?**

- 100% renewable energy, increasing percentage of food locally. We'd never have to talk to anyone in every other state. (joke!)
- They don't want to be isolated, but they want good infrastructure, good airports – they want to make enough money to retire somewhere.
- In 20 years we'll still have personal mobile transport and air flights. There'll be more electric, there has to be more communication.

*Will we have to sacrifice to be sustainable?*

- Personally I don't see how we can do anything except downshift. I don't think we can grow our way out of the problem. I see there will be far more electric vehicles and infrastructure. Less miles!

- I do think that a vision for a sustainable Vermont does include behavioral and cultural change. If you go back to our values of hard work, self-sufficiency and so on. From one person, you teach your kids about having less.
- Our energy usage is not going down in any way – it’s going up. I know there’s change we want, but is it going to occur? It’s only going to happen through pain – people are going to do it because they need to and it works better.
- Perhaps the accumulation of wealth will no longer be the motivating factor for us. The ‘me’ generation has led to excesses and there needs to be a massive course correction and I think this is the beginning of changing shape. If things are valued the way they should be.
- But right now we’re just dumping money into the problem.

*Other key points of vision?*

- I’d like to offer a ‘destination’ vision. There’s a lot of ways to get here – rail, air and cars. I’ve been convinced by the Tuscany, southern Italy concept. It’s not that it has anything particularly unique – but simple foods, rolling hills and open spaces. The key is freshness and the experience is outdoor-ness. Sense of place there that is very real. It’s supported by the government and it’s a whole package. It might not be sustainable, but it looks good and tastes good! The more real VT could be and the more it could attract folks, the more appealing we’d be to people outside the state.
- Example of American Flatbread building fires and watching the stars. It says to me that people are hungry for what’s real and we are real whether we want to be or not. What if we make it a safe place to come and promise you a rich, meaningful and safe experience and place to come. I think our economy can do what it needs to do and be innovative. It’s not that it’s instead of factories, but we do it well.
- It’s got to be an inclusive economy. You’ve gotta have IBMs and Flatbread. You have to have a landscape of different size businesses that meet the needs of folks. When you get too far into the conversation, it’s about the wrong and right kind (good and bad), but we need to have both.
- We need to export that technology – we give stuff away right now and don’t leverage our learnings and our experiences.
- It’s one of our biggest weaknesses as an organization – we’ve produced a great model, but we don’t have the resources and the stamina to share the models. How do we put out there the stuff that we’ve been doing on the feed and fuel project. It’s amazing the reactions we get when we go outside the state – but we run out of steam before that point.
- If you look on the ground at what the VSJF is doing is supporting small farms that would otherwise disappear. Fields of sunflowers and canola is a wonderful vision. One of my biggest concerns is that we’re losing one of our greatest resources which is the views. People buying up the land and allowing it to go up – along the highways where you used to have beautiful views now you have hedges and scrub. Long term I’d like to have farms that keep the land open, with biodiesel, wind turbines, solar, etc.
- I think examples (Stateline and Borderview) you have people who have grown up on the land who can fix anything and can use everything. I’d like to see more Vermonters learn how to think that way – because the stuff we just put into the land fill could be used for any number of purposes. The stuff that John and Roger come up with and put together to make work.
- The importance of open land and productive land and light industry. In our citycenters and population centers I see a sustainable VT including this as well. Light industry (maybe

green or not) can attract the people who are interested in keeping the land open for their recreation and use.

- 1988 – statement about 2 vermonts is probably still clear today – it’s true to some extent here now. This is where sustainable jobs are so important for people who may not have other opportunities.
- There’s a great leveling when you leave the job and you work together in a community – by and large it’s about the work you do in the group – not what’s in your bank account.
- From a structural standpoint the economy used to be all about vertical integration and all about consolidation. I think in the future it will be about horizontal organization – mimicking ecology and our communities here. Lots of small pods, diversified industries. Bigger and consolidated will not be better in this century. I think the only way we can grow is not about owning every aspect of the supply chain, but about horizontal relationships. Right now it is that way in many instances in VT.

# Council on the Future of Vermont VT Housing and Conservation Board Organizational Interview

October 31, 2008

**1. The VHCB was founded on the idea that Vermont's ethic of conservation, our high quality of life should work in concert with creating affordable housing. Has VHCB been successful in this mission? Why or why not?**

- One success has been embracing by the conservation community of thinking about housing. It's a huge mindset jump that's really significant. Conservation community becomes a partner, not a competitor on open space.
- Linking the two first seemed weird to people but has come to be common sense—looking at housing and open landscape together. Dual mission success.
- From a housing standpoint it unites us in a dialogue on land-use—we come to agree on projects on the ground in the communities—has built collaboration.
- When you read our statute it talks about our contribution to economic vitality and housing. We help reinvest in ag. Champion deal preserving actively worked land. Small towns with serious challenges really benefit in their revitalization.
- We haven't succeeded at our mission yet—much more to be done.
- Back in the beginning we had a big fear around the dollars—it was a bit of a shotgun marriage that we were all worried about. There are still inevitable tensions because of our passions for one side or the other. Just tolerance on some parts. I think this tension will continue in the stressed environment; will my project or your project get funded with the limited dollars available?
- Who else is going to care about development? we mix the development people with the anti-development people,
- Around time of act 200 controversy. VHCB was the one on the ground to make the changes...planning, downtown development, Forum on Sprawl. All concerned with successful project development on housing, sustainable ag operations...we're in symbiosis with all partners.
- We are one tool among many and we can't control other elements like the price of milk, downtown program, etc. More tools than one program can produce are needed for full success.
- Other tools—use value taxation—etc. We don't really know what a working lands policy is today.
- Successes: VHCB is a leverager of fund. We are one of many factors in getting things done. We contribute to both Housing and Conservation but do it with HV, VHFA, Nature Conservancy. We are a key component although we may not provide bulk of the dollars. We are a leader in requiring quality development—not thin walls, cheap construction but good quality work.
- We've been a good at helping a community reinvent itself, redo its center
- Areas that still need addressing: the sustainability of housing projects. Anything deteriorates over time. Not always enough reserves for the long-term health of projects.

- One thing we've done well is decentralizing opportunity. There is opportunity for civic involvement. These projects are complex. But people get engaged and then we are a tool to civically engaged local groups all over the state. We are a part of an architecture of opportunity for Vermonters.
- We help build capacity throughout the state and sustain it. That's a challenge in terms of working with fragile local working groups. Partners with local non-profits is a strength.

**2. What is the trend for conservation in Vermont – do you see rising challenges or opportunities that will affect how conservation has been done in the past?**

- Conservation covers a wide range of activities. Lots of buckets—saving nat. resources, ag., historic preservation...lots of meanings. The whole area around ag. Development is most stressed at the moment.
- Protecting resources and looking at the productivity of the landscape in economy.
- Cost of land dramatically risen. Second home buyers have driven costs up—a real problem, the finite dollars can't go as far.
- Ag. Pressures on dairy, new diversity is an opportunity.
- Many projects are done so that people can retire—family transitions...but how will next generation make it? Next generations can't sell development rights...no plan for this next stage. As farmers age, they are getting into a trap.
- Development rights design from 70s can't serve as a working landscape policy for the next century.
- Of all our programs, Agriculture is the one is most susceptible to pressures of global economy and market pressure.
- We haven't used all the tools—green zones for agriculture!!
- With greater urbanization and suburbanization may lead to the need of land use planning for recreation
- Conservation challenged when economy improves—costs going up. Short term benefit from Freeman foundation—they are moving away from past level of investments—will lead to challenges on funding.
- We acquire more and more rights and projects and we will need to balance with the needs of the community for land use opportunities.
- 

**3. We ask in our public forums for people to look ahead a generation to tell us about challenges they see for VT, but this is increasingly difficult with the last month of economic upheaval. If you were to identify one strategic principle that Vermont should stick to for the next 20 years – what would it be and why?**

- Keep it local: decentralization. “Solutions are in the community.” Finance is top heavy, we need to turn back to community.
- Smart growth—VT is still different and special. The dynamism between towns and working landscape. It inoculates us from the bigger ups and downs of economy. This will serve us well in future.

- We often obsess about local, don't take advantage of the whole of state. We could do more—we can't share a snowplow. No county government. What can we do as a whole state, need to aggregate what scale we have.
- We maintain an environment that encourages innovation and entrepreneurial activity. We can't compete on scale but we can compete on innovation. Work from these.
- We need to integrate real energy conservation and energy development in everything we do in VT. We've been focusing on it, but is it coordinated? Right now it is in silos, and we could really step out and do incredible work if we get our act together to do it collaboratively.
- A strategic principle is not to forget about the average Vermonter or low income Vermonter. We could be an elitist museum.
- "I hope we don't forget who we really are" – we're not trying to be everything to everybody.
- Keep our workforce here—not lose them to a vision that there's a better life elsewhere.
- We were much less prosperous a generation ago but we didn't need homeless shelters...but today people in the last 20% are not keeping up economically. We haven't even had a conversation about that in VT. I don't understand why we didn't have the same problems when we were less prosperous—we may need to make sacrifices...big box economy is not producing jobs that provide an "equal share"
- Community can sound trite but it's so true—sharing and working together.

#### **4. Do you think the definition of working landscape will change in the next 20 years?**

- We use the term without definition...means different things to different people. Used to mean cows in the field, not anymore. Needs to include viable ag. sector. Not defined and tools not sufficiently development
- Lots of people want it who don't really want it to be "working"—it's not just cows, it may also be giant wood pellet plants.
- Forest tension between wilderness forest to promote working forest (multi-use). We need to address that tension. It won't go away. We really need to be careful about a balance and someone will need to define that balance.
- It has to be okay to cut a tree.
- Contradictions around wilderness expansion...interferes with local uses...you could make the argument about lots of land—need to be careful about it.
- Need to look at policy around hunting—its not just sport but also how people feed the family—a very practical exercise. VAST Trails etc. are also part of the working land.
- We have ag. devel. right purchase program and we have a natural areas program in partnership with Sierra Club—that protection is also important.
- Eco-tourism is growing and natural areas also have an economic role.
- Working landscape will be crucial in energy development. We have to have it expand to include energy development.
- Wind/digestors/et c. Permanent easements have to be flexible enough to include energy development
- "Rising tension between the workers and the lookers".
- Contradictions in production of hay and manure spreading and the desire to look at nice fields—people want to advise or control farm practices of their neighbors etc. Can we

educate new people who move in? People who don't really know much will think they don't like some practices without understanding the role of those practices in stewardship and business viability. Other businesses not as critical in the public eye as ag.

- When people have opportunity to be connected—through education or a CSA—they understand better and that helps address these issues.
- Any business connected to land use faces public pressures.
- Role of farmers who work the land of their neighbors—haying fields etc—this is a positive.
- Act as a whole, not just locally. We aren't comfortable with master planning. Need to layer maps to look at green zones, ag development zones, master planning, empowering planning.
- Planning for the kind of development that will promote the uses that we would like to see for zones.

**5. The Commission on Vermont's Future from 1988 recommended that VHCB be fully funded and utilized. If the COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT also had the opportunity to articulate something critical about conservation, quality of life and working landscapes, what do you think it should be?**

- Planning for what we want. Master planning to encourage the positive realization of the potential of working landscape. We need to collaborate across the board to get to where we want to go. From a smart growth or energy standpoint we need to do infill but towns resist it—we aren't all in the same planning process but plan against each other. Either statewide or regional planning should be stronger and inspire much more collaboration “build to one Vermont”.
- We need to recognize that we have had vision in common for years—it has led to vitality in VT. We have visionary stuff going forward. “We do have a basic principle at work here” We promote active livable community in conjunction with working landscape that balance is quality of life.
- Scale and traditional settlement patterns are foundations of what we are all about. We've been successful in encouraging some infill and working landscape but overall growth inevitably changes things. We may lose some of our scale—we need to be sure it happens within confines we set.
- People need a place to live. Housing/homes need to be a significant goal. We often aren't explicit enough about housing. “Quality of life starts with housing.”
- When people were working on 1988 study we were 3 months old—now we need to know that it will take concerted public investment—it won't happen without common effort and joint investment.
- People have been afraid to hold a dialogue that calls for taxes. We are always told there is no money. We need to speak for the value of public investment might bring. We just put out 700B for bailout. We need to recognize strategic need for investment.
- Need to change people's opinions about where they want to live—starting to see people moving into town, but our development pattern is problematic...”until we get wholesale buy in”

- We've become a more contentious state in last 20 years. We need to look at how we have as a fundamental value of acceptance and inclusion. Bedrock values of the state means accepting farm smells or mixed housing...
- A famous letter—Keynes—1944—shocked people by saying that more planning wasn't socialism...you need to maintain liberty in people's lives. We need to find ways to respect each other, people of right minds planning together in respect. We can do more planning if we have respect for each other.
- Conserve farms but help them be viable.
- Housing isn't enough on its own. We should help people move out into ownership.



**Council on the Future of Vermont**  
**October 15, 2008**  
**Vt Association of Conservation Districts**

**1. The VACD helps provide support to Vermont Conservation Districts by focusing on educational programming, serving as a link between Districts, facilitating natural resource conflicts and representing the Districts at different government levels. What parts of your work are the most successful in Vermont, and why?**

- We've just acquired the technical program. We have 11 employees who work on a statewide basis – ag resources specialists to land treatment plans or nutrient management plans. Assist farmers, state and fed agencies. We're getting up to speed on coordinating what every district is doing – we're trying to get them coordinated on like portable skidder project. All counties are different – one county started the trees for streams program – planting trees by streambeds – that program spread from one to another. Another is building portable skidder bridges – they got grant dollars and now lease them to foresters for harvesting in a sustainable manner. At statewide level the coordination is phenomenal.
- We have one 'lobbyist' to represent the concerns we hear about in the ag community – she represents either the districts or the landowners. We could use more coordination around water quality concerns or land owner concerns. She keeps us informed as statewide districts what's going on on the Hill.
- Coordination is most successful – utilizing resources, bringing them together, making them better, stronger.
- The districts represent the landowners – comprised of 5 supervisors. Typically farmers or people in touch with community.
- We represent the farming community – the prime ag land and ag base is crucial. The farmer's property rights need to be maintained – I'm a farmer so I believe this. It's for all of Vermont; doesn't matter if its rural or cities.
- We have an extensive list of the things; tell tale sign of statewide ag.
- Supervisor on the board is landownership. So they really are the rural landowners of the state. Farming is a big portion of it- but at districts we branch out to protect the resources, forests, wetlands, suburban projects with rain gardens, tree plantings with schools. Every district has its involvement in these areas.
- Buy Local – another direction that we're moving toward. You have support from each district area

**2. Are there key issues that need to be pursued to help the landowner/farmer?**

- Future of VT farmers – continuing with the buy local program, but going to the legislative level to make it more affordable. It's not cost effective to support local products at this point in time. How do we get a more affordable product? And how do we advertise those products? There's a project out of Minnesota created a statewide infrastructure map – visual tool to see and then invest in what they have and don't have. Could we figure out how to get a program like that in VT? One district has already (Lamoille County) mapped and has a booklet for distribution. Maybe we could have Sterling College pull together a database online? \*\*\*

