

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

ST ALBANS Community Forum Day notes January 24th, 2008

The following notes were collected from focus group meetings and forums throughout the day spent in Franklin 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 January 24th:

- St Albans Senior Center members and board
- St Albans for the Future and economic development group
- Franklin County Community Action and human services
- Franklin County Home Health Care Providers
- St Albans Community Justice Center and guests
- St Albans Cooperative Creamery group
- St Albans evening public forum at Bellows Free Academy

Facilitators: Paul Costello, Catherine Dimitruk, Sarah Waring

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COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report, January 24th, 2007
Franklin County Senior Center

Scribe: Emily Stebbins

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

- I've always lived here. You couldn't find a better place to be born. Good place. Good people.
- It's a good town with a lot of good people, and it's a mixture, too.
- I've lived in other states and wanted to come back, because of the mountains and the lakes.
- Four seasons
- People in Vermont are a lot closer and friendlier. They'll help each other if they need help—barn-raising, taking collections. And that's still true today.
- Vermont is a safer place; not as fast-paced as other places
- If our neighbors don't see us, they call or seek us out to see if we need help.
- Our pals were either Irish or French, and they were Catholics. We were Episcopalians, and our home became the gathering place.

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

- There's more robberies, break-ins, and murders now—you wouldn't have seen that 30 years ago.
- You have to lock your doors now—you didn't use to.
- A woman asked to use my bathroom, but she stole all my medicine.
- We have a lot of foreign people, people new to the community, and I think a lot of it has to do with that.
- The police will come if you call, but I don't think they'll follow through; they wouldn't fingerprint
- There are more police officers now than there used to be.
- Oil tank fill-up cost \$440, every month
- Drugs and gangs, safety

- Every Vermonter should have health insurance and prescription drug coverage
- Jobs! We need good-paying jobs so people can make an honest living.
- The railroad used to pay well.
- What's going to keep our grandchildren here if there are no jobs?
- Give a break on property taxes for school taxes, especially when you get into your 70s. It gets hard for seniors.
- Gas/energy prices
- Walmart! Or a Target. We haven't got any other stores in St. Albans to buy from, or they're too expensive. We can't afford to shop here.
- The variety of products for different sizes and basic household good can't be found here. Fishman's, Woolworths, Ames—you used to be able to afford them, and they had more sizes, too.
- We need a store here that causes everything so we don't have to drive to Burlington.
- There are more plus-sized people in St. Albans than there are petites.
- We need more classes for kids instead of missing schools for hockey and soccer trips. Too much focus on sports and less on education.
- We need some good-singing men!
- And good restaurants.
- Local events involving schoolchildren.
- The senior bus is a good feature, but it should have a wider range, cover more area.
- We should have a bike lane all the way from downtown up to Hannaford—then I could ride my scooter.

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

- Lower taxes
- Lower prices, period, especially on oil, gas, and everything.
- The President will be giving a tax break, but a lot of people aren't making enough money to pay income tax in the first place, so they won't get a break.

- Universal health coverage for everyone
- Program to help young people stay in VT for college, or to bring them back to work here. It is possible--I have grandchildren who went right through college and have good jobs here and make good money
- Address problems at both state and local level—they should be working harder!
- We need a Walmart or a Target here, because you can't get basic goods if you don't drive.
- More education—many can't afford it.
- There's some luxury things that we don't even have here in VT, like Red Lobster
- A good restaurant you can afford to eat in
- Get with it—don't wait too long!

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

(The conversation was mostly about this community, and so this question seemed covered in existing notes).

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report, January 24th, 2007
Franklin County Senior Center Board Members

Scribe: Emily Stebbins

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

- Strong identity
- Independence, pride
- Strong sense of community in St. Albans
- Parties at the Senior Center are lively affairs with music and singing

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

- Preventing isolation of seniors—provide adequate transportation, deliver meals
- Sr. Center has about 750 members; over 50% are over age 75; many are retired schoolteachers living on less than \$750-1000/month. Many widows are living on Social Security/railroad pension incomes.
- Often widows are left with no idea of finances or what to do—they can't even grieve because they are forced into so many big decisions without adequate information. There's a huge knowledge gap in being prepared to live independently. People get confused, and so are easily intimidated and taken advantage of. They don't know where to turn for advice. No one uses the 211 hotline.
- FCSC offered Medicaid Part D information to over 700 seniors. We're turning into an educational service—on estates, trusts, finances, Medicare/aid.
- There has not been great interest locally in Catamount Health. There seems to be no interest in state agencies in getting help for people here.
- Cost of living for seniors: energy, prescription drugs, healthcare—for many, it's not the cost of living, it's the cost of existing. A huge percentage of their income goes to fixed expenses. So things such as driving become an issue of affordability if car insurance premiums increase, for example.
- With increasing taxes, many must choose between housing and medical/fixed costs. Sometimes, even if their home is paid for, they can't afford to keep it because the taxes are too high.

- Transportation is a major challenge for seniors. Many can't drive, or shouldn't. City offers a fixed route bus service; you must be within ¼ mile of the route to get service, unless you ask, and seniors are not going to beg.
- One company in Georgia, VT will hire seniors part-time, but many can't get there because they lack transportation.
- If you have too much money in savings or assets, you don't qualify for other gov't support, such as Catamount Health or food stamps
- There is no/inadequate state/federal money to help with the infrastructure and transportation that is needed to provide adequate services to seniors.
- We need to define what a "senior center" is so we can be on equal footing with mental health centers, etc. We fight to get grants for \$5,000. Our whole budget is \$200,000, and we had to spend \$80,000 this summer on a roof repair.
- "No one in Vermont can take pride in what we do for seniors."
- Range of services offered to seniors here is far less than is common in more urban areas
- We're not delivering Meals on Wheels, we're delivering a message that we care. Often that is the only meal they get or the only person they see all week. In many homes, the freezer and fridge is almost bare—40-50% have little to nothing in the refrigerator. FCSC delivers a hot nutritional meal prepared at Northwestern Medical Center, plus a bag with milk, bread/roll and dessert. Some get 2 meals; some get 1 meal and share it with their partner. Cost is \$3/meal; voluntary reimbursement donations have dropped from an average of \$1.26 to \$.78 because people don't have the money. FCSC also delivers 130 monthly food baskets, which people must pay for. Many are crying when picking up their baskets.
- Local churches are doing a good job, but they're not rich churches—they're often funded by older people, too, so returns will diminish. They're focused on children, the homeless, soup kitchens.
- Pets are in many cases all the "family" that an isolated senior has, their sole source of social interaction.
- FCSC depends on 14,000-15,000 volunteer hours per year. They foresee a loss of volunteers in the future—people have to take of their own lives, and in general they're not as charitable, or they can't afford to take the time. Volunteerism is down all over the nation.
- Partnering with the schools for volunteering works and is a good relationship, but it could be better.
- Tax breaks might incite more younger people to volunteer

