

# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

## ISLAND POND/ESSEX COUNTY

### Community Forum Day Notes April 17, 2008

The following notes were collected from focus group meetings and forums throughout the day spent in Essex County. These notes are in raw form – reflecting much of the inflections, quotations and feelings of the attendees at these meetings. Below is a list of the meetings that occurred on April 17th. For anyone in Essex County who did not get a chance to come out to forums, **CFV encourages you to contribute online at [www.futureofvermont.org](http://www.futureofvermont.org) and share your thoughts on our future.**

- Brighton Town Select Board
- Brighton Community Forum
- Unified Towns and Gores of Essex County
- Evening public meeting

**Facilitators:** Sarah Waring, Paul Costello

**Scribes:** Laurie Zilbauer, Greg Stefanski

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Brighton Select Board**  
**April 17<sup>th</sup>, Island Pond**

Scribe: Laurie Zilbauer

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

- Vermonter personality traits: caring, sharing, neighborliness, friendliness.
- In a small town there are opportunities to serve on the Selectboard, to know your neighbors, to know your community- versus other states, where you have to contribute money to be able to participate in any committee for the town. You have to pay to be a part of the work for the community.

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

- Employment Difficulties
- Young kids get a good education & then they leave.
- Our economy changed from living here and being employed here to being supported by recreation, tourism, and part time residents.
- There are too many “Southern Ideas”, new comers expect and demand more services, but they don’t see the financial situation of the year-round residents.
- The change over rate of part-time residents to full-time residents has really increased in the last several years. This is due to snowmobiling and 9/11.
- Since 9/11 people want to be able to get out of the city. There’s a fair amount of people that wanted a place to escape to and purchased homes here. They offered higher amounts than the locals were used to and housing costs have shot up, making it hard for locals. Brighton has had 2 state ordered reappraisals in the last 4 years.
- Divisive Town Issues
- Opportunities from new populations mean new people are coming and getting involved. There are new faces at public meetings and events.
- The new people are a mixture of retirees and people who don’t need jobs to live here (part-timers). These populations have more time to volunteer.
- The Fire department is seeing a decline in volunteers though, because you need younger populations and the increase in part-time residents and retirees has really limited the people that can volunteer for the Fire Department.
- When Ethan Allen left – they created a void of volunteers. Ethan Allen used to let workers off to fight fires and still paid them for their time away, no other employers do that now. Also, many firefighters had to take jobs outside of the area and they no longer had time to volunteer or were too far away to respond to a fire.
- Another challenge is providing good ambulance services, the EMS services come from so far away now, when before it was provided by the fire department locally.

- When Ethan Allen closed, a few of the former employees formed an employee owned woodworking business to create jobs for themselves. But the problem is their competition is global = 40% of furniture is made overseas.
- The local economy is tied to the national economy and federal government issues like Transportation, Health Care, and Schools. The national issues are filtering down and having a big effect on us.
- Another major challenge is the volunteer training time required for emergency services now. There's extreme amounts of training required for NIMS, ICS, new Communications Equipment, Air bags, etc.
- More and more training is needed by the state in order to maintain the ambulance licenses. The local EMS used to be volunteer run out of the Fire Department, now we have to pay Lyndon Rescue to provide it, because of all the training that's needed. EMS services went from \$6,000 a year provided by locals to \$60,000 a year provided by Lyndon Rescue.
- The overall problem is the lack of volunteers.
- The problem is government writes up rules for safety, but they don't know their real impacts. The Visiting Nursing, Schools, and Emergency Services have all been dramatically affected in the past few years.
- The implementation of state mandates comes down to dollars & cents, but the state never provides the money to do it and the state wants to cut reimbursements to towns or agencies that don't follow through.
- We have all the same regulations that you have in the big city, but we're running out of people to carry out the regulations. Montpelier doesn't talk to local fire chiefs, they talk to the Barre or Montpelier instead.
- The main problem comes down to representation; Montpelier has 3 representatives in the Legislature. We have 1 that we share with 22 other towns.
- We need to spread the wealth, small towns have a different processes for planning & zoning, this model should be used for other state requirements.
- An opportunity is to recognize the commitment and volunteerism of those that do help out. Five new firemen took the required first responder course and Brighton recognized them in the Newspaper. They didn't get any money but at least they were recognized for their efforts.
- The voters know the issues that the Selectboard has taken on have seen visible positive impacts. This visual improvement helps to develop support and trust for the Selectboard.