- We need to get local schools more involved in the full cycle of food. Pilot projects around the state – hardwick and others – getting local food into the school, and have a compost either on site or short distance away. It’s phenomenal for ed – where your food comes from and the full cycle – education, conservation, and farming community.
- Cooperative programs for conservation and environmental education. How can we develop statewide materials that are educational (maybe posted on a website) for educators to use, grades k-12? Maybe even sponsor a books on wheels program for non-profit educators. Support for environmental ed is huge but comes in very small chunks, so you’re writing a lot of small grants.
- How do we support farmers on a tax basis to encourage them to maintain the open lands rather than divide to developers? How do ensure they remain open and working? We couldn’t sustain something like that – we are too small. Each of the ideas needs to have enough bang for buck to do that.
- The land use program was intended (correctly) to help the farmers stay on the land. The legislature should be increasing this rather than cutting it. Food and clean drinking water will come from this. Or get TNC to purchase only development rights – cash infusion for this generation.
- Working landscape will only be sustainable if there is support for those who work it. Big difference between providing dollars for writing plans, and actually implementing the nutrient management plans. VACD does help writing plans, but there is no time and dollars (from feds and state) to do the longterm planning to work WITH the farmers. You need a few people who can work on a statewide basis and go farm to farm to walk them through.
- State has put funding for this in a maintenance program – depending on the size of the operation there’s regulatory requirements to maintain plans. Technically the support is there (two programs – state and fed. Right now the state is putting funding toward a maintenance program, but as the state budget begins to shrink, we have to continue to fund it.) there should be public funding going to this since they are shared resources.
  - Everyone’s different – some do, but some are quick to blame landowners if there’s a problem. The press is the first place you see it happen. There’s blame on an individual when it may not be their fault.
  - It needs to be part of the education and overall explanation to non-rural members of the community. People live in the landscape and see it everyday – they understand it more so than those removed from the working landscape. These we need to focus more emphasis on ed and outreach. They may be our largest consumers but may be the furthest removed. They seem to be the first to draw conclusions and then go to representatives.
  - VACD has an employee that assists with the Agency of Ag, Act 250 prime ag development of land. It was brought to our attention that lands set aside for prime ag are still sitting there – how do we pass this information out to the young farmers or people who could work the land? Either purchasing the open space for working, (for ag community, community ag sharing) dovetailing into the Act 250 lands that are set aside already. Who is the one central coordinator for this?
  - A lot of this goes back to education and bringing the rural perspective back to urban or suburban areas. Certain things that go along with agriculture (like manure) need to be known as the things that go with the open working landscape. There are public

- perceptions that make it hard. Part of the education is about diversification, but we also have to support what we have.
- Some of this is commercial dairy and industrial farming. Then small farms and operations can use the infrastructure. We have to support what we have already and has provided us with what we have today. It employs a lot of people and provides a lot of money. It's not just the smaller dairy, veggies, farmer's markets, but still reaching out to those to educate about this.
  - Labor sharing happens as different suppliers provide to the smaller guy - it really is a symbiotic relationship, but people don't realize it. I've seen it where they compete – but really it's all to the consumer and it's about producing a quality product. There might be in the future an issue with that – where they both use the rural landscape and feel they have to compete. Things like this concern the landowners who are caught in the middle or not playing to one or the other but just sustain themselves.
  - A veggie farmers inputs aren't that different from a dairy farmers' inputs. Organic operations may be using manure from commercial operations – we're all doing the same thing, but our end market may be different and our process may be different.
  - If you have a dairy farm and a CSA you should keep the land open in between. Everyone needs to work together and keep interests focused on a common goal. A third party coming in to focus on the common, rather than the sidelines.

*Should this happen at the legislative level?*

- Yes, and other states have done that either in labeling or marketing products. They have a responsibility not to disadvantage one over the other.
- VTers do look at our resources as being privately owned, but we all should share in the natural resources because it belongs to everyone. I don't think the legislative people look at it that way. When they blame someone it's the one that owns the land where the problem stops always. Maybe we need education that it's all our natural resources, not just the farmer.

*What would you say are some of the opportunities – or things you'd like to see – for Vermont's future?*

- No longer a state Rendering service. So, High Fields Institutes taking on an advisory board. Trying to do education on composting carcasses. How do we establish a state rendering service where animal carcasses can be hauled off to a site?
- There are ag-plastic recycling plants around, although the closest is in Canada. There's a task work group to figure out how to get a recycling facility here in VT.

**3. Are there global or national trends around our landscapes that will affect Vermont and that VACD is looking ahead to and preparing for? What are the priorities you see for the state?**

- Development and growth – commercial and residential. Growing the economy with energy or creative economy – this will take housing and people.
- If the global climate change models are accurate then you'll see the prime dairy in Mexico, southern – shifting to VT in next 20 years? Will we become an even greater producer?
- How many towns around here have growth plans? Not just ten acres per house – this is a subdivision that will kill the farmer. In order for a producer to farm 40 acres, he has to

involve 6 landowners with different and changing opinions. I see this happen a lot – all it takes is one to say no! Urban planning and zoning and ways of keeping open land available.

- The governor's initiative on urban growth – this was really disturbing to us – affordable housing and things like that. The ideology behind this administration's push for getting new growth into VT may not support the ag vision for the state.
- You can't stop growth, but we want to make sure that it's done well.
- We need to enable the municipals to have the resources to do these plans. Regional planning commissions are an excellent source – they have staff available to maintain and plan on a regional basis. We still are individually and privately owned properties, so you can't stop growth.
- We don't have a statewide vision – for planning. There needs to be statewide emphasis on planning and zoning and resources available – so that when a developer comes into a small town he can't just take advantage through a loophole.
- It should be statewide coordination rather than statewide regulation – how do we do it without making it regulatory – and providing legal assistance?

**4. Vermonters identify the working landscape and our heritage as rating highest on a scale of values (from our poll), and in every public forum we've conducted they describe how much closer they feel to the land here than in other places they've lived. Does this public perception play out when it comes to Vermonters taking action around conservation and management of landscapes?**

- Everybody cares and wants something to be done, but they have different ideas on what it's going to take. If you educate, then you know if you do this – you get this, if you don't – you get that. Buffers and trees are great – but what are the different ideas and results? People have great intentions and great aspirations but there needs to be a level of legitimacy or something that ensures it preserves the working landscapes and resources.
- For success to happen – we need achievable results. (for example, we all want to save gas, so we drive less – we'd buy other vehicles if we could, but they aren't available so we don't know what to do.) But the portable skidders – it's achievable, identifiable, manageable. You have to start to make it into manageable pieces. We have to identify what you want to do – and there's 1000 things to do – even if it's not the highest priority how do you get something done a small piece.
- Another piece is planning – having your homework done ahead of time, so that it's done right and people can SEE the results. Having the goals and results there and people can see it.
- Evolving plan with identifiable pieces.

**3. Nature-deficit disorder is a big initiative in today's world, yet we heard in our forums that parents are hesitant to let their children play outside or have unregulated play. Do you see this happening?**

- Without a doubt you can see it! We bring 6<sup>th</sup> graders to our field days – wildlife, water, soil, agriculture stations. It's amazing when you get these kids – even from rural communities – they start to put their hands on fertilizer or soil or pelt from raccoon or leaves – they don't really know what to do. They've never gone out and made leaf piles or

climbed a tree. Just simple exposure to get them to realize there is more to do outside than sitting inside and play. These kids have no calluses on their hands.

- But I didn't see the difference between Middlebury or a Bridgeport student.
- Everything today is geared toward novelty and soundbites. In Nature there are no soundbites. There's nothing dictating your time – you're not spoon fed in Nature. How do you get that stillness, or move from one to another? How do we deal with it rurally here in VT?
- Maybe they grow out of it – there aren't too many studies about when they get older. Sterling College for example – those kids are throwing their lives into it.

**5. Do you believe that VACD has appropriate power of action to lead conservation efforts town to town and statewide. If not, what is missing?**

- I think it is what District makes of it. That's what's so important about them being landowner based entity. They get to focus on what's important in their district. I think they do have the proper authority – because it's up to them and they can go ahead or not. Some districts have really active supervisors and get a lot done and get a lot of community support and some don't.
- What do they need? I don't know what they are lacking – because every district has a distinct vision and strategy. Our mission in Lamoille is focused on education because we're not really an ag community.
- Water quality is common – but that's driven because of the funding we get from the state and feds.
- The limitation we have is funding. You can do everything you want with volunteers but when you get down to it, you need the funding. In Addison every town gives us something – but we give it back to them through conservation. Whether it's a press release or with kids taking the program back to their parents. Our district is emphasizing getting this out of the community.
- Market yourself so you become a household term. You know who to call and where to go. Then they come to you. Or if they want to do something to conserve or protect the resources, they don't feel like they have to turn themselves in before they get it fixed. For the landowners, we don't haggle – we work with regulatory agencies by getting their money, but our staff work in a non-regulatory manner.
- As far as what VACD could use – sometimes it's nice to have the use of a facilitator. Every district has volunteer supervisors. We do this with our free time – we don't have a lot of money and operate on a nominal basis. We can't hire facilitators and specialists that we need. Something like this would be wonderful for every supervisor in the state to get this kind of discussion.
- The limitations are that we're volunteers. You can only ask so much of people before it's too much.
- We don't have the funding to hire facilitators, but a facilitator for this type of topic at an annual mtg would be just phenomenal – you'd get a range of topics around the state. Our supervisors are phenomenal resources for looking at the pieces of the report.
- We don't often mention the culture of agriculture – and why is VT different from any other state. The culture of ag means that there are communities that are still closely knit – you

don't find that anywhere else – you have small town communities, practices and manners and still care about the land. That's unique – a lot of the commercial places don't have that.

- If you have family place you have culture and community. You have hang outs after work getting a beer and talking politics. It's a place for communities to gather. If you look at fire depts. In rural areas – who else can stop what they are doing in the middle of the day and go help someone? Once you're in the corporate world of working for someone else you can't support this. Sole proprietors and family businesses have the opportunity to support their community. They feel ownership to it. They have invested their lives into it.
- It's just different here. That's shouldn't be lost.

## **6. Does VACD have a vision for the state of Vermont?**

- To look like it is today. A working landscape, crystal clear lake and rivers and streams that feed it. With a thriving economy producing quality goods that are represented nation wide and globally. With more money in state coffers. Maintain support for these great causes. You can't identify the culture of ag, but you have to maintain it too. That's why you have volunteering all their time to maintain. The farmer's way of life is everyone's way of life. People in community need to have the connection to him – and then the people there have the say and its their community too. Start at the bottom and local and work our way up. Based on a supporting structure rather than a dominating one.

# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

November 6, 2008

## VT Higher Education Council and Association of Independent Colleges

### Organizational Interview

**We've heard consistently that Vermonters value accessibility – most especially to opportunities in higher education for youth. How do VHEC and VAIC wrestle with the difficult challenge of keeping higher education available to all?**

- We struggle with that issue all the time. How do we get the word out, how do we get Vermonters to understand the value of higher ed? If you don't have it, you won't have a livable wage for your lifetime. The brick wall is financing. We have people incur unreasonable debt loads. There was an average of 40k debt. As a result those kids can't find a job here to pay off the debt. Without additional support and support from the state, we can't change that system.
- We can keep higher ed available to all by working both sides of the first year of college (high school and post graduate). CCV has a really focused plan with VSAC – both about your senior year of college and about just before the sophomore year of high school.
- We all struggle with student assistance, and lower costs. We have to recognize that access has to do with more than cost. Many people are working two jobs, they have kids and we need to meet their needs. We have to think about different modes of delivery. What is the future of higher ed in this country? It's not going to look like it does today. New ways of thinking, working, new skills sets. We want to provide good liberal arts base, but we need to supply those basics as well. We need support from the state to do this properly.

**Superintendents Association and School Boards Association say that we need a seamless transition from graded school to high school to higher ed. We haven't had the visioning part – we talk about financing instead. What is your take on this?**

- Yes, that's true. We have to recognize the intrinsic value of education – we have an educated populace. All of that ties into education for the people here. We need to be able to invest the funds.
- The high schools tend to look at progression into college as if that's all that matters. I think our focus on who goes forward isn't enough – we need to focus on who graduates. It shifts the conversation on how you succeed rather than how you get in. Principals tend to think about getting into college as the only thing you have to worry about.
- It's easy to focus on finances as an access issue, geography and time as an access issue, skill level is an access issue. None of this lends itself to starting and stopping points. I think we'll see that education beyond the age of eighteen is an essential element to an individual. The value in the state needs to shift to focus on value of ed beyond high school. Education is not just for the individual, but for the state. We will not self-perpetuate that unless we're educating the entirety of our population.

- We survey all high school seniors upon graduation. We have 74% who want to continue education beyond high school making that decision before 9<sup>th</sup> grade. But we have an old system that works with folks – the decisions are already being made – we need to make sure they know it doesn't end at 9<sup>th</sup> grade. How do you go about making that decision and why will what you do in 9<sup>th</sup> grade impact what you do in the rest of your life? It's much more difficult when you're an adult.
- This association represents tremendous geographic accessibility. Independent colleges and public schools more and more raise millions and millions of dollars for people to attend. Much of it is coming from outside the state and being brought into the state. And our institutional discounting which is also a gift back to the state.

**Thinking ahead about the future of higher education in the state, what are the biggest challenges you face and how do you prioritize among them? Are there some challenges that will never change in higher education and others that are new for colleges in Vermont?**

- Relatively new: more learning disabilities, more autism. New Commissioner of Ed talking about Vision 2018 – talking about an individualized education plan for every student. Every student has a different way of learning and communication that we're not keeping up. It's an antiquated system that is failing many of our students by saying 'you're college material' and 'you're not'. We need to say right from the get go – 'who are you and how do we help you learn?'
- Costs: costs go up and it's very hard to create new efficiencies to reduce them. Higher education has the classic economist's 'costs disease': personnel costs, health care, food – we have all the inflationary ones.
- There are more and more conversations about institutional survival because we're reaching a breaking point in the next few years. Many of us talk about it politely in terms of a 'decline in quality' – but we need the public to know this. We're in a state that truly DOES NOT value higher education in comparison to others.
- The biggest challenge is the public perception to recognize that it's an individual benefit as well as a social benefit. It's a cultural change. It's necessary to have that conversation to take it to the people.
- We're living off the Great Society – where education benefited the society. Unfortunately now the prevailing sense is that education is about the individual only.
- I would question whether the overall business model for liberal arts colleges – are there parents out there willing to pay an excess of 50k to educate their kid? Middlebury is diversifying – but we thought we had time. With the economic crisis that is here that time is shortened. The health care, people costs are massive.
- But there are two things we do well in this country – we teach well and we make movies. We have so many students abroad who want to come here, but we don't talk about it. There are advantages in diversification and aiming for the foreign students as well.
- More specific to VT – funding for higher ed is about 50<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states, and funding for k-12 is up in the top ten for 50 states. But we have an enormously inefficient k-12 system, but we're not sustaining the higher ed sector because the policy is so weak and flawed.
- Key challenge is the brain drain of high school graduates. We're already looking at over half of the college bound kids leaving the state – high school age going down 21%. We import more college kids than we export – but we don't know how many we keep from that.



- Staffing – we have over 1000 staff at our school, but we import them from over the bridge in NY or other places. There is simply not enough staff to run the place.
- Vermont as a state and higher ed in specific will have real workplace problems. Our school used to be totally adjunct faculty – but we’ve moved to a standing faculty – and now I’m kicking myself for doing that. We’re all going to have more parttime faculty if we sustain our students. If we don’t maintain enrollment we’ll lay people off.

