

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

ST JOHNSBURY and Caledonia County Community Forum Day notes May 8th, 2008

The following notes were collected from focus group meetings and forums throughout the day spent in Caledonia 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 the day on May 8:

- Caledonia Community Work Camp inmates
- Sterling College faculty and students
- Fairbanks Museum and Catamount Arts staff
- GRACE and guests in Hardwick
- Kingdom Trails in Burke
- Ridge Protectors in Sheffield
- NVDA in St. Johnsbury
- St. Johnsbury Academy staff and planning committee
- Evening public meeting at St. Johnsbury school

Facilitators: Paul Costello, Catherine Dimitruk, Sarah Waring, Fran Voigt

Scribes: Paul Costello, Sarah Waring, Catherine Dimitruk, Fran Voigt, Laurie Zilbauer

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COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report, May 8th, 2008
Caledonia Community Work Camp

Scribe: Laurie Zilbauer

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

- Vermonters share a genuine care and concern for one another
- We are more independent, self-sufficient or self-supporting, not dependent on outside resources.
- Vermont used to be the first republic – Vermont has a sense of community that I haven't experienced in a lot of other places. Care for the natural environment. Drive to preserve natural areas and small scale farms. Fighting sprawl.
- We try to hang on to our property.
- Vermonters are a fairly tight knitted group, most people stay here for their families. It's a challenge to keep people here – the trade schools and high schools need to help prepare young people for the workforce.
- Vermonters are a tight community, people look out for one another. A safe environment to raise your family.
- It's a woodsy atmosphere with fresh air, being away from the big urban sprawl. A few steps outside your door you can be in a wooded area.
- Education – freedom to do what you want. The environmentalist shares the values of the hunter, mutually appreciate different lifestyles and utilizing the land. There's a pride that Vermonters have, both sides can see the same things, find a common ground.
- Vermont's not a place it's a state of mind. Vermonters are peaceful and mindful of one another, unified sense of community.
- Geographically we are placed in a perfect spot, near yet far from nice metropolitan areas like Boston, Montreal, New York.
- Preservation of the history & beauty of the state is an important value.
- There is a strong sense of work ethic. Honest morals, honest wages.
- Vermont's a peaceful place, that's why it attracts tourists and vacationers.
- Vermonters have a healthy well being both in mind and body. There are yoga centers, outdoor activities, people trying to get into shape here.
- Keep Vermont Simple – we're teetering on becoming “caretakers of a museum” and not living in today.
- Safe place to raise your kids.

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

- Drugs & Alcohol. Keep our kids off drugs.
- Substance abuse is huge; supply and demand is in at an all time high. The Amtrak station in Rutland has expanded the drug supply from the New York City. It's at a breaking point.
- There are proven and effective drug treatment programs that have been stopping the demand and government is shutting down these programs. Education and treatment is the only way to combat drug use (reduce the demand) and these efforts are falling low on the state's priority list.
- Lowering the demand was effective in the past.
- Vermont has to improve its infrastructure, economy. It's hard to conduct business in the state without powered infrastructure, communications technology. Vermonters pay 60% of the taxes in the state. We need new businesses to handle some of the tax burden, but the business support technologies are not there.
- Global Warming is a major issue, people may be moving inland. Global Warming will affect our way of living, but it might not help. These will be huge issues in my lifetime and my children's lifetime.
- Start to try to retain its youth. Aging demographic is a challenge. It's pricing young people right out of the state.
- We need more industry in the state. ACT 250 needs to allow more business development; we need to get around issues that affect business. It won't allow them to grow or expand so they leave.
- Southeastern Vermont taxes are a huge burden. There needs to be some balance for the taxes.
- Children are our future; we need alcohol and drug prevention programs earlier on.
- Higher rates of violent crime in the future. The generation today gets taught violence through the media, and it affects their lifestyles and values.
- The legal system needs to be revamped as well.
- Dept. of Corrections should be called Dept. of Detention. There's no real correction going on. This is a waist of time; I could be doing other things, like going to college or getting vocational training. Here we rot and fester and it doesn't help. They could be working to prepare people with better skills.
- Dept. of Correction's prison population is bursting at the seams. When you're incarcerated your whole family suffers. We need more half-way houses to help guys that have made poor choices. Jail can be a revolving door. There has to be better prevention and treatment. When someone falls, there's nothing to help pick them back up.

- The public system is paying for the incarceration and then their families to be on welfare. There are better ways to break the cycle.
- We need a program where you can take college courses or further your education. Getting into a career this might be a way to leave the system.
- We have the resources and technology to not use oil, use micro hydro power, solar power, and expand on these systems to be ahead of the game. Break the need for immediate satisfaction.
- Provide jobs through these new energy systems. We have the teachers and resources to invest in these areas.
- Address ACT 250, it is the main problem that holds all projects up.
- Corrections – FSU should be done away with. If you have no problems and do what you’re supposed to do you get out on parole. But you’re Conditional Re-entry fee is \$30 a month (supervision fee). Plus you must pay \$30 a week for mandatory classes to deal with your drug or alcohol addiction, plus you can only get a \$10/hr maximum job after incarceration. It’s like the system keeps you under their thumb, you already feel like you are under the eight ball. So you go back to stealing and dealing drugs because it’s the best money you can make to pay your fees and feed your family.
- The State spends more money on the Dept. of Corrections than Education in the state. Why are we sending our corrections money out of state? Kentucky?
- Band aid fix that Vermont does all the time. We need to invest some serious money for long-term solutions rather than short term fixes.

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

- Affordable housing
- Support ourselves better without being able to rely on tourism, generate jobs and businesses.
- Taxes keep rising, but the pay rate hasn’t raised enough to handle this. Livable wages are hard to get.
- ACT 250 is key.
- Create more jobs
- Close off areas where the state is wasteful. Education is key, especially higher education. Access to higher education changes your ability to excel in life. There are a lot of schools that are lacking in a lot of areas. Pay the teachers more. Help students to have more pride in their abilities. Teachers “shaping the future”, isn’t there anymore. A good education is key.

- Vermont is bleeding out the youth; we have drug dealers coming in. Keep our kids here; address the new people with a new way of thinking.
- Focus more on education, our education system is far behind other states.
- There needs to be incentives for kids doing well. Some school districts get more money and have better teachers.
- Better health care system is needed; minimum wage doesn't let you afford health care.
- State spends money frivolously, track where the money is going and put it in the right places, education, workforce training, vocational training. For example – Dept. of Corrections will pay more and more overtime instead of hiring a part-time staff person.
- Taxes are too high, businesses leave. Colleges take out-of-state students before in-state students because it brings more money. This limits the locals access to a higher education.
- City taxes are too much.
- Property taxes, rental costs should be a priority. There are two classes now, upper class and lower middle class.
- Compromise bringing in big business, and balance a thriving small business economy. Still keep the Vermont seal of quality, Vermont image alive.
- Rich are getting richer and poor are getting poorer, people who use their hands, 98% of people that do the actual work need to be able to live their lives. It's hard for working class people to make a living. Richer people need to not make as much and pay appropriate wages.
- It comes down to taxes, businesses and people wise, higher taxes compared to other states is a deal breaker.
- Home heating oil, energy resources. Minimum wage is no where near what the actual poverty line is. Address affordable energy needs.
- Vermont needs to accept change; I want to still be proud of Vermont as it's going to be. We need more business, population and consumerism. We can't necessarily preserve it, it needs to function economically. I don't want to see Vermont decline, just to preserve some decaying value.
- We need to keep money in Vermont; all of our money is going out of state. Keep it here.