#### **Concerns for Future Generation:**

- They'll only be able to come back when their 65 to retire.
- The younger generations will have to be real professional people in order to make a decent living here.
- Young professionals need to have the opportunity to come back if they choose.
- There are opportunities for service professionals, like nurses and attorneys. New professions like this can help diversify the economy. There are opportunities for

people with service professions that are common everywhere to locate in a small town and provide their services.

- “Bring the jobs here that provide the services we need locally.”
- Brighton State Park Beach is almost all Canadians. The dollar exchange has really attracted Canadians. They are really contributing to the American economy.
- Who wouldn’t come to this town, with the 600 acre lake and a downtown on the edge of the lake. It’s only a matter of time before people find out what we’ve got here.
- Vermont values attract people, they feel like, “I can be back here tomorrow and it’ll be okay”. It’s our small town values that attract people.
- Brighton is locked into one kind of tourism – snowmobiling. Tourism is what we have to work with since Ethan Allen left.
- You used to get everything you needed in downtown. There were bookstores, clothing stores, now you have to drive to Derby and Newport City for those things.
- I would like to see development and full storefronts again. We have seen an increase in the last few years based on the towns investment.
- I’d like to see some aesthetic improvements in town for the future generations, but visual prosperity may attract too much growth. How do we balance prosperity and growth?
- People are taking better care of their properties now, there is a sense of pride in ownership and pride in the town.
- We watch out for the poor locally and we make sure we won’t tax people out of town. Will the next generation be able to say the same?
- There is an outdoor economy growing here, which brings the possibility of jobs that might become available, such as managing land or working in the outdoors, opportunities for professionals. UVM students are already doing wonderful research. Possibilities for biology and research positions.
- The Silvia O Conte Wildlife Refuge is new, but its establishment of it had taken people’s camps away. Vermonters lost 25 camps; this has affected the tax base. Ultimately it may help the town, if it brings in enough tourists.
- Brighton did a marketing study on how to better tap into the tourist markets. The town now offers entrepreneurial courses, mentor ships, local micro-business loans for start up business, but the town still doesn’t get enough tourist traffic to support small businesses. If we have a few bad winters, small businesses go under.
- The key still is for local leaders to organize the efforts that foster change.
- Towns do get help from State Dept. of Labor, NCIC, NVDA, but sometimes it takes a crisis to get government people here to help. Ethan Allen was the first of many big businesses to leave the state, only happened because we were first.

- Utilize Grants CDBG, VT Trans Enhancement Grant, Welcome Center, & local private money raised = People saw positive change. Town lost \$10,000 for youth center, people still contributed to the Welcome Center.

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

- Capital Budgeting, taking care of infrastructure. In the next few years the Town will have to take care of a lot of local buildings, parks, and roads.
- Fire department – stretched thin by surrounding towns, E911 system needs to be made away of the limitations. Determine who or what goes, not tied to finances. Brighton tax payers foot that bill – contract agreements, mutual aid agreements. Increased expenditures fall on the shoulders of Brighton Tax Payers.
- As for Broadband, Great Auk Wireless is installing an antenna. We have downtown wireless service, the Library has wireless. Broadband isn't that big of an issue; it's the cost, not the accessibility.

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

*This question was very much answered in the above conversation.*

**COMMUNITY FORUM DAY**  
**Scribe Report**  
**Brighton Community Forum, Island Pond**  
**April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

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

- There's a lot of friendliness here. I moved here to be the librarian and have since joined many clubs and groups to help out around the communities.
- A lot of people love it here. They love the ruralness, the nature and the small town atmosphere. It's comfortable.
- You can make a difference here – you can be involved in the work that you love and actually see progress in a small town.
- Having moved away, I am happy to be here because of the differences between rural Vermont and other states and urban areas.