### **What’s the role of higher ed in VT in incubating the economy of the future?**

- North Carolina, Wisconsin, most recently Kentucky – these states have invested and are keeping their students there. They determined that if you have the workforce, the businesses will come. Those states determined that if you want economic development then you may have to take cultural sacrifice.
- The common element is that there was someone in those states that championed this idea. We haven’t yet had that champion, we haven’t yet had someone bring this idea to the forefront to get the attention we need. There will never be more money unless we invest as a culture to make it so.
- It’s not just the people around this table who need to push higher ed. We need economic development experts here in the state – the businesses here in VT! – to also speak loudly and support higher ed. You need more than presidents out there speaking for this! Partnership with business.
- In Sweden, the govt, the businesses and education work together so that no one gets laid off and they plan for what they see coming. More partnerships that are actually working together. Strategic planning for the future of the state of VT. Burlington College – we have a lot of students interning in businesses – I would offer that VT’s culture is around small business, entrepreneurship and innovation. We should support that and let the students here come up with their own ideas.
- We need to be incubators and continuing lifelong learning. We need the folks who are retirement starting businesses as well – how can VT be a supportive place for that? There are many parts of VT that you can’t have cell phone or internet access – and you need this to be competitive today.
- If 30% of our adults have college degrees, it means 70% don’t – and they are telling their kids that they don’t have to. But these same kids can’t make a living in VT and they can’t help us grow the economy. Parents are mostly saying ‘I don’t know how you’re going to go to college’. It’s not just about money, but about educating the populace to make sure they know about the values of higher education – for themselves and for the society.

### **POINTS OF VISION FOR EDUCATION IN VT?**

- Part of what scares people is that higher ed means only college. But education is continuous, lifelong and throughout ages. If there were a rhetorical framework, it would not be about college, it would be to say – education does NOT STOP at high school, it goes on forever. Then it gets it away from the mindset of just college.
- Something along the way convinced society it was more important to go on into the workforce. We have to make the higher ed connection to this group of college and the next generation.

- I do find myself talking about the year 2050. We're trying to put together an education at Champlain that will meet that need. You think about the working life of the students on our campus today – and there you are. We can't predict it, but we can predict some pieces of it. Global economy, forces worldwide. It's not that difficult to tease out the educational themes to take them to the future. What's also clear is that if you only graduate from high school, it'll be bleak. Massive outsourcing is only the precursor of what will happen. If a young person today refuses to invest in themselves with higher education, they are nailing and bolting the door closed.
- With respect to Vermont, in the year 2050, this is what we want to be! How many jobs, what kind of tax base and how will we get there? Having a vision of what we need to know to get there – where do we want to be as a state?
- It may require the reinvention of education. What we're doing in education is inadequate from the start because it starts at age 5. In other places it's more intensive, its not agrarian calendar, its bilingual. Students in other parts of the world will outcompete ours.
- Higher education will be reinvented by 2050 anyhow. It might as well be towards what we'd like to see.
- Colleges and international baccalaureate to get started. If Vermont did that, we as colleges could embrace that. There are a lot of things we could do to make a primary education.
- Higher education will expand beyond the borders of VT. Middlebury will have a graduate school in east coast, language school in California. We have to be a global education presence based in VT.
- Education professionals or whoever needs to make the argument either hasn't done it correctly or effectively. What will it cost us and keep costing us if we discourage more and more people from being able to access higher education?
- There's no long term thinking in the political realm or the regulatory realm. Everyone is thinking about strategic planning on a 3-5 yr. We have 2 yr terms in VT – we need a political leader that will take this as a vision moving forward.
- On the planning horizon we have to keep in mind the goal of teaching students to think and to learn how to learn. I hear from the state about planning for the vocations of today – but they'll be gone. So we have to help them be the people who will create the jobs of the future. They have to learn how to think creatively and we have to educate the whole person.

# Council on the Future of Vermont

## Vt Youth Conservation Corps interview

### Oct 3, 2008

#### 1. When you think of Vermont, what does it mean to you?

- I moved here from Michigan – it’s pretty and scenic here. There are mountains and quaint little towns, but the whole state is like that.
- It’s nice here, and quiet.
- There are a lot more people here than where I’m from in WY – there are a lot of cliques here in VT. But I like it, I’m happy.
- I moved here from Chazy, NY and now I live in a city.
- I moved here from Dallas, TX with over 1000 students in my freshman class. It’s too small here.
- People have a different mindset – there’s less diversity here than in Chicago where I’m from. It’s difficult to adjust.
- I’ve been here my whole life and I love it. It’s a nice quiet peaceful place.
- There’s lots of cars now and not enough places to get out into nature.
- VT means my family and my family farm.

#### 2. We’ve heard a lot about kids leaving the state for school or jobs. Have you seen this in your life, and if so, what is your take on this trend? Do you think it’s good for kids to leave here, or not good?

- “I think it’s good that kids leave the state because we got no jobs. The taxes are ridiculous. I’d leave for like construction in Arizona because they need English speaking people. I’m serious! They need like foremen because it’s just Mexicans.”
- My brother moved here and didn’t want to at first, but he loves it. I’d like to stay here for school but Vermont can’t offer metropolitan experiences. There’s more to do in a city. “I think of VT as like Florida – it’s for people who are done with adolescent energy filled years. It’s a place to retire or be after you’re young.”
- My friend graduated and went to school in London, England.
- Lots of kids from my school are graduating and staying in state – like UVM or St. Mike’s.
- I want to win the lottery so I don’t have to worry about school costs!

*We opened the question also to the leaders, who also represent that demographic bracket that is described as ‘leaving’ or ‘missing from’ Vermont.*

- I came here from Texas – and lots of my friends are young Vermonters who moved out of the state, but have a reason to move back. There are more jobs elsewhere, but the people who are here wanted to come back for some reason.
- I went to St. Mike’s and graduated from there – I had about 30 close friends. In the past month another last two have left for jobs out of state. But it’s interesting that mostly the out of staters have left, and the Vermonters have stayed.
- Most of my friends from high school went to college out of state and have stayed out of state. I’ve moved back because of this job, which is what I want to be doing. But it’s funny because there aren’t a lot of people my age – you can tell this age bracket is missing from VT.

- There's a sense of community here. I'm staying because I like that sense of community – grew up in Mass and most of the MA friends have gone back there – and while I like to visit, I want to stay here. I kind of 'retired to VT when I was 19'.
- I grew up in VT and couldn't wait to leave – I went to CA for school and started my family far away, but we've come back. Both our kids now want to leave. We've chosen to live a lifestyle that doesn't require a lot of money. We're only lacking an ocean!
- I grew up in Southern VT and went to UVM and have worked hard to stay here. Many of my college friends have left – I am trained to be a social studies teacher, but they're holding onto their jobs here in VT. I grew up here, went to school here, and all my friends have left.
- I left VT for school but I'm back. Family and this place are my reason to come home.

### **3. When you think about growing up in Vermont, what experiences have been good and what do you think could be different for the next generation of young people?**

- Schools could be more diverse. People from other places are good – there's some of Burlington from Africa, Tibet, etc. This is good – “it gets you into the real world” to be around kids from other places.
- People are always texting or calling each other. They are losing the face to face. Our kids will probably just text each other. It's ridiculous to me. And kids are becoming teens too young – when I was six I played hopscotch, but I saw a 6 yr old kid texting!
- My three year old cousin can navigate the internet.
- We have a lot of sports. There's snowboarding – it's growing. There's more young kids doing it. (other activities were playing with dogs, music, singing).
- Four wheeling is sort of going away because people worry about tearing up the land. More and more people care about the damage and are against it so the use is going down. People have more restrictions on access to land now.
- Vermont kids are too sheltered right now.

### **4. What are the biggest challenges we will face in the next 20 years?**

- I'm afraid of fiscal responsibility. We have to support the seniors and the retirement of seniors so we might not be able to afford to retire. The past generations have put all these problems on us and it's like 'what did we do?'
- Trying to get jobs. There's lots of waver in the economy right now. There's a big loss of jobs in the economy. I also think we're about due for a major disease pandemic. Every so often in history there's a disease. (another suggested that aids was our pandemic).
- Wars are a challenge. When will the war we're in right now end?
- Rising college tuitions. For our kids I've heard that it could cost twice what it costs right now (like 80,000 dollars!). (another commented – “if I have kids, they better get good paying jobs!”)
- Rural internet access. It's infuriating to wait for a slow dial up connection. There's no cell phone reception either. We don't seem to have a plan or to know how to pay for it.
- Energy is challenge – I'm worried about where we'll get it from.

# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

## Organizational Interview: Workforce Development Council

December, 2008

- a. **The Workforce Development Council has been in action since the mid-90s. What are the most important lessons the board and staff have learned about workforce education and training in Vermont since that time?**
- We have greater appreciation for the interconnectedness and that it is a system. Before we might have looked at it in terms of funding flows. Now the challenges are, how does it work as a system.
  - Still a need for more interconnectedness and system
  - Been around since SETA – 196x, the Fed portion. The state came in and co-mingled our board later. Seems that we are facing disconnection between agencies in state with education and economic develop. Been recently that education is jumped on board. Our workforce is dependent on a good education process.
  - Goes back into the 90s – the need for training and accumulating skills and building indiv portfolios used to be viewed as necessary for people who were low income or who had lost jobs. Didn't think of what's appropriate training activity for 11-12 year olds as to what they might want to be as adults. Thinking of Vermonters as self-sustaining capable individuals. Dealing with a Darwinian systems. We can't have throw aways – have to think in terms of multiple approaches and customized individualized approaches with the idea that we have to be successful with everyone.
  - The one size does not fit all when it comes to workforce developemnt and training. Apprenticeship programs can be weeks, or an associates degree. It varies and changes constantly based on technology, industry sector growth and demise. The ability to be agile enough to change gears. Even if we had the best K-16 system there will always be a need for workforce development. Will always need to adapt to new skills. Ability to go back and learn new skills is regardless of what we have on the K-16 program.
  - As our society and technology around globe has evolved – the need for kids to start thinking of career education needs to start earlier. For the system – customize, agile, responsive.
- b. **We've heard all across the state from our public forums that there simply are not enough jobs in Vermont. From the perspective of the WDC and the Regional boards, how does this play out at the local level? What is the relationship today between the number of jobs, the existing workforce, and the competing global economy?**
- There are plenty of jobs for people that have higher skills than they are being trained for. If they were properly trained there would be more people employed. Depends on the economic cycle.

- How to make the connections with skills and job availability
- There is the need to meet the immediate economic needs and the training but at the same time think strategically about long-term investment in kids going all the way back to elementary. How to make it as integrated and seamless as possible. Is it recognized that it's needed in the field. We really need to engage the communities, parents, state agencies, business, etc.
- Research is telling us huge numbers of kids are becoming disengaged early. When get to high school kids don't know why they are there. Don't see the pathway. We're trying to connect to help students see multiple pathways that they are aware of and a vehicle for them to enter the pathways to narrow down their career training with achievable outcomes along the way.
- We see that when you do engage students in seeing pathways and then apply their learning to real world problem based situations then they do get engaged. We are preparing kids for a future we don't have clarity ourselves, which is a challenge but an exciting challenge.
- One perception we struggle with in education is academic education and training. People like to say they like them educated and not trained but they are the same thing. It's a false dichotomy. A good training program develops a lot of intellectual ability in people just as a traditional education program does. Creative, innovative, function effectively as a team. We tend to pit business approach to education with the intellectual development with people. What is the skill set people need to enter college and the workforce – they need the same thing. It's not different.
- Education is about workforce development. Have to have an enlightened workforce to
- The legislature and admin people in the state are working toward closing the gap in the last few years.
- Employers tell us they have to go thru large numbers of people to find qualified applicants. The people you hire often need remedial training. Tech schools have the problem; colleges are heavily into needing remediation. We are a long way from having people ready for jobs and that doesn't include the soft skills – social skills.
- Health care is a big sector in need to high trained jobs; also construction and IT related fields that are in niche markets in demand for software developers recruiting from outside VT to find the people they need. The communities, states with the best workforce will be the winners in the long run.
- There are some shifts occurring in how we view labor. Transition in generations, not going to have 25-30 year relationship with your employers; shifts occurring in how we have to think of our relationship to the laborforce. Comes back to agility to adapt to changing situations and adapt our skills. Skill gap, skill sets requires skills but not necessarily advanced degrees. Global economy requires specialization. There is lag time in identifying skill set and delivery of education and training.
- Mind set problem. Perception of parents and younger workers around the importance in having a good job. Many people reject that notion that they need a good job to have a quality life. Live to work or work to live. Difference in the

value set. It isn't until the economic realities hit that they might realize the need. There is a difference in this culture of that reality.

- Our heroes are rap stars, athletes.
- From historical perspective had railroads, industrial parks, etc. The next thing is the human resource because that is the bottleneck. Need to develop the workforce to make the economy work.
- In the early 80s location, building, infrastructure were the issues. In the last 15 years that has shifted. Now it's more workforce oriented and buildings and roads is assumed. Other countries that have invested in their workforce are ahead of us.
- We have one of the best public education systems in the country. Vermonters are more in support of it too. People put a lot of money into education so we are starting from a high place.
- We dilute ourselves thinking we are on a level playing field. We compare ourselves to what's happening in NH for example and that we're doing OK. We have 50K engineering graduates per year, compared to China that is XXMillion, etc. We can't compete in that numbers game. They don't have the cultural imperative that you have to treat everyone the same.
- The model is not much different today from decades ago.

**c. When the WDC considers the changing global economy, what industries or career development skills seem to be most useful for Vermont's future? What will be the key features of Vermont's economy in 20 years? Do you see a future where every adult who wants to be employed is? Where the economy is half telecommuters and half in-state workers?**

- Composition of jobs and economy will be less about the production of things. That's happening worldwide. Machines make things well and don't need people
- It will be more globalized – people will have to think how they are competing with people from around the world. Tasks become more specialized. A different world where if you don't have an advantage in every stage in the process you will lose it. For each specialized area. You have your hold of intellectual property becomes less and less. Ideas are mobile and intellectual property becomes so fluid.
- Certain jobs have to be done where they are but others will be elsewhere
- The lines btw secondary and post-secondary will be more blurred. Connection btw education and the workplace will be more blurred. Have always had pre-apprenticeships. See education and business partnering more in the development of individuals.
- Big challenge – dichotomy of historical notion of vocational training and career technical education. Need to change the image of real career technical education. Blurring lines btw high schools and technical schools so kids can begin to design their program. What's the market in the future for web designers, for example. Will take partnerships and coordination to make the shift.

- This may not be the American century. There is no guarantee that we will have good paying jobs. We're not entitled to have health care and public education. We could end up being the 3<sup>rd</sup> world workforce.
- In 20 years, our workforce will be younger, a demographic shift. There will be more job opps in future than now. Every person will need to work to fuel the economy. Larger percentage will be telecommuting. More internet based education, more technical education. Will have more people choosing to live here because they can and work all over the globe. It won't be the nimble fingers anymore, it will be the nimble minds. We need some value-add. We have to foster it from the early age.
- What about financial sector, engineering sector – offering those in the schools in addition to arts and computers.
- It will have to be deliberate to get us there.