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

(not answered.)

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report, May 8th, 2008
Fairbanks Museum and Catamount Arts staff

Scribe:Fran Voigt

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

- A place where the slower pace of life (relative to big urban areas) provides an opportunity for personal growth and happiness—no rat race.
- Small scale, common values, shared experiences
- Connection to the landscape
- Understand that many young people in Vermont object to the small communities where everyone seems to know everything about them until they go elsewhere and find that no one cares. It brings these Vermonters back home when they are ready to raise families.
- For flatlanders who have chosen to move here, Vermont has become part of them and their families. They have no desire to return to the places from which they have come and see that the culture of Vermont has shaped the values of their children in a positive way.

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

- It is hard to envision the economy of Vermont in the future, but one hopes that the downtowns and farms will continue to be supported, and that there remains an environmental consciousness.
- Another suggested that there be less effort made to hang on to the status quo and a much greater emphasis on moving to a technologically based economy.
- A younger adult wondered how climate change will affect a dispersed population in many small towns especially as the costs of transportation, fossil fuel heating (Will there be more co-housing?) and other energy dependent activities become very expensive.
- A flatlander expressed some concern about whether Vermont might really become a caricature of itself. That is, will citizens avoid some less savory parts of the modern world because of the risks that go with having them, eg, refusal to accept another major factory because of the closings of others, such as Fairbanks Scales, and the economic and social disruptions that go with these inevitable evolutions of factories.
- The future of the creative economy seems good especially when guessing that it is fostered by tolerance and an open mindedness that are attributes of Vermonters.

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

- Need to address the fear in young people about the lack of economic opportunities. Better technology should help to create those opportunities.
- Need to embrace efforts that add value to Vermont's natural resources.
- Need to understand that Vermont's population is aging which can bring new challenges in terms of healthcare but also opportunities in terms of skilled labor in certain circumstances.
- Need to continue to develop and support cultural opportunities in the downtowns—and streetscapes.
- Expect more self reliance in food supplies which also will require a shift in food preferences.
- Need to be sensitive to generic notions of development that can be found in the rest of the country (and are showing up in Vermont) but not in keeping with the character of the state.
- Must become aware of bureaucratic sprawl, that is, the location of significant amounts of social services in certain communities around the state, such as St. Johnsbury, that change demographics, economies and social fabric of these places.

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

- Downtown St. Johnsbury still needs a “kick in the pants”. That is, it needs to get more/better investment.
- The neighboring small towns have become like suburbs to St. Johnsbury, but because of escalating property values in places like Peacham, middle class families cannot afford to move there anymore.
- With the upcoming real estate appraisal, there is some worry about its impact on the town's creative economy and local stores.
- There is some worry about the absence of “box stores” in St. Johnsbury as compared to Littleton, N.H. However, St. Johnsbury has cultural opportunities, professional services and boutique stores that attract people from New Hampshire. The two towns may be complementing each other.
- There may be opportunities especially in the creative economy related to the changes in demographics and lower than average incomes. And the culture provided by the creative economy is seen more and more as an asset by the business community.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report, May 8th, 2008
Sterling College faculty and students

Scribe: Catherine Dimitruck

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

- It is the Green Mountain State. Vermont is green: ecologically, politically, literally.
- Independence: politically, socially, yet a strong sense of community.
- Sense of community in Vermont compared to dispersed community elsewhere.
- Agriculture is still alive here.
- Vermonters have strong roots and traditions, yet are progressive.
- Human scale, viability of small rural communities.
- Lack of barriers to participation, leaders are accessible.
- Viable rural economy.
- Pervasive sense of community.
- Tension between how Vermonters see Vermont and how Vermont portrays itself actually vs. reality. Example, the real work of farming vs. the idyllic image of the pretty red barn.
- Fierce independence, desire to keep things local and provide for yourself and your neighbors.
- Quaint.
- Resources are still clean.
- Community feel- Craftsbury is even different than Southern Vermont.
- Much more community here than in the Champlain Valley, everyone is more connected.
- In Craftsbury, many live and work locally, so there are stronger connections.

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

- Population has grown; population is more transient, struggling with changes in land use, changes in politics, some positive, some negative.
- Loss of farmers in politics means less understanding of the working rural landscape.
- Demise of land based resource industries in the current world order is a problem.
- Challenge to create and maintain a viable rural economy.
- Children need to be able to see a future in their home and communities, the internet will help this.
- Community landscape is changing, we're in it together is shifting towards- we're in it alone as individuals. Communities' challenge is to bring this value of community back.
- Challenge exists with the potential loss of local schools.

- Vermont is on the southern edge of the circum polar north, ecologically and socio-economically. As the climate changes, this will bring challenges.
- Socio-economically one challenge is people moving in with easy access- more umbilical cords connecting the Northeast Kingdom to the rest of the world.
- Vermont is in danger of losing its identity.
- Challenge of keeping the family farm going, what happens if Vermont loses this? It is a huge piece of economy and identity.
- Less and less open space is a challenge.
- Rising fuel costs- will it be a benefit for locally grown organic or will fuel prices negatively hurt that commodity too?
- Small farms are a strength and liability, a challenge and an opportunity.
- There is an opportunity to use all of our outside connections to bring Vermont values outside of Vermont (ecological, agricultural, community), to lead by example.
- Telecommuting is a huge opportunity.
- Distance learning is a huge opportunity.
- Will exposure through technology lead to a desire for something different?
- Sacrificing long-term vision for short term gain- a failing that needs to be overcome.
- Health care, housing and electric are expensive.

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

- Understand the need to consider long term goals and externalities, not just short term impacts.
- Affordable housing without creating sprawl. Encourage people to live in Villages rather than farm fields.
- Need to preserve Vermont wildlife, precious little public land vs. somewhere such as the Adirondack Park and White Mountain National Forest.
- Loss of contiguous habitat needs to be stopped. Federal or other long term protection is needed.
- Preserve tradition of Vermont.
- Enact policies that allow creative local economy to flourish rather than favor large farms (example- allowing raw milk sales, on-farm slaughter).
- Reduce red tape for farmers.
- Build processing facilities to encourage Vermonters to keep commodities within the state.
- Community problem solving model, with 'community' defined by the issue or problem being addressed.
- Restoring town meeting.
- Reduce red tape of education and dictation of curriculum to help expand creativity and reduce taxes.