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

- Internet & Cell Phone Service needed in Norton & Area. Better infrastructure would help people telecommute.
- The lake is a great resource. Lake draws tourism, without that the town would be desperate for something.
- NEK area – lakes, mountains, hiking trails, WLF management areas, but they are underutilized should be more usage.
- Need to more clearly identify trail heads, hiking areas, trails, etc. Not clearly identified & hard to direct people there.
- How can we further promote Vermont assets & resources?
- Limited signage and directions to resources sends the wrong message about access to public lands.
- There are opportunities for new trails & more trail mapping, and better guiding tourists to nature.
- Good examples are the Wildlife viewing area map, Moose areas, and the Connecticut River Bird watching guide. Opportunities to better access our nature & unique resources, such as the Northern Boreal Forests, which have very unique birds.
- The Silvia O. Conte Wildlife Refuge is a plus for the region, but it's open sporadically and isn't funded evenly.
- Trails and recreation amenities should be handicapped accessible. There are only 3 long-trail accesses that are handicapped accessible.
- Vermont & NEK has opportunities for brook fishing, good water quality.
- Employment is a challenge. Ethan Allen has closed & the property is still vacant.

- Children in the region – what’s available to them, activities & future employment.
- Brighton needs a Recreation area, something for the young people to do. Maybe an arcade or something that will make them feel safe & be occupied.
- A Good Example was Pizza Put from Burlington. No jackets required, a local hangout and it was wonderful, lots of different activities. New businesses could tie into the tourism market, multi-seasonal businesses and activities.
- It’s hard for kids go to IROC (nearest facility), so they hang out on the street, and skateboard on the sidewalks.
- The Town should coordinate with LSC to have summer youth activities and the Recreation Students would receive college credits & supervise activities for local kids.
- There are definitely opportunities to collaborate with different organizations and people to develop activities for the kids in the summer & year round.
- The school summer program should be offered outside of the school within the downtown, so the kids can access it better.
- A supervisor is needed to utilize LSC work study program students. Brighton doesn’t have a recreation supervisor position.
- Money & funding for local efforts is difficult because of so many low income residents.
- Many of the people moving in are wealthy and want things & services that can’t be supported by the tax base.
- Money could be an opportunity – to offer services & shopping locally. Rather than spend money on gas and go to regional centers, there is an opportunities to fill professional positions & service type businesses in the area. It might be supported because of high gas prices.
- The Career Center located nearby in Newport City is an opportunity for the local workforce to have access to training and higher educational programs.
- Vermont’s small towns have an opportunity to attract people that can offer professional services with our way of life. Professionals can make a good living, and still have necessary amenities.
- High gas prices can help support local 5 & 10 stores again; the old general store model should be encouraged instead of a Wal-Mart in Derby. Ace hardware & Simon the Tanner are good examples of small quality stores that meet a number of local needs.
- There might be an opportunity to start a Co-op of small stores owners in the area in order to meet minimums for goods & services, since most suppliers won’t ship now without a certain minimum.
- The highways need to be improved, it affects tourism.
- Route 114 between Brighton and Norton is terrible. This section of Route 114 hasn’t been addressed because Essex County is underrepresented.
- The local chamber needs to be active for the businesses; membership in chambers needs to offer more solutions to regional issues. The Co-op for small stores is a great idea.

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

- We definitely need to have something for the young people to do, both activities & opportunities.
- Try to get repeat tourists and coordinate with youth activities.
- A priority should be to attract professional services, like CPA's or an Attorney to set up shop locally. We can first find out what the needs for services are? Then determine what is needed, and then assess things like office space.
- More Tourism businesses, where I can rent a bicycle, kayak, canoes, or boats.
- Vermont's Highways should be a priority.
- Providing for adequate representation should be another priority, shouldn't solely be based on population.
- Work on the education system; make sure the schools are teaching to standards. Vermont should be committed to an academic school system, extend the school day. NECAPPA testing is a good indication for how the system is working.
- Improve the education funding mechanism.
- Natural Resources should be a priority; the environment is directly connected to tourism. Address Lake Memphremagog's pollution issues and make the lake handicapped accessible.
- Accessibility to Nature plays a major role in the long term health of the region.
- Funding for local projects is tied to federal funding resources. Our tax money is going outside of the U.S. right now and this directly affects the completion of local projects and priorities.