# **COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**

**November 6, 2008**

## **Vermont League of Cities and Towns Organizational Interview**

**1. Everywhere we go, Vermonters praise the human scale of VT communities, the accessibility of government and the power of local democracy. Then they complain about the inefficiencies, stubbornness and lack of coordinated effort that is inherent in our tradition of local control. Are we at the right balance point today between local control of education and municipal life verses coordinated regional and state efforts to advance effectiveness and efficiency?**

- It depends on what area – some things we’re at the right scale: zoning and planning can deal with at local level. But for example, police services locally can’t continue without regionalization.
- Can decide locally how to take care of roads and infrastructure. What we do in Waterbury doesn’t contribute or contract from what people do in another community. But police and ambulance services where large communities provide services to small areas there is subsidization that goes on that is difficult.
- Speaking of the style of govt and service in Vt as we all know is born our of rural environment and self-sufficient approach. In order to accomplish level of service needed 100 years ago could reasonably be delivered at local level. Need for larger economy of scale for services delivered lended itself to a town to town approach to whatever challenges small communities faced. Now, ie Mad River Valley, people recognize that there is more need for cross-town and regional collaboration and it’s either going to come naturally or will come with a lot of resistance where towns will have to combine to deliver services like infrastructure sewer and water.
- People don’t feel that the state is advancing any of those things but at the same time we don’t have enough local control in areas – transportation plan or construction. Almost impossible to run an effective program when dealing with state dollars or processes. The state isn’t giving us the local control we need or advancing processes
- The people like local control and they like to complain about the inefficiencies. I don’t want to make the effort to force a merger between village and town between them when they don’t want it. Getting resistance from the citizens. Happier with what they have now and complaining about it and paying for it. They hate it and they wouldn’t have it any other way.
- Is the question even correct – the state has taken away our ability to zone but they aren’t making things more efficient. They are making regulations. Efficiencies will come with regionalization. But will local communities have the desire or will to do them.

**2. When one looks at Vermont compared to the rest of the country, the absence of County government is striking. Are there issues where regional or statewide approaches to priority issues should be strengthened?**

- There are several – regional solid waste districts, water districts, transportation, fire departments, voluntary quasi-regional, There are ways in which regionalization is happening.

- They all need to be strengthened.
- Public transit needs to be strengthened
- The other element of control whether it's local or regional, come back to do you have control over how you generate your revenue. It's complicated because have to send money back to state to support other towns.
- 11 managers and administrators in chitt county. How does that make sense? It's nice for each municipality to have a semblance of local control but a lot of things are outside of local control
- Trying to regionalize too much it's hard when you're looking at the adversity within the towns themselves.
- Wouldn't follow county boundary lines. There isn't county govt. They can raise taxes and not being accountable for anybody.
- Many factors: geographic, social, population, economic to define a region.
- What issues work best at regional level: they are already happening like: ambulance service, bus service in chitt county, education to some extent where there is a union high school. But could be efficiencies in infrastructure arena. Not sure how it would work. Expenses are so enormous for dealing with simple maintenance. Middlebury has taken it upon themselves to build a bridge with Middlebury College but without the state. It's a benefit to everybody in Addison county.
- The only way it's gong to happen is if econ continues the way it is we'll be forced to make decisions locally economically or if it's forced from the top down. Everyone's been trying and talking about regionalism for years and nothing seems to kick-start it.

**3. As the world becomes a more technical place, towns and cities are sometimes hard-pressed to respond to all the demands on them. With the variety of tasks at the municipal level—from directing the operations of the school, to management of infrastructure, to planning and zoning—do municipalities have the tools they need to succeed? What is missing?**

- Volunteers are missing
- They have the tools if they are members of league of cities and towns. We offer a lot of assistance, technical or legislative and legal and insurance. Every town belongs; many take advantage as they need it.
- Human resources and volunteers to man the various commissions is a huge problem. It's a national phenomenon that has occurred since TV and people working 2 jobs. Volunteerism is less than half of what it was in the 50s. People are volunteering in church groups and little league. More likely to volunteer in things with beginning and end point and don't volunteer in the tougher jobs like committees and town govt.
- A lot of things it's a family thing with people that serve the community. It's a dying breed. It will get more difficult. So many pressures on families with both parents working and the last thing they want to do it run off to a night meeting without seeing their kids.
- Saw early voting from people who used to vote after work. After work there were no lines.
- There hasn't been a civil discourse that encourages people to volunteer to serve.
- Local govt has become more complex. Now have zoning board, planning comm., conservation comm., recreation comm. – communities have higher expectations and want more services. Probably 5 times as many committees today that we had 50 years ago. Not enough to serve all the committees.

- Don't teach civics in school. Get a lot of volunteers from kids to 80 year olds. The kids are excited when they have a value so they do it.
- People will come to town meeting if there is controversy or real decisions to be made. Is true for town service as well. With loss of local control and importance of that it will be lower priority.
- Can't get people to serve on regional commissions
- Have to ask – ask them and treat them well when they do volunteers.
- There is a cultural issues – a lot of people have inherited the idea that govt is part of the problem, not part of the solution. Don't want govt to interfere with their life. People don't hold high regard for govt. Maybe they feel better about local govt.
- Govt designed to be slow so they don't take away rights
- Local govt made to work together and if they don't it's difficult.
- Everyone is praising virtues of early voting, but in Waterbury town clerk's office nothing has been done but tending to early voters.
- Migratory population has hurt Vermont. We are dependant on things running by citizens to work.
- People moving to rural setting from the city want rural setting with same services as cities: paving, zoning so they couldn't have manure spread by the side of the road.

**4. When you look to the future of Vermont, 20 to 50 years from now, do you see new roles and responsibilities at the town and city level? What do we need to do today to prepare for this future?**

- There will be tremendous devolution of responsibility from federal govt for all things domestic. They can't continue to provide help because of tremendous debt. In terms of highways, everything domestic. They will back out of whole responsibility.
- Paying for what people want vs. what they need
- Projections for numbers of students growing didn't come true or leveled off. A dramatic miscalculation on the part of the experts.

**5. Clearly, Vermonters love their hometown communities. Will we preserve, protect and grow our municipalities? What will success today look like for the towns and villages of Vermont's future?**

- Ownership by population
- Civic participation is a sign of vitality and commitment
- Controversial issue – no growth at all in terms of commercial activity and other want controlled growth and others that want to let everybody in: WalMart, etc. It's an individual choice. We're seeing it in Middlebury because of State of VT rules we have a project that the planning commission approved that is being challenged in courts by surrounding communities. Classic anti-sprawl campaign. It's a problem of regionalization that takes away feeling of community. A diverse group of people in the town finally making a decision with a group outside that challenges it.
- If sense of community is an issue that is paramount then some would argue that the homogenization is a direct threat to that sense of community. How far do you allow the development to go on? Example what happened south of Rutland Town wasn't done wisely with no semblance of control whatsoever. If it's the state's philosophy to support smart growth in traditional, clustered downtown development that that's counter to

development outside of these core areas. The state needs to decide which way it wants to go. Can't have it both ways. People are talking both ways.

- Declining population is a problem. Childbearing aged folks aren't living in Vermont. Where are the jobs. Can talk all we want about development in downtown. If all we are creating are restaurants or places for people to buy things we're not going to attract people to VT. Jobs.
- Technology to be a partner in governance and democracy. Getting people to participate through technology in their civic duty. Webinars and interactive things to conduct meetings. Dependent on getting broadband. Ability to do face to face communication. If can do that could relieve some of the stress in terms of time poverty people have.

# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

November 3, 2008

## VERMONT DOWNTOWN PROGRAM

### Organizational Interview

**1. In each of our community forums we've heard Vermonters talk about the 'sense of community' as either what drew them here, or what makes this state unique. Why are strong downtowns important to this 'essence of Vermont'?**

- Our former secretary of state used to talk about downtowns being the 'face of the community'. It communicates to the outside world how people feel about their community, they can invest sentiments in a public way, all the social, private interests can come together in a geographic way.
- Downtowns are democratic in that they belong to everyone.
- Downtown was the place that you got your first pair of shoes, got your haircut, went to see a movie. We want those things for our kids and grandkids. However, many Gen Xers didn't grow up with downtowns; how did they all of a sudden have the same attachment for downtowns? VT is unique in the sense that we don't have all the malls that you see in other places – but we have the sense that 'this place matters'.
- 10-15 yrs ago – kids would hang out in the mall. More recently they want to be downtown instead of at the mall. The fact is that they are there because they want to be there – not in the food court. The Mall is too artificial, too structured, and people have come back to downtowns for a whole variety of reasons.
- People value downtowns for a lot of different reasons. Cultural, historic preservation, arts groups, youth groups, rotary; you can find something that everyone can value in a substantial way in the downtown. When we started this program in 1995, it caught – it elevated as a public dialogue (Bill Shuldiss, Barb Grimes) with 70 presentations around VT. We sent them out and we saw a whole slew of articles and editorials – you got the theme of 'downtowns are important'. You introduce the concept and people got it.
- We now have 23 downtowns and 83 villages.
- Some demographic data is through National Mainstreet Center – website and archives. Boston Globe, NY Times – anecdotal evidence – that young people are moving back to downtowns.
- Malls and downtowns both have a high point just after they are built – then after 7-10 years they cool. Unless you have reinvestment people don't go there. Malls became dingy after awhile.

**2. What are the most significant challenges that Vermont city, town, and village downtowns face today? Are there significant opportunities ahead? How will our downtowns be different 20 years from now?**

- One thing that has added value to our downtowns; is that what we have here physically becomes more unique. Where do you hold a parade? It was to be in the downtown. Although it's unique, we are facing challenges. The big one right now is energy

consumption. The perception that older buildings are energy consumers – people ask ‘would it be better off if we just started all over again?’ We’re working to try to counteract that perception. The cost of redevelopment is another challenge; vacant space is a cost and challenge. Dealing with spaces that are unique, large, have high ceilings, etc. They have all of the potential of being one of a kind that makes them attractive; but sometimes they can be seen as being a liability. But we also see people who want to walk and live; they are already vertical and already there. We have all of the potential to take advantage of this in our existing downtowns, but the challenge is to make it adapt to today’s needs.

- Short term – the economy. Typically the small businesses don’t have marketing expertise and savvy to compete. We’re riding a national wave on downtowns; I do worry about sustainability over the long haul. In the mid-90s it felt like rolling a rock uphill. Now we’re trying to guide it going downhill! In downtown orgs the ability to raise volunteers, money; the management of local orgs will remain a challenge for a long time. The way state monies flow; we see it in growth centers. The downtown program is created to try to level the playing field but the growth centers almost act in opposition to downtowns. There are different kinds of growth centers but the question to me is ‘how does the money flow?’ My guess is that the new growth will get the money – and that the state’s priorities will be set by new growth.
  - Growth centers; the instigators there are developers rather than the community. They are not an infill or investment in designated downtowns. The state spends a lot of money and HOW it spends that money is a huge issue.
  - Growth is going to happen – how we manage that growth is what is critical. The downtowns here have been very insulated. When I got here to VT I said; wow, these are actual real live working downtowns! What a threat could be is: how downtowns deal with these global things (the internet, the global interests, the interstate highway previously). Ten years from now it’ll be something else that none of us have thought of before.
  - Downtowns need to be nimble – it’s very hard. Without a downtown organization you don’t have that mechanism to plan and look at trends. The key to the success of downtowns is the success of the local leaders. The people in these positions have to have development as well – because staying in the same place will end in failure.
  - If you believe that the local capacity is key to this program, then it’s crucial that the state priority be maintained; they will go away if we go away. It’ll take 3-5yrs to disappear. The state is looking to cut programs – we don’t know what the next years will bring.
  - The most successful downtowns have the mechanism in place to compete, be flexible and sustain.
  - Buy Local is a big theme that intersects the downtowns and is a big opportunity.
3. **We have heard as we travel that some people are worried Vermont may become a ‘playground for the wealthy’ or become overly dependent on tourists and second home-owner property taxes. Is this a realistic or possible future? What would it mean for the future of our communities?**
- Interesting anecdote: we’d like to get more tourists, but we don’t want to be Woodstock. They would like to accommodate tourism, benefit from it, but not become ‘it’.

- I think tourism is a double edged sword – we say we want tourists, but really we want their money. If you can manage the tourism base and not just ‘give away the ship’, then it can generate other economic sectors. What they are looking for is how they can move here. They are now at a point in their lives where they can choose to live where they want to live. You have to keep the quality of life balances. But you also have to ask them ‘can you come here and start a business or move your business here?’
- There are opportunities and challenges in incorporating the property owning visitor; examples of people trying to build connection between summer population and downtown. How do you incorporate them into the fabric of the community? It’s not healthy if they don’t join the community. You have to reach out to welcome them.
- You build it for the locals, the visitors will come. If we can keep the downtowns and village centers real then tourists will actually enjoy that. The second part is to make sure that the 2<sup>nd</sup> home owners know they are welcome.
- It’s such a huge topic that it’s kind of hard to answer the different aspects. Right now there is no strategy to address it. It happens in some communities; tourism is to get people here and have a good time. It’s someone else’s problem to deal with the impact. Who’s problem? There is no one right now addressing that.
- They’ve co-evolved – it’s perhaps a necessary paradigm. How can we take these people coming here anyway? How do we build more industry based on them coming?
- VT Brand as a place of well-being. It’s what you see – hardworking people. We’re working in all these places trying to make our built environment relevant to the outside world. Affordable housing, the guy running the store, the outsider, the tourist. If we recognize why people want to come to VT – scale, community, things like that. The other side of this is that some of the tourism in VT is based on who can pay. We do heavily support the ski industry, but not heritage tourism – even though heritage adds to our brand. One of the downsides of tourism is that we don’t value stewardship. There’s not a good public policy or funding to support stewardship (which is the ongoing care and feeding of the downtowns, built environment, or working landscape – all of which contribute to the brand!)

**4. The ideal embodied in Acts 250 and 200 and set by statute as the central goal of Vermont’s planning system is for strong village, town and urban centers surrounded by green belts and open working landscape. Does the planning system we have today efficiently and effectively protect and promote this vision? Why or why not?**

- One participant questioned whether or not we had a planning system today.
- I was a land use planner and talked about pushing the rock uphill. In terms of planning and zoning we had a desire for a pattern but it wasn’t really being reflected by the public and we didn’t see it in reality. Anyone with money got out of the towns and did their own thing. If it comes down to the question of money or zoning – money will always win. (Phill Hoff). How do you harness the market power to bring people to live? You’re modeling it through the zoning instead of trying to reverse a pattern. It’s been fairly positive: VT Property Owners’ Report showed the increasing value of downtown properties. The market was noticing the value of being close to these places. There’s a premium on these places. You pay much more for people who want to live in town.
- Is our planning system adequate? There’s room for improvement. The crux is the local capacity. If the locals have experience, etc – yes, there are towns that have done a good

job. But others have all locals, etc and they face sophisticated developers they are stuck. The state hasn't kept the eye on the ball. In the late 80s you had a steady revenue stream but now its not something you can count on – Regional Planning Commissions have had ups and downs. You lose a lot of capacity when things go down and we're not good at sustaining the focus. You have to have strong leadership to make the vision come through. I'm not sure a strong planning process will lead to what we want – it has to be tied to the budgeting process. You have to have incentives to make sure that they will build here. Market incentives. When you talk about our development patterns, I'm not sure that we have the wastewater systems in place for our towns to have dense downtowns – or enable them to grow.