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

- Tourism is a benefit for Craftsbury.
- Poverty needs to be addressed.
- Sterling College wants students to go out and fix the world.
- Potential decline in tourism due to energy prices could negatively impact town.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report, May 8th, 2008
GRACE and guests in Hardwick

Scribe: Sarah Waring

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

- I think of Vt as my home – my house. It is welcoming, protected and well taken care of.
- I moved here 8 yrs ago but I could have chosen to live anywhere. I was living in Europe and chose VT particularly because of the focus on quality of life. Everyone's not fighting to keep up with the Joneses here. People are different – they live and let live.
- VT is green and there's a tolerance for different lifestyles.
- There's a great delight in and value in smallness of scale. It lets everyone have a voice but also demands that people play. You can make a difference even at the state level because you know the people there!
- I moved here in 2000 and visually it was extremely beautiful. It's a good place for an artist to be! There's an independence of spirit – and an individualism. There's also no traffic! I hope sprawl stays in Burlington.
- I'm not a native but I moved here by choice. There's a sense of place here. This is our place and we have a sense of ownership. Why Hardwick? We liked what we saw here.
- Vermont means connection to the land itself – the ownership of the land is stewardship of the land. Whether people are using the land for recreation or whatever; foremost in my mind is that people moving here don't have that sense of sharing the land.
- *Do people care that the sense of community in Vermont is potentially being lost?*
- It's a tough question; for example, Hardwick still has a town meeting, but its in the daytime and it's clear that people who work in the daytime and can't take time off can't come. So town meeting no longer represents the town. It's in conflict with tradition in some ways.
- There's certainly a longing to keep a sense of community but the older more traditional ways to do this are coming apart. The social fabric is challenged now.
- But at the same time some things are really successful – example of a rainy Green Up Day with lots of people volunteering – very good show for volunteers! I think people are not ready to give up on a sense of community.
- I was astounded when I worked at an art gallery at the number of people in Vt in the 'arts'. There's an honoring of art in Vermont that is quite unique. (this honoring doesn't necessarily extend to artists!). Respondent told the story of a man stopping by the gallery to look at the exhibit – on his tractor.

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

- As property ownership changes in Vt then ideas about and connections to the land will change. I grew up thinking that I could walk, ski, ride anywhere. The changing attitudes aren't just from folks moving in, but other things changed attitudes too. (Respondent cited 'Take Back Vt' era as one where people got less friendly in general.) There's a natural balance to landscape use, but as people are less connected to community, then people have distinct land uses that threaten this balance. We end up narrowing our vision of place.
- There are farms that people aren't making a living from – if your survival depend on it than you have a different feeling about how to use the land.
- The good jobs and cost of living (jobs that pay well and have benefits) are in short supply. So is affordable housing. All kinds of development requirements are imposed on new buldings and projects so that even 'affordable' isn't really 'affordable'.
- I have a daughter and son-in-law who would like to move here – she's a nurse and he's a professor with a position at a Vt college, but they can't find a place that's affordable to live. I don't know what will make this challenge go away.
- There's a conflict between people with modest incomes and people who value the scenic quality of the landscape and want to preserve it. The land in Hardwick now has a 'view' component on assessments that it didn't used to have.
- I live in Elmore. 15 years ago there were land issues there that brought out all this conflict – about VTers who wanted to give their land to their kids and how the economic reality of land value is so important. If we want to preserve a Vt we want for the future we have to look at this.
- Public transportation is a challenge and an opportunity. We don't have it now, and so we stay isolated. But it would be great to have, saving on fuel costs, providing car pooling, etc.
- Schools are very important – the opportunity there is to create wonderful educational environments. The challenge is the cost of doing so; small scale is wonderful but it has a high cost. There's conflict over this always – people who do not want to honor the history of the school and just see the bottom line.
- Education in general is a challenge – both public and higher education because the COSTS of both are very high. We have 76 high schools in VT for 100,000 students.
- The population is aging – in my experience with nursing homes we have seen a facility that is full and people that are on a waiting list. The whole dilemma is to figure out how to care for and to have services for the elderly. This will continue to be a challenge into the future as we grow our older population. But there's an opportunity there too, because they are a dynamic group, who is living longer and has more to offer in retirement age (civic engagement, time, energy, local services.)
- Where does the budget go for social services money? Respondent gave an example of a Meals on Wheels program that had be severely cut back, and wondered what was being funded instead.

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

- Taking better care of people so that they can take better care of each other and where they live.
- People can't take care of an elder or provide an extra room – so we need to create a structure for this. Nursing homes are very expensive and getting worse.
- If we're going to prevent Vt from becoming a playground for the rich and filled with older retirees, something HAS to be done about good jobs with benefits for young people, and affordable housing.
- There has to be a real concern from new arrivals for the diversity of people here – making sure there is room for all people. They have to know the impact they have and that the community has an presence already (example of community on Block Island deciding to keep its place out-of-the-way and pristine.)
- There are economic issues that should be priorities for the state. We at GRACE have an aging staff and we have a hard time offering competitive salaries and benefits. Attracting people and keeping non-profits viable is crucial.
- Still, this state has more non-profits per capita than any other state! We have a non-profit entrepreneurial spirit!
- The state needs to do a better job at recruitment – the Dept of Economic Development does a lousy job now at bringing people to the workforce.
- The role of government in the future needs to be better defined. The town or state government responses to things have to be coordinated. There's not widespread agreement about who should respond or be responsible for what.
- This 'level of responsibility' has a lot to do with our education system too. If people in Craftsbury were responsible for educating the kids in Craftsbury, for example, then we could get it done. But we're all confused about who's in charge.
- There needs to be an appropriate conversation about this. There's more conflict and animosity than there needs to be.

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

- Hardwick is a good example. The community commutes away each day because they don't work beside each other on the land or here in town.
- Hardwick is growing jobs – there are people who went away and came back and now you can see the microcosm of everything we've talked about here at the local level. Hardwick and surrounding towns are on the cusp – we've got Pete's Greens, Jasper Hill Cheese, High Mowing Seeds and we're creating a critical mass here. The VT Food Ventures Center will move here and once you get some good things you attract other good things.
- It's always a mystery why sexual and domestic violence prevention centers are threatened by grants that are being reduced or are not available. We're in the position of begging for funds for these services.
- All kinds of services are expected to be given by the town or by non-profits here in Vermont.

- The Federal Government has resources going out – but we're not in isolation here! We're challenged in so many ways, but resources are being pulled out from under us to support people in other countries.
- In Vermont there is an historical and cultural record of local politics – this can move us where we need to go.
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COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report, May 8th, 2008
Kingdom Trails

Scribe: Paul Costello

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

- Vermont is Green; the yester year is still in place.
- Vermont means community to me, there is an emphasis on community and activity in the community.
- Kingdom Trails exists on the common values of sharing the land and this originates from a history of hunting, fishing, logging, etc. Land owners know it's good for the community good for the health of society and economy.
- The NEK is its own separate place, there's cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, a tradition of trail networks exists here.
- Kingdom Trails has a unique situation with public use of private land. We're unique in being able to pull it off.
- There's an economic importance for trail networks, we're a poor region and the benefit of the trails on the economy makes them supported here.
- With new people moving here for the idea of privacy, people who move here want seclusion and privacy and allowing your land to be a trail contradicts that. This is the challenge when you start opening up to new populations.
- Kingdom Trails hasn't ever been critical of what a landowner has done to his land. Founder John Worth, "We've never lost a trail to logging operations, we'll find a way around it and we'll find a way through it when they're done." There is just a difference in values.
- A trail organization doesn't really have a hand to play.
- A few years ago we had to convince the land owner that this increases the property value; increasing value is working against us now, because we're increasing your taxes!

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

- Sometimes people have their heads in the sand about progress. Better planning should be done to maintain rural character, as in working lands: a maple stand, the Holstein in pasture, dirt roads, and stone walls. Too much growth is a challenge.
- Managing that growth is a challenge.
- Green industries are an opportunity.
- High-speed internet access is desperately needed.