- VFW, Legion, St. Luke's parish, local restaurants all help out, but people like to take meals here at the Sr. Center. Home-school mothers help out.
- There are few opportunities for seniors to socialize – there's a stigma attached to senior centers in Vermont and nationwide, especially for younger seniors. They're seen as an old folks place.
- We all have children who've had to leave Vermont for jobs. My two children have unique engineering degrees, and there are no jobs for them here.
- VT children are not going to college here because it's too expensive
- And even if you can find a job, where will you live that you can afford?
- Older parents are left behind in VT with no support system—there's no family around to take care of the elders. I fear it will get worse for our children.
- Franklin County is the fastest-graying area of the state. The younger generation is not here, and if they are, they're too busy working two jobs and trying to support themselves.
- There are very few retraining opportunities for older people, and qualifying criteria are prohibitive.
- “Marriage penalty” forces many people who would like to get married to just live with their partner instead. For example, one young couple with disabilities has decided not to get married because they would both lose benefits/services.

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

- You can't piecemeal the priorities when it comes to senior services. You have to provide security first, and then things like transportation. There is no quick fix to a systematic problem.
- There has to be standardization and definition of senior support services—what does it mean to be a “senior center,” and for what funding streams are they eligible? Sr centers need a stable base of support to maintain buildings and infrastructure, and to establish clearly defined relationships and partnerships with other centers in the region. “The rest we can handle, with volunteers and partnerships.”
- Transportation: we do a good job here for dialysis patients and the most severe needs, but not enough is available to prevent isolation and provide security.
- Guidelines/qualification criteria for assistance need to be more flexible for unique circumstances. We must change the thresholds and allow for flexibility on a case-

by-case basis. For example, the foster grandparents program offers a small stipend and is income-sensitive, so you can't participate if you make too much money.

- Advice to the next generation: save for retirement; don't depend on government support.

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

(This conversation had already mostly covered this question and respondents agreed that they were speaking specifically about St Albans and Franklin County.)

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report, January 24th, 2007
St Albans For the Future and economic development group

Scribe: Emily Stebbins

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

- It's unique, a respite, not like the rest of the country. I value what's unique about Vermont, including independence. We have different opinions and approaches, perhaps due to our smallness, our economic climate. It's a place where you can be independent, but small enough where you can feel connected. You may not know every Vermonter, but the degrees of separation are very small. In what other state can you walk down the street and be passing by your Senator, or your governor. There's a connection to all levels of leadership.
- Home. It's pretty unusual to go to a small party, and find the governor there. If you have a problem, all we do is come down to City Hall and see Liz and cry on her shoulder. It's warm and fuzzy.
- When looking to attract new and innovative businesses, having the homey quality of life is a huge incentive for companies looking where to locate.
- I see Vermont as slow, which I like, and is why I live here. Not everything is in a hurry. Relatives outside of Vermont say it takes us an hour and a half to watch 60 minutes, and I like that.
- WE value aesthetics, scenery, Lake Champlain and the mountains.
- We very much appreciate our surroundings—not only people but the trees and the brooks.
- If we didn't have that beauty, we wouldn't be Vermont.
- We like that independence, we don't want to be like anyone else
- There's a closeness here, a willingness to take people in, a great sense of community. Everybody gets, "well, you're not a Vermonter," but that's OK. As an outsider I feel very welcomed. When people recognize things I've said, as an outsider, it really makes me feel at home.
- They accept that we may have different ideas about how to do things, but they take that into consideration.
- There's a sense of respect.

- Community, caring, networking, easy access to decision-makers, but the biggest thing is our unique perspective in terms of close access and a caring feeling across the state as to the impact on people.

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

- Job creation, keeping our youth and our children here in Vermont.
- Not just job creation, but good jobs, jobs that pay a livable wage and will keep people in Vermont.
- We have many colleges and schools here, and so many students from out of state, but they go back to where they came from, they don't stay here.
- Young Vtters seeking to go to college find it very expensive. There needs to be less-expensive options for higher education, both for young people and adults.
- Financial hardship for families and individuals. Looking ahead, the demographic shift to more senior citizens creates a health insurance, tax issues, teachers' pension plan is shortfunded, Medicaid issues, they're already putting more into Catamount than expected—all those expenses will need to be covered by fewer working people. We have responsibility to those who come before us to ensure that they're not enduring any hardship. If taxes continue to go up locally and statewide, it's going to be even harder to recruit businesses and maintain a local tax rate.
- Permitting process takes too long.
- Downtown we have lots of old, historic buildings with vacant space on upper floors. It's cost-prohibitive for potential investors to come in and be able to do renovations and recoup their investment. There has to be more incentives. There's historic tax credits available, but there's no pot of money available at the state for seed money.
- Flexibility. It all has to be done at once—you can't sprinkle a building one floor at a time. If you have to have two egresses, there's no bend to the rules.
- City portion of tax bill is minimal. The majority of tax credits available would have to come from the state.
- If there's a \$4 or 5m renovation, you might get some money from historic preservation, but the minute you deviate from that you lose the money. There isn't general money for business investment. We need to find out from developers what they need from us to make VT more attractive.