- It does resonate that infrastructure is a key future challenge for this country. The systems that support the economy we've developed and the way we've come to live have all been neglected for a significant period of time. We have 14 mega-metro regions in the country. How can we invest as a country to support the kind of development we want?
- You cannot grow without sewage. How can I change the use on this building if we don't have the capacity to flush the toilets? They are big issues and they are quality issues. But sewage isn't what we want to talk about.
- The price tags for infrastructure development is so outrageous that taxpayers balk at it. But our division is trying to find funds to do infrastructure investment from the feds. There are interesting models that could be used to leverage funds.
- Open lands is so much an economic question. We try to work around the edges of economic models – I've lost track of timber prices. The Current Use program helped, but I don't know how you deal with it. There is no market advantage to holding onto forest lands. If energy prices stay high we're in a different era, and that changes everything in terms of local production of product. It makes it economically feasible to grow and market locally. Secondary processing here also.
- So much opportunity for forest value added – every dollar out of the woods turns into hundreds of dollars of value added.
- The communities with growth pressures on them have made great improvements in zoning. Many places have zoned the ring around the downtowns to allow certain uses, but not others. That is a big help to prevent the urban sprawl. That's one thing that has been a benefit of the focus on downtowns. When the communities have come in for downtown designation, they've done design review or land use planning. It helps prevent some demolitions that would otherwise just occur.
- If you were to grade our planning system on A-F, we'd get a C. We haven't failed but we're not doing particularly well.

**5. What is your vision for towns and communities across Vermont? What vital pieces need to be in place that should be invested in today?**

- Vision is continued vitality, engagement by and oversight by the public in the community. More of a local economy. I'm very jaundiced on getting big companies into VT – we get all kinds of small businesses that grow and then get bought up and leave by and large. We have to have the pipeline from the bottom up.
- People who can buy organic, local are perhaps the elite and wealthy. This is part of where the perception about 'playground for the rich' comes from. The physical vision is



the one that is expressed in Act 200 with a network of vibrant communities connected by beautiful rural land that is being taken care of or allowed to be wild land.

- Statewide barn census – lots of skepticism about why we need this. First, they are falling down in heavy snows, second they are an icon, third they are important to communities. The future of small businesses and small ag value-added and the ability to reuse the infrastructure for other uses. The barn grant program is still in place as well. It's state money for capital construction. Local landmarks program as well.
- It's axiomatic in downtowns – you just don't tear it down. You reuse.
- In terms of downtowns the vision would be economically diverse, culturally diverse, nimble and with a collection of businesses that can respond to needs. Continue to be locally owned – perhaps simply because we're not a big enough market for big boxes to bother. Our goal would be to have smart successful innovative businesses in our downtowns.
- I think it's going to take work. It won't happen on its own. I think the environment is too complex and it has to be managed. You have to manage these entities to be able to successfully compete.
- You have to also make sure there is an environment for an entrepreneur. Especially as younger people are coming up; out east you think that someone will have a job for you when you graduate. Out west you think you'll create your own job. How do we change the culture of people here so that we're not saying 'we need jobs', but we're saying 'how can I create jobs?' That won't happen unless we have investment in technical centers and incubators. How do we help that person who has grown up in a business, but couldn't do it on their own? Because that will be the future of VT.
- Logically we can't have a large portion of Community Supported Enterprises – we've started this kind of a network, but now we need to move it to the next, which is venture capital.
- But the CSAs are different; it is an economic model. There's a difference between the two – traditional credit markets won't be loaning to CSE. Regardless markets will open back up again. But in a place like Vermont where we don't really have 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> tier city here. We need these models – LLCs and CSEs – this way the investors know that we've already invested if the first wave fails. For smaller communities you need to invest here locally specific to what we want in our community. (a commercial kitchen is still there even if the specific restaurant fails)
- There's not a way or a welcome to come back to VT after these kids have gotten their education and experience elsewhere. It's a loss and it's an incredible opportunity. Get them back here with their enhanced skills. They're not penalized (although they lose money!), but what can they do to get back here? Is there an incentive to start business or to move here? I'm not even sure if it has to be an incentive. It's a contact for the resources – how do we capitalize on these people – it's not when they are just out of college – but when you bring them to make jobs!
- Economic development is at the core of everything we're talking about. But to do that is to take investment in infrastructure, education and a whole bunch of things. But economic development can often only be seen as what's new.
- Letters to the alumni from Morestown, NJ – they simply invited them. That became their economic development strategy locally as a community.

- It takes intensive work with these communities: we're like a kid with a box of band-aids – the big problem is that it's a dysfunctional community. Historical, cultural; one person can't do it.
- The downtown program was supposed to focus scarce resources; if they are not a part of the program than we can't do anything for them.

# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

## Vermont Interfaith Action: Organizational Interview

December 5, 2008

**VIA is pro-active on many of the most important issues that we've heard about from Vermonters in our public forums – affordable housing, healthcare, opportunities for youth, and the cost of heating. How did VIA prioritize these challenges from amongst all that exist today in the state?**

Grassroots org, we survey members of our congregations and ask them what their issues are and it's a matter of numbers – do one-to-one conversations with congregation. In each parish, there is a local organizing committee. We interact with the people in the parish on a continuing basis. Then out of that comes the issue that blooms out of the one-to-ones. Presbyterian, Episcopal, sinagog, uu, college st congregational, and are cultivating new members.  
Do social justice. We lobby for systemic public policy changes. Don't do direct service delivery.

**Your mission is to bring about systematic change by transforming people and communities. How successful have your strategies been in the state, and what would you say your biggest challenges are? What will it take to bring about a transformed state?**

- Part of nationwide org that's been around since the 50s. We follow a model of activity. Many of our leaders have gone through Pico training either locally or nationally. One distinguishing qualities is that we spend a lot of time doing research and talking to the peopole affected, talking to those epole who could help us define what the need is and how we can affect change. It's carefully done and before we take any action we make sure we have all the facts. Pull peopole together at the local, state and federal level.
- Working on foreclosure issues, and health care and are able to “speaking truth to power.”
- Big on steps
- Because this is a leader driven org how can we continue to expand our base of brinigng people into the process. Culminates in a Public Action. Our organizing model rubs against how change is seen to be done appropriately.
- Having done a lot of work with hands on charity work – this is a different way. We are perceived as being a little smooshy – but that's not true. We have to overcome the tendance for peopole to be uncomfortable with a faith-based organization.
- Can be afraid of confrontation, not backing off.
- We are new org since 2004. The attempt to establish ourselves as a viable power is ongoing.
- Generally I would say universal health care, specifically children. Disappointed that the pres vetoed s chip. Affordable housing, issues with youth. We've been trying to help enroll peopole in that state and have been disappointed with the results we got so far.
- All these issues are important, bu thte big issue we will be butting heads with, it will be a matter of “what can we save, what can we keep, rather than what can we expand.”

- Live with a heightened awareness when part of this group. Always focused on what the folks in power are saying about the issues.
- The armory in the N.E. is an example – it was going to be rehabbed and restored. It fits in with the youth at risk and other issues. Went to state house for a press conference to preserve the fund.
- Just had a gov's forum. One of the 4 issues we addressed was green jobs. Econ. Devel. Is a concern but not something we've addressed. Affordable housing and health care are more local and we were able to change legislation locally and very concrete ways we could address that. UVM helped with affordable housing.
- Our focus tends to be from the grassroots; health care, youth, transportation,

**The Interfaith Action staff works on specific issues in the Chittenden County region, but is connected with the PICO network (for Paul: a national grass roots organizing initiative focused on communities of faith). Are there lessons that other states have learned or successes they have managed that you'd like to see in Vermont? How might Vermont learn from other examples?**

- Through the network we hear a lot about what our affiliates are doing in other states. We hear about issues of public safety which are greater than they are here. Immigration not as much of a problem here; mostly I can think of examples of what we don't have to deal with. We've been able to concentrate on more progressive ways of looking at things rather than have to deal with crime.
- Other states are looking at VT as a model for more cutting edge approaches to health care.
- We do get publication updates from other parts of the country. We have a PICO advisor that works with us on various issues. There is a concerted effort with health care that diff people from all over the country that go to DC to be a force.

**From your perspective, are there qualities about Vermont, or things the state does well, in which we could act as a model?**

- Clean air – our reps in congress are approachable and it's good to work with them. When he goes to DC with other people on the Clean Air Act he can walk into the office.
- Our smallness is one of our great gifts.
- They really are accessible to us – can call our representatives. A tradition that goes way back and crosses party lines.
- It's astonishing the influence we have already because it's a small state. We've accomplished quite a bit because it's small. Have more contact and more power as a result.
- It's like a great big village. We also have a tradition in VT of taking care of one another. Of being distressed when people aren't getting enough to eat. We're not unique in that. But we are the most rural state; sense of caring for each other.
- We're an agricultural state and there are all kinds of needs because of that.
- Old state, have a feeling of caring for elders. A good community cares for the youngest and oldest.
- Suffering of others is more evident and closer to you because of our size.
- Struck when visiting larger city by how many people are sleeping on the street.
- If you have every doorway with a person sleeping in it, there is an element of fear. But it's more than people can take care of because it's so big.

- When had gov's forum put a human face on homelessness and health care. The stories are powerful.
- Another way we're a model is that we are very intentional about having discussions about what we do next. There is involvement from the community with discussions that lead to decisions. Intentional about ramifications about decisions we make and how it will affect the quality of life in the future.
- Town meeting model – Vermonters think that their opinion matters and they have ideas for how it can be fixed. Less placid acceptance of the status quo.

**We'd like to ask about the 'transformation' in your mission statement. What does it look like? What is your vision for Vermont if your work is successful?**

- One of our images is of social justice. People living with dignity and all of their needs met. Our job isn't through until that happens.
- Its part of our spiritual life – there is a spiritual component to the work we do.
- The dream of God is social justice. What is awry gives you an itch because that's not the way God intends it to be. What we're addressing, shelter, water, clothing, shelter. Our of basic needs and justice – when everyone has that there is community
- Social justice is that basis of love.
- It's living out our faith.
- We worked with UVM to get affordable housing for lower paid staff. People in my faith community that have worked for “UVM in the past. We do try to work with the people. It's not too Vermonty to push back always, but we try to do it in the Partnership way.
- We have a range and a tradition among the clergy of social justice. By and large, I'm not feeling a political strain within the congregation. What we are hearing the clergy preaching dovetails with the work we are doing. If the leadership of individual parishes it helps. There are always people that disagree with some of the politically driven ways.
- We feel most tension in some of the methods we use more than others.
- Sisters of mercy are part of the group.
- No such thing as “no” just “not now”. Our model is non-partisan and centrist. We come together in a collective community and advocate for the wedge issue in a more autonomous way. It's a process of being a young organization – being part of this group is self-selective.
- The evangelical churches are a challenge to have them join. It's not an emphasis of what they place in their community.
- Social gospel movement – there was a time during and after the depression. The whole liberal movement in the church affected some parishes; but not all faith communities.
- What about political advocacy 30 years ago – I think the big change has been in the social and economic structure. Things have changed so that people can't manage anymore the way they used to. More people are up against financial struggles. We have to organize in a different way now.

*Overall, we haven't heard a lot about faith in our community meetings. Why might that be?*

- Faith is a private thing, we are trying to work to change that in our individual leaders. We hold values that benefit society at large. And bring that forward to help our systems and institutions.

- One thing have ask, if church attendance has gone down, where are pepole getting their values now. If they were listening to the pulpit then where are they getting it now. It's important to connect to my roots and work from that and also important for my children to give them those values that are ages old and not new and transient.
- If read Paul's letters to young churches, they struggled with caring for the needy. Human nature in balancing self-interest with caring for others.
- As a person of faith I'm delicate with telling people what they should do. People want to do something to help but with issue of middle class struggling. People have many calls on their time and don't know how to make a difference. You can make a case for some people in days gone by going to church on Sunday and then checking that off. May be hope in the future of a broader based participation. Maybe we have wander around and say some wild things.
- We concentrate, it's not our job to bring spiritual discussion to the public. We look at what's important to us and what we would like to see change. There are very common human values that bridge. We don't push moral issues.
- All of our volunteer members are considered leaders. We do leadership development. Help people that don't want to speak out in public. PICO's model allows people to speak their needs. Give them the tools which already happens with the testimonials.

# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

## ORGANIZATIONAL INTERVIEW

### Associated Industries of Vermont (AIV) Stakeholder Session

12/18/08

#### **Is there unity between the environmental movement and the forest products industry that we need to support the working landscape economy?**

- Use Value Appraisal – currently costs \$29,000,000. Changes could add \$5 or 6 million to costs.
- A change in Use Value appraisal are the “thin edge of the wedge” of new regulations, new restoration, new disincentives to cut.
- concerns about the increments of regulation restoration and revenue incentives that undermine opportunities for active forest management, timber stand improvement, and economies of scale for forest operations.
- “camel’s under the tent.”
- current use a “tax discount plan” – the more we add to its primary purpose of supporting positive forest management, the more we will lead to the revolt of the taxpayer.
- can we afford
- “greatest risk is we are laying the groundwork for future regulation”
- private property rights – do these preempt community values around management, push back.
- Industry is suspicious of future state /federal land purchase or federal money that comes into the state for conservation, etc., all of which have conditions that continue to move the mark of incremental restrictions on management and harvesting.
- ½ of the forest is in working lands, about 200,000 acres. About 5 million board feet added in 2008. 5 years ago it was zero. Past 3 years about 15 million board feet. Have goals for 5 million board feet. Cuts make it challenging to have staff to manage sales. Increase stewardship program (for cuts) shows there’s money here to support future cuts. Confident that the number of sales will increase.
- has 2 years of volume that is already environmentally cleared. Pump is primed for future sales.
- Role of forest service in economic stimulus. May be asked to be a vehicle to get stimulus dollars out. “How can we put people to work in 3-6 months.” Could do (something) forest inventory, boundary surveying. Acquisition plan: 700,000+ acres. mostly in holding. Very directly set up with management plans, not for wilderness. 189,000 acres in managed and used for forest production. 2008 firewood up 30%.

#### **What priority will need to be established for the forest products industry to be optimally profitable for the next generation of Vermonters?**

- don’t call it agriculture and the working landscape. Be clear that agriculture and forestry make up the working landscape.
- people are on the crest of the wave of the topic of “global warming.” This conversation is just fashionable, not substantive.
- “We were green before it was politically correct to be green.”