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

- The Library was recently redone. It was a small facility, and we applied for grants to enlarge the library. Private Donations helped make the renovations possible. Once local private donations were provided it encourage the rest of the community to get involved and chip in to have a nice public library. Now it's a very nice facility and it serves surrounding towns & summer residents.
- There is a lot of volunteerism, but it goes up & down. I think it's based on having a small intimate community. Divisive issues tend to tear a community apart, but if people can move on, they'll come together to work on the local priorities.
- For Vermonters, it comes down to the fact that we're all neighbors in the end – the size kind of affects how business is being done.

**COMMUNITY FORUM DAY**  
**Scribe Report**  
**Unified Towns and Gores**  
**April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

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

This group of people shared a love of the land, and living in a remote place – they work together to represent those citizens of the Unified Towns and Gores of Essex County. There are 50 residents in this area, 30 of whom are registered voters. Eighty-eight percent of the land in this region is owned by four entities – including the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of Vermont. UTG describes its residents as ‘woodland rich and people poor’. This area leads the state for moose, has 3 students in the Vermont public school system, and has recently unified to be able to better provide services to their residents – the Board of Governors acting much as a Select Board does.

Also joining the group were two members of ARCO – the Averill Recreational Camps Organization. ARCO promotes a good, safe habitat, maintains roads, & pays for insurance liability. There are 140 camp properties around Big and Little Averill lakes and the property owners are a mix of Vermonters and flatlanders.

- Things have changed a lot since I moved here 38 years ago, but I love the solitude, the individuality of living in this place.
- Like to help and be involved. Thinks that this is true of many Vermonters.

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

- Taxes – especially education taxes are a significant burden. We have \$750,000 in education taxes and only have 3 students. Plus most properties have restricted deeds.
- The State’s mandates to have a full time principal & full time guidance counselor with only so many teachers are unfunded mandates. The small schools up here would be fine with just part-time positions, could even share between the schools.
- Another issue is that the UTGs don’t vote on a school budget, but still pay taxes to Brighton.
- My Property taxes have risen by \$45,000 in 15 years. We also have no representation; we’re the largest land area with the least amount of representation in Montpelier.
- My school taxes went from \$280 to \$3,000. The ACT 60 & ACT 68 are written so they don’t make sense. They also cover redundant things. The bills treat large population areas over small population areas rather than funding being tied to the local ability to tax and we have no affect on the legislature because of the lack of population. This is mainly a problem because the tax isn’t noticeable for areas that have growth. If you don’t have growth and don’t have anywhere to grow, like us, your taxes keep going up.

- The Common Level of Assessment (CLA) is 126%, taxes are going up 15% and nothing has changed. We even had a re-evaluation last year and its still out of wack. There weren't even any sales to support this.
- There are misperceptions that the UTG's are all owned by out-of-staters, but 70% of property owners are Vermonters. Property values increase by 10.9% last year.
- Will Merck bought the Champion International lands for \$89/acre and now there are restrictions on the forest land, it's supposed to be open for public use, but that's not the case.
- We feel like a used football up here, and land is being fractured and sold to be able to deal with the tax burden. The state's forcing the subdivision of land, because of the financial pressures.
- There's a strong image that the UTG's are the playground for the rich and the rest of the state. But we have no infrastructure for the state to support, no way for us to get our fair share of taxes back from the state.
- The State also regulates the roads, lets snowmobilers go anywhere but the state doesn't let bicyclists use the roads. Locals have no say and we keep up our own roads.
- ACT 60 changed the tax system to the point where the UTG's needed a municipal officer in order to administer the new tax system.
- Originally the taxes were ridiculously low, we had no services or infrastructure, so the state decided the UTG's should give money to the towns around us. Up to 2000 the UTG's gave money regionally, and because of ACT 60 it goes to state now.
- ARCO properties – ACT 60 & 68 have tremendous tax increases, the services are slim to none, we maintain our own roads, and maintain our police contracts. Own the public fish access and lease it to the state \$800 a year. Taxes are \$400 – \$1,200 for a simple camp in the woods, and \$2,000 – \$4,500 on the lake, appraisals doubled and tripled. It's forcing out Vermonters, it's all going to Burlington, and nothing stays locally. We keep trying to keep the expenses down, but we can't address education and we have no say. Most owners can only be in town for 180 days (deed restrictions).
- Our assessment rate is 1.75, even though we had a reappraisal last year. We'll only apply one level of taxation for us. The sales of Lake drive everything.
- There is a discrepancy from one side of the Lake to the other, same tax rate. The state set this up with the easement from the Champion Lands deal. Recreation uses dictate 180 days of use only.
- The Champion Lands Plan required a single family dwelling to have 1 acre of land. Then ACT 250 was waived for existing camp lots, so Champion could sell the lots to the leased owner when they sold the land. The state created a tax problem because of this and left. Not assessed unreasonably, but its all from the tax rate.
- Challenge is all these accountability vs. responsibility (4 entities own majority of the land). The State wants to shut the gates (literally to the roads in the spring), but not have the accountability for what happens. Owners are limited to their property at certain times of the year.

