

# COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

## BRATTLEBORO and WINDHAM COUNTY

### Community Forum Day Notes August 21, 2008

The following notes were collected from focus group meetings and forums throughout the day spent in Windham 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 during AUG 21st:

- Higher education institutions in Brattleboro area, convened at Marlboro Grad Center
- Human services organizations convened by United Way of Windham County
- Brattleboro Arts Initiative and creative communities group
- Energy group convened at Windham District Waste Management Facility
- Grafton residents, natural resources group convened at the Grafton facilities
- Bellows Falls creative economy group
- ALANA Community Vision
- Public evening forum at the Gibson River Garden

**Facilitators:** Paul Costello, Ellen McCulloch-Lovell, Chris Hart, Sarah Waring

**Scribes:** Bill McMeekin, Ellen McCulloch-Lovell, Chris Hart, Paul Costello

**Listening Team members:** Travis VanAlstyne, Christopher Kaufmann-Ilstrup, Mike Dunn

# **Council on the Future of Vermont**

## **Scribe Report**

**Higher Education Convening at Marlboro Graduate Center (included SIT, World Learning, Marlboro and other regional higher ed institutions)**

**Scribe: Chris Hart**

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

- First, it is home. I've lived here 30 years. When I cross the border in any direction I feel that I'm home. Never felt anywhere else I've lived. Lived in various Towns in Vermont. My roots are here and I have not out worn them.
- Vermont is dichotomous space – it's an oasis with a past we appreciate and exhale comfortably in and at the same time it's a cutting edge green technology center with political rebels and social policy. Two fold which we sometimes have to reconcile but what we also appreciate about it. We're a different personality form anywhere else.
- I've lived here 4 years and agree with all that has been said. This is also a challenging place to find work. I drive an hour to work. It is challenging to raise kids here – school funds are restricted so there is not the richness of extra circular activities you'd find in a more prosperous or larger community. The lack of diversity in the school population is not good for our children. We have a high perspective of ourselves that isn't reflected in how we actually live.
- Our motto is strength and independence. It is hard to live here. Challenges make us strong.
- Balance between our community and our independence. On my road we're there to be on our own but we also have to help get our neighbors out of the ditch. Community and separateness. Have thought about leaving but the arts, politics, counter culture and other qualities keep us here. Having an entity like ALANA is a strong plus for the community. Diversity is attended to. We are stretching our financial recourses. Over 50% of those in Brattleboro are below the poverty line. (Note This is factually in correct) . More people need to be aware of the need.
- I came here for a person but fell in love with the State. Natural beauty we want to keep. Vermonters are very aware of the landscape we have and we want to be a part of it. We are

independent minded and strong willed. If there's an issue Vermonters will have an opinion on it.

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

- From the 1990 to 2000 Census we lost 22,000 in population who left the State.
- The issue is jobs.
- Population is getting older and finding educated people to fill the jobs more difficult. We need to bring in more adult learners. I would like to see employers help workers go back to school.
- I second that. I hear a lot about education. Adults leave because our higher education is out of reach. The cost of education for working adults is too high. This is a huge challenge.
- From 1990 to 2004 we lost ½ of the cohort between 29 to 39 years of age. We need to extend services and education to work with older adults. The baby boom is now coming through the system. Only UMass offers a PHD in gerontology.
- I grew up here. Doesn't come into the high schoolers mind to even finish high school let alone go on to higher ed.
- Energy future: We need to become independent in our energy future and reliance. It will have a large impact on our landscape and independence. Wind project on Equinox. Energy independence requires tradeoffs. The State Government says industrial wind is not ok. We need to figure out our values versa our energy independence. We need a new paradigm.
- Health Care: The costs go up. The profession reimbursement goes down. Catamount provider reimbursement is not good. We have a problem keeping and attracting providers.
- Opportunities: Energy independence is 100% in line with our values we should be leading the energy movement and we are not. Statewide on this issue we are not doing well at all. We need to adjust our aesthetic.
- Fiberglass wind turbines in Barre all most went out of business but were bought by a Texas company and now sell overseas. This was an opportunity for our energy future to change in Vermont and it must.

- Technology is reaching into small Towns. Connect those in small towns to the world. Good thing. When this happens it will be a very good thing.
- We need high speed internet. Coming and that's' what another great opportunity.
- Dairy farming is disappeared in our community. Local issues are power line placement .
- Diversification of dairy is education that needs to happen. Vermonters don't like to hear about more controls. Lake Chaplain is polluted because of agricultural run off. Solid Waste Management District finds that people do what they want to cause they are independent. We want agriculture to survive but not to control or enforce actions that would support this.
- Education is an answer to our challenges. More control is also needed. Less enforcement and more education.
- Our roads are in really bad shape and this will slow our economy.
- The local agricultural movement will be good.

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

- Business development and job opportunity. Focus on this. We should trade off to get more of this. Growth of midsize business without sacrificing landscape and values. Business friendly state need to make ourselves this.
- Compromise of conflicting values is the key words. Ridge line and turbines are a good example. Need to be willing to do this to achieve our future.
- Finding common ground. Independence equals the consensus of many segments and it is hard to get this. In the end we table things and celebrate our independence.
- I am new to Vermont and find that its unique character is vanishing from the USA. Communities in Vermont are like old time Towns,. They have those qualities of old Vermont. Important characteristics that the rest of the county is losing.

- Is there a dichotomy? Are the pieces to cherish also barriers to our future? This is a big challenge to answer. There is limited opportunity for the young to stay. To develop more means losing some of what we cherish.
- Vermont is an ideological Haven. Gentrification of Vermont: True Vermonters vs. Ideological Vermonters. They need to be integrated.
- I live in Weston where we have many 2<sup>nd</sup> homeowners. When I ask them how they came to have a house here they wax poetic about Vermont.
- Uniqueness: Where are we going and how are we going to get there? Balance the voice of the past and future. How about the 50% below poverty? Where is their voice? They get a good job, good raise and then lose their aid. How do we hear them? Ideological Vermont: The values are more fragile than most pessimistic of us. Impacted by extremes which cancel others out. “Outside big money interest and power” can manipulate communities that haven’t come together. Important extremes could be done in by outside influences. Complacencies and lack of compromise will do us in. Road on Worcester Ridge to connect Worcester and Stowe. Money and planning for road is being done by outside interest. We can’t get our act together in the major values so others can get their agenda done within us or to us.
- Vermont might kill itself by trying to keep money and big business out. Wal-Mart wasn’t welcomed in Brattleboro so now a Super Center is going into the New Hampshire Town across the river. All that money and business is going there. Must be balance between protection and realism. Ideological Vermonters are the ones here with money so they can afford to be Ideological.
- Jobs are needed to attract the 20 to 30 year olds. Opportunities for arts and entertainment are part of what attracts young people. Need to communicate this.
- Vermont needs a brand identity.
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**IV. We’ve been talking about Vermont, but how does this discussion concern the future of your community?**