- fear of diversion of resources away from cement tasks for bad science - around this bandwagon around global warming.
- “regardless of global warming, wood is good”
- people will adjust to climate change.
- “We know it’s a game” to talk this talk about the green economy but “wood is good” is true regardless of whether global warming is true or not. We need to talk from principals of good land stewardship.
- We may not be cutting large enough clearcuts to build enough regenerative growth to surpass the need of clear browse.
- We need to create jobs. We have a problem with a certain group of people who want to have Vermont as it was.
- We should look at one kind of permit that needs to be changed for one kind of industry – like wood products mills
- “we need to shoot at the duck, not at the flock.” need regulatory reform that aims at specific-targets.
- In Berlin, NH there is a German firm sitting on pellet plants for export to Europe. These people bypassed Vermont. NY has another starting near Saratoga.
- We go to our cocktail parties and others do that but we don’t meet across these groups.
- “Vermonters actually think we have a working landscape” but only 3% of Vermonters actually work the land.
- “Rural fantasy land” – “It’s going to come to the end – there’s a million little knife cuts” add to the destruction of the underlying economies.
- “As long as Vermonters think we have a working landscape, we aren’t going to have enough fire in the belly to make a real economy or save Vermont.”
- We need sawmills
- We need bigger trucks on the road. “We have to fight to cut a few trees to ship to Canada in the dark of night to be milled so we can buy it back at Home Depot to develop our rural fantasy homes.”
- We’ve been sold a bill of goods that Vermont needs to be protected from Vermonters.
- “We’re about to lose it – a 5 year period and we’ll be like MA where you can’t blink your eyes in the woods.”
- “Would like to see more local mills. We’re going to lose them if we continue down this path.”
- Canada makes it easy to build a mill. What a contrast – “America a so-called free country – it’s like Red China.”
- “There’s not a silver bullet to advancing business in Vermont.” There’s lots of small ones.
- “We need to create the environment to give these guys the optimism to keep making investments.”
- Highest costs of production is our biggest problem. Can’t compete with Canadian subsidies in milling.
- commercial property taxes
- what inventors need
- low costs of production
- low permitting costs
- “we castigate businesses as corporate raiders”
- workman comp
- “no stability. No vision for economic development here”



- “We don’t know what cost of energy will be – we need to know stable energy price in order to draw investment.”
- No one discussing energy security in leadership capacity
- “need for Vermont Yankee to have competitive, value-added manufacturing.”
- Let’s be real. Investors are making decisions in corporate offices far from Vermont – they are trying to decide whether to invest here, to expand, retract or close and we need to compete for their capital and it’s the return on capital that will determine if the investment is made.”
- “without capital we will gradually erode into a third world company.”
- Weight limits on interstate – rests with Leahy
- workman’s comp is always #1 or #2 in terms of priority for the forest industry.
- It’s great that so many people say they love the working landscape but do they use it as a false term. We don’t necessarily [know that].
- “It’s not just profitability: the overriding theme is that it’s all intertwined in who we are.”
- “We don’t want real Vermont to disappear.”
- “We need to embrace traditional rural culture.” “When people look at the future I hope they embrace the past.” State Ag University doesn’t even have a forestry program anymore. Calling it a dying industry.
- “We are watching who we are being taken away from us.”
- We see Canada stealing the industry and jobs – crown lands, Quebec cheap power, subsidies to stay rural with forest industry jobs. Govt. in Canada understands rural economy and let it happen.
- VT and NH trucks and overweights are huge problems – NH has limited fines and much greater weight limits.
- Duck analogy – “we don’t have a focused perspective on the problem. Got to set goal and target them.”
- Look at wood products industry. DCI is gone, Laltroys gone, Manosh gone, Killington gone, Rutland Plywood is ½. Ethan Allen shrinking.
- “When we talk about wood industry it isn’t there.”
- “The way things are going, there will be a recovery. people in this industry will do well into the future. If we cut taxes, cut regulations, we’ll be poised to succeed when market rebounds. We can be poised to benefit. “There will always be a high quality resource base here and a high demand for it.” And it will be cheaper.
- Polarization isn’t everywhere in rural America.

# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

## Organizational Interview Vermont Humanities Council

December, 2008

**VHC's mission is to create a state in which every individual reads, participates in public affairs, and continues to learn throughout life. The focus on education is implied in your mission, as is the focus on engagement in community or public life. Yet other state Humanities Councils are dedicated to storytelling, history or cultural events. Why this focus in Vermont?**

- Is one exclusive of the other?
- Public affairs and education role is here because they are needed in VT
- We target the neediest of Vermonters—the homes where there were no books
- We worked with headstart, with literacy. So that's one basis of our public role.
- When I joined we talked about reaching young people; implied is that if you are not pushing Humanities to young you won't pull them in later. Historically we did this through literacy education.
- First Wednesday program is really bringing people out—from all ages. They enjoy the variety of speakers, from counter-terrorism to Jane Austin. It's infectious
- First Wednesdays strike one as having college students and familiar faces who come each month because they are excellent programs with nationally known speakers.
- How about public affairs—what's the connection—is public discourse part of the platform. People never shy of sharing ideas.
- We've had dialogue about whether we should have political programs—do they mean we are taking a stand for or against...we've decided that it is terrific to put ideas in front of VT for individuals to think about.
- Share ideas that people “talk about over their back fence”
- “Every idea incites” Oliver Wendell Holmes
- As a society Vters are engages, Putnam's social engagement—VT a model. Our programs work to share these values as central to our culture—for everybody , not just a faction.
- We're the healthiest state...town meetings, more informed people are the more confident they are to share and :”stand up before others”.
- Town meeting a core of our culture to use our own voices.
- Are we really different? Are we really diffeent enough to have different programs or are we just reflecting our ouwn biases.

**What are the major challenges you find, either at the local level or at the state or regional level, when bringing programs into the field in Vermont?**

- Funding
- Visibility
- Well, we're getting better at it. First Wed. are terrific. A great place to celebrate the work in general.
- I think we're invisible at summer camps for challenged children and places like that.

- We'd like to see every community would be well aware of humanities and race to sign up for programs. Some places we are invisible. Lots of our work looks like the work of the local library, people don't know we're a part.
- Our name may be a problem—some people don't know what the humanities are.
- Vision—people coming out to things that are :”a lot of work intellectually.”
- Humanities are work, not entertainment—that's part of our challenge today.
- The state is not Middlebury. Southern VT is like second class—Brattleboro, Bennington, etc don't have the programs we bring up north.
- Smallness of state makes it hard to raise funds to reach whole state.
- Scale is greatest strength and opportunity because our communities are still strong. More than any other state we live in small towns. Local libraries and schools are still integral. How do you form community in Arlington VA or Miami?
- “What does community mean in new developments of 50k homes?”
- We're “like a city-state”
- People move here just for this reason.
- If you practice literacy and humanities you have a better life.
- Millions of Americans have checked out on thinking. They are choosing not to because they are out of practice and aren't encouraged and it takes work.

**What's your vision for Vermont in the next 20 years? What is the role of humanities in building that Vermont?**

- Education is really primary. You really have to give so much to these kids in helping them to think and to getting them excited about education
- So much need. Children in poverty and the inability to get into town.
- VT a humane, caring place—the significant number need more.
- VTers are going to engage the diversity in and outside of VT.
- How do we understand that and help engage diversity
- Giving a book to a child to a one who never owned one, whose parent never read to them. This is so compelling. Our literacy program for caregivers.
- Our work is the germ of this next 20 years. If we are successful the state will look bright.
- Demographics are looking bad. Education will have combined schools. Not enough tax base for small local school.
- I don't see jobs for my kids in VT
- We'll have fewer kids and more old folks in 20 years.
- There are other educational venues besides schools.
- 150 years ago we didn't need the humanities. We read the bible, shakespeare. What we are doing is compensating for the changes we've seen, TV, travel, etc
- Take away TV
- We didn't have Computers.
- Job Creation and public transportation. I have 3 kids, 2 would love to live here but can't. Public transportation is virtually non-existent.
- Increase of drug use in St. Albans. The hot spot for gang infiltration. A bad spot. Is it fallout from the lack of engagement of youth and lack of connection
- Challenge of maintaining small schools is overwhelming but they are the center and local control is a very strong desire.
- “People need something to aspire to.”

- Where there isn't the humanities in a culture of learning and the past, you have weaker communities and more social problems. Where the humanities are strong you have less of these problems.
- We have outdoors to get into. This gives a physiological centeredness and teaches kids cause and effect.
- Life of the mind is important, but it's also the life of the heart: empathy, feeling with others.
- That's what literature means and does. These make lives richer and communities stronger.
- Supporting people reading.
- Reading emotions, reading the woods, reading nature, understanding other—bridges experience.

# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT ORTON FAMILY FOUNDATION

## Organizational Interview December 9, 2008

**1. The Orton Family Foundation works to help communities articulate, steward and implement their heart and soul elements, while enhancing their valued assets. How successful would you say that Vermont communities are in doing this? What are the major obstacles in the state to doing this work?**

- Where we're at. RFP for Heart and Soul. 5 from VT. Narrowed to finalists; 5 in NE. None of our finalists were VT communities.
- We were trying to start from visioning but in a different way, an inclusive way.
- Most communities already had a specific project in mind. Weren't really ready for the broad visioning effort that we wanted to lead. We were surprised. We were offering 100k. Rutland, Burlington, Bradford, Brattleboro, Colchester. We were surprised by the lack of smaller communities.
- Towns had a hard time envisioning a project at this scope.
- Now we are working with 2 communities in ME. One of 2,000 and one of 21,000.
- They are not successful in engaging their citizens. We provide an opportunity to meaningfully engage and be heard. Obstacle is our legal framework around land use.
- So much happens without an opportunity for people to be heard or to participate. "The way the public is required to be engaged in our land use decisions is seriously faulty"
- Heart and Soul is bottom up not top down. People don't expect to be heard—cultural barriers.
- Regulatory mandate of town plan is top down. Planning commissions lack capacity. Lack of technical capacity. Public hearings divisive. Commissions are caught in the middle. Too much immediate stuff on the table.
- Some towns feel like they've done that been there—already knew what they wanted to accomplish, not really ready for visioning. Boards aren't well trained.
- Bring together the divides in the community. Divide by income. By diversity. By pro-anti-development. Groups don't know how to bring people together. Hunger for trying to pull people together but limited skills to do so.
- Heart and Soul tries to get at it. It doesn't happen at regulatory planning level.
- Stories—story-telling as a place to find shared humanity.
- Towns worked hard to build applications, the first question we asked was—tell us something about your community? And they would really struggle to answer. Rapidly changing demographics and inability to get a handle on demographic shifts.

**2. Vermont as a state has some unique characteristics and structures. When you think about Vermont's position in the global and national economy – and the steps it could or should be taking – what are the priorities you see for the state?**

- a. Vermont's progressiveness and 'enlightenment' is very encouraging. Orton works to unleash the power of the citizen. We do it through video, art, stories.
- b. One of its greatest assets is the feeling that the individual can effect change here. People really do want to make change and think they can.
- c. We want to help them make good on that promise. Smallness of the state makes this apparent.
- d. Leading the way in terms of green economy and new technology is so consistent with the state's brand and history of innovation.
- e. Entrepreneurial spirit here; risk taking; diversified economy; led to small businesses—shining VT examples.
- f. Green business and tech has a "fleet footedness and local loyalty provides fertile ground"
- g. Vermonters getting the jobs, need for job training to respond to future needs.
- h. Funny conversation about youth leaving...
- i. Vermonters have seen link between Env and econ. for a long time
- j. That can carry over to ag. and nat. resources to integrate with green businesses.
- k. Future of ag. Wonderful spirit of agriculture but there is not a clear state direction. Could we get on the same page? Could we line up strategically so that investments could be more leveraged.
- l. I wouldn't advocate for green commercial develop at the risk of losing environment rigor. Act 250 is great. A positive economic force.

**3. One of the difficulties that any town or community has is the translation between articulating heart and soul elements that make them a vital place, and putting structures in place to preserve, protect or support those elements. What are some of the best practices you've seen in your work, and what could Vermont communities learn from?**

- a. What has promise but is untested is an approach to these issues is to identify values and vision in the solution. We need a process that embeds action in the planning and links directly to the people participating.
- b. For example, a farm has everyone up in arms to conserve...but no connection to action or to the solution. The process divorces action from these people. Need to give them power to be part of the solution.
- c. Separation has led to an inability.
- d. Top down vs. bottom up is a problem.
- e. Wisdom of crowds. The "next form of democracy" book. We commission on cognitive barriers to public participation. How do we get people involved and keep them involved throughout.
- f. In ME a planning commission is trying to devolve some of their power to the citizens. Making sure people are heard and involved.
- g. Stewardship. How do we leave capacity when we leave. Stewardship of the human element in interactivity.
- h. Indicators—leave measures that can document at community level to track successes. To give measure of success.

- i. ME town fight over walMart. Voted down. Went ot towns around to adopt size caps so that the store didn't just go to a neighbor. Citizens did it, not municipal government.
- j. Jim Kent, discovery process, a cultural approach to change.
- k. There is a fundamental lack of resources at the community for engagement and planning. Planning commissions react to proposals. Don't have ability to bring in creative solutions. Overmanned and outgunned by developers.
- l. High degree of lack of creativity.
- m. Dean, money for conservation, but not for planning.
- n. Need for more funding for local/regional planning.
- o. Smart growth is a great example of regulatory change. We don't have a lot of stories of success with continuity. We are building an awards program to encourage more stories and more successes.
- p. NH has a new stepped grant program for planning. Consolidates funding and gives incentives for going to the next level.
- q. Matching funds challenge for the Heart and Soul application was another problem.
- r. We want to bring scenario planning into the visioning process. Push scenerios so the conflict of values comes early in the visioning process. Then when you get to implementation you have many more issues resolved.

**4. From our public forums across the state in the last 18 months, we've heard overwhelmingly that Vermonters seek the 'balance' between growth and development to support our economy, and conservation of our precious natural resources. Is a balance achievable? What would your vision for this balance be in 20 years?**

- a. I think its achievable but there is no fixed point—it will evolve. No end point but a vital process critical to success. Participation in dialogue gives communities the power to achieve.
- b. Fluid. Not an either/or.
- c. There may be an intuitive sense that this is fluid, but we haven't had the state conversation. For practical purposes of local plans you do need to put it in writing.
- d. We need to build the social fabric to have this dialogue.
- e. Strongest communities are the ones that have built the culture to be successful.
- f. We should be looking harder at how to use our resources. More use of forest and more diversified ag.
- g. Energy and conservation always fades when we talk about energy. Instead of new power lines, we need universal solar hot water.
- h. Challenge of local vs. global thinking. Wind is an example. I'm hoping that we can make some hard long term decisions around what we want for energy, how to replace sources and give backbone to leadership to move forward.
- i. Fed. Infrastructure investment should be smart growth—not to expand sprawl.
- j. Bill represented St. A. against WalMart for VNRC. "I think the essential village character is essential to its long-term prosperity." We can't sacrifice it. Vermont still has an "essential character" that is a foundation of longterm foundation of prosperity.

- k. Leadership is essential to projects. Towns say they want diversity of people involved, but then their committees don't have it. Diversity is the first step, getting new people on committees. We then go to 'emerging leaders' who will carry on at the next step.
- l. Starting to bring training in for leadership.
- m. We are trying to reach into informal networks. Maybe there needs to be a more formal recognition
- n. We expect youth flight but incoming youth too and especially 30-something...they come



# **Council on the Future of Vermont**

## **Vermont Association of Regional Economic Development Directors**

11/14/08

### **5. What are Vermont's key assets when it comes to attracting, retaining and growing jobs for the future?**

- Stable workforce
- Pleasant place to live – quality of life. A place to raise a family, safe, good education system.
- Have to be careful how to discuss quality of life card – 10% of time of the people in this room is spent in recruitment; 90% in retention. Why do they stay is the better question.
- The high productivity of the workforce allows businesses to remain competitive when they are fighting against the high cost of doing business here. Retention rates and productivity levels are historically higher; though there has been erosion of that in the last 10 years.
- In terms of retention, the high quality of life keeps a business here. But ultimately the cost of doing business in VT meets the point where the cost of doing business offsets the productivity rates.
- The Vermont brand is an asset to some companies; we are known for certain products like woodstoves; but to the markets of some companies, brand means nothing; but brand does transcend more industry sectors than people are aware. People tend to associate it with food, but VT's 'green' identity benefits companies
- The pure image that VT has which the press and Hollywood help maintain. The challenge is when you get people here and they start dealing with the realities of living on a postcard.
- Some people come because they want to be close to nature and recreating like skiing, hiking
- VT traditionally has a lower percentage of ramifications of national trends of crime – we're not exempt but we do have lower rates.
- Companies aren't drawn here to raise their kids in the K-12 education system in VT.
- In Brattleboro, there is a critical mass of arts and crafts that draws visitors. Cultural vigor of arts and crafts that draw families in.