- There's a gate on our road, the State can lock the gate to keep it from being damaged during mud season. So I can no longer gain access to the properties, or others are locked in. The State has the power to lock gate but it doesn't pay to fix the road, the property owners do. There's a period of time when the properties are inaccessible or unsafe, and there are break-ins, and fires.
- Many of these places are privately owned but can't be accessed. But the U.S. Fish and Wild Life and the VT. Dept. of Forests, Parks, and Recreation claimed they were going to maintain public access in the Champion Lands deal.
- Another challenge is people don't want to stay here for longer term or full time because of the lack of services, and road restrictions, and dangers. People try to retire here and after two weeks with no cell phone and internet they called off their retirement in UTGs.
- UTGs are supposed to be a public recreation area, but it really is a wilderness. There's a lot of dumb people accessing the land, that assume their technology will work. We usually have 1-2 fatals a year; and one time we could not get people in to save him even though they did get cell service.
- Misperception that public land is safe and it's not its wilderness.
- Lack of knowledge of how to treat the wilderness area, and then the locals need to pay for the emergency services to rescue people.
- A part of the problem is VAST holds to much control and authority. Do not disclose the location of trails each winter even though they are needed for emergency services.
- There's a lack of State representation to address Route 114. This is our main emergency services route and the conditions are terrible. You can't go over 40 mph because of the conditions.
- Lack of Cell Phones coverage.
- ARCO owners are becoming an aging group and will require ambulance services up there and we can't call them, we can't reach them. You can't protect your family, friends, & neighbors. If something happens someone will have to drive up to Averill to make a call. Cell service is a public safety issue.
- Cell Services are 20 to 30 minutes away. Having to drive to get cell service means that emergency response is 1 hour away.
- All comes back to not a lot of people.
- Emergency Services are looked at as a revenue resource, instead of public infrastructure.
- There's more value for the land management companies to have camps out there. They get more money for rent than there is with timber harvesting sometimes, so the state should encourage camps. Land use should be a mixture of timber management, camps, and recreation uses. Camp leases are very high now and a good revenue source.
- I don't want to see any more state or federal land purchased because neither entity has the resources to take care of their properties nor are they accountable. The State and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management are above the law; they don't have to answer to anyone.

- On the State land you can't have a loaded gun in your vehicle, and can't have beer at hunting camp. This doesn't fit with the traditional land uses. One group helping with this is the VT Traditions Coalition. We need to keep our traditional uses active on Vermont Lands.
- Would it make a difference if there were local officers here? No the U.S. Bureau of Land Management has the same policies across the country.
- The State's Rules change as administration changes. We need legislation that will standardize, not policies that change with a new commissioner. Gate closing is a policy of one of the agencies.
- Property owners in the ARCO group are now putting more and more money into their properties. Turning deer camps into houses, and through membership they are demanding more services. Response time for emergency services and a lack of cell service is a big issue. There is no electricity and no telephone lines, but many of the properties are appraised at \$300,000 - \$400,000, equal to the homes across the lake that do have those services.