- Brattleboro opportunity with arts and outdoors. Take National Geographic article and market to larger community. Brattleboro has a lot of opportunities to present. We should aspire to be the articles that are written about us.
- Brattleboro is the gate way with 91 and SIT and other colleges. Diverse part of Vermont. Leverage for all of Vermont.
- Brattleboro is closer to Boson than Burlington. Would be great to be locus of energy for southern Vermont. All happens up North.
- Brattleboro and Putney have big affordable housing issues. Citizens are against virtually all affordable housing. Everything is done in Montpelier. It all comes down from Montpelier. Here we have no housing an aging population and just government employment.
- Move State out of Montpelier and get State Offices to other Towns.
- Montpelier makes building too difficult so houses go outside of Town Centers.
- Here we can only go north with housing. Are we going to build Hi-Rises? Prices for houses and rentals are too high.
- Brattleboro has strong energy independence.
- Colleges make significant contributions to the region. They are bringing the young people everyone says we are losing. Higher Ed attracts and keeps young folks in a community. Higher Ed makes huge contribution to this area.
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**Council on the Future of Vermont**  
**Scribe Report**  
**United Way of Windham County and invited Human Services guests**

**Scribe: Paul Costello**

**1. What does Vermont mean to you? What common values do Vermonters have?**

- Independence and community.
- Connection to land and environment
- Love of the land.
- Committed to social contract – that we share in supporting the neediest of citizens.
- Tolerance and creativity.
- Quality of life
- Hard work. Work ethic.
- Getting dirty.
- Democracy – people having a say and participating in decision on public life.
- Value civil liberties.
- Individual empowerment “if you say something it makes a difference.”
- We focus on underlying conditions, not just symptoms.
- Strong sense that we can effect change. People see themselves as change agents.
- We have pride in ourselves and our history. “we can do it” we can be heard and we count.
- Popular saying ‘indomitable Vermonters’
- Pride in our history – we’re ahead on social issues, slavery, insuring children’s health, civil unions. We lead. ‘we don’t sit and wait for govt to solve our problems’
- Not waiting for Washington.
- ‘the solutions always seem to be local’ and we are ahead in this consciousness. Initiatives at the local level and provide models that the state then follows.
- Worried about the health of the community – I think that we aren’t that healthy. The average kid graduating from school doesn’t have good choices for jobs that can support a family.
- American dream is out of touch except for people who move in. Unless we tackle that we’re sunk.

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

- Lack of opportunities for youth.
- Substance abuse – the cost of drug and alcohol issues - \$200 million annually in actual costs of these problems. How to best prepare families and youth to prevent this?
- Education is a great concern. Increasing drop outs. Questions about achievements.
- Poverty; people (coming to use human services) have a fear of dropping in. The climate in VT can catastrophic for VT heating fuel and cost of shelter. It’s getting

outside of the range that people can afford (therefore people are coming for support now more than before).

- “no longer possible for people to work their way out of poverty.” Without a serious effort made on livable wages, people will always be stuck at the bottom.
- Housing for lower incomes is a terrific challenge. A perfect storm – wages don’t keep up with costs, inflation, gentrification, etc. Previously, women could get jobs to protect a family from raising housing costs but now we’re at the point where employment of both in a couple is leveling off and housing costs are still rising.
- Crisis in education: it’s hard to meet the needs for early education and do it with quality. The opportunity for higher education and life long learning is not realized.
- We have an opportunity to invest in upper and lower ends where most needs are – early education and higher education.
- Childcare: could be an economic benefit and attract new businesses. It’s much easier to educate a child than to repair an adult. We’ve learned so much about brain development but not changes the systems to address the needs of young children.
- Need for health care and dental care.
- State does a poor job supporting higher education – it’s a key opportunity for working families!
- Demographics and aging population have huge implication for health care.
- We underfund health care that could save dollars spent on institutionalization and hospital care.
- Dwindling work force is other side of the coin. Where will the money come from?
- The needs of an aging population and the needs of youth may conflict.
- OPP for business development – in our energy future around heating and efficiency. There’s lots of room for conservation, efficiency and development of renewables here.
- Transportation is a challenge and opportunity.
- Challenge is our history – we export people and always did. This is what is happening in rural America.
- Scale – we are so small, we really have limited resources.
- State recognizes the need to expand energy efficiency/conservation and weatherization.
- Energy may have catastrophic short term challenges to families but are a long term challenge.
- Our values – openness to change and our size makes us flexible to do new things. Energy projects, district heating systems, etc.
- Cliffs in the human services and the systems that support people in poverty which stymie the desire to move out of poverty by those very people.
- Access for the disabled and transportation is a challenge and will be more so with an increase in the aging population.
- VT could become a theme park for the well-to-do and tourists with a scattering of symbolic red barns and cows. That’s a negative opportunity. We need to be careful that doesn’t happen.

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

- Our precarious situation around disincentives in programs for the poor. How can we make program identify early signs of problems and address them before they build major costs? Fund prevention, not incarceration. Early intervention and prevention.
- Early education is where it all starts.
- Redesigning education as a whole for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Need a statewide strategic economic vision. Unless we build on and act from it then we do become a theme park.
- This should be build on our common values and visions for the future. Otherwise external forces will control our destiny.
- Create an economic situation based on VT strengths and values.
- There are heavy costs to being true to VT values. That's why some businesses languish while WalMart is successful – “the hell with sthose values”. Marketplace won't do this on its own – example of Singapore manufacturing items at 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the cost of Putney's manufacturing. We have to agree that public subsidies are needed to shelter and promote economic activity that we want. Enterprise zones. Tax incentives. Subsidies for entrepreneurs that get them started in the areas we need. We need a 'social contract' around economic development strategies.
- In WW II there was a common sense of struggle and sacrifice to move the economy forward. There was a 'we versus I' mentality. The next generation is more of an 'I' than a 'we'.
- Racial diversity and its lack doesn't create a welcoming atmosphere.
- Creating a range of housing opportunities in Villages and downtowns in VT – this is a cultural challenge for us.
- Teleconferencing to lessen travel and include the Southern part of the state who always have to drive north to participate in statewide conventions.
- Time for us to orient public investment into telecommunication infrastructure.
- What would people need to live their whole life in VT?

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

- “Imagination and courage”. We have lots of 'oughts' but it's about what we can do and what we will do.
- Book – Haven in a Heartless World – by Christopher Larch. We build an ideology that traps us with our 'oughts', 'musts', and 'shoulds' and limits our action in making real change.
- Strengthen our non-profit community.
- Changing community engagement – strengthen alternatives to state and federal decision making – more civic engagement.
- Education for civic engagement also necessary. Build our infrastructure to support a 'can do activity'.

- Our non profit and services are too concentrated in some parts of the state. We don't reach out to places that really need them. Parks Place is a good model of success in bringing services to Bellows Falls.
- Comes back to education. Change the system.
- Balance between individual rights and community needs. I can stop windmills or affordable housing! The balance is skewed too far toward the individual. Community needs more power to see that good things – like housing and energy projects – can actually happen.