### **6. What are the major threat/threats to the Vermont economy in the next 30 years? How does the work of the Regional Development Corporations respond to them?**

- Workforce (until recently with surge due to unemployment rates); there is a shallow pool of workers from which to draw
- Demographic realities that aren't going to get better, age of demographics, not enough young people. Now with more unemployment will have a freed up workforce. Could be short-term. People are applying to jobs they are so overqualified for that when the market opens up they will leave those jobs
- Hard to look 30 years ahead; who knows what will happen in 6 months – may have a lot of businesses leaving the state due to current economic times. There will be a huge sea-change in this country but we don't know how it will hit us here in VT. Historically VT isn't hit as hard but that may not apply to this time, we were hit as hard as anyone else during the depression.
- Energy capacity and cost is a threat

- Overregulation: the legislative process itself -- VT tends to adopt legislation in the favor of minority. They create additional layers that don't serve the majority. Makes operations more time-consuming and less transparent.
- The time required to get through permitting process is long – the process is broken
- How nimble will we be to take advantage of our strengths, we have great potential in some areas such as pellet plants, value-added agriculture development, green industries – can we react in adequate time to move them forward
- K-12 graduates are ill prepared to manage in society and the workforce coming out of the traditional h.s. system. The Regional Tech Centers are doing a better job at tech readiness than the traditional high schools.
- Financial burden of our K-12 education system is growing at a rate the state can't support. Not having a statewide school calendar, for instance, impacts the workforce in some industries that have to hire migrant workers but if school calendar was tweaked just a little, they could hire Vermonters. Last legislative session mandated a uniform school schedule, but that may be met with a lot of resistance from local districts.
- Health care costs are unsustainable. Health care costs need to be addressed at national level.
- The fact that we are a rural state – meaning we are impacted by geography and a fewer pool of workers.
- Lack of higher education is a problem in the SE part of the state. Companies don't have options to partner with a local college on projects, which impacts their ability to do business.
- Tax differential between NH and VT. For example, the Workers Comp rate was 4X higher in VT than NH so one company went over the border. In MA the rate is about 1/3 that of VT.
- Telecom access: affects value of houses, impacts peoples ability to open businesses or do their job in those areas.
- Legislature itself and its makeup is not representative of the VT population and they don't care about the needs of the VT population. A lot of the legislators are trust people that have moved here recently that want to keep VT rural. Real Vermonters can't run for the legislature. Now that the sessions are 5 or 6 months, it eliminates those who can represent our needs better from running.

**7. Wherever we go there's a dialogue around sustainability – from peak oil folks to branding 'green' –the administration's "Green Valley idea/GBIC's new green strategy. How important in your view is the 'green strategy' for the future of business development in Vermont?**

- 'Green strategy' has to be real and not just perceived – i.e., clean up of the lake. Can't just say it, we have to do it.
- Have to balance the cost for green (i.e. solar and wind) with the benefit of it
- We have a lot of natural resources here that we aren't taking full advantage of. i.e., Switching to a value-added on the ag side, we are beginning to make progress. Forest products, wood pellets can provide key jobs should we defer to that
- Local food systems and value-added ag products is a driver; a cost factor has to be addressed and an understanding where our strengths lie. The value-added specialty food industry is growing and VT is getting known for it.
- On ag piece, up to some point of growth it is an improvement but sustainability can't happen without profits. Need to bring dollars in to expand businesses over time

- Can't put too many eggs in the green basket. At one point, we thought VT could lead the way in green technologies. The fact is, VT is behind the curve when it comes to leading the charge in 'green.' We have to diversify in other areas as well.
- Hard to define what a green business is; so how do you define what businesses you give incentives to – have to have a manufacturing base to make green businesses work. Manufacturing makes up of 18% of the economy but makes 28% of revenue. High wages there. We can't exclude our primary manufacturing base that creates the parts that go into the products that are 'green'. Easy to focus in the 'windmill' maker and not the manufacturers that make the parts that go into the windmill.
- There are currently incentives for green industries in VT.
- No strategy, no state plan on economic development issues that is specific enough with strategies suggesting the direction we need to go. We don't want competing systems planning around the state. There should be a state plan.
- Land-use ties in, if going to incentivize sectors, where do you want to incentivize other than cute little downtowns.
- VT historically is proud of its independence and communities have a lot of say on their own destinies and future. To impose a top-down process would be challenging. Need to extend land-banking to housing not just banking.

**8. Many people describe Vermont's scale as both a hindrance and as an opportunity. Does Vermont's scale make it hard to do business and hard for growing businesses to stay? What should we be doing to use our scale to our advantage?**

- Reaction time – can react to needs as they arise because of the small scale, and things can be addressed within that same legislative session
- Access to Government is an asset; a person can meet with the Governor for example.
- Initiative to establish growth-center legislation was well thought out in a sense of strategy. But it needs to be readdressed in terms of localization. Need flexibility that allows for industrial parks to be designated as growth centers for industrial growth, for example – the infrastructure is there. If we are trying to enhance the relationship of small-scale then let's extend it. Growth center legislation needs to be expanded from downtowns.
- Multi-use zoning could address some of the problems. But have to be careful. When manufacturing plants are in downtowns it creates other problems.
- Home-based businesses need areas of growth. Try to find blend that is right but have to provide options.
- Idea of cozy towns is attractive to visitors, it's part of VT brand, important to tourism and attracting small businesses. However, the rural scale presents challenges with retention of workforce. Not enough room for growth within companies for some young people. Spousal employment opportunities can limit the ability of a family to move here.

**9. Vermonters worry about the loss of youth; what should Vermont's priorities be if we are to build a strong economy for the next generation?**

- Where there are core business industry sectors that provide technological challenges that engage youth, the services and products follow. The youth will create them.
- We have great cultural assets already. Critical mass of job opportunities that aren't all starving artist type companies that give enough high value that provides good-paying jobs. Online learning may help address professional development.

- A lot of youth are naïve to what the area has to offer. They don't understand what the opportunities are w/in the region – i.e. B&J offers education reimbursement and good benefits. Many kids just think that staying here means working at the local supermarket – they don't know what's out there. Kids say that they would love to stay in VT, but...there's 'nothing here for them.'
- Businesses would utilize incentives to attract Vermonters that have gone to school out of state or college graduates from VT universities to their workforce.

# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

Vermont Superintendents' Association

ORGANIZATIONAL INTERVIEW

August 14, 2008

**1: Are there Vermont values that condition the work that you do for good or for ill? Are there things we stand for as a people in Vermont that support the work that you do or serve as contradictions that you need to address?**

- The notion of local control is contradictory. Low student / board ratios. Can get in the way of collaborative efforts. Local school boards cause a lot of inefficient use of superintendent's time.
- In a supervisory union the myths, mistrust and prejudices between local boards can get in the way of collaboration—will consolidation of local governance advance?
- There's a tremendous value placed on education. Families value it. Schools are often the heart of the community.
- Schools are for all children.
- Education is now so complicated; education as a business is complex- legal and policy issues. The way schools are orchestrated, from a board and operational level, don't fit anymore. How can VT make a shift towards a more efficient and effective future, w/o losing the value of education?
- Independence, or isolation in a way. A little unique. These local values are positive, but they contain inherent conflicts—some schools don't look outside themselves, and it's very difficult to change.
- That depends on where you are. In my schools, we have a lot of interaction globally – students and teachers travel and are engaged in so much outside the building.
- Regional differences within Vermont are real. Oftentimes locals don't want to hear from state or federals.
- Partially this is due to the system Vermont has set up, a la Act 250, that can appear a bureaucratic nightmare for locals to navigate.
- Expectation that people will do a good job, and a value that schools will really perform.
- Change is hard.

- Dichotomy between local / state level support for education. Frustration with funding system. Support for local schools is not mirrored at the political center. There is a “malaise between the state and local level.”
- We see unheralded criticism of schools by the state...the state government is not as supportive as the local community.
- Strong family values and a history of inclusion of special ed. Students—we value schools for all.

**2. What are the major challenges and opportunities that Vermont schools face today? Have they changed or stayed the same in the last decade?**

- Funding. Now more complicated, misunderstood, poorly communicated.
- Funding: it almost pits state vs. local. Rhetoric abounds and the political rhetoric in Montpelier dumps on local boards and local decisions. That’s different.
- How does that effect you? Locals hunker down.
- Taxpayers are frustrated and confused. Changes to funding law annually. We need to constantly educate the public and media because of all the changes.
- I hear about the loss of the machine tool industry 10-15 years ago. Economic shift. Challenge to rebuild the economic base.
- 95% of jobs available in VT don’t require a college education. We don’t have a vision for how to retain our well-educated youth. The larger issue is that we need to have a vision for where our kids are going, what they need, and how to provide education so that it’s integral to these realities.
- Technology is a challenge and an opportunity. Our kids are deeper in than the adults and head. Challenge is that we don’t have the infrastructure in the schools or in the state to leverage the opportunity.
- Also a fiscal issue – capital improvements are needed. Schools are built in and for the industrial age. Most buildings are 50+ years old. We are in the information age now and our facilities have not evolved to deal with new communications and other infrastructure needs.
- Is our ed. system industrial?
- We are trying to break out of it and ensure that we are effective in educating in the information age.
- I don’t sense that the public wants a major shift in curriculum.
- Is the school pressured to be a full-service operation (i.e. teaching core societal values and skills? We are a social service agency now—it’s a pressure.

- Lack of good leadership candidates for principals and superintendents. There's also a lack of capacity at the Department of Education to provide leadership...and their budget is inadequate to the challenge.
- Education has become a political football.
- Business community is taking an interest in education and that's positive.
- Local folks have enthusiasm for schools but it can be a double-edged sword. They really are the leadership holding schools together, but they often are not efficient at sharing resources or organizing across districts.
- Technology can allow for increased coordination in the delivery of education in a decentralized system. New technology can be a basis for new forms of cooperation.
- Chittenden County Sups group has evolved. Now evolved into a coordinated group that is able to provide new opportunities to our schools.

**3. Throughout the state we've heard a lot about the financing of public education. Have we developed, or will develop, an equitable system of governance and financing for K-12 education? Are we going to develop a stable, equitable system or have we already done so?**

- Having a financing system that supports poorer towns is positive. But the system is confusing.
- There may not be an economic base to meet all the real needs—today and in the future.
- Schools maybe need to do marketing of themselves—an opportunity & challenge. They are not used to it.
- Economic inputs & outputs: The way to generate funds is not how you spend them. Mixes state & local systems. And then mixes politics and realities that snowball. We've mixed up the question of what we spend money on, with how we finance it.
- We don't celebrate that VT is 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> in almost all measures of educational outcomes—we should be celebrating these successes, not just talking from the revenue side.
- I don't think we can 'afford' to be cutting ed funding. We have horizontal equity, but there isn't vertical equity that would allow us to spend equally on educating our kids.
- We have an over reliance on the property tax—second most egregious reliance in nation.
- Should we integrate high student outcomes into a brand-marketing of Vermont's economic development?
- Educational outcomes, good as they may be, is only part of the issue—people consider it in the context of cost and opportunity for their kids.

- *Brigham* caused wealthy towns to lose their easy access to “Cadillac” education. Institutional memory (of local school funding system) causes divisiveness between communities. “Vermont value: I’ll take care of my neighbor if I can see him.”
- It appears that we have figured out a good financing system, but there is a legacy that is preventing us from recognizing our strengths. Does it mean we are looking backwards & not forwards as a result? Yes.
- There’s also a danger in some towns where the “consumer ethic” of parents contradicts the “community ethic” that calls for opportunity for all children. School choice, as it exists, can perpetuate a shopping mentality for my child, especially by new-comers to VT, that is at odds with the needs of a strong program for the whole state.

**4. Has our concentration on the finance system led us to neglect a larger public conversation about the goals and means of public education? Do Vermonters share incipient points of vision for the future of education?**

(chorus of ‘yesses’).

- Burlington residents assume that rigorous academics are a given. Advocacy from parents.
- People do have values and visions but we rarely get to them in political conversations on education because of our fixation on financing.
- Disconnect is pervasive. State board of ed and dept of ed are disconnected from the governor and his administration. Causes politicization of education. When Gov. Douglas says schools spend too much money, it resonates. And yet we still get a high rate of budget passage. It may not be sustainable. There ends up being a paralysis on program advancement maintained by state rhetoric. “Schools are spending too much money” because the watchword—even though local budgets do pass with local support.
- Current economic, energy and health care conditions are going to cause costs & budgets to increase. This could spiral into a crisis.
- Is the funding issue going to be a challenge, a crisis even, in the future?  
It’s heading there.
- The economic engine of the state is the crises. That is the larger issue for sustaining school funding.
- Schools that are service centers for the state are gaining population. Cost of educating a child in poverty, or a concentration of such students, is a special challenge.
- The more you talk about that, it can sometimes drive wealthier families away.
- Migration to service-center communities. Those communities have had a harder time passing their school budgets historically. Potential for voter backlash.



- Just the fact that whether you are gaining or losing students matters dramatically to the funding system, the taxing system...that's not ideal.
- Should the school budgets be voted on in towns? It's a fairly unique circumstance globally. Why not vote on highways?

**5. What “ends statements” could you suggest as outcomes that Vermont should see for its education system a generation in the future? For example, “20 years from now...”**

- Ireland 15 years ago decided to make education a top priority and it has contributed to their economic turnaround of the last 20 years.
- We should have world-class students.
- We need a state or federal commitment to intertwining education and economic development.
- There would be a seamless, or invisible, transition between the end of education and the beginning of workforce so that you can't tell the difference between the last phase of education and the first part of employment.
- No textbooks. 1-to-1 computing.
- We're moving to critical thinking. Industrial age education you get in the first couple years. We will build deep education in basics but then education to build learners with skills to find and process information in new ways. Media literacy; using it not regurgitating.
- Less red tape. Smart, efficient investments.
- Finland has a good education system. They get everyone to school ready to learn (early ed). (Societal expectation, not just on the school.)
- State of education represents the worst of public life, not the best of public life. We aren't capitalizing on our abundant resources (intellectual, etc.) we need to muster positive investment of these resources at the state level.
- Finland has become an envy of Europe—all kids arrive ready to learn and investment has ensured that they are.
- There is a virtue to having the electorate support the foremost public institution.

## **Council on the Future of Vermont**

The following testimony was gathered from organizations who could not meet with the Council on the Future of Vermont in person, but wrote in their challenges, opportunities and visions for the future of the state. The groups in the following pages responded via mail or email to a set of three questions.

## VERMONT NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL

*1. Does Vermont have any characteristics that make operating or doing business here unique for your organization or your members? Please list those characteristics.*

As the state's largest and oldest environmental organization, the Vermont Natural Resources Council is supported by a loyal membership of 5,000 individuals, families and businesses who care deeply about the Vermont environment and its natural resources. The characteristics that define Vermont for our members are:

- Healthy, productive, working landscapes of farm and forest lands
- Fresh, clean, abundant water resources
- Vibrant town and city centers & strong citizen participation in democratic processes
- An expectation for leadership in environmental stewardship

*2. What are the three most important trends your organization or members will respond to in the next 20 to 50 years?*

The privatization of the world's water resources.

As climate change and a burgeoning world population put increased strain on finite water resources, corporations are recognizing the economic value of water, the "blue gold" of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Vermont must be steadfast in its efforts to protect groundwater and surface water resources for the public good.