- Many complaints about workers' compensation. Some companies want to hire more people, but they won't because they don't want to pay more workers' comp insurance.
- Double-edged sword of thinking outside the box vs. keeping things the way they are. Dynamic between preserving VT's heritage and growing our economy. How do we change in the VT way?
- We start to see encouragement to do out-of-the-box thinking from Flatlanders, but see resistance from natives.
- Many people move to VT, influencing that creative thinking, or preventing it because they want to keep it as is. Natives know we need change and new jobs, but newcomers may have more resources and want to preserve everything. But this not as prevalent in Franklin County as it is the Northeast Kingdom and other places.
- We lost a lot of input when we went to Act 60. We had towns acting for themselves to create industrial parks and attract businesses, but now there's no incentive because they can't impact their own tax rate as much.
- Threat to commerce of new border-Passport requirement.
- If large-scale ag continues to pay and be a good lifestyle, it will continue to be a piece of economic picture. If not, young people won't see incentives to take over the farm.

Opportunities

- Rail opportunities here did not have support from town or city because there was nothing to gain from. It's hard to get the town fathers interested because two businesses locating here wouldn't necessarily lower our tax rate.
- Railroad is more a state opportunity than a local opportunity, except by exception. Commuter service from St. Albans to Essex/IBM, Fanny Allen, Burlington—would benefit St. Albans but also a much bigger area. Would take trucks and cars off the highways, provide jobs. Opportunity to move the huge percentage of Franklin County IBM employees to rail—but can St. Albans do that? No.
- How much have we really developed our connection to Montreal? Could that support economic development in the future?
- Capitalize on our geographic location—proximity to Canada, location between Montreal and Burlington.
- There's always a discussion about being more regional, looking to Plattsburgh, Canada, Montreal--but no one wants to give up their little kingdom. As baby

boomers age, it will be crucial to pull from every region and have relationships in place.

- We send 8,000 people south to work in Chittenden County or points south. One third of our employable workers. That's our opportunity for generating a workforce here in Franklin County, which helps with transportation wear-and-tear, carbon footprint, etc. We're considering putting banners at the three exits: "Tired of driving? Look at opportunities in Franklin County at www.fcjobs.com." We have skilled people going south who have never researched the opportunities available to them here.
- More education/marketing to people about what is available here in Franklin County.
- Doing outreach to area high schools, targeting those who aren't going to college. Rail Dispatch Center employs 20 skilled workers at \$50k a year.
- Homeland Security—we're one of five centers in the country, and they just announced 200 more jobs. We have about 1200 jobs here now, both contractors and federal employees. As passport requirements and other issues arise, there's potential for the St. Albans center to grow. Handle the H1B visa program, which brings people from other countries in to work, so as demographics shift, we need to issue more of those.
- Impact of current labor issues on future growth? It's gotten a lot of bad press—if the 200 jobs are contract, people will hesitate to take them. Even as the contractor looks to employ others, it's gotten bad press, and wages have gone down. They have no control over management and the shift in salaries.
- Local economy, especially local agriculture—organic foods, artisan cheeses. Big opportunity in future for Vermont brand of fruits and vegetables to take off; I think it will be sought after by restaurants and other markets.
- SAFF market study showed big potential for local food.
- More opportunity for Vermont to brand itself outside the state. California is branding its milk and cheese. Is the state doing all it can to brand itself?
- Here, we depend on the actual producers to promote the VT brand, such as Cabot. It wasn't VT that promoted Ben & Jerry's, it was B&J that promoted VT. State doesn't partner to the point of promotion, we just provide the VT seal of quality.
- Money invested in a revenue-generating partnership.

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

- Get rid of Act 60.
- Broadband telecommunications and fiber-optic infrastructure will be a huge asset, and we'll be behind for years to come if we don't have it. Good job creation will follow. Vacant office space will be a lot more attractive if you can combine our quality of life with access to big-city jobs.
- Reducing or maintaining existing tax rate—state and local.
- Restructure educational system for the jobs of the future. STEM curriculum: science, technology, engineering, and math. The growing sectors of the economy will need those skills: green, technology, etc. We've lost the drive to compete, especially compared to countries like India. Lengthen the school day and keep kids there learning.
- People in education seem to be afraid to overwork the kids, or overstimulate them. Classes should be harder.
- Kids aren't motivated, they come in late, they don't care.
- Computers, Internet, TV, cell phones make it a different world. There used to be a big stigma with not doing well in school—kids now don't seem to care so much about doing well. It's a families issue.
- Family stability is extremely important to the future of Vermont. Life is really different, and it's not a good different. What are we going to do? What is our responsibility to make it better, to make things attractive for other people? That's our job and why we go to all these meetings—to make things better for younger people. Morale is awful.
- Society has created stress and pressures that we didn't have—club sports, 3.5 hours of homework in middle school, increasing demands on school from power parents. We have to stop somewhere and get back to family. It's showing in our kids.
- Sense of immediate gratification: everything is right now. Cell phones and computers let you get information or talk to someone immediately. McGill has opened a new school just for computer programming and games.
- Our children are raising their children completely differently than we raised our kids.
- The lack of interpersonal connections means that children are not learning the soft skills. College students are dropping the F-bomb everywhere in conversation as if it were nothing.

- State legislature spends a lot of time talking about a lot of stupid things, like marijuana legislation. We as a state have many more issues that need to be addressed.
 - Many companies in this area do drug testing. Three out of five applicants failed the drug test at Fonda/Solo. 24 out of 48 new potential Ben & Jerry's employees just failed the drug test. In comparison, failure rate at Henderson, NV plant was 90%. But legalizing marijuana would solve the workforce problem!
 - If we legalize marijuana, how do you enforce safety regulations for employees, such as train drivers?
 - Frivolous legislative action relates to “Flatlander problem” we discussed before. Historically VT legislature was Vermonters—farmers with time during the winter, seasonal workers, etc. Time commitment has lengthened from 3-month session to 5-months plus, making it difficult for many native Vermonters to serve. Some other states have legislatures that sit only every other year. We are one of the least populous states, but we have a legislature working 5 months a year on topics that most Vters don't care about.
- Up until last year, Franklin County delegation of 13 legislatures was the only Vermont-born-and-raised delegation in the state. They as a delegation are not the most active, but they tend to be very level-headed about the issues. Tend to agree with your average VTERS as to what the priorities are. As a whole, I don't think VTERS' vision and perspective are always shared at the Statehouse level.
- RDCs and RPCs started a discussion on second-homeownership and how it impacts the state: two types of people: (1) buy a condo, pay taxes, and come up once in awhile for skiing—have expectation of pristine VT and expects someone to pump their gas and wait on their table without putting anything back into VT (2) buy an old farmhouse, invest in VT, donate to the opera house, and share the values of the State.