# **Council on the Future of Vermont**

## **Scribe Report**

### **Brattleboro Arts Initiative**

**Scribe: Paul Costello**

#### **1. What does Vermont mean to you? What common values?**

- Vermont is a maverick place, a place of ingenuity and forward thinking.
- I feel patriotic about VT. I do PR for Vt on my own time.
- It's people oriented here (a letter from a Korean visitor saying he felt at home here).
- I am doing a series of portraits of Vermonters. We need to take care of young and old and bring VT to the international realm. I'll be applying for the Arts Council project around visioning the future through art.
- People are here to be themselves. We want the same things.
- Brattleboro values its members. In the arts we do a lot of talking to ourselves. But we need to talk together better as a larger part of the community.
- There's a group that measures 'ideaphoria' – the rate and flow of ideas. We have that here. But we don't have the infrastructure to capture ideas and make them real. Need more structure for that.
- Respect for simplicity. I travel around the world as a circus performer, but I come home here and I help castrate pigs. I can live simply but also constantly leave and bring ideas back.
- We need to make it easy for our kids to leave and bring ideas back.

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

- Finding ways to encourage young people to come back and still service economically. Kids can't find people to meet and marry in rural VT.
- My kids came back. They went away – and it was as important as their coming back – it broadened their world view.
- Health care. Cost of energy are big concerns.
- I grew up here, moved away and came back. Energy is the key challenge.
- Arts are crucial and the development of jobs. This is a time of need for energy.
- We need to develop sustainable systems. Renewable energy. Sustainable business systems. Bhutan – the king changed the Gross Domestic Product to the Gross Domestic Happiness. Think out of the box! Follow your bliss! We need to do what makes us happy and how we can make a living with it.
- VT is a net exporter of people for the last 200 years. We always send youth out. We import retirees. This is underinvestigated and not taken advantage of in state policy. It is places that are interesting and can transition that and flourish. Brattleboro is the 'place to be' despite discomforts.
- Vt has a unique nature. A sense of small town quality. A great opportunity because of this nature – make of it what you will. But you may expect less and our challenge is not to accept less success than in Manhattan – let's not BE marginal!

- Arts don't come out of suffering. "we are entering a new world, so why play by the old rules?" we are no longer making things – you don't need to be on site any more. Quality of life, plus internet lets us have it all here.
- The arts are an economic driver. Arts are a part of the future of VT. We are promoting Art Fits – everyone is a latent artist.
- Arts community is guarding against the danger of gentrification. We get it.
- We should move the idea of supporting arts from the charitable to the investment.
- Who owns VT? It used to be people who had their primary resident in VT, but where are the boundaries? If other state people own parts of it? VT doesn't have an urban center. Many of us want Brattleboro to be an urban vital center.

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

- Paying rent is a duty and making a living. The big problem for artist is health insurance – it's a real challenge.
- Energizing the state could come about with better statewide communication. There is a little back and forth between communities and between North and South in VT.
- We should have a statewide Arts Magazine.
- There need to be more discussions like this. More transparency in how we spend money at the state level – we don't have creative conversations on the use of funds. More discussion on costs of energy and gas and health care. We need more public involvement in big questions like this.
- Public discussion needed about Entergy. How can we get beyond the 'do now' things and invest in alternative energy? We need to get over NIMBY.
- Arts education needs to be looked at. We cut arts in school systems, we need to show advantage in educating cultured people. Budget cuts start with the arts.
- New and unexpected linkages – like art and sports. There are new pairings happening.
- Art fits Vermont!
- Incorporate an arts non-profit with local k-12 education system.
- Vt is a singular place to live – that's due to its specialness. We need to figure out how to do better the things that we already do well. Like bike lanes. Instead of thinking about doing something new, how can we do what we are good at *better*.
- Simplicity is not the same as backward.

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

- Concerned about big box stores here and across the river. Having them come is detrimental and having them leave is also detrimental.
- Arts will have a hard time in tough economic times. Non-profits may suffer with less money to give money away.
- We need to make it easy to build businesses here – especially locally owned businesses.
- Energy discussion is in our face. For us as a town to be pro-active and support alternative energy strategic plan.
- Elder care here in Brattleboro.

- Children; Brattleboro has a changing ethnic mix and we need to educate each other on how to get along.
- West Brattleboro Association is looking at the use of space....
  - We need more overnight beds for tourists.
  - We need shared solutions.
- Vermont is a 'base of operations. We need to surface our assumptions'.
- We need to bring what VT is out nationally.
- Internet communication capacity is a huge priority.
- I'm concerned about open spaces, agriculture and forestry. We've lost our farms and the character of being attached to the land.
- The land trust model – my dad sold the right to the farm and now my husband and I could never afford to buy this preserved land and it can't be broken up for several small farms. We just can't afford to buy land.
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**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Scribe Report**  
**Energy Mtg at District Waste Management Facility**

Scribe Report: Ellen McCulloch-Lovell

**1. What does Vermont mean to you? What common values?**

- I like the hometown atmosphere.
- Our sustainable form of life attracts people – less traffic, crime, congestion. I like not having to lock my door...the green fields, the mountains.
- Concerned about the drain of young people; my sons won't move back.
- Common theme is local control; if energy is ruled by forces outside Vt, we're wise to invest in what we can control. From an economic point of view we need more options than Hydro-Quebec and Vt. Yankee.
- We are independent and very civic-minded, maybe most in nation. Town meeting is a dying but vital part of our heritage that we need to nurture.
- I love saying I'm a Vermonter. You don't have to be a native, just have a Vt sensibility. Things are doable here. I feel authentic.

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

- We have the opportunity to develop self-sufficient resources here in the face of the energy crisis.
- We can use biomass and get along pretty well.
- Huge potential for jobs by building our own energy infrastructure.
- How do we get energy plans developed? We have a choice – can't get rid of Vt Yankee and not accept alternatives. A real opportunity to harvest timber for biomass. These logging jobs don't look nice but people need to understand they'll regenerate.
- State government doesn't present the full range of opportunities; citizens don't understand what our energy system looks like. No leadership at state level.
- Small population is a problem – few resources.
- Vt needs more capitalization, more access to technical assistance and retraining.
- Have the opportunity to develop US-made machinery, like chippers.
- State does not lead in infrastructure for district energy. Community scale energy projects not served well by Public Service Board or the Governor's office.
- It's a problem that you can't sell or gift excess energy back to the grid; no mechanism to sell blocks of power back wholesale to gain efficiencies that would help local generation. Look at feed-in tariffs, the German model.
- So. Londonderry voted 2-1 against wind; town would have hosted but the return was too low. More tax benefit will increase community acceptance.
- Discussion about a turbine generator developed by (Hervey?) to burn dirty gas, methane, done with an EPA grant but no money to test and manufacture.