The loss of farm and forest lands.

As the price of oil increases due to peak oil, Vermont must ensure sources of food and fuel closer to home. Vermont will need to significantly reduce the number farm and forest lands converted to development to ensure local resources are available.

Climate change and energy security.

The earth is warming as a result of the burning of fossil fuels. Vermonters must rethink how we will power our activities in a safe and healthy way. Energy conservation and efficiency should be our first line of defense in pursuit of energy security, followed by a mix of renewable and clean energy options.

*3. What does your organization or its members believe should be the top two priorities for Vermont as a state over the next 20 to 50 years?*

Building a green economy.

A green economy is one that supports vibrant downtowns interconnected by public transit options, one that fosters homegrown Vermont enterprises like entrepreneurial family farms, one that supports community-owned renewable power alternatives and one where the working and wild landscape supports and inspires its population of conservation minded Vermonters.

Developing energy independence.

Energy security is as important to Vermonters' economic security as it is to reducing the greenhouse gases which contribute to climate change. Transportation and home heating in Vermont are the largest contributors to those greenhouse gases. Vermont, as a state, should invest in community-owned and community-scale renewable energy, public transportation alternatives and building weatherization assistance to meet Vermonters' needs.

## Vermont Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance

1. Does Vermont have any characteristics that make operating or doing business here unique for your organization or your members? Please list those characteristics.

The Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition (VBPC) exists to promote bicycling, walking and running in Vermont and, through education and advocacy, to make these activities safer. Vermont's rural character provides a unique environment in which to operate. Pedestrian safety, for example, is a focus for the Coalition but it must be approached in a different way than it would be approached in many other places in the U.S. As approximately 50% of Vermont's roads are dirt, there are no accompanying sidewalks. The fact that pedestrians routinely walk and run in the roads must be taken into account.

2. What are the 3 most important trends your organization or members will respond to in the next 20 to 50 years?

As a small organization that is usually coping with the challenges of the moment, it's difficult to anticipate trends that may occur in the next two to five decades. Given the information available at this time, it appears that the government's and the general public's approach to transportation will undergo radical transformation due to these trends:

Movement of citizens to population centers  
Resurgence of less expensive, more efficient transportation modes  
Expansion of mass transit options

Bicycling and walking/running often are stellar ways of getting from Point A to Point B. They provide excellent methods of transportation, not just opportunities for sport and recreation. Unfortunately, local, state, and federal governments have not supported these activities by promoting them and appropriately funding infrastructure. As fuel prices continue to rise, more Vermonters will choose to live closer to their employers or will seek employment closer to their residences. Residents of Vermont will seek less expensive ways to get to their destinations. In so doing, many will consider the possibilities of walking, bicycling, and/or taking the bus. Savvy employers will provide accommodations in the way of showers, lockers, etc. As pressure grows for more mass transit options, there will be more bus routes, more departure times, more lots provided for car and van pools. Monetary incentives will bring about the changes that decades of warnings regarding planetary

and personal health haven't succeeding in inducing.

3. What does your organization or its members believe should be the two top priorities for Vermont as a state over the next 20 to 50 years?

Over the next 20 to 50 years, legislators should invest heavily in the state's bicycle and pedestrian program. This is a line item in the VTrans budget which has been frozen since 2004/2005. No new projects have been accepted into the program since that time and all current projects are scheduled to be completed in 2013. Visionary leadership is needed to appreciate the value provided by multi-use paths, bike lanes, and sidewalks in excellent condition, to name just a few examples. Vermont's congressional delegation should lobby for increased federal funding for bike/ped initiatives as an expression of U.S. commitment to the health of its citizens and the economy.

**VERMONT STATE COLLEGES**  
**Response to Vermont Council on Rural Development Future of Vermont Project**  
July 21, 2008

**Vermont characteristics that make operating or doing business here unique for our organization and its constituents:**

- 1) Low level of State funding for public higher education. Vermont ranks 47th in the nation in state appropriations to higher education per \$1000 income, 49th in the nation in state appropriations to higher education per capita and 49th in the nation for higher education as a State spending priority relative to all tax revenues including lottery. Capital support for higher education, already among the lowest levels in the country, declined to \$1.6 million for the VSC in FY09, addressing only a small fraction of deferred maintenance and no new construction or equipment needs.
- 2) High number of postsecondary institutions in Vermont. Higher education is an important and valuable industry in Vermont.
- 3) VSC focus on Vermonters. Fifty-eight percent of Vermonters attending undergraduate college in Vermont attend one of the Vermont State Colleges.
- 4) Dispersed Vermont population. In order to meet the needs of the State, the VSC has full-time employees in over 60 locations statewide.

**Three most important trends for our organization in the next 20-50 years:**

- 1) Demographic changes. Vermont ranks among the highest of all states in the percentage of 25-34 year-olds leaving the state, and projects a dramatic increase in the percentage of the population over sixty-five years old. Vermont is already the second oldest state in the country and will see a 22% decline in high school graduates over the next twelve years.
- 2) Technological changes. Rapid changes in technology already have had a dramatic impact on the delivery of instructional programs and services, and on students' and employees' expectations for service. The power of technology will continue to expand exponentially, and Vermont must make strategic investments in technology to support economic vitality across sectors, including the many small businesses that are so vital to Vermont's economy.
- 3) Sustainability. Rapid and large increases in the cost of fuel and food, declines in the job market, deteriorating infrastructure and environmental concerns all combine to create significant sustainability challenges.

**Two top priorities for Vermont in next 20-50 years:**

- 1) Investing in higher education. Vermont cannot compete in the global, national or regional economy without a well-educated citizenry; the public and private benefits of higher education are proven.
- 2) Investing in sustainability. Vermont, like the rest of the country, must develop strategies for balancing affordability, job and economic growth, the environment and the State's infrastructure.

## VERMONT SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS' ALLIANCE

The Vermont Software Developers' Alliance is concerned about the infrastructure of Vermont...without high-bandwidth there will be no high-tech in Vermont, and an investment in high-speed internet could pay big dividends when trying to provide solutions like distance learning, telemedicine and tele-commuting.

=====

Op-Ed: If Broadband is the Interstate Highway, Why are we settling for Two-Lane Blacktop?

Recent discussions around the state and during the campaign for governor suggest a growing unease about the prospect of economic growth and prosperity in Vermont. Travel and transportation are becoming more expensive. The state has lost several hundred high-tech jobs in the past year.

The admirable E-State initiative is largely an exercise to convince ourselves that "something is being done", and "we've got it covered". By late 2010, by magic, FairPoint (dangerously undercapitalized) and Comcast (the latest owner of the Vermont assets of the bankrupt Adelphia ), and a few "WISPs", wireless internet providers covering the hills and hollers, will have us covered. No significant attention is required by the state economic development folks; no significant public investment is required.

Talks with the Douglas administration and Gaye Symington have shown that they think the E-State deal is just fine. Pollina's web site makes no reference to broadband at all.

What worries me is that with E-State we're going to get people barely off dialup. By going with wireless internet connections, we believe that we have a state-of-the-art high-tech infrastructure superior to other states. That is how it is being sold. But, we're really just paving the dirt roads.

Wired broadband connections in 2008 are the equivalent of the interstate highway project of the nineteen-sixties, and the rural electrification projects of the nineteen-forties. Broadband is *\*the\** strategic infrastructure of our time, and should be treated as the crucial public investment that it represents. If we fail to invest in this infrastructure we will be passed by other regions that are making these investments.

Here's why. Current and future internet services include voice and video in both directions. These services require high speeds, and continuous connections to be effective. (Email, web browsing and research, the stuff we've been using the internet for, for the past twenty years, by contrast, do not). Further, new applications are predicated on the end-user being a

provider, not just a passive consumer of another 142 high-def television channels or downloader of the latest iTunes. In other words, high-speed broadband is not simply another medium for delivering the same old media by the same old conglomerates. Broadband enables individuals and small business to actively participate, lead and contribute to the future economic life of Vermont.

New applications, including distance education, telemedicine, videoconferencing and telecommuting, all of which are enjoying increasing interest and urgency with the increase in gasoline prices, are moving out of the research phase and into production. Several providers of these services are in Vermont and they service clients around the world. How ironic is it then that in many areas they can't reach Vermonters in their homes or businesses because of the lack of investment in broadband?

We're not out in front. We're barely catching up.

Remember he failed tech academy proposal in Essex a few years back? Almost everyone agreed that this was a good idea, but it foundered under the weight of politics and financing which played one town off another. Now we're on the cusp of being able to provide technical education via distance learning. This isn't merely a theoretical possibility. Collaborators, including the Vermont Software Developer's Alliance, Linking Learning2Life, St. Michael's College, the city of Burlington and the town of Colchester have submitted a proposal to the National Science Foundation for a pilot project using a Vermont-based company, Global Classroom, to deliver advanced placement and technical courses to students throughout the state via broadband. My own company, Microdesign, with the UVM Department of Physical Therapy, is delivering a thrice-weekly exercise program to a dozen patients in their homes via broadband using their home TV sets and cameras which allow the instructor to supervise and correct their movement. We see potential for cardio rehab, diabetes management, and a host of health and wellness applications, provided that the participants have affordable, reliable broadband connections to their homes.

Understandably, politicians pick their battles. I want to suggest that the investment in broadband infrastructure should be given the highest priority by all candidates for governor.

Many solutions to the intractable problems we face in Vermont of workforce training, skyrocketing education and healthcare costs, and economic development will be delivered via broadband. And it will take forward-thinking legislation and economic incentives, in partnership with private initiatives, to get us there.

--- Lawrence Keyes

Lawrence Keyes is a principal with Microdesign Consulting Inc. in Colchester, and chairs the Vermont Software Developer's Alliance outreach committee.



## **BATTERED WOMEN'S SERVICES AND SHELTER**

1. We at Battered Women's Services and Shelter know that Vermont's rural nature has a huge and negative impact on domestic violence. (Nationally, DV accounts for 20% of all homicides. In Vermont, the statistic over ten years jumps to about 50%, 2007 being particularly bad as 93% of homicides were related to DV when one counts the men who committed suicide after killing their partners.) Victims living in rural locations experience increased risk for several reasons. Batterers are maintaining power and control over their female partners so that many victims are not allowed to drive or to hold jobs. Often they prevented from traveling independently on public transportation as well. Such social isolation means that the batterer becomes the sole voice and decision maker over victims' lives. Response and assistance from friends, family or police may be compromised.

On the positive side, because of our small size, Vermont provides the opportunity for small communities to work together to implement and evaluate programs that can end domestic violence. In communities across the state, we can educate citizens to recognize how we are socializing our young people, both male and female, to adopt roles that pressure them to accept violence as normal. We can teach all people to recognize early signs of abuse and to respond appropriately, supporting the victims and holding the batterers accountable. We can say no to accepting such violence in our state! There is a strong and coordinated network of agencies promoting such non-violence in every county.

2. The three most important trends Battered Women's Services and Shelter will be involved in during the next 20-50 years are the ongoing work of our Coordinated Community Response Team, the development of primary prevention initiatives to end domestic violence and our participation in efforts to increase affordable housing for all Vermonters with special concern for victim needs. Currently, our Washington County DV Task Force is bringing in new stakeholders toward building an "energized, informed and funded" Coordinated Community Response Team. We look forward, as a part of this Team, to bring truly effective wrap-around services to victims of domestic violence. As a staff, we are seeking to identify and eradicate the root causes of domestic violence by educating the public. Deeply held cultural norms must change so that acceptance of violence as acceptable becomes obsolete. And, our Shelter Coordinator is active on committees currently working on non-discriminatory housing practices as well as ensuring that lack of affordable housing is an issue constantly being reviewed.

3. The two priorities that BWSS would like to see in the next 20-50 years are economic justice for all, including and especially victims of violent crimes, as well as significant and pervasive education initiatives throughout the public sector teaching citizens how to recognize and respond to domestic violence in all its forms. The economic justice goal would include a consistent emphasis on affordable housing. The prevention goal would focus on primary prevention, recognizing and ending the generational nature of domestic violence. We would like to eradicate the need for having domestic violence shelters for women and their altogether!

# VERMONT ASSOCIATION OF HOME HEALTH AGENCIES

DATE: June 23, 2008

## 1. Unique Characteristics.

- 1.1 Population - The fact that Vermont is rural with few dense population centers adds significantly to the cost of delivering home care services because travel costs here are very high. Home care staff travel over 7 million miles a year providing home care services.
- 1.2 Competition - Currently there is little competition in home care services as most of the care is delivered by the 11 nonprofit home care agencies. This is a major plus for the state because the agencies are able to work together to assure the every Vermonter gets the home care they need rather than compete for limited resources.

## 2. Most important trends

- 2.1 Staff shortages – Currently there are shortages of nurses, home health aides, therapists, and personal care attendants and that shortage is not likely to improve any time soon.
- 2.2 Finances – The state of Vermont does not pay the costs for services and the gap between cost and payments is likely to get worse.
- 2.3 Costs – The cost to provide home care services has risen dramatically in recent years. In order to keep competitive with other providers, especially hospitals, home care agencies have increased wages significantly over the past decade and continued increases are likely. The cost for travel has risen at an even greater pace.

## 3. Priorities

- 3.1 Rates – The state must pay its bills. Currently home care agencies lose over \$4 million a year providing service to state-run programs. That cannot continue.
- 3.2 Staffing – The state must continue to offer educational incentives for Vermonters seeking degrees in health care, especially nursing and the therapies.

## **MAD RIVER VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

1. Does VT have any characteristics that make operating or doing business here unique for your organization or your members? List:

- The VT Brand is recognized and carries much weight, denoting quality of a product/service
- The bucolic setting, working farms and high quality standards (air, water, resources, locally manufactured items) deliver a powerful message to the consumer

2. What are the 3 most important trends your organization or members will respond to in the next 20-50 years?

- declining skier visits
- competition for family time (club & school sports/traveling teams etc. compete for family vacation time)
- national and global economics decline resulting in less disposable income for travel, leisure and shopping

3. What does your organization or its members believe should be the two top priorities for Vermont as a state over the next 20-50 years?

- affordability for living here (school funding, fuel, property taxes)/workforce housing
- aging population, lack of service industry workers.

# VERMONT SKI AREAS ASSOCIATION

## 1. Vermont characteristics unique for the ski industry:

Positive:

- Proximity to metropolitan areas.
- Vermont brand and ski industry heritage superior to neighboring ski states.
- Small communities closely associated with individual mountains.

Negative:

- Regulatory framework more restrictive than competitor ski states.
- Business taxes, fees and expenses higher than competitor ski states.

## 2. Three most important trends ski industry will respond to in next 20-50 years:

- (1) Aging demographic of both Vermont residents and core skier market. This is two-pronged problem involving labor shortage issues and aging baby boomers.
- (2) Costs and sources of energy. Energy costs continue to rise and the long term solution to replacing some or all of the power supplied by Vermont Yankee and Hydro-Quebec has not yet been adequately developed.
- (3) Transition to four-season resort operations. This is a continuing trend that diversifies operations from winter-only activities for the long-term health of the industry and Vermont's tourism-dependent economy.

## 3. Vermont's top two priorities over the next 20-50 years should be:

- (1) Reform of government regulatory framework to reduce burdens on economic development while maintaining environmental protections.
- (2) Addressing energy supply & costs.

\* Also: Retain Vermont's youth to ensure needed labor force.