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

- Put it up – build it, build cell towers! UTGs voted and every one wants wind power. Cell towers are tied to money & populations.
- We work with regional towns, like Norton on waste disposal, we're moving towards regionalism with some services.
- Need fish – the lakes need fish.
- We need regulations that are built for our situation. We're mostly subjected to policies that are set by state agencies rather than the legislature. We're at the whim of the state. They try to shove the UTG into the mold. It doesn't fit.
- TAXES – there has got to be a way to re-evaluate and change the system for these people who are taking so much of the burden.
- Emergency services here are dependent on Cell Service. We need this as soon as possible and we need coverage to be consistent. Without cell service we won't be able to know when our citizens are in an accident or even dying.

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

*All of the previous discussion was about the local community issues.*

## COMMUNITY FORUM DAY

### Scribe Report

### Public Evening Forum

### Brighton Elementary School

April 17, 2008

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

- Neighborliness, caring attitude, seeking and using opportunities, working towards our goals in a neighborly fashion. 'I moved back here four years ago from Orlando FL and I love FL but I'm able to participate here in the select board, the town, etc'
- The sense of community – we live in a small community – we really know everybody and you have more to offer to smaller community. You can do more here; we can do a lot for the community here, but if we lived in a place with more people, what we do and be wouldn't be as important. Working with the elderly, housing, services, etc are extremely important. We have a lot of volunteers, we'd like to expand but we don't have room.
- Supposedly a national value, but particularly in the NEK, I still think there's a general freedom of expression. There's a way that I see things going – although people say there's openmindedness – here there's a freedom to express to conservative values and it's taboo in other places. Freedom to say something and liberty to be accepted to be who you are are two different things. And here, you get the second one.
- I'm new here, but I went to college at UVM. Part of the reason for choosing to come here, is that I think VTers have a very strong tie to natural environment. VTers appreciate it in ways that you don't see in the rest of the country. The spectrum from utilitarian to the preservation – overall in other places you don't see that awareness. People who live in VT and through the generations have had a very strong tie to the land – you don't have too many generations until you get to people who log, hunt, trap, fish, etc. People come here and choose it for that reason.
- Appreciation for the beauty of the land and nature in general. That's something that most VTers share.
- Values are more important than money for people. It's not all about money here. A lot of people could live somewhere else and make more money – but they choose to live here rather than make a lot of money. There are a lot of opportunities, but you have to be creative and imaginative to figure it out.
- I value the independence of the people. We take care of ourselves and we don't rely on the state to take care of us.
- "I used to value independence, but I don't now. When they wanted to put in Act 60 they said we were rich. It took our school away and the small town we live in didn't have to use state aid. I'm not happy with what the state's done. We don't have the tar road, or sewers given to us."

- It's fine to be independent, but some are almost too independent – the elderly that I deal with – some people don't want to accept any help whatsoever.
- People are very proud and hardworking and sometimes it gets carried to a fault.
- I think the older generation is more independent than the younger generation. The older generation – they have a lot of pride and sense of community and responsibility. The younger generation – they need to learn from the elderly for the value of independence and respect.
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## **II. Looking ahead through our lifetimes, and those of our children, what challenges and opportunities do you see for Vermont?**

- I think the challenge for the young people is to make a living and to be able to stay here.
- That's always been the story in VT is that you have to go elsewhere to make a living.
- It becomes a challenge to make sure that the health care that we need is provided. So much of medical care is dependent on the govt for reimbursement. Those areas that can be cut or changed around – it's often health care. First, there isn't training for new nurses and isn't good training in the state. Also – the information that they have to gather – there's a technology piece that's huge. In this community with the ambulance service – the number of volunteers dwindled down and down. The expense for the ambulance has gone from 6000 to 60,000 in the past few years.
- As you have the advances in technology and global society – you have the breakdown of society. That sense of community in VT – it's been a core value. For instance there used to be more volunteers because the young people needed something to do. More and more young people spend their time with technology.
- It gives people an opportunity to work from their homes – the technology allows them to do this. Jobs are available through this. Communication opens up with internet.
- Housing – especially for elderly folks to have a good place to go. If you want VT to be a retirement place, if you want a place to go, you need to have housing. If you get to point where you're all by yourself, but you can't keep your home – they are ready for an apartment, but not assisted living or a nursing home. That's what we need is a place to give people dignity and live with pride. The state has to look at – to give housing to these.
- I wonder – I often think we lived in the best of times. The future doesn't look that bright.
- Sometimes in Vermont to work for big companies and orgs is great, but if you're laid off at 58, what do you do? It's great for people to take the incentive to take their own future.
- The price of gas may actually help some of our communities to grow or be revitalized. We go out of town for a lot of services. It may become profitable for lawyers, CPAs, professional services, may feel like they can attract business and