- We should look at telecommunications along with laying pipe. So. Vt is underserved in telecom. Businesses have dial-up in Brattleboro; Comcast does not return calls! Great Auk wireless has been a disaster.
- The So. Vt. Corridor loop will suck up money. Growth is curtailed by lack of electricity – the current energy loop is at capacity.
- Our image, quality of life is on the cusp of being lost: the green image on the verge of a commercial take-over.
- It's very trying to live here.
- This will be a dangerous winter – people can't afford heat.
- Tourism and marketing is a failed department of the State.
- With our close proximity to markets, we should do a better job on manufacturing.
- Rural areas will be de-populated. As gas prices go up, people need to earn more to live out of towns.
- There is a lack of federal support for Medicare and Medicaid. Workers' Comp. costs are going up.
- The State ignores south of Rt. 4; we live in a tri-state world here.

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

- Make incentives for renewable energy to help keep young people here.
- Need capital to develop alternatives (like the generator that burns dirty gas.)
- Being able to afford heat this winter.
- Need to look at housing stock – older stock can't be maintained with cost of liquid fuels.
- Transportation is an issue – need public transportation, bus and train. Railroads need upgrading; need to move products without trucks.
- Promote regional tourism.
- Every project needs long-term sustainability: example – biologically-based septic.
- Grow food locally – more home gardens.
- Address cost of health care.
- Address education – more jobs for youth. CCV, Vt Technical College and UVM should revise curricula.
- Do everything differently – new thinking should permeate daily life.
- Think beyond 2-year election cycles.

**The group agreed that it had addressed the fourth question about how the discussion concerns their community.**

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Scribe Report**  
**Grafton Group including Smokey House,**  
**Grafton residents, peak oil committee members, Grafton Cheese Co.**

**Scribe: Bill McMeekin**

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

- Independence – rural
- I hope we can hold on to present agriculture – maybe agricultural “ruralness” is the identity of VT
- Use of land- on the land, with the land. People outside VT cite tradition, less modern.
- We are in an era of momentous change – it’s a “post petroleum era”. We will need to learn to get along with much less dependence on fossil fuels. VT has a great opportunity to be a leader in this effort, due to values, scale.
- Community, self-reliance. We rely on Community. We have a lot of work to do, but VT is ahead of the game. You can talk about self-reliance, local production, and people don’t look at you as if you have three eyes!!
- We import 95% of our diet. The VT image is very important, and we could reduce that percentage significantly.
- Advantages of scale – “I know everyone!”.
- Legislation has had an impact. Act 200/250 and Billboard law have been a net benefit.
- Community and Relationships are a value.
- I moved here from Ohio – the core values here’re education, awareness of environment. This is totally different than the mid-West.
- “Community” is too broad – there is a subset out there that is struggling, and maybe they don’t share these values. More likely, they are concerned with “self-preservation. We are all stressed. Many fear the impact of changes.
- The values most strongly held are sometimes the most deeply challenged. For example, VT forests – at one time much of VT was cleared for production. Also, VT has exported population over the past 170 years, to the Civil War, expansion to the West, etc. Values are nice to talk about, but there are threats they create. (Speaker was talking about examples like self-reliance and independence, which could threaten economic growth).

- Core value is VT environment. It has an energy that creates supports other values. There is a delicate balance between Individual and Community. In Montpelier, legislation should be tested against these values we have been discussing.

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

- Challenge is absence of opportunity. The average High School grad – what are the choices?  
Not many
- Challenge – Montpelier has the taxing power, but leadership is lacking.
- Are we a culture of Achievement, or a culture of Community? The constant striving for goals (money) has interfered with Community values. Money is not everything. Maybe we need to revisit priorities.
- Other parts of the country are different, but society is driving us to consumerism. How do we resist?
- Dichotomy. It's not whether we have jobs or opportunity – we must have both! But how do we bring that about in a way we're proud of. Youth leaving VT is o.k., but want to create opportunities for them to return. How do we get there? We can't live on 401k's – we must have jobs.
- VT has gone from sustained community growth to a third-world country, where we are serving tourists that bring their money. We need to re-vitalize employment opportunity so that we can participate and compete globally.
- One person described the “New England rotation”. A person comes to VT from CT, has kids, difficult to cope with lack of jobs and cost of living, moves to Maine, kids grow up and move out to CT for better jobs. Kids make a good living, move to VT, and the cycle repeats.
- Ludlow is an example where farmland has disappeared, and real estate values are absurd. There is no Community left in Ludlow. Second home owners do not participate in local affairs, volunteerism. There were many advocates for the Ski Area, but now they can't afford to live there.

- In the 40's, there were no opportunities. The challenge is access to better jobs. Small businesses are the answer. Instead of one Golden Goose with a big Golden Egg, we need many small geese with many small golden eggs. From this comes Community.
- Public education is often irrelevant. It must be tailored to current challenges. The hard realities of the present must be addressed. There is a class struggle. Petroleum will become more expensive. Communities will solve these issues. Infrastructure must be developed on a community or regional basis – Communities are best suited to do this.
- We are not creating opportunities legislatively. We must change the tax structure.
- 50% of job applicants can't pass the drug test! Does anyone not think IBM will leave the state eventually?
- Challenge to maintain the Lake Champlain shoreline. The impact of the second-home market is threatening.
- I have friends at Chroma Technology. Housing is a big problem.
- We will never have salaries in VT that can support exploding real estate values. There is an over-reliance on 2<sup>nd</sup> homes and tourism.
- The value of self-reliance is itself threatened in VT today. We have developed a network of social services that replaces self-reliance, which is a cycle that defeats many of our values. The State of VT should provide catalyst support to improve self-reliance and help bring people out of poverty.

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

- High Tech expansion. Communication (cell phone). Better environment for business. Get VT “wired” and “wireless”.
- Second Home owners have great wealth. How can we harness that some way?
- We need to learn to feed ourselves.
- Transportation
- We should have a vision of a regional structure in VT that is self-productive. More local production and less reliance on importing. Even if we fail, it is not a bad way to live. BUT

– can we do that efficiently and economically? People on the lowest economic strata may not be able to participate. There must be a balance between Green and Efficiency.

- Our standard of living could well decline in the future. But the cost of transportation/energy will demand more localization. As costs increase, the local product, which is now more expensive, will become competitive – and restore balance.
- Social Capital must be rebuilt in VT.
- The main reason I’m here is the aesthetics of VT. We must maintain the landscape.
- Education as a priority must be addressed
- The State government must recognize the integrity of Communities and provide support accordingly. As it is now, they (legislature) control all the resources and think they hold all the solutions. More community focus and support, and recognition of the values of communities would help solve many problems.

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

- In Grafton, perhaps we could tap into the community to address some challenges, e.g., utilizing land owned by non-farmers for agricultural purposes. (lease, etc.)
- In Danby, we had a crisis around construction of a gas pipeline. The crisis brought the community closer, and we were able to develop opportunity out of crisis.
- Agriculture – conserve topsoil. Land use – don’t build on it.
- A community dialogue is essential. “Relocalization” is a new popular term.
- Forestry – we must be careful how it is handled.