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

- “Up until last year, Franklin County delegation of 13 legislatures was the only Vermont-born-and-raised delegation in the state. They as a delegation are not the most active, but they tend to be very level-headed about the issues. Tend to agree with your average VTERS as to what the priorities are. As a whole, I don't think VTERS' vision and perspective are always shared at the Statehouse level.”

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report, January 24th, 2007
Franklin County Community Action and health services

Scribe: Emily Stebbins

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

Due to the late arrival of our three respondents, this question was condensed and rolled into a more detailed discussion of needs and challenges.

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

- Cost of living, especially fuel – price of fuel is driving everything. Forcing people into homelessness, raising the cost of food, transportation, everything
- Fuel is absolutely a huge issue. Higher than anything I've seen in 16 years. Affecting moderate-income people as well as low-income people.
- Peak oil – some people have an apocalyptic vision, they think there will be massive changes in our society within 5 years. I would like VT to lean more and more toward renewable resources. I grew up here, and I love our natural beauty, but I don't care if you need to stick a windmill on a few mountains. I would love to see NRG triple in size. Energy supply
- Truly affordable housing. Affordable housing has turned into housing for kind of middle-class people. Poor people can't live there because their credit is bad, and they're not qualified to live there. Two issues
 - How these housing agencies review applications. If they just look at credit ratings, most don't qualify, and they don't have advocates to argue their case and appeal. Agencies should be doing exploration on a case-by-case basis—did this person have a life event (divorce) that changed their ability to pay?
- Distinct difference btw low-income and affordable housing, and we're getting crunched on both sides.
- Study with Champlain Housing Trust: in half the towns in Franklin County, the median home price was not affordable to volunteer firefighters, EMTs, etc. Asked local zoning boards to consider this.
- Reporting of homeless veterans is horrible – there's no good system. Most are camping out, and not accounted for.
- Data committee is looking at a lot of things, and discovered that a high percentage of affordable housing is taken up by people moving in from out of state to take

jobs here. Affordable housing is going to middle-class. Truly affordable housing doesn't really exist.

- Offender re-entry. 30 people past the minimum in local jail (@ \$40,000/year each) because they don't have a residence to go to. If we were able to give the community the \$ you save by not having these people incarcerated to raise the level of services, we'd be doing a lot a better all around, and we'd be saving money. More prevention, intervening in a crisis before they go to jail. But system doesn't change because legislature won't turn over money this year to change a system over 10 or 15 years. Services exist but need to be enhanced: intensive case management, housing stock need, mental health and substance abuse counseling could create the leg up to a better future that they themselves could own. Recognize existing strengths in existing families and individuals and capitalize on them to realize their dreams.
- People in generational poverty are not future-thinkers. Generational poverty involves families who grew up only understanding how to survive being poor. No higher expectations for their lives than what their parents had. Extraordinarily difficult to break the cycle: lack of education, expectations, social integration, how you see life around you and how people see you. Expect that they can't succeed, or have to start working at an earlier age. Influenced by nutrition that they get, and capacity to concentrate in school.
 - We have our successes (Case of former "housewife" with no life of her own who got divorced and found herself in situational poverty, managed to go through CCV and get nursing license. Her barrier to employment was a nursing outfit: good shoes and scrubs. Spent \$40 to get her that, and she's never come back to my office since.) What's harder to count as success is someone using the foodshelf so they don't go hungry. It's keeping you alive long enough to get off the system. Some people are never going to get out—disability or Social Security—they're physically or mentally unable to get employment. How can they not need occasional assistance when they get \$650/month. We're always going to serve a certain segment of a population:
 - I think people could come out of poverty if system let them. Welfare was supposed to be a short-term thing. People go from generation to generation receiving benefits, but they're not enough to get them to move on. People don't really get enough to live, but if they get a job, their benefits are cut, so they're penalized if they want to get out of the generational poverty: won't earn a lot more money, and will lose food stamps and medical care. Upfront costs will be higher, but you have to make the investment now because the costs down the line will be enormous. Think how much better it would be if moms and dads on Reach Up could get a job and keep their full benefits for a year, half benefits for next year, and quarter benefits the year after. Then they could get on their feet and get a little ahead.

- Neighborkeepers in Burlington: having people stand by you
- Conversations can turn stark and ugly when you start looking at all factors that go into poverty. For example: it's a lot harder to get ahead if you have two or three children early on. If we as a system don't support single parents, it'll be a lot harder to support those.
- Resources: transportation, livable wage, etc. What are the opportunities around a creative economy here in St. Albans. Keep Vermonters here, living and thriving. That gets back to what's possible, what's affordable.
- \$8 to \$9.50 is the average around here. It's not livable. Housing crunch, fuel, transportation. I had someone in my office making \$14/hour and was struggling with the bills. Fuel has doubled in the last two years.
- Integration of an identified population (reentering offenders, low income, kids living on their own, etc.) is always difficult. Educate people about who these people really are—people of and for your community who've run into challenges. How do we meaningfully engage people?
- As a system, we talk and talk and talk. Without the resources, we can't take meaningful action, so I'm not going to spend any more time on discussion. Get the conversation to policymakers and funders.
- Having our administration say we have to do more with less is unreasonable—our nonprofit partners, esp, have been doing all they can.
- Richford did set priorities and move on them in a meaningful way – if our state could do that, and hold ourselves accountable, and incorporate people we haven't brought to the table before. We haven't done a good enough job identifying real stakeholders and engage them in a way that makes sense for people. Keep the goal in mind. Get to core principles as a community
- The bottom line is we really need more money. The state only has so much money. We need governors, representatives going to Congress expressing the problem. With 50% more people showing up at our doors, you can't expect to serve them all with the same amount of money.