- Terrorism events are a challenge for more populations and different populations.
- Business growth exists from broadband access.
- We need to realize that Vermont is a playground for other people. How many people come to use the land, open space and natural resources? They come here spend money and go home.
- Telecommuting is an opportunity; you don't even need office space anymore.
- It's challenging for our professional children that want to come back to Vermont to actually have the opportunities to come back. Keeping our kids here is also difficult. Its challenges to find jobs they would be happy with.
- The access to the internet has been a benefit.
- Challenges exist with having and running a small business in this state, you get conflicting answers from the state. The uncertainty of the process is also difficult. ACT 250 has done a lot more good than bad. Maybe it could be made easier and less complicated to operate a business. Difficult zoning definitions.
- These situations are not unique to South Burlington and other areas of Vermont. ACT 250 set a good tone for development but on the other hand I think there should be a balance. Once you start writing regulations and rules, then you have to hire people, it goes on from there.
- Kingdom Trails has 33,000 user visits annually, approximately half is from Vermont, the other half is out-of-state, and 50% of the out-of-states are from Canada (in spite of the challenges from the border).
- Most users come back approximately eight times a year. LSC completed an economic impact study. The average user is 35 years old, most travel approximately 250 miles, and for income 70% make \$50,000+.
- Kingdom Trails continues to educate on trail etiquette, that you're riding on private land, etc. The trails are expanding and may become too much of a good thing, which can be a bad thing. We need to keep this a positive impact for the E. Burke Village community. We do have a unique clientele as far as respect, but we still have to do some policing.

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

- Geotourism is an important part of the fabric our community. It's not that big yet, but there is a lot of outdoor recreation.
- Maintaining historic recreational trail uses on these lands (skiing, etc.). It can't just happen it has to be planned to happen.
- Trail use is all about how it's packaged. VAST does a great job, they stay on the trail. Community should discuss this issue. We need people to buy in.
- Vermont is a destination because of the natural resources.

- This has changed the health and fitness of the community. There are more kids on the Nordic team than the football team. The tradition is here, there's a culture of trails, being fit and being outdoors.
- Nothing like driving by LI in the fall and you see a floodplain filled with kids playing sports. 70-80% of the student population participates in an organized sport.
- Tying Kingdom Trails resources to community, bikes and after-school programs. Free skiing if you apply. The community has a connection to the facilities.

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

- The Burke Mountain development might make skiing and outdoor recreation more exclusive. Ginn's resorts are very exclusive destinations, club type environments, and we want to make sure that local people will be able to ski here.
- There's a concern for being priced out. Are we going to plan for these changes, or are we going to be concerned for our kids?
- Create more mountain biking businesses and trails around the state. This won't take away from any other trail network and add money to small communities. Like Barre's Millstone Hill. It's a bonus to have a larger destination spot to offer. It gets a larger draw.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report, May 8th, 2008
Ridge Protectors

Scribe: Laurie Zilbauer

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

- Vermont is a place that is getting a very rare description (compared to other areas of the U.S). Green space and open space is important; Vermont has fought to preserve green space and open space.
- Vermont doesn't want to become a state that is a clone of another.
- There are parts of Vermont that can no longer recover from effects of development, but the NEK has that opportunity. Three most important values: Scenic Beauty, Natural Environment, & Greenspace.
- Vermont is a place of just the right scale. It's not a pretentious place, It's a homey place and on a small scale. It goes straight to your heart.
- Vermonters care about their landscape. Care deeply for the land, we would pay high taxes to never see it developed.
- Compared to the Midwest, you're almost never out of site with cell towers, transmission lines, & billboards. It's a cluttered landscape. Vermont is special that it doesn't have these issues.
- Vermonters have a strong sense of preserving land
- Greenspace here means the land is being used; it's not just a vacant open field or property that is commercialized. The 21st century doesn't jump out at you here.
- People are drawn to Vermont – peaceful, quiet space, relaxed, no rush, not industrialized or paved over.
- People come here for the landscape, atmosphere, and sense of community. We have a collective Farmer Stand in the village so neighbors can sell to neighbors.
- Vermont is a peaceful state, lots of wildlife, very peaceful. No extra noise.
- Reference the *Sutton Town Plan* – a vision for 2020, Plus NVDA's Regional Plan – land use & energy section.

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

- Partitioning off property.
- Vermonters have a sense of community, with the influx of new people we maybe losing our sense of community, small churches, farms. Big companies come in and may destroy that. Small communities don't have the resources to respond to that. Very salable – but attracts people that may destroy it.
- Avoiding industrial development that is being put on us by big corporations.

- Industrial size wind is inappropriate for Vermont for social, economic & environmental reasons. Economic arguments = unreliable high cost of power. It doesn't make sense for Vermont because the available actual production capacity is only 8 to 10% of what is estimated and it doesn't reduce or replace base load power. Environmental = huge footprint on the ridgeline. Affects on wildlife – birds & bats. Social perspective has divided the community (host town), regional communities and surrounding local communities. Poverty plays a role in the desire for industrial development.
- Sheffield was preyed on because they don't have zoning or planning and it's a poor community.
- The proposed wind project has reduced property values. People are scared to sell their property. The development has scared away prospective purchasers.
- Sheffield wanted to stay the way it was, no large development.
- Sheffield is selling out because of poverty, but we're also selling out the whole region & state because these developers will do this to other small poor towns. Big developers buy their vote with the purchase of development rights. Many people support the project because they directly profit from it rather than planning for what's appropriate for the whole community.
- Many perceive the arguments are between “last-one in or NIMBYs” vs. locals who are pro-economic development, but that's not the case. There are other, better opportunities. We have enormous capacity for locally supported energy opportunities. Economic development points to biomass plants.
- Also there's the emotional standpoint – legislature has been bamboozled that they have bought into a company that is so much larger than our small town. Bigger than anything we have any seen. Local People felt that they haven't been heard and can't compete with the lobbying.
- Vermont used to take care of the individual local small towns, now it's all about the state, the state wants to do what's best for the state rather than what's best for each small town.
- It comes down to the future vision – the size and scale of this development is really the big concern.
- NEK can support small energy systems, which would be community supported.
- The polarization is terrible.
- UPC wind guided the Selectboard on how to deal with the voters.
- The problem is that any developer could fit this mold; this is a huge precedent they are setting. We are fighting for the whole state; it could be anything [major development] next for another small poor town that doesn't have the resources to deal with this. It all comes down to what we are fighting to defend.
- This is a battlefield and the state needs to be ready, the poorest towns are first, this will spread. State policy should be on the ball, what do we need to do to defend our values. The rest of the world is going to keep on building and building.

- Public money is being spent to support the development of these projects and we need to raise private funds from the poor community to fight it.
- Vermont has historically never jumped on these bandwagons, and Vermont skipped that step this time. It surprising that the state is jumping on this bandwagon with out research and fore thought.
- We can't be tribal on this issue – NEK people are together on this, but we are a minority in the state. If one part is threatened – we have to look at the state as a whole.
- NEK called a kingdom – it's different from the rest of the state.

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

- Creating a different kind of agricultural niche
- Enabling people to work from home - telecommuters
- Development of Craft guilds, support local goods
- Protecting greenspace, but use it, keep it working. Vermont Fresh Network. Not just a phony landscape. Use the land, make goat cheese. Build on Vermont's brand development.
- Biofuels should be discouraged because they use more energy in production than they offset.
- Broadband and WiFi are needed.
- The Commercial Scale Wind issue feels like a hostile takeover of our small communities. The legislature doesn't care because Montpelier is so far away. Montpelier needs to look at how they affect the small towns.
- We need a brand new Nuclear Power Plant.
- We need more planning grants, VCDP grants, money that supports planning & zoning to better direct development and provide for home-grown projects.
- Tourism economy is tied to the local environment, topography – and excessive industrial development conflicts with this image.
- A poll is constantly cited that declares that 80% favor wind. This is from deliberative polling and these folks that want wind as long as it's not in their back yard. This poll didn't compare priorities for wind fairly against other renewable options. The poll asked: Do you want wind power or a coal plant or a nuclear plant?
- Large Scale development is a challenge, has to be done rate. We don't want to be against large development, but development should be of appropriate size and scale. Development should be tied to size & scale of the place.
- The speed of this development overwhelms people, too.

- Those of us who have seen this process and project unfold from outside the state, feel like life-time Vermonters don't have the outside life experiences to know what is happening and that zoning will protect you. We need to focus on town planning connected to zoning control.

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

(answered above)

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report, May 8th, 2008
NVDA staff

Scribe: Laurie Zilbauer

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

- Vermont is my home and my family's home. Vermont is different than other places; we are tolerant of others, independent thinking & creative. There's willingness for leadership, for tackling challenges in another way.
- I'm a refugee from the suburbs of Atlanta. Vermont has a sense of home and community, with it comes a sense of civic responsibility. The level of involvement in local government is really really impressive. This is something that is not replicated in other areas.
- Vermonters think more about the consequences of their actions (speeding, etc.), ways to use public resources and community lands. We feel we have an impact on the greater good.
- As a homesteader, there's a rather odd mix of independence and interdependence, plus a resistance to change and acceptance of it.
- We've learned very well to take care of our own. We still care for each other and watch out for each other. While we do this on the community level, we are looking for changes in communication technology for the services that will help even more.
- Vermont is my home and I find it wonderful – common values, love for the environment, a real desire to maintain the beauty of the state. These values range from the legislature down to the local towns. I'm very impressed with the commitment of local planning commission members to maintain what they have in their towns.
- Attitudes, neighborliness, architectural styles, don't want to see their towns grow from small town character to larger and lose that character.
- Fairness, respect, equality, self reliance & generosity. There's a long history of self reliance = unspoken understanding that if someone else is in need you lend a hand. That benefit is with no strings attached – Pay It Forward.
- Accepting change is the hard part – and its best expressed in an old joke. How many Vermonters does it take to change a lightbulb? Three – one to change the bulb and two to complain about how they liked the old bulb better.
- Vermonters are prone to air on the side of understatement. This sometimes comes off to the outside population as cold, but in reality we're just not boastful.
- Vermonter's tolerance is more of an acceptance. Whatever your differences we're still your friend we're still your neighbor.
- Here if there's a disagreement, people can agree to disagree. In the end we're still neighbors and still friends.

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

- Biggest challenges are the ones that affect Vermont and the rest of the world, energy, global warming, etc.
- I worry about a world that our children will grow up a feeling little or no control over these outside influences and global issues.
- There are opportunities if we manage to provide high-speed internet and efficient communications, if we do this the opportunities will be endless.
- Affordable housing is going to be a major problem. Reappraisal has been scary for the jumps in numbers.
- A lot of towns do surveys that ask: What do you want most for your town? The common response is we don't want it to change; we want it to stay the same. This is hard to manage and unrealistic.
- For a number of farms, taxes are a big burden. Farmers are forced to sell land to developers to pay their taxes even though they'd rather not see it developed. A lot of the times there are area farms that are no longer operating and have been passed down to children in the family that are no longer operating and it's hard for the children to start up again, so they subdivide and sell the land.
- Farming is part of a fabric of the community, we are losing that input into the community and you can't get it back when it's gone.
- We enjoy being able to take a ride on the back roads, losing the farms completely changes the landscape.
- With loss of farms agricultural products become more expensive. There are issues of spoilage, bacteria, and viruses. These are now global issues.
- The way that we purchase and pay for food is going to change dramatically. That is something that is an opportunity for local farms. Instead of focusing on keeping the land open, focus on keeping it a working landscape. We treasure this more = good example is Jasper Hill Farms.
- There are opportunities for producing soybeans.
- We shouldn't get hung up on the cost difference of local food. We might not be buying our food from super centers in the future anyway. Rising food prices, distribution and shipping. Diminishing local food production for biofuels is a short term trend. We've paid in more ways than one.
- Challenges – crumbling nature of our infrastructure to get food to market. We need to focus on this especially if we are going to be the red basket of the northeast. We need to upgrade our rail facilities, shipping facilities, and trans-shipping facilities. We need the ability to access the rail lines in each community.

- Annual maintenance of existing transportation facilities is a challenge. The problem is transportation is connected to land use; it affects where people are working and where they are living, the relationship between work and home, where you live and where you purchase goods.
- The demographic shift of part-time residents in the NEK isn't linked to global warming, but it is linked to an increased national market for second homes.
- All of the municipal infrastructure systems have been neglected for many many years and the population is too small to fix these things. Small population gives us a limited tax base. Not many economic generators to help with infrastructure upgrades.
- On the other side it's hard to find people to run the infrastructure systems, because the jobs aren't glamorous or high paying, but they do pay a livable wage.
- Opportunity for a return to manufacturing that would be a boom for our economic situation. Couple the strong work ethic and strong entrepreneurial sense and tie it to a realization that Vermont has a quality of life that is important to employers or a manufacturing enterprise. Vermonters should promote themselves in this light – quality production of goods and quality of life.
- Second home growth – as this sector grows there will be some profound changes, such as a shift of families with young children leaving the area and the consolidation of schools because of it. For Granby, this was a huge blow to the community. We have many schools that are facing decreasing populations.
- Rich keep getting richer and the poor keep getting poorer. Focus on welfare services to help people grow better.
- Erosion of the middle class sector is occurring, may not be full affecting here.
- Second home issue comes down to the land use, it affects values and impacts the ability to stay where you are or maintain land that is affordable enough for farmers.
- Governance is an issue. I like Vermont's local level of government; it is good but hugely inefficient at times. There is little interest in working together with neighboring towns, like for maintaining roads, or water systems. Merging of systems needs to be done. It's too tough to tackle these problems alone.
- As the population ages, some of the civic engagement has dwindled. My children and grandchildren are not stepping up because of time constraints. No willingness to sacrifice time to get involved.
- Maybe its an issue of the opportunities that are available for young people. Young people feel there are better opportunities else ware. The average age of firefighters is 56.
- It takes two incomes to survive now. You are so pressed with working and raising your family and there's no time left to do these activities. Time poverty.
- Brain drain - is it a long-term problem? We may not have the opportunities to keep people where they are, but we should have opportunities for them once they are ready to come back.

- We have an aging population that is spread out all over the place; aging in place is a challenge to provide the services needed. Tightening budgets, transportation costs. How do you provide those services to people that are so spread out all over the landscape? We're so rural; NEK has 10% of state's population and 20% of state's landmass.
- For Senior Services there's a lack of transit connections, or the ability to get to jobs if they want something part-time, seniors also move out because it's cheaper to rent. They may already have a house that's paid off, but they can't get to the doctor so they move.
- Becoming an E-state and expanding telemedicine could solve a lot of these issues. But again this is tied to the telecommunications infrastructure.

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

- Make all the challenges our priorities, particularly the global issues. I think we could do more than what we are doing now. Housing, livable wages, energy, global warming.
- We need to learn to integrate changes in order to maintain what we have.
- Given the aging population and addressing the youth, the Area Agency on Aging has had level funding for the last eight years. We've made a choice to allow seniors to age in place, now we need to fund it. We could utilize our youth to help with the aging population. Create jobs with a livable wage for support professions for the elderly (i.e. nurses).
- Providing more technical assistance to the municipalities. I think it's really important to maintain a level of autonomy at the same time. The county or RPC shouldn't be king. It should offer local support.
- Start changing the mindset of our future generations, too much consumerism, there is something fundamentally wrong to have to go and spend money to keep our economy moving. There needs to be an alternative to a consumerist society.
- We need to be more conservative, our wants are not necessarily our needs. There are other options. There are things that we can do more locally.
- This region isn't as inundated with consumerism, we have a great opportunity to instill a sense of opportunity to buy less, pay more (for sustainable goods), and support local economies.
- There will be a shift in consumer patterns. Decades of spending, rather than saving is coming to an end. Shopping as a form of recreation is going to come to an end.
- Land use – the importance of the agricultural fabric, the ability to produce food and goods locally. Going to see a need for more regional scale manufacturing and food sources.

- We need to offer more incentives for development in traditional village centers, support rail infrastructure, connect more local farm goods to local markets, grab onto existing infrastructure to support these models.
- We're past the 50% mark of remaining oil in the ground, rates and usage has still continued to go up. Technology is not energy; technologies will not fix loss of our energy resources by 100%. We need to also change our lifestyles, built environment, and past times.
- Vermonters are better poised to deal with this change. People living off the grid, we have plenty of technologies that Vermonters are already using. The state needs to take advantage of this time to help people better adjust.
- We should focus on the family unit. There are problems with families and the loss of time for parents and values.
- Develop renewable energy resources; emphasize building a diversified energy portfolio and local projects. For example: Greensboro Village is re-establishing their hydro dam.
- Renewable energy development should be able also address homes that already exist. Focus on existing farms and homes to be more energy efficient not just new development.

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

(answered above)

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Notes, Caledonia County Community Forum day
May 8th, 2008
St. Johnsbury Academy Staff and Faculty

Scribe: Sarah Waring

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

- Vermont means a state with common sense. It's a place where people have contact and are connected to each other. People know folks in Montpelier and do business with state government. It's a state where you hold onto believe that you can affect the destiny of the state.
- It's a state with equalitarianism. I'm coming from suburbia where people didn't care who you are. But here it's different – people don't care what your job is, there's no status attached to that – instead it's about you as a person.
- The scale of the state makes that possible. There's socioeconomic inclusion in Vermont – with the exception of the artificial communities! We have a cross section of people in the state and everyone knows someone.
- Vermont means family and a cherished childhood. I couldn't wait to get back here, but you have to be prepared and be ready to sacrifice for what you want. I started my own company when I came back because there weren't any jobs really.
- There's a commitment here to serving kids with disabilities. The special education kids.
- To me VT means an availability of opportunity. We're within driving distance of the best metropolitan areas on the earth, but we can also step out the back door and get our hands dirty.

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

- Ch - Concerned about keeping young people and highly accomplished (high powered) students in Vermont.
- Ch- Example of someone's daughter who said "I will never come back to Vermont" but now she wants to and has to face the reality of living here.
- Ch- Example of person with four children none of whom can return because the job market here just doesn't compete with the job market elsewhere.
- Opp- The issue of brain drain is a rural issue – Vermont does have to do a better job of generating new jobs and good jobs for people. But if we can create an economy and communities for 30 year olds – especially those with families – then we can do something in a small area which is particularly important.
- Opp- We should re-organize our fiscal priorities for rural areas. We are land rich and cash poor in rural Vermont and we need people who own the land staying

here. Right now they are being forced off or they can't help but subdivide to pay costs.

- Opp- It's been a long time since we at the state level looked at all the different types of taxes you can pay (example of vehicle taxes in New Hampshire – but no sales taxes). We need to look at this list again and then re-adjust the tax structure and support the projects that we've already funded. It's fine to give ourselves special things – example of conserved land in southern VT being paid for by the state – but in times of economic downturn, we can't focus on these gifts, we need to pay for the necessities. We need to re-examine housing. We need to look at transportation infrastructure – we need basic road repair. Two mottos for Vermont in the future: 'Fund what you've done', and 'Return to the Basics'.
- Ch and Opp -It seems like Vermont is caught between a competition of 'covered bridge' and 'factory' ideals. We are here because we like the image of the covered bridge, but without the factory we don't survive. There needs to be a balance for VT.
- Ch and Opp - The elderly represent an important challenge and opportunity. VT is rapidly aging – but communities here need to continue to stay attractive to people.
- Ch- Where will our power come from in the future?
- Ch- In state tuition rates are challenge. We're 47th or 48th in the nation for in-state higher education tuitions.
- Opp – quality of life here. I moved away and came back, but I'm a nurse and I could move anywhere in the world. I desperately wanted to raise my family here because it's not like other places.
- Ch – there's an organism-ness in Vermont. All the small villages have their own ways of doing things. This is fine in one way, but trying to work together is hard when you try to do things at the state level. We have really great people here – and there's progress that's happening in education, but it's being done by the people who don't have to be caught up in the system. This is not a good model for consensus on any common issues for the state.
- Ch – we've made a conscious decision to localize education – why would we want to consolidate? The issue was acknowledged that towns want to keep their schools, and that smaller classes are good but we didn't move forward.
- Ch – Getting students to the national standards. You'll always find that the last 20% of students can't get there because of socio-economic situations. We have to look at families and alternative ways to support kids.
- Opp – How do we support our communities? People have to work together to realize and better meet the needs of different clientele. We need to provide support and simultaneously keep high standards.

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

- Making Vt a place where people want to raise families. At the end of the day you don't find people who can afford the taxes complaining about being here. They know what they are getting for the high cost.

- Efficiencies – we need to attract people who will contribute and want to live here.
- Resources in rural places are going to support people who are moving in as opposed to people who are here already.
- I hope that in the name of efficiency we don't move toward big government. We had local area schools when we came here, but now they're gone and that's a big loss. I don't want efficiency determined by big consolidated government.
- It's difficult to work together when everyone is protecting their own little piece. Even just in Peacham we're very diverse!
- DON'T LOSE TOWN MTG.
- Promoting cohesiveness and working together should be a priority.
- Accessing agencies is very difficult – both as educators and as parents. Even for our small size of a state the bureaucracy is big for people to handle.

