



Vermont Council on Rural Development

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## Stuart Hurd column: Communitywide efforts exerpt

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On April 12, I attended the Community Day follow-up meeting. More than 100 people came to the Fire Facility to participate in the formulation of tasks/ideas important to the community. Rather than focus this discussion on the four ultimately agreed upon, I want to comment on the feeling of community and the desire of those present to work hard to, first identify the ideas and to commit ultimately to work to find solutions and directions.

As hard as it is to find consensus in large groups of people with divergent interests, the **Vermont Council on Rural Development** staff, led by Paul Costello, managed to find that consensus. I found the process to be stimulating, encouraging, and unifying. On May 16, VCRD returns to the community, bringing a group of selected individuals that will provide expertise to help those who want to work on the chosen ideas get started.

In June, VCRD will present a report to the community that tells the story of the community visit and highlights the tasks/ideas chosen by the local people then working on each of the selected ideas. I was left with a feeling that some positive outcomes would be achieved. Here are the four tasks/ideas: Develop a Bennington vision statement, improve communications, and create a positive town image; make downtown Bennington a destination and build a new town green; address poverty through collaboration, create a working group and fund, and expand dental care, and build a community center, renew and expand the recreation center, and build a skate park.

*Stuart Hurd is Bennington's town manager. He writes a monthly column on town issues for the Banner. [www.benningtonbanner.com](http://www.benningtonbanner.com) [1].*

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