



Meeting focuses on Vermont's future

By **BOB AUDETTE**, Reformer Staff

Tuesday, August 19 BRATTLEBORO -- What will Vermont look like in the next 20, 30 or 40 years?

The Council on the Future of Vermont will be in Brattleboro Thursday night to ask that very question.

The council wants to know how Windham County residents feel about where the state is now and where it is heading. The council also wants to know how area residents feel about the trends that will influence what happens in Vermont over the coming decades.

"We recognize that many trends are affecting Vermont's rural areas, towns and cities as well as the way we live," stated Sara Waring, the council's project manager, in a press release announcing the meeting. "Some of these factors are growth and development, shifts in the global economy, or changes in demographics and climate."

The Council on Rural Development is a project of the Vermont Council on Rural Development. The meeting, at the Robert H. Gibson River Garden, starts with refreshments at 6 p.m. The conversation begins at 6:30.

It's been nearly 20 years since such a conversation was fostered, stated Waring.

"Similar statewide conversations took place following the devastation of the 1927 flood and again in the late 1960s when a new interstate highway brought big changes," stated Waring.

The council is conducting similar discussions in each county of the state.

In Grand Isle County, residents expressed concern over the state's energy future. In Franklin County, residents said they were worried about the care and support for seniors in their communities. In Orange County, people talked about why youth are leaving the state for better prospects elsewhere.

In Windham County, the council is hoping to meet with a wide range of community members of all ages, socio-economic backgrounds, professions and education.

"By bringing everyone in to share their views, we can begin to find our common threads," stated Waring. "Once our goals are clear, we have a much better chance of reaching them."

This will be the council's only stop in Windham County during this phase of the project.

The conversation is meant to give direction to policy leaders on the local, state and federal level.

"We'll also pose questions not only about their own community and what the current trends are, but to hear what they think the most important thing is and will be about living in Vermont," stated Waring. "Everyone has these ideas in their heads, but they don't often find a chance to express them."

Those unable to attend the meeting are encouraged to submit comments at www.futurevermont.org.

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