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

- St J is the largest town in this area of the state and so disproportionately we have the lower socio-economic end of the spectrum – because this is where the services are. People come here because they can live here.
- The middle school is failing – the school isn't doing as well because there are fewer and fewer kids with a more intact family structure.
- The distribution of incomes here is skewed. Professional management positions were here and there was labor that paid well. But now the neediest kids have moved to St J. The state will find you an apartment in St. J, the state has located the prisons here, and all these have provided a drain on the communities.
- Infrastructure is really important here – BROADBAND, cell phone coverage, water systems and the state isn't bonding for a lot of new things right now. But this is the best time to bond, raise taxes and get us out of the recession and resolve a lot of issues (example of this being done in the past at a time of economic downturn and it working for VT).
- Permitting process is strangling us when good solid businesses are looking to locate here. Even our local businesses, like EHV Weidmann have decided to locate out of state. This is a HUGE loss of morale, when something that's been here forever has to shut its doors or expand elsewhere.
- The other side of the state truly is the 'West Coast' of Vt. We should re-prioritize this side of the state to get more attention.
- We need certainty and predictability when it comes to development.
- We're competing again Littleton – they have a downtown because they have critical mass.
- *What about St. Jay academy? Trends that you react to globally or nationally?*
- Thirty years ago we had 24 boarders here, now we have 256 boarders. But at the same time the day student number hasn't gone down significantly – really taking care of the kids is the most pressing problem locally. We have people living here

fraudulently so that their children can attend the Academy. There number of students is going down, in general.

- But at the same time the value of the dollar going down means that we do have more European students. The stock markets are in our favor in some ways.
- We watch the international stock markets and the political situations in many countries. We watch the Chinese economy and the invasion of Kuwait was big deal to us here.
- One of the biggest local impacts for the school is broadband and cell phone coverage. Kids just won't come here if they can't expect to be online and connected the way they are at home. It's not just to attract the kids, but also the parents –they have to do business and expect to be able to be reached even when they are on travel.
- Even more important is for our local kids here. If they can't access the world the way these international students are comfortable doing then our playing field is not level. Vermont kids can't compete in the global world. Even for professionals too!

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Notes, Caledonia County Community Forum day
May 8th, 2008
PUBLIC EVENING MEETING AT ST. JOHNSBURY SCHOOL

Scribe: Laurie Zilbauer

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

- This meeting is a good example. Just having other Vermonters being accessible to one another to meet on different issues, working to cooperate with all citizens. A more accessible state.
- Vermonters want open local and state government. We're independent and brought up to be tolerant.
- Community is very important. Taking care of each other. Having a center of the community, such as schools or a church is important. Maintaining a sense of community is important to Vermonters.
- Vermonters are a bit more frugal than other people; don't spend more than they have to, especially in government.
- Vermont is more in tune in keeping the state character, rather than over developing. People are more aware of who they are and what they want.
- Living close to the land is value that a lot of Vermonters share. We appreciate the land, stars, mountains, and clean water. It's treasured here. A lot of people want to keep it that way, want development done on a "Vermont Scale", not like Anywhere, USA.
- Vermont has always been thought of as a state of mind: positive, character, special, because of why people come here and people are happy with what they see and now they want to be here.
- The way people communicate with each other and how they are with the environment.
- There is more space for yourself. Vermont has a bit of a national image, as liberal, outdoorsy, and environmental.
- It's a place where when you have liberalism and conservatism on a circular scale rather than a line that divides people. It's a special place. Humility is somewhat of a value.
- There isn't a need to beat the guy next door, to have three more cars, no competition for material things.
- Self-reliance is important. Energy self-sufficiency, this is a challenge with preservation of the natural environment. A bit of a conflict.
- There's a good feeling about small town Vermont, we look after our neighbors and they look after us. Small town comfort. Helping one another.

- We need to move away from Vermont and then move back to realize how wonderful it is. Neighbors are like brothers and sisters, they care about you. They are the kind of people that care about each other.
- Even job difficulties have been accepted for people to live here.
- I'm accepted as a Vermonter because of my involvement and willingness to participate in the community.
- There's a sense of the possible in Vermont. When there are issues and problems, together the scale of Vermont is manageable. There's self-reliance but interaction with neighbors, it's easier to reach your goals. Working together.
- You can access representation easier too, legislatures.
- There is a sense of pride in being a Vermonter. People are curious about it and attracted to it.
- There's clean air, nice people, people who care, people who get involved and have action. It's not necessarily intellectual its in your body, you feel it. It's a combination of wanting to be a part of something and it's all encompassing – holistic.
- Vermont is the #1 safest state for children. A factor that attracts many families to move to this state.
- Vermonters have a pride of perseverance here; in Kentucky we called it being stubborn.

Looking ahead through our lifetimes and those of our children, what are the challenges and opportunities that you see for Vermont?

- The Area Agency on Aging has challenges with the changing demographics, an increasing aging population. Communities need to come together to share resources for the elderly. There's a challenge in keeping this demographic healthy and engaged in their community.
- There's an opportunity for employment and job creation to meet the needs of this demographic.
- A main challenge is getting wired. Telecommunications is needed for jobs.
- Growing without destroying the environment. Go back to growing your own food; keep the state running on local products and the local economy.
- There's a heavy reliance on the property tax and it hurts communities as people try to maintain their possession of large land tracts. We need to look at all ways to generate revenue in an area rather than property taxes.
- There are many challenges that go past our state borders, such as energy, food, global warming, social unrest, etc.
- There are opportunities are to build on the precedent of ingenious people and inventions to solve problems. There are many social changes that have come out of

this place; we have been one of the first places to address it, slavery, civil unions. We should try to use these precedents to move forward.

- Peak Oil may challenge New England's Village structure because having the old village structure is needed for a post oil world; small scale, center of the community, walk able.
- Maintain compact small scale development rather than sprawl. House size, etc.
- A large segment of our population hasn't been able to or motivated enough to get the kind of education they need to be successful in today's society. Does it touch the rest of us enough to address it?
- Being raised in a family that doesn't work with today's society?
- Education is a priority for every community; we need new solutions, combine services. There's a stigma around substance abuse and mental health too this stigma needs to be addressed. Emphasize that we can all live up to our potential to contribute to our own lives and our communities, not be treated separately.
- A challenge is the graying of Vermont. It's harder for young professionals to leave and then come back because of affordable housing. The influx of young and energetic people is a challenge.
- It's a challenge to figure out a balance of welcoming newcomers and others that may bring bad ideas from where they came from that conflict with our values, like big box versus local stores. How to maintain the values.
- Vermont is perceived as not being business friendly, and there are a lot of problems from a lack of jobs for young people. Make us more business friendly to create these jobs or change the perception that these jobs don't exist when they do. People act on perceptions not on realities.
- Jobs are needed for all ages and for older people. We train people over 55 and they are paid minimum wage. They do their jobs well and should make more money.
- Will my children's children be able to afford to go to college?
- Jobs are important and hard to find here.
- I don't think there is a difference in perception and reality, the jobs are not there. The economy is difficult right now.
- A big problem is around class, the fact that the jobs and people, employers and skills needed, just don't match up. We need to match up those needs. Connect the job category needed and the people that can fill those categories. Ignore differences to accomplish this.
- We put too much on college education rather than the trades.
- Health care is a lot better in Vermont; we need a heavier emphasis on primary care.
- Evaluate our priorities for what to commit our resources too. Tax picture was good and we bought good things, there's a shortfall now, so we need to evaluate our priorities and cut our taxes to meet the current capacity for taxing. Only do extra when there's a surplus.

- I'm puzzled at the business community supporting a veto that required full funding for the decommissioning of Vermont Yankee. This is unwise and wrong for future generations. This is an opportunity for Vermonters to think seriously about replacing the power that comes from Vermont Yankee. There are practical areas of energy that are not being pursued.
- In Vermont's history, we've had key points where we have married resourcefulness and improvement of infrastructure. Roads and electricity are an example, and now we're being hindered by not upgrading the infrastructure of high-speed internet access. This should be an important priority as it affects health care, business development, and telecommuting.

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

- We should access the information that already exists for each of these topic areas. Use existing resources.
- Energy wasn't enough of a priority before and that's why Vermont Yankee went the way it did.
- Children and early childhood education, birth to age five has incredible brain development. Each child should start out with equal access and opportunity.
- Affordable health care, health insurance costs are compounding. We need to take a look at the actual cost of health care.
- Children need to have an equal access for nutritional food, a large amount of kids are going hungry. Children are going to school hungry. Where is this government spending its money?
- Infrastructure should be addressed on a national and state level. Air traffic, roads, bridges, electrical infrastructure. It's 200+ year old infrastructure. Legislature wants to bite off more than it can chew. Has a direct affect on all Vermonters. Repair and Replace.
- We need to change the way infrastructure is financed. Majority of that \$ comes from this community, for all the facilities. I don't know how this small community can support the infrastructure they have. Originally all the money for construction came from the Federal level – now locals are expected to pay for it to maintain it.
- The rate of change can affect quality of life. Our quality of life is closely connected with low expectations; Vermonters do not expect grand things. There's a balance historically, with the past and a demand for change. Newcomers come here with the expectations that they want the same level of quality and services for certain things, but this is unrealistic and they don't understand it. If you are prepared to expect things to be quaint (i.e. dirt roads vs. paved), your quality of life would be a lot higher. Change comes but it comes slowly enough that it's not highly susceptible or affects our quality of life. A slow rate of change is needed. Infrastructure should not be improved too much. It all comes down to a matter of expectations.

- Infrastructure = water, roads, center around the basics. We should balance bonding and raising taxes to improve the infrastructure both are needed in this time of budget constraints & infrastructure needs. It's never going to be one or the other.
- There is an opportunity to pursue the distributed grid or smart grid (net-metering), the idea is to allow very small to medium size producers to contribute electricity into the grid. A distributive grid will make it easier on the network as a whole, promote renewable energy, and allow many people to contribute to base load electrical power. Everyone can provide base load electrical power.
- We should help provide jobs for our children. The St. J industrial park has 1,000 jobs or more, it's here because of quality help, training programs, but the biggest cost to major employers is electricity. There is no more lower cost electricity in the state than Vermont Yankee power. 1/3rd of our power comes from Vermont Yankee and these companies count on firm low-cost power. The most important thing is consistent low-cost power.
- Education is a priority = leads to better jobs and a better life.
- Vermont needs myth busters, there are so many myths. Address the perceptions and myths that are holding the state back.
- If you get taught learning earlier its fun, later it's not fun.
- Villages are valuable, small scale, compact infrastructure. We need to value the resources that exist in our compact downtowns and villages.
- Survey of business community of what skills they need. Match the skills & jobs to the people who have them or are willing to learn them. Involve the high schools and technical schools.
- What businesses need is what we are doing in our schools, speaking skills, computations, continuing to learn, and developing lifelong learners. Training is available, but you need to come with the raw material to do it and be able to apply it. Focus on Education from early childhood to college. Each thing builds on the next; people should focus on a continuing to move forward.
- There's a drive to build housing that's too expensive for the people that want it and need it. Look at the housing stock and what gets built, make sure we're building affordable housing that's of appropriate scale.
- Vermont Yankee provides power at 3-4 cents/kWh, but it's all subsidized. Does it still apply as cheap power, is it real without subsidies? We should focus on solar panels. You can get 5 kWh on a nice day. Southern facing buildings should have solar panels and maximize passive solar capacity. Or develop more small wind facilities, like at the Danville school. Push more distributive systems.
- What is considered built-out for the VT ski industry? Is standing still moving backwards or do we need to continually need to expand our ski resorts to move forward. What do we want to see Vermont as in the future? Maybe we should ask ourselves in 30 years do we want to see Vermont that has 1.3 million people like the state of NH? Or does it have 20% more people than it has today?

- Towns need to be proactive about planning and zoning in their communities. You can't just sit back and let developers decide for you.
- Vermonters need to realize what they decide for the future may have pros and cons.
- What we need is focus in the state. We have a whole number of issues and we're not focused on what's most important. We need to decide. What is the connection between these priorities? One solution may have positive impacts on other issues. As a state we shouldn't be so unfocused.
- We need to figure out if we want government to provide these needed services and cut them back when the money isn't there or grow the economy and have a trickle down effect. Let's grow the economy in a reasonable way.
- Property taxes go up and up, it's too expensive to live here, it needs to be generated some other way. Encourage business to come here and always be friendly. Otherwise where is the money to fix our infrastructure?
- Ireland used to be like Vermont, it came out of that by being really really connected to the outside world. Our goal should be a rather aggressive promotion of the internet and high-speed optics that can bypass our roads. Labor can be transmitted digitally and have internal businesses. Ireland is an example of what Vermont could be.
- I hear focus on our Vermont Communities, like the food resources are there, but the access to food is the problem. Distribution is the issue, when the prices get to high it's going to come and we'll have to deal with it.

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

- Windmills, high school budgets, it's hard to evoke the energy to make things happen locally and respond to what's happening statewide.
- Your community is a key issue, people identify with community on a fairly small scale, and there is a sense of us (small) and other (outside). It's a challenge to have a sense of community at several scales, and work constructively on every level. There are not a lot of things in place to make things happen. Things to do and think NEK wide. People's focus tends to be much smaller.
- How do you embrace these statewide efforts and still focus on traditional/local challenges. State collects the state income tax, sales tax, school tax, and we are stuck dealing with the mother load of problems. We have limited local resources for addressing our local values and goals.
- We need leadership at the state level, leadership in a futuristic sense for decisions that will be made for the future not just right now.

- Not everybody is going to be happy; the core concern is going to be making people happy. This whole thing has to get out of the “we-they” syndrome in order to make any progress.
- Railroads will be looked at again. We are going to have major changes and no solid answers to our problems, but this is a good thing. How are we going to heat our houses next winter? Uncertainties call for a time for creative thinking, etc. We have to look for them and engage everyone and all solutions as well – be proactive.
- There’s synergy happening in St. Johnsbury, it’s contagious. The internet, solar energy, the arts, its all coming together.
- Keep in our minds to support our local businesses.
- Develop a housing retirement community around two operating farms. Help local farms and keep the elderly engaged. This is a way to deal with many many things at the same time. This is happening all around the country now and it’s an excellent model we can employ here.
- The conversation is geared toward economics. A lot of the work that has been done has been grass roots. We are starting an effort to communicate and coordinate grass roots projects that are happening.
- Maybe its time we mingled seniors with large houses with small young families that can’t afford housing. Trade housing/space to live for services.
- How much more isolated will your community become with the cost of fuel going up? We need to encourage car pooling, drying your clothes outside, helping your neighbors, asking people if they need help.