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Scribe Report**  
**Bellows Falls Creative Economy group**  
**(included Downtown Association, RAMP, business owners, town employees,**  
**and other guests)**

**Scribe: Bill McMeekin**

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

- Leaving NYC, liked New England, but not N.H. We liked VT.
- There is a certain wildness, certain independence, and liberal, progressive politics. Like-minded people.
- Surprised at the “Nativism” encountered at Town Meetings. (Speaker implied that she was not accepted by the “natives”). So – lots of good things, but sometimes provincial.
- VT is home. Nothing like reaching down and grabbing some earth. Proud of the notion of “environment above profit”. Great place to raise a family.
- One individual can make a difference. Call the governor, invite him to a forum, and he actually shows up! This is much different than Philly.
- Spent Summers in Maine as a child. Lived in California, but left to “check out VT”. I like the progressive politics, love of nature. Fed up with California, McMansions, and “keeping up with the Joneses”. Consumerism is rampant there. I was blind-sided by the Nativism, though. Some old-timers were cruel, unwilling to accept new ideas, etc. I am very involved with the Arts.
- Sense of human scale. I came from Western Massachusetts, which is suffering from “Affuenza”. There is a sense of “straightforwardness” here – no veils.
- One can exert influence due to small scale. Love of individualism – not how much money you make.
- Quality of life – but there is a lack of opportunity.
- It’s easy to connect. Volunteerism is good here.

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

- Way of life is threatened. Crime and drugs. Public safety issue.
- High population of Special Ed students. Caused partially by lower rents in the Bellows Falls area compared to other communities. This brings low-income folks who tend to have a higher population of kids with special needs. In turn, this drives education costs up.
- Inadequate services to deal with mental health and human services.
- Education – I would not choose Rockingham/Bellows Falls for schools. I will likely consider private school for my children. Local Public Ed has poor performance score.
- It is a challenge for parents to be welcomed – and involved. Must use technology/websites to communicate.
- It is natural for kids to leave VT at some point, but it is a challenge to bring them back.
- There are 2 types of students – College-bound and non-college-bound. The challenge is how do we support the not-college-bound ? There are some regional vocational centers (Brattleboro – 30 minutes away), but the commute time is an issue. Some students wind up taking all courses at Brattleboro High because it doesn't make sense to take a few classes here, drive to Brattleboro, then return to complete local high school class schedule. This impacts community.
- Real estate prices are reasonable in this area. There are jobs out there (Sonnax Industries and Chroma Technology). But there is a labor pool issue.
- Opportunity – there is a good inventory of space (infrastructure) at reasonable rents. Many upper story spaces available. Many of our old buildings have been updated, but more to be done.
- Challenge – There is no mall media attention to the lifestyle opportunities in small communities. We need marketing campaign support to get the word out. Ski areas and tourist attractions get all the exposure, but our community is a great place to live, too.
- Strong connection to local government (Selectboard, etc) is critical.
- Challenge - State Government is often an impediment. I wanted to open one suite (two rooms) in my home for lodging. The permit process is unending, and a year has passed, and I still am not there! Need to “friendlyfy” government.

Note: During this portion of the session, there was a recurring heavy emphasis on the quality of education in the local school system, the high cost of special education, and the need to improve all aspects of traditional and vocational instruction.

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

- Simplify government permit process. It takes too long.
- We need to entice people downtown, via tax policy, incentives, tax-free zones, targeting areas where you want development.
- The state has a thirst for tax money. We must reduce taxes.
- Downtown doesn't have to be just retail – what about dentist, doctors, optometrists, etc.?
- Use existing buildings before resorting to new construction.
- Sales tax issue – this is a real concern for border communities (N.H. has no sales tax).
- Transportation – Tourism – Jobs. There are no rental car services in this part of the state. When people take the train to VT, they often cannot include our community in their travels, so they go to Burlington, or Stowe, or White River Jct. This makes it difficult to market our specific community.
- Improve the rail system
- State government should be more proactive, rather than reactive. They seem to operate in crisis mode. There are no 5-years plans made public to give us confidence in our government that they are in control of the government process.
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### **IV. We've been talking about Vermont, but how does this discussion concern the future of your community?**

Much of the consideration of this question was covered above. The following are added:

- Bellows Falls is somewhat unique in that it has a more dense population than many communities. In addition, it has a specific demographic due to the relatively lower cost of living here. This creates special economic stresses for our community.
- Education is a pervasive concern – we must improve.
- School spending is out of control – taxes are too high.

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Scribe Report**  
**ALANA Community Vision**

**Scribe: Sarah Waring**

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

- a. Place that is aesthetically beautiful. Clean air, clean water and a slower pace. It may not actually BE a slower pace than anywhere else, but being here makes me feel like it is.
- b. An example – Last night in our kitchen, conversation stopped because we could hear an owl. It’s quiet here and safer.
- c. I was trying to think about this question – it’s always been home for me. It’s changed a lot, but then again, it hasn’t. A lot more folks are moving into the state from the cities.
- d. Vermonters have a commonality – it’s family that keeps me here. Besides the ownership of a home and having kids in school – it’s the feeling that I’m important and that I matter. I’m recognized and with that I feel the ability to make change that is more reasonable. As I started to explore other places I am appreciative of the comparison- pollution is less here. “If I was going to take the bad with the good, this is a state that I am willing to do it in.”
- e. My family took the risk of choosing the place first and then finding jobs and making it work. We’d done it the other way and we were disappointed. Sometimes I love it more when I go away and come back. I feel like I can be myself and that there is an acceptance of difference. You don’t have to keep up with consumerism here. There is a comfort of level of not being judged, but I am a white person.
- f. Well, for white people it’s easy to fit in here, and it’s very mellow that way!
- g. I moved here in 79 and the attraction was that there were small towns which practiced democracy. I had activist blood in me, and this was a place it could take root.
- h. It’s a source of pride for Vermonters; if you want to get involved here its steeped in groups that are trying to make things better. Especially this corner of VT – it’s full of causes, events, organizations. A certain spirit and pride.
- i. “This just feels right” people move here because the sensibility matches up with theirs. Once they get here they realize they can make change. I grew up in a family that made change...but in terms of ‘fitting in’ its a different story for me. (young woman of color). I identify culturally with black culture – with the dressed up, well put together, gold boots, snazzy clothes. I had a friend (man of color) who told me that ‘Vermont was making him slip and that he used to be fly’. If you are trying to be fly here, you stand out, you don’t fit in. But this is because the external world (white VT) doesn’t care how they dress, and you care how you dress. But I’m of both worlds – so I don’t really fit in either place. When I go to the city, my friends say ‘are you wearing that?’