Opportunities:

- NRG, solar energy, Vermonters' emphasis on preserving our lifestyle, country-oriented.
- We still have space and willpower to see things done. We have the capacity to build the housing that we need. It has more to do with priorities than lack of resources—getting will of community behind you, getting zoning changed to allow multi-unit buildings and density.

- If we want to be a green state, there has to be money coming in, a commitment from Congress, if the states are going to pull this off. People talk about ending homelessness in 10 years by creating affordable housing: first of all, it's not truly affordable; second, you need livable wage; lower fuel, better economy. It's not one thing that will end homelessness.
- We have great collaboration here in our county.
- We all have to solve the consumers we're serving. Noone can solve homelessness without talking to people who are actually homeless.
- Two pilot projects for supportive housing
- If all service providers could somehow close the borders of our counties for 3 years, we could solve a lot of the problems in our population. But a lot of our clients are coming and going.
- Billions going for war in Iraq—think what we could do with just a drop of that money.
- Economic stimulus package won't help: people aren't going to spend that money and go out shopping.
- Commitment as a service sytem to be prevention, front-end oriented, rather than crisis response that we get thrown into; would make so much more sense. Our problems of corrections, mental health, etc. will not be alleviated otherwise.
 - F-GI has largest forensic mental health service population in the state.
 - Many of those people wouldn't be in jail if we didn't go from that one extreme to another re: keeping people in hospitals. There has to be a halfway place. Now they're committing crimes and getting traumatized in jail. Many could be served better in a mental health facility to get stablized and back out in the community. Recommendation is to call the police, force a crisis.

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

- Systematic change, step down benefits, don't penalize for getting a job
- Requirement life skills education: budgeting, planning, interviewing, getting along with your landlord, social interaction, cooking
- Advocate at national level, get more funding

IV. We've been talking about Vermont, but how does this discussion concern the future of your community?
(Topic already covered in existing conversation).

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report, January 24th, 2007
Franklin County Home Health Services

Scribe: Paul Costello

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

- 'I was a political refugee from the state of NH in 1973'. VT means progressive thinking. Daring to speak up. To examine ideas 'way out of the box'.
- Generosity – people wanting to take care of neighbors.
- Closeness – people care.
- We moved here from Ct 10 years ago – there's a sense of pride and feeling lucky to live here. Nice feeling – people are chosen to live here and are happy to be here.
- Vermont is always home. Even when people leave they always want to come home.
- Vermont is one of the first to do returnable bottles. Vt is one of the cleanest states still. (e.g. not having billboards).
- We care about what our landscape looks like.
- Wind debate demonstrates 2 values pulling against each other – clean energy and skyline.
- Used to be very strong feeling that you had to be born here to be a VTer. Then Bernie Sanders – a NYer getting elected as mayor of Burlington. We are progressive in a way that is hard to describe.
- 2 different cultures – people who were raised here and people who came because they were attracted to VT.
- No other states elect Independent senators.
- Town meeting day is a shared value.
- Local control is common – people can make a difference 'my sense is that town meeting day is threatened and that it's representative of Vermont'.

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

- I really wish we were a state that could sustain young people.
- Jobs and opportunities for youth. Make sure Vermont remains a place that has industries.
- Average age of nurses and other medical staff is old. Elders. Medicaid supports nursing home residents for the most part.
- Challenge is that anyone who leaves pines for home.

- It's prohibitive for many families to afford a 2 year college, much less a bachelor's.
- Family is what has made the state look like it does today. Tourism follows that. The rate of farm loss is still fast and maintaining agricultural identity is so crucial. It would be a terrible loss to the state. My family came here as tourists. Now (speaker) drives with family and visitors around the state who say 'look at all this land waiting to be developed.'
- Population in the country will push the development in Vermont.
- Global warming; we may lose our ski industry. We will shift out from 'winter wonderland' tourism – we will need to reidentify our tourism niche. We need to be realistic about this happening and build long term strategy for tourism.
- We need to put ourselves in a position to look honestly out.
- We need wind energy 'what are our options?' in terms of energy.
- Corporate power and big box stores: standardization of consumptions is putting local stores out of business. Vermonters have more resistance to this than other states, but we're still threatened. We need to support the survival of small businesses.
- Rural transportation will become more and more an issue.
- 'We have the opportunity to be informed, to be educated and to prepare.'
- 'we have a history of thinking outside of the box.'
- We have some technology businesses and energy businesses. Whenever there are major changes – like \$7 gasoline – whoever has already begun to respond will be out in front.
- There are lots of rural producers of niche products.
- Lake Champlain is so representative of ecological health and it is really hurting. Contradiction is that farms are lead contributors to lake pollution but they are the ones we want and need to save for the health of Vermont.

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

- Better healthcare – this needs to stay a priority.
- Education must stay a priority. It used to be that the tax base of the community determined how decent education was to be done. It's still partly true.

- Kid's health should be a priority. It's hard to make the case for services and treatment. Many kids need speech services but without a diagnosis then it is much hard to see them.
- Autism – partly because we identify it more and more and it is a growing incidence. Here in St Albans a local task force is forming on autism.
- No real set of sources for autism exist – the clients are really diverse and systems of services are also really different.
- I think that finding ways to keep feeling of local control alive is key. Many new institutions.
- Collaboration for local services – lots of pride in this. Franklin and Grand Isle or partnerships.

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

- Being on Lake Champlain sets us up to look at partnerships. We have to look at the ability of people to access services.
- “biggest question in this community's mind is whether or not there'll be a Walmart built.”
- Ames closing sets up a contradiction but Walmart will be ‘bad for the downtown’. People who live here love the downtown and what it means, but put it aside for short term benefits of low price and convenience.
- Many say ‘we're ready for the change’. But they aren't.
- People in favor of walmart coming are more focused on day to day and less on the beauty of the mountainside.
- “I think a downtown shopper is not a downtown shopper!”
- VT has to show itself a leader in many ways. I'm optimistic that that value will prevail.
- This is not a very optimistic time in our country. Corporations are getting power. I'm not optimistic but I would like to be. “I don't know if we are strong enough to resist.”