take a risk here. Creating jobs this way by hiring secretaries or partners. An example is a physical therapist here in town – right now it's 2 days a week, but he's looking for full time opportunities.

- Personally, yes I think gas will remain high and it will be several years. The war is costing us a lot of money that is not coming here to us. There's billions of dollars going overseas – to Iraq.
- There's quite possible this country could be independent in energy. If we didn't send all our oil to Japan. Or concrete materials to China. They can't even get the big concrete pipes and things – they will be using a lot of energy.
- I think it is an opportunity for VT and VTers to do things locally. We're learning as a society that the economy of scale that we learned about in elementary school – it's worked for some things but it doesn't work for everything. In particular, thinking about food supply. The energy and expense of moving food across the country and around the world, when we can do it locally? Why spend it? To do it locally helps the economy, the environment, and our health. It works for agriculture. I think there's a way, because VT is still a rural state, with food items especially. There may be a way to support farms and family farms if this localness happens. The problem with Costco is that it's about raising our kids and how we buy things and what we need.
- We used to have farms and now there's only one working farms in town – there used to be orchards, cows, sheep, chickens – people don't have time to stop and do that. They have to work to earn money, to make a living, to support the farms!! They may come back to it, but I don't see some of these kids doing it. I really don't.
- One of our neighbors now has a garden that didn't have one before – but it's just for themselves.
- The price of things never goes down!
- One cow, you used to be able to do it, but now you can't afford it.
- Growth always has opportunities and challenges. Island Pond is one of three or four communities that is on water. We've had a hundred folks who are from away who would love to live here and retire here – they'd like to come here – so what will the impacts be when they move here. When they get here, there's the opportunity of commerce with the people. There's the challenge of overpopulation, crowding, sharing the resources. Because of rising costs, a lot of people are changing their habits; growing a little garden, or making their own clothes.
- Major problem filling those positions here – the town volunteers are down. Many work away or are second home owners.
- Not a lot of border opportunities that are realized.
- It's increased in the last 6 months – the greatest opposition is what they have to go through when they get to the border. Every time you have a good thing – someone steps in and messes it up.
- To be safe when you're doing air travel – they never think it's going to happen to them, but then when it does happen they bawl like babies. And there were bombings before that – OK City, and high school shootings – the only people who

- remember are the people who were hurt. It'll happen again as soon as they back off on security and safety. It'll happen again.
- The opportunity is there for snowmobilers to expand – this area is just ripe for biking in the summer. The on-road biking it's to our advantage to bring them in! You can kayak from here to Newport on the Clyde.
  - I think native Vtters and people of this area like quieter and more low impact sports. Even the guys who are interested/invested in motor sports sometimes are interested in diversifying the types of activities.
  - The idea for Silvio Conte is to have an environmental education component, ideas that tie to the cultural history throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century there. And the natural resources and wildlife use of the area – to be able to have that as a bit of a destination, but to build right from the visitors center – to go hiking, etc. Show them how they can use the refuge. It could include things like an auto tour route, where there are focal points that people might be interested in seeing. I think it's possible to do the same thing with snowmobilers and make it available to schools and children. Apparently there's not a lot available for school kids. One of problems is cost of busing for trips. One impediment may be transportation costs. To have a landing on the Nulhegan River were people can pull out of the water – another thought from the Friends Group.
  - I think as a community we're not organized enough to attract and promote it enough to make it as economically significant as it should be.
  - We came from a town where the open lands got gobbled up, and that's a potential challenge for VT.