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

- This may be generational – the challenges of color also have to do with what generation you’re in. I don’t really identify with the hiphop culture (black man) – my music tastes are 17<sup>th</sup> century and I like LL Bean! But one of the challenges are the perceptions that white residents of VT have of people of color. There are only a few ‘ways’ to be black in VT. The diversity of the non-white populations exist here, but they don’t tend to get recognized or appreciated.
- It’s difficult for white people to think about – they ask me ‘where are you from?’ but there is a subtext of ‘you can’t be from here, so when are you going back to where’re you’re from?’ There’s no way you could be born and raised here!
- This perception extends to all types; it manifested itself here when the police chief made a public statement about why a candidate of color wouldn’t like living here: there’re wouldn’t be any activities or cultural events they would like.
- The key leaders should be educated about these issues.
- It’s a tipping point that we’re facing. The number of people here that provide products and services for non-white people is so tiny. First, people don’t get why it’s not really okay to give a black girl a white doll for a present. Second, there aren’t a lot of black dolls around here!
- Examples of hair products and having to visit other states to get the beauty products they need.
- Challenge for multi racial kids. “My daughter is in the Passing World and people try to convince here that she’s not black. She’s proud of being in a multi-racial family and so she grapples with identity in a different way.”
- There is a large swath of Vermont that is unconsciously unskillful in race relations. This is manifested in different ways.
  - If your stereotype is that people of racial and ethnic diversity are thugs and gangsters then you’ll have disproportionate interactions with the police force.
  - If you assume that people of racial and ethnic diversity can only exist in a few genres (not the full diversity) then you will discriminate against them in hiring because you assume they won’t like it here.
  - If you assume that they will get involved when they get here – instead of inviting them – then your community misses out on the resources they can bring.
- At this point in time, VT’s ethnic and racial diversity is small – about 5%. We are at the stage of tension that is creative. But in one generation this could turn into a corrosive tension instead. On the one hand, you need the tipping point, but if you’re not prepared for it, it becomes bad.

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

- Education – at all levels. Right now our workforce is a product of our Vermont schools – we don't address diversity in the schools, so these young leaders graduating are unconsciously perpetuating the stereotypes.
- To value and affirm everyone we have to start in the public schools. Preschool and earlier.
- The long-term solution is what we need to think about – the quick fixes today will not make the real change.
- For example, the state of Vt had no diversity and social equity standard for teachers who were getting accreditation. It was one of two states left in the country that didn't have this. So we worked last session for this to change – but it won't be until 2017 that all the teachers in the state have gone through this training. And it won't be until 2028 that the first class of young leaders will be graduated with teachers who incorporated this learning into their curriculum. It won't be until then that we can expect the populace to change the stereotype we have now.
- The other part of change is strong legislation: we need to make sure that our anti-harassment laws are strong. Right now we have laws that are reactive – but in terms of education, we have to be proactive.
- We're trying to produce citizen leaders – because it's not the institutions that determine politics, it's the people populating the institutions that determine politics. Sometimes it means informing people that it's **TIME TO GET INVOLVED**.
- Right now, we have 2 school board members, 1 select board member, 9 gubernatorial appointees and 5 on the Commission of Civil Right who identify as non-white. So individuals are stepping up to the plate.
- There are institutions that a visionary in response. They go from being unconsciously unskillful to being consciously unskillful. They realize that they are unconscious of what they do, but they are still doing it. They want to change.
- It will take very responsive leadership to recognize the demographic shift and be responsive to it.
- Windham County has the highest percentage of ethnic and racial minority owned businesses – 6%!
- Of the 5000 board members of organizations across the state, only a handful are non-white. People need to be able to ask the question – what's keeping us from realizing that their skills sets are valuable to the work of the organization?
- The Governor has been good – when he made appointees who were non-white, the response from the 'good old boys' was that they didn't like it. His message to them was 'this is a gubernatorial board and I have the power to appoint. I see the need for this person's skill sets, so if you don't like it you can resign.' That's the kind of leadership we need because it won't happen otherwise.
- In Vt it takes a very public event to shake people out of privilege and complacency. We had a hate crime in Brattleboro and there has been all kinds of good work and PR that's come from it. It gets people's attention and some people will keep working on it, but it takes an incident to raise the profile. It's not human nature to work on some problem all the time, we're pulling in the partners who get it, but we have the OPP to do something now.

- For me, a young person of color, it's about the individual change and who I know individually. It's the small scale of VT and the connections you can make. Right now, through the work I've done, I have lots of these and feel empowered to make the changes that are necessary. But others don't have that ability and are disempowered to make change.
- Important CHALLENGE: feeling like you are a part of a community doesn't eliminate that instances of racism. I'm a part of this community because I've made it my business to be a part of it. But there are others who aren't simply because the community doesn't reach out and affirm all of its members.
- In order to get to changes in the response – we need to measure things differently. We need to break up the demographics for our statistics. We should disaggregate our data and all data should be disaggregated by race – especially around youth risk behavior in VT.
- People have a mindset that people of color come here because they want to be white – that they are assimilating! There's a generalization that what's good for white people is good for black people as well.

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT**  
**Scribe Report**  
**Community Forum day**

**GROUP NAME: Brattleboro EVENING**

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

- I was so impressed with the way it looked and felt. The size of the library in a little town like Tunbridge. The first time I've ever moved anyone in.
- I was born and raised by accident in New Jersey. Striving for self reliance and respect for others. Compassion for others.
- I grew up in the NEK and it took me a long time to get back to VT – I am absolutely overwhelmed by what I learned in a small vt town.
- The quintessential VT value is the sense of community. It's so important in today's world – that's one of the things I like best about VT. New Yorkers will help you, but there's not the shared sense of we all care about and like each other.
- Sense of community here is really different from where I've lived. I think people really relate to where they are living in a way that they know their neighbors, There's a center – a place to go, activities that draw people together.
- Once of the values across the board is about the love for the land. Farmers, business people – we are all profoundly grateful for all the four seasons.
- We have a different sense of the environment than other states. The land and the rivers are reference points
- The value is to be very critical of our own values. I live in Worcester, but my work brings me to Bratt enough; the Commission on Rural Life was a mistaken progressive liberal idea; the eugenics and sterilization of our poverty stricken neighbors.
- Volunteers – a high level: local govt, people willing to step up and take on a task or responsibility for the good of the community.
- I was brought up in NJ by accident. I remember what that experience was like I think that the land here has a lot to do with the sorts of people that come here and stay here and live here. It is not easy living in VT – the weather and the climate is challenging. You have to love it here to respond to that. People who have been here all their lives and the newbies.

- We've been here about five years. The community part in a way derives from a sense of scale. I can't imagine something like this happening in a state much larger than VT. Population and geography – this comes down to our representatives; there is a bearing on why people here are community oriented and participatory.
- Small schools and what small schools do for the students; I've raised my kids here and have experience with Marlboro – small schools address the students' needs and it's easier to respond to that. Small schools also build community; everyone gets to know everyone. It's been wonderful raising my kids here and they've done well.
- I think something that's important to VT is downtowns. There are a lot of places in the world that don't have them – people are fighting very hard for their downtowns and it's part of what makes them special.
- I've been here for almost 40 years: I'd say common sense, pragmatism, and tough. We don't have malls everywhere.
- The value that is paramount for me as a new person is to include new people. I've lived in communities where you've had to live for 20 years before you can prove yourself. Also there is an appreciation for living a simpler life.
- I'm from New Orleans; I really appreciate the fact that since I've been here there's so much culture. I was really concerned about how I was going to be able to adapt. It's really been wonderful; great art, wonderful musicians. To even tell people I live in a town is hard for me! It's weird to have a license with mountains on it. But I've found a way to be happy with what I do and that is being a musician.
- A real independent spirit; both in thinking and the way people live. You don't see that anywhere else except VT. We do have a great sense of place here. That feeds in to the community that everyone is talking about: you can walk around downtown Brattleboro and you know everyone – it's still small. It's a nice feeling. The accessibility of government; this you really don't have anywhere else in the country or maybe even in the world. They are around and available; you can walk around and talk to people – it doesn't happen elsewhere.
- Where I grew up there was a mall and I felt like I was 'from the mall'. I wanted my kids to be able to know where they were from. Now they can see the town, they can envision where they were from.

- When I moved here I was able to be connected to older farmers; there was a particular way of looking at life, particular humor is really unique.
- I've been very fortunate to have lived in some very unique places in the world; Venice, Provincetown, Manhattan. But when I came here it was all here. I love the politics in Windham County.

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

- I think the great challenge for Vt is to stay VT and to take a leadership position in the US as a clean, green, ag state that supports the arts, supports farmers and has a vision for the future that isn't protected elsewhere. Every bit of farmland where I used to ride in VA now has houses and driveways and pavement. I think our challenge is to remain ourselves; support the poor, celebrate the arts.
- We ought to keep the Green Mtn State green. But one of our biggest challenges is for intact families. I'd like to see reclaiming the natural, traditional family: mother, father and kids. It should be reclaimed through churches, schools.
- To me it's always the hardest thing when a country spends 22% of GNP on military, then our federal delegation has to focus on poverty, healthcare and the other issues. We have to focus beyond military. Then we have the money to be green, vibrant, sustainable. Affordable healthcare and dental care in VT are two huge crises. Right now there should be program to provide primary dental care for children.
- I would agree with everything that's been said to this point. I think a challenge for us will be energy sources; and also trying to maintain all of the things that make VT VT. This is an opportunity to be model for the rest of the country as to what might be possible. We should be a model of how to respond and be entrepreneurial and have both energy and a clean environment.
- As our population is steadily declining the problem of affordable housing is very very difficult. We need to find a way to provide our young people and young families with housing.
- I have young people and grandkids. The problem is good paying jobs; we need good paying jobs to bring our families back in close.

- I work with young people every day. I see young people in our community in two kinds: we have those who are smart enough and driven enough to go to college. We have some who “found a way to get the hell out of here” in droves. We have others who don’t have the drive, or resources, or education to get out of here. They are stuck in a generational poverty cycle: their lives suck all the time, and if they aren’t high then they can’t live here. There are kids joining the military even when they are pacifists; they don’t know what it is about.
- I feel that the main concern right now is getting off our dependency on oil. Under that umbrella there are so many opportunities to create jobs and have a sense of purpose. Young kids right now have no sense of purpose. It’s about feeling that you contribute to the community. VT is a great place to create community resilience; there’s lots of ways for us to model about how to be self-supporting through our local resources.
- OPP: to lead the US – I am really proud to live here because we passed the civil union bill! I want to lead the country in policy, in Dr. Dynasaur. In my view people need to be shown the way. I also think we can show how diverse people and values and backgrounds can live together amicably. We can show Americans how to lead and build consensus amongst diversity.
- Transportation: lack of opportunities – or even where there are opportunities – we need to find a way for kids to get to them! Jobs or opportunities.
- I’m a citizen of two countries: England (6 decades) and VT (2 decades). My priority or challenge/opportunity is to avoid the risk of just becoming ‘little VTers’ but to look for links, connections, networks and find that there are similar places elsewhere. The challenge for VT is to insist that we have something to lead about; and to be humble if we don’t have anything to lead about, but to step out of the way. The risk we have is balkanization: we have to work together and avoid partisan politics.
- I think a challenge for VT is getting off the big grid system. I think that in VT we have an opportunity to localize our power more and we don’t want to go the way of big transmission lines but to be more local. I would like to see our energy more based on a cooperative business model as opposed to large corporations where we have no say. If we’re talking about community the cooperative business model should be under consideration.

- We have the opportunity to encourage more efficient use of energy through education and product – I don't know if more can be done through legislation – but we can get more out of what we have.
- I think a challenge/opportunity is for the people with money and power to tap into the resources across the state. We have wonderful resources across the state that you don't find even in a large urban center. The people in the positions of power and with the \$\$ need to be able to find a way to access those resources and give up the power they might have and face the challenge of change. I don't think we invite them to do that today. It is welcoming in some sense; but if you really want to change the way things are done it's hard to do that. This is something you find everywhere, but the challenge for VT is going to be that those people in those positions need to be able to find a way to do that.
- Neighborliness and helping each other out; people all over the country do this in that regard. But here there's just no jobs! When we first moved here there were manufacturing jobs, and now they are gone; not because of VT. But are we going to get other jobs? Manufacturing? I haven't heard that there is a strategic vision for the kinds of development we have.
- I think the economic challenge is huge. There are people who can afford to live here and people who will be struggling more with the energy crisis. If the state and other folks can be thoughtful around the ways to focus on energy and renewables.
- An eco development in Guilford; but I was surprised in the complete lack of interest from the state level. Having a conversation with the director of development; but there needs to be a strong partnership and an active interest in supporting alternative interest and economic development.
- I'm only here a year and I'm a retiree but I am studiously trying to figure out VT and fit in VT. We come here because we like to be here and then we want all the amenities we had on East 72<sup>nd</sup> street. People are talking about the fact that oil is now a big issue but that projects are too small to fund. A lot of our decisions macro and micro are driven by the bottom line and we need to have a different line.
- There is a group in town developing 'green collar jobs' – what would this look like in VT?
- I'm the marketing/public relations at Marlboro College and I moved away because of jobs, but was happy to move back. Something that many people are looking for in their 20s and

30s is arts and culture. This is one of the things that helps draw me back to the area – quality of life is well rounded, artistic, cultural orgs.

- There are still farms in eastern Long Island; the county bought development rights from farmers in the 60s. We're a few hours from NYC, from Boston, from Montreal; in the 80s three of my favorite mountain bike rides were driveways. We have a continued pressure and low density; development is our biggest issue. We need to not split up VT into 5 acres parcels. We need to talk about density and getting people to live in dense areas, not spread out.
- There's a paradox that seems to be emerging here: values like community, etc – but I think we're creating an isolation from one another in that process because we're getting what we need. At the state level I imagine the inter-organizational study and communication is a challenge. As the whole country is struggling with either a free market nonsense or spend and tax – this false dichotomy has been driving us away from getting the needs fulfilled and getting people having resources.
- Two challenges in terms of local govt: VT is best because it's very small. But we are taxed hard because we're very small. To wrestle all the modern 21<sup>st</sup> century issues; first, small govt will have less and less ability to help the state and vice versa. Second, across VT local govt is based on volunteers, zoning boards, select boards, etc; the complexity and sophistication of what they deal with is growing. Unless we can provide the technical support they need to do their jobs, local govt will be very stressed.
- I'm a visual artist, I have an intact alternative family. I wanted to mention early childhood education – I wanted to mention the model in France where preschool starts at 3 and families are supported – our situations seems very primitive here.

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

- In order to implement whatever we discover our vision to be; one thing that will take a lot of courage is to construct a democracy. I don't see this as being likely because there is a world of dwindling resources. We've thought that we've had democracy here but in actuality we have a small number of people who govern our lives; it is a very complicated

system that could be simplified. It involves town charters, requiring people to vote, participate in a living democracy. Most of the people in this state probably don't ultimately engage in making decisions in what we want. We need to spend some time and attention on that first.

- Priority is something we've been doing for some years and should continue to do and put energy into. Support the Housing and Conservation Fund! This continues a lot of what we've already talked about; open lands, housing, etc. If the legislature can fund this at a substantial level we can all be served (applause).
- One of the things we've mentioned is that govt and agencies are close by. We name an organization and the chair is here; it seems to me that a priority to realize this vision is to be more visible and name the resources that really are here and closer than we might think.
- Something I haven't heard this evening and something I'm really concerned about is the healthcare system; from cradle to the other end. It's broke. It's really broke. The hospitals are hurting and the system itself is hurting.
- The priority is that we have to get together: We have got to get together! We have micro-institutions. There are 3000 non-profits in the state and grass roots orgs that are incredible. They are often so busy that we don't work together; we need more! We simply have to create places where we can get together. We're small but we're also fractured! That makes us tiny; and tiny won't do it – we have to get together.
- I think we have to really pay attention to agriculture. It's great that we have farms and farm stands; in addition to buying blueberries people need to take the next step and freeze blueberries. We need to keep land open to support the land that's here – supplies and infrastructure. We need to really be aware of how important they are and could be in terms of economic survival.
- I would say let's remember we're talking about the lifetimes of our children; get ideas from people who are 15 and 16 and 17. Kids need to know that we're part of a world and young people need to inherit and we need to get them in right away (applause).
- I've used Amtrak for years and would very much like to see a greater development of the rail system. I know it'll take federal and state funding. Rail travel is up on the Vermonter – and I'm willing to pay taxes for that. It's been very important to tie me into the resources I can't find here.

- Our chief priority starting right now is to get VT Yankee shut down. There's no reason for us to rely on them for the future – if there were any kind of accident that would be the end of agriculture and everything else we love about VT. People are being seduced by wanting to have cheap electricity. If we turn toward energy and renewables and manufacturing the solar cells or wind turbines that would be great – we could be employing young people and inspiring them to stay. Let's not let them steam roll VT but close that puppy down in 2012 (applause).
- Thinking about the future and next 20 years; we should get lead paint abated so that soil would be ready for us to plant.
- Legislature did pass a very far ranging energy bill this year that promotes energy efficiency and creates jobs. I appreciate what this woman said about families here and early ed. I want to talk about the spirit of VT: I hope we can continue to foster the spirit of togetherness. And we need to look at how what we do today will affect our children and their children. It's what's inside of us that will allow us to survive whatever comes up. It's that spirit that helps us look beyond ourselves.
- A large portion of our budget goes to Corrections. A large part of that population is women and large number is about drugs. The support for community justice is waining and there's serious priority there for alternatives and how to fund this over time.
- I think that VT Yankee ought to be decommissioned in 2032 and replaced with a fusion plant, or a trash burning plant. I can't afford alternatives – I can afford electricity from VT Yankee.
- I think VT was the first state that voted against slavery. VT has often taken the lead as small as it is on national issues. There have been enormous amounts of discussion about regional economy; we need to think about goods, services, and the products we have here. Light rail is amazing – how do we create the opportunities to have these systems. Affordable, non-traditional healthcare. One of the tragedies that happens is that we underfund mental health support but we fund Corrections. We must act at VTers to end the addiction for 22% of our national GNP on military.
- I've been a part of many visioning groups; I hope from here we go to place where we develop a mission statement and then a strategic plan that is 5-10 year plan. I hope we have a great plan for communicating the vision, the values and how we lead by example. I've

been a part of so many of these and everyone articulates the shared values; and a year later there's a little something in the newspaper...and nothing. We need to engage everyone and not just have this be something that's a blip.

- The agenda here has nothing about implementation. There's almost nothing here that's new and it's not a problem that everyone here agrees with what we want. But there are tough choices and implementation is a big deal – if we don't implement having the authority over our own decisions. We don't have home rule, state referendum, etc. I would invite people to see how Switzerland operates now – there are models available.
- I want to tighten it a little bit: I think unity and these are important, but none of this will happen unless people step forward. Generally the things we've mentioned are not things that multi national corporations are not interested. Local people have to get involved and do this – if that doesn't happen all the great ideas are going no where. (applause).
- I think one of our priorities should be to think about what we need and what we can share. Our neighborhood has come together a lot in the last few years; we carpool, we go to farms together. There are so many places and areas we can do this - we have to rethink what we purchase and when we go out.

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

- We're re-writing the town plan. Up until this time the town plan hasn't had teeth – but it's our vision. It's important to make it 'shall' instead of 'should'. The town charter is being reviewed – and the more power of the people – the more people will have a chance to change their own lives. In towns like Barnstead NH they had to legislate locally to stop a water company taking the water out of their aquifer. They had to pass a law to say that corporations were not human beings. One community at a time and passing laws that do that for people.
- I think the number one priority is to get off fossil fuel as soon as we can. That is our priority in the world – to say nothing of Brattleboro.
- I think the economic future of Brattleboro and the state is creating micro economies that work together: local money, local buying, that we don't have to depend on the large scale

thinking. The large scale is now failing and we need to move in and figure out how we're going to do it locally and create micro economies.

- Focusing on democracy issues: we do have to be involved, we do have to find a way to make the system work so that what we know what occurs. We should also recognize the protection of the commons. We need to stand up and protect those things that are in common to us all. We need to use the concept of the precautionary principle: do no harm. We shouldn't let anyone take that away from us.
- Transition towns book – to get a model to move a town away from oil dependency. It had a town in Devon, England that is a model for how to go about doing this.
- One of the most amazing things I saw recently was that SEPCO came in and renovated an apartment building. SEPCA is very VERY important to support – that needs to happen throughout the community and the state wants to do this.