



Vermont Council on Rural Development

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As seen in *vtdigger.org*: <https://vtdigger.org/2017/07/21/object-pownal-initiative-call-town-vote/> ^[1]

POWNAL ? Vermont?s southwestern-most town in April became the first selected by a statewide program aimed at helping communities address the challenges of climate change.

But the designation of Pownal by the Vermont Council on Rural Development isn?t being welcomed by everyone in town, with some calling for a vote by local residents on whether to participate.

?I don?t think we need these people from Montpelier or Burlington or wherever coming down and telling us what we think we should have,? said Selectboard member Ron Bisson. It?s a skepticism shared by at least some other Pownal residents.

The Council on Rural Development?s Climate Economy Model Communities Program was launched in Pownal this spring after Planning Commission member Shannon Barsotti applied to the council for a grant to enable that to happen.

In an April news release, the council said, ?The goal is to transform Pownal into a ?climate smart? community by implementing comprehensive efficiency efforts, transportation system improvements, renewable energy generation, entrepreneurship and business incubation to spur economic progress.??

Many in town are enthusiastic. More than 100 attended a meeting June 24 to brainstorm on possible projects related to better preparing the town and its economy to deal with the effects of climate change and to take advantage of opportunities those changes could present.

The next communitywide session is set for July 25 at 6:30 p.m. at the American Legion Post 90 home, when participants will choose a half-dozen initiative priorities from among a list of ideas proposed at prior meetings.

But others are skeptical, including resident Robert Jarvis, who has been writing letters to local officials and attending Selectboard and Planning Commission meetings.

Jarvis voiced concerns that the program has been ?fast-tracked,? contending that Pownal could

have postponed applying for it until next year to allow a townwide debate and vote.

?I think this could have gone for another year,? he said during a July 13 Selectboard meeting, ?and give us time to actually debate it as a town and let the citizens understand what it is really about.?

Jarvis argued that voters should be able to weigh in on plans that could affect property and other rights, as well as the overall future of the town.

Barsotti said she feared ?there is some confusing information out there and some misinformation about the program.?

Jon Copans, the program?s statewide director, said of those with concerns, ?I hope they will come and come with an open mind.?

The notes from the June 24 Pownal forum can be viewed [here](#) [2].

Source URL: <https://www.vtrural.org/programs/model-communities/press/20170721>

Links:

[1] <https://vtdigger.org/2017/07/21/object-pownal-initiative-call-town-vote/>

[2] http://vtrural.org/sites/default/files/PownalKickOff-ForumNotes_0.pdf