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report, January 24th, 2007
St Albans Community Justice Center staff and human service providers

Scribe: Marie Houghton

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

- Not born in VT; always felt I wanted to live in VT since age 12 – peaceful, beautiful, used to be safe. Attributes brought her here. Doesn't feel quite so safe as was 23 years ago
- Place where people want to raise kids; hopeful that there will be a future for them here; concerned about rise in crime – may be perspective of her job in reparative justice.
- Not native VTer – moved here in '85 from CT to open B & B. Think of VT as one big community; easy to get together and work to solve problems. Small enough to be connected. Easy to get to state leadership. Small world is precious thing – we are long way from losing - there is still a strong sense of community. Restorative justice at community level really works well with our sense of community. Works well here – wonder if this program exists in other places in the country? For offenders, it's hard to hide in VT so someone knows the offender it helps to make process work well.
- VT enjoys national reputation of “maverick” if we want to do something different – VT is a good place to try it. We sent an independent to Washington; Senator had courage, and was supported, to change party affiliation. Our representatives speak out and represent what VTers want/think. Not like other NE states. Smallness allows us to do things; i.e, billboard law, bottle bill, healthcare. State-wide Corrections system affects whole state not like county system in other states. We are one of 2 states that run Corrections; 1 of 2 states that allow prisoners to vote.
- Value behind allowing prisoners to vote – still Vermonters, still citizens. Forgiveness counts – paid your dues. One of few Corrections systems that has accredited high school and curriculum links to K-12; seamless program. Helps support people when they leave the Corrections system.

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

- **Challenge:** Keeping children in Vermont; kids are leaving or not coming back after college. Lack of employment opportunities both number and type. Kids are interested in high tech/fast moving careers – don't have those industries here. Maybe rural aspects of Vermont encourages kids to leave .

Champlain College has great high tech programs but graduates have to leave VT to find jobs.

- **Challenge:** Socially limiting for young people in more rural areas. Not much to do. People want to live in the country, but find rural life less appealing after being here awhile.
- **Challenge:** Affordability/cost of living. For young people, they can't live by themselves – can't afford housing. Need help from family or need to live with others. Housing costs too high. Would like kids to be able to find a good job and be able to afford housing.
- **Challenge:** Housing and transportation are two big issues. If you live in Richford or Montgomery with no car – can't get anywhere, certainly not to work. No public transportation system.
- **Opportunity:** Green, peaceful, friendly. Need to promote style of living to potential new businesses. Preserving the environment – could attract people who want to work in and are interested in environment/environmental jobs. Promote tourism. Ireland is good example. They did strategic planning and attracted high tech jobs. VT could do this. Target specific industries that align with what we think VT is – perhaps environmental, energy. Could attract young people.
- **Challenge:** Too many low wage jobs – kids don't perceive they can make a living
- **Opportunity:** VTC is a good school – do they have an environmental program?
- **Challenge:** Many kids and families go from one crisis to the next. Some families have trouble dealing with basic necessities – job, transportation, etc. Some families really demoralized/depressed/overcome by one crisis after another. Need to link them to job training programs, other support services. Need to do better job getting word out on what programs are available. Coordination of services has improved, but still needs work. A suspended license means people have trouble getting to work.
- **Challenge:** Cost living high, pay low, broad range of employment opportunities not available.
- **Challenge:** Many in middle class are one unexpected financial crisis away from disaster. Working families now need services. Homelessness is a problem for this group as is food and other basic needs.
- **Challenge:** There is a sense of giving up before they start (young people). Little sense of hope. Resigned at an early age to not being able to make it. Give up dreams and goals early. Media, glamour, success, instant gratification may affect this – if I'm not CEO of a company by the time I'm 23, I'm a failure. Generational poverty can feed this state of being. Some feel they will just check into the “system” (economic services) get the check in the mail and pay their bills. Have heard this as an expectation from 4th graders.

- **Opportunity:** Education (social, living and coping skills) for adults could help change this. Today one must have high school diploma or GED in order to get jobs – even McDonalds's.
- **Opportunity:** Do we/can we change generational poverty? 21% of males in VT 19-23 are in care & custody of Dept of Corrections. Very scary number. NY Times Economist article on why has abortion rate dropped – hypothesis – because young males are in jail.
- **Challenge:** I have been feeling for the last 18 months or so – that the average citizen doesn't view VT State police force as their friend. People don't want any contact w/state police. Don't think of them as a resource. Fear state police. Some cases are questionable – throw hammer down too hard – i.e. driving; too harsh with license suspension. Kids could be productive, have part-time jobs, etc. Many good kids. Relationship between police and public needs to change. State police manage rural communities on a part-time basis. Where there is a local police dept there don't seem to be as many problems. I understand that state police have resource issues, but does this situation needs to be addressed.
- Hard to help kids on probation. Work to help all, but try to target one or two to give extra support to help them get on right path. More focused attention helps a lot. Caseloads are high.

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

- Affordable housing. This is an oxymoron.
- Appropriate substance abuse treatment (local would be good); Needs to be done speedily. This is a problem due to space constraints in treatment programs. We have a growing drug problem (not marijuana). Kids will agree to treatment, but there is a 3-4 month wait. Wait time too long - lose the kid.
- Maple Leaf Farm was originally designed for alcohol addiction only. Now serves all types of substance abuse/addiction. Has lots of young kids there for drugs. Very difficult to have young kids with adults in this setting.
- VT's minimum wage is higher than federal and other states, but still not adequate
- Need to keep agriculture alive – not corporate farming. Need to keep ag healthy – less chemicals. no pesticides, etc. Ecologically safe. Need to help VT farmer stay in business; Dad got here when there were more cows than people. Farming used to be major element of state economy.. If family farms continue to disappear – part of our identity disappears – what will this mean for us. Who will we be?
- Don't want large development

- I work on the water (Lake Champlain) every day. Works for Fish & Wildlife (as well as Corrections). Has offenders in the F&W program. Water stinks, weeds block access for boats. Offenders help remove weeds, etc from boats. Big fine for transporting weeds. Hopes money will continue to be available to continue to work on this and improve things (lake/environment).
- Need to protect/preserve lake. Worried about being able to do that.

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

- I work on federally funded program, 5th year of 2 yr pilot (lake improvement) – goes back to educating people on different issues; ie, how bad the water is. We don't reach people due to rural nature of state. Might reach migrant farm workers, but they aren't connected to many other members of community. People tend not to ask for help. Generational poverty is issue – system is not designed to serve/support generational poverty (welfare/economic services). Need someone to help pull people together to try to solve this. Richford is a good example. Began talking about transportation. A community member referred to “those people” – people receiving state aid. They were confronted by community member who stated that all people who live here deserve respect.
- “Those people” attitude prevalent in Vermont. State agencies encouraged state supported people to live in Richford due to low rents (slum lords).
- I grew up in Barre – but have definitely heard people say this.
- Need to break cycle of poverty. Many people have skills and means to find work; just don't know how to get started. Insufficient resources to help them. Many beaten down by poverty – wheels are spinning – not getting anywhere. They give up. Need to stop referring to “those people.” They should be contributing to society. They want to, but need help. Often people are easy to help, desire is there – just need a navigator to help them get started.
- No major cure – a lot of little stuff. We need to get the ball rolling, hard to decide which family gets services; some people happy to milk the system; lots of people who just don't know what to do.
- Cutting state employees by 400 is ridiculous. We are helping people – funding is always in question. Mentoring program has insurance issues which will make or break program

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report, January 24th, 2007
St Albans Cooperative Creamery

Scribe: Catherine Dimitruk

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

- Agriculture, small community, safety are key elements.
- Independence, community control, caring.
- Local control, community control.
- Vermont is 'in vogue' with its own cache.
- Independence and community involvement.
- Focus on education as important.
- Provincial outlook on issues.
- Not sure if we have common values any more.
- Traditional Vermont values are common to those from here, but people from away come to VT for its values but don't always practice them once they come here.
- Common values were more prevalent in Vermont 50 years ago.
- Outside of VT there is the impression that it is hard to become part of the community, and hard to talk to Vermonters.
- Once you are part of a community you are loved and trusted.

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

- "Newcomers to Vermont challenge its independence."
- Vermont 2 by 2 program at UVM and VTC helps to overcome provincial outlook, this should be expanded.
- No veterinary college in VT and competition for staff is an issue.
- Broadband connections need to be expanded; farmers need this as much as any other business.
- Infrastructure needs generally, Vermont' roads and other infrastructure is old, and we don't have large population base to help pay for improvements.
- Potential leadership vacuum when Leahy retires,
- Lack of labor for agriculture and skilled labor for businesses. 7-day work week businesses are challenged to find workers.
- Disconnection between consumers and where their food comes from.
- Changing demographics.
- Success of VT's education system is at risk, already having problems with basic math and reading.
- Agricultural pricing as a whole does not recognize regional differences.

- Loss of travel and tourism over time.
- Small state provides opportunities for access and to effect change, can change things more quickly than larger states.
- Consumers want locally grown products with less energy input, this fits with Vermont's agricultural business, pasturing cows, etc. Vermont is closer to the food markets than the mid-west.
- Vermont image as the Green Mountain State.
- Challenge to find energy in the future.
- Vermont has an abundance of water vs. other parts of the country.
- The local food market is growing.
- Intergeneration transfer of farms is a challenge and opportunity.
- Have to maintain a critical mass of dairy farms to ensure the infrastructure to support farming remains in tact.
- Education is crucial, but Vermont needs to be willing to spend money.
- Federal guidelines and state laws, such as keeping grazing animals out of waterways- increased regulation overall and federal level are a barrier to increased farming.
- Transportation is a challenge, the condition of the roads is poor.
- Demand for Vermont milk in the Boston market is increasing substantially, and is at an all time high. Most attributable to the quality and BST free status of the milk.
- Global trade in dairy has short term benefits, but those will likely go away over time as other countries make corrections.
- Premise ID (lack of) could be a hindrance to global trade.
- Vermont is known for quality, and we are close to NE markets.
- Canadian border needs to be seen as benefit.
- Opportunity exists to connect business to business for promotion, i.e. IBM in China can promote VT milk, make business introductions.
- Increase n non-dairy farms, changing farms leads to small vs. large, conventional vs. organic; instead need to bring people together about agriculture.
- State is listening to small groups outside, rather than conventional dairy farmers.
- Look to move from 2 to 4 year term for Governor, too many resources are spent on elections.
- Need to regulate business less than we do.
- VT is seen as not being business friendly, can't bring young people here without jobs for them.

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

- Vermont needs a strategic plan, identifying the businesses we want and set aside resources. We need an overall vision, whether it is agriculture, travel and tourism, etc, the key is long-term (10-15 years) commitment.

- Compare money spent on agriculture to the amount it brings to the economy. More needs to be spent to support agriculture. In KY a community will buy a bio-refinery, in Wisconsin health care packages are available for farm families.
- Farmers cannot afford to pay good wages with benefits.
- No diagnostic lab or veterinary college here in VT, so we should have a subsidy to help defray the costs of sending samples out of state.
- A website where farms can be listed for sale, and resources for farmers are listed is needed,
- Long-term support is needed for success in dairy.

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

- In the future, there won't be fewer cows, but there will be fewer farms.
- What is the tipping point where too few farms are in place to support the needed farming infrastructure?
- There will be an increase in small and large farms and a decrease in medium farms.
- Need to make sure that Agriculture is part of Vermont's future as it impacts the look, the feel and the fabric of Vermont.
- Agriculture will provide returns to this community of Vermont.
- The farm viability program is great, but too small.
- In Vermont 6,500 businesses with a focus on agriculture- cannot disconnect "business" from "agriculture."