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

- To be the best place in the world to live in.
- I'd like to see open land preserved and not see ridgelines with homes on them just everywhere.
- Transportation system – our roads and infrastructure. That's a challenge and opp. it's a big expense for the future. It's reached the point where govt just has to cut back and cut back on all the problems. The way our country is spending money is affecting all of us, and I think that's going to be long term.
- Education – I believe that the state of Vt needs to rebuild its educational system. Education needs to be looked at, we have to have a strong focus on standards, academics, and consolidation needs to come. I don't think arts, skiing, etc should be at the detriment of academics. Kids can still have a lot of fun in school even in academics.
- Bigger doesn't mean better. The children and the community loses the identity – when you send them away you lose that sense.
- I went to a small school, my kids did, my grandkids did. They've been on the honor rolls – they haven't suffered from being in a small school.

- Finding a way for schools to work together. All these small schools could find a way to work together.
- Now the school is trying to be a family – the school can only do so much. Back then, family life was different. Mothers and fathers don't do their job because (I think) the state won't let them. When young parents are misbehaving it's because they weren't taught to behave themselves.
- A lot of this goes back to people thinking they have to have a lot more in the way of material things now – maybe if they forego the televisions, computers, cars, etc. We could spend more time with kids. Kids learn what they see. They see the values that we have they duplicate them. (if we're running to Walmart three times a week, that's what they will do).
- Family life! We don't have that. It's all over – it's not just Vt. It's seems like it's a shame that the family can't eat a meal together. If you have a good family life and good family, then you won't have the problems in the society that we have today.
- I think this is the greatest challenge here. I take a lot of identity living here, but even VT has a lot of diversity (Chittenden to NEK). The greatest challenge of all is going to be; how can people live by what's in their heart. When people are regulating us, telling us what we should do – can we survive? The challenge is for people in general – we want to do this, but how do we do this? The basis is in the family and if the family breaks down the society breaks down.
- It doesn't matter how much money you put into education. It takes the kids, a teacher and a building – if you don't have them, you don't have anything. We need to teach what they need to learn.
- The community should not always depend on the state. Community should be able to try to create their own – or at least to try to work together to get something done. Even if you get a lot of money, you won't get a community. The people in it are what's making it.
- The state wants to be known as the 'green state'. They want to create products that it can be known for. I was encouraged by that – when the state can be known by the model it can do and products that it can give to others.
- In state energy development – that would be nice.
- I'm disappointed that there aren't more people here. It was advertised quite a bit.
- It depends on the issues at town meeting whether people turn out or not. If they really care, they do show up.
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#### **IV. We've been talking about Vermont, but how does this discussion concern the future of your community?**

- There's a lot for our community that can be done. If we want to succeed and to grow in the way that we want to grow – not just have it happen to us – if we want quality growth, we'll have to work at it.
- I think tourism for us is a very important part of our community – it's the cleanest, they come and leave their money and you don't have to educate their

kids. It gives jobs. The local folks often can't buy here now because the land prices are going up.

- Elderly – a retirement place in Island Pond with more services that we could offer to the elderly. It could be expanded, and they could retire here and support businesses.
- I think a lot of people wouldn't want a lot of growth in this area – it's fine to have it in Chittenden County. In where we used to live in Norwich, it went from 5 houses to over 100 with lawyers and doctors. We had to move out – and we chose Victory on purpose.
- In Granby when we lost our school we lost everything. We lost our sense of community. The future of these small towns are people moving in from Massachusetts, Connecticut, building houses and camps. But their camps make my house look small!
- Real estate is hard to sell everywhere – it's hard to know how some of these big things will all play out in the end (like the Gin Development).
- It is hard to know what's going to happen; some crash! (like Burke development going bankrupt!)
- For Island Pond I would wish that the rest of the state would think of us as a beautiful town that they can come back to that welcomes you!
- I wish that the NEK would stay rural like it is – but I also wish that Chittenden County would not assume that our values are the same as theirs and try to push them onto us. A lot of the things that hit Montpelier come from Burlington.