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report, January 24th, 2007
Bellows Free Academy Public Session

Scribe: Sarah Waring

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

- We all have some common values, we're all a little bit independent and it shows in how we ourselves behave and how our legislators behave in Montpelier, and our Congressmen behave in Washington. We don't necessarily go along with anyone else's line of thinking, but come up with our own conclusions and take our own course of action.
- We are close to our legislators – we can go in the side door. We don't have a powerless feeling but feel empowered by the intimacy.
- It's great to live in a state of our size and feel so close to all the legislators; run into the governor and feel at home.
- Our advantage of a small scale is something that we should play to – be able to network very effectively. It's a lot more difficult in other areas of the country – they rely on someone else to do it – we have to rely on ourselves.
- Democracy still works here. We can still change – the individual can make a difference.
- independence is a real big thing. It's in common to the people who grew up here and the people who want to live here. Hard work! We have a reputation for that and it's fairly well justified. We take care of each other and have a community responsibility to make sure we're all okay. Tolerance for individuality.
- Feel a sense of personal responsibility. We think things should be taken care of, so we do it ourselves.
- Accountability – we don't say 'it's them' but we try to fix things ourselves.
- beauty of the state and the protection that Vermonters have about that beauty. Water, woods, mountains.
- Caring communities is a big role. There's a little bit of a shift as society becomes a little more mobile.
- We enjoy the uniqueness of our reputation. Nation wide we're looked at little bit different. We're cutting edge, or we're independent. Vermonters relish this image.
- Leaders in areas that other states may not feel comfortable attacking.
- We're a state of the size of many cities.
- We have a rugged optimism. We know we're small. We're baring the burden of supporting infrastructure. We know we can survive here despite the weather, etc.
- Tolerance and acceptance of other people for whatever they are. 'I don't care what you do in your house, just don't tell me what to do in mine.' People are equal – gender, race, sexual orientation, we're equal. I think this is all over

Vermont. Supposedly Franklin County was a hotspot of opposition to civil unions. Tolerance is very widespread.

- We find in VT (perhaps rural New England too) – a spirit in the communities of a togetherness, and a willingness to help others. We see it in the churches more than in other organizations. If someone's in need, people respond and willingly go to help, without being asked. In our small towns probably more than in other parts of the country.
- We value the land and environment.
- It's easy to change regulations, make new standards, adjust the rules, because it's manageable because the scale is smaller.
- A long history here – a lot of diversity settlers, Canadians, native Americans, very active historical societies and a corner store. Deep value on history.
- Value of QOL – teacher student ratios, low crime, limited traffic jams, access to the outdoors, etc.
- Community service, people on the school boards and select boards.
- (Paul Schwartzkoff) Vters are 'do-ers' they do the things they believe in. In Vermont, if you don't do the good work, someone else will. Everyone's taking care of the important things.
- Strong local food scene. Strong and growing.
- Cultural traditions, maple sugaring, very important.
- Agriculture is a part of our society, our economy but strong ag is core value, even of non-farmers. The 'rest of us' have that value too.
- VT has a strong brand – the weather is the same as other places, the syrup's the same, but part of the brand is the farm and the green hills. It's a part of the brand.
- It's a core value for agriculture – no one says 'don't help the farmers' We love the farms, the foods, the working landscape.
- Vermont has a sense that local is better.
- Because of the size, we know the farmer, members of their family – there's so many connections, so any change becomes personal.
- We respect what people have done historically, as well as what it takes to run a farm and the current status of farmers.

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

- Overbearing tax burden – as the future moves on and healthcare and medicare and teachers pensions become important, the next generation's challenge will be meeting all of those commitments.
- Energy policy and moving forward with energy.
- Transportation within the state – making sure to move people within the state. Connectedness within the state – we need to be move away from individual fossil fuel use, we need public transportation. Our local economies are languishing because of this.

- Aging infrastructure and not having the public engagement to meet the maintenance for those systems. Whether it's transport, energy supply, etc. We're not laying good groundwork for the public investment. 'We talk the talk but we don't walk the walk and that bothers me'. There are serious shortfalls and I don't know if we're doing enough.
- Infrastructure is a great example of trying to get something that benefits us down the road away to happen. People in political office have to get reelected into office by people thinking about their pocketbooks today.
- Energy crisis – peak oil – is a fact, the only question is the timetable. And we have to think about sustainability of our communities. When personal transportation becomes cost prohibitive will I in Fairfield be able to get what I need without driving elsewhere.
- Affordability – housing, taxes, energy costs; the whole nine yards. Even the smartest people out there working for the state of Vermont might not have the answers. But the quality of life we have in Vermont – and the small scale – where do we come up with the basic funds and how do we pay for it? Unless we stop the war in Iraq and put a trillion into Vt, where will we come up with it?
- Independence, access to state govt, these are positives. But there's a flip side to this. What will we be able to affect in the future, when the trends hit us that are made not in our state, or even our nation? There are challenges that have roots in these global issues. There's less and less that our state legislatures can control. Maybe this is a reason the problems are more costly.
- I think that many of the things that we consider valuable to us are opportunities but also challenges. Our size makes it difficult on taxes. Infrastructure needs to be bigger than we are. Our independence sometimes is so favored that we don't open up our decision making. We work so hard to keep our working landscape – in other states they'd build it up and bring in whatever they want to support the taxes they need. Our assets/values have us sacrificing.
- Development in other places is a power of its own. The development can be detrimental to what some people value.
- Reading a book about the 1927 flood and the period immediately after. (1927 is when I was born!) Rebuilding the highway system and the roads in VT in 1927 were mostly dirt and all washed out and we had to cope with it on our own. One of our problems today is how to bring back some of the railroads. We have to have mass transportation. We have to find other ways to get transportation accomplished. We're faced with rebuilding the railroads and the highways. Today we have to bond to do this. At that time, the young people who went away to college didn't come back to VT. We're faced with the same problem 80 years down the road. A proposal floated in the time about hydro electric power. But it didn't fly because no one wanted to see the farm land being flooded. There were people in Washington who helped at that time. And the people right here in Vermont dealt with the problem and they found the answers.
- UVM and VT state college system aren't really affordable. Could be better for our state, but they could be better for our state.
- Farms now could be an energy source with cellulosic ethanol and other ways of generating electricity.

- With each subsequent generation we're losing a connection to the land – hiking is not the same as working a farm. If we lose this we lose something that is particular and unique about VT.
- The way to raise the best people is to raise them in a small rural town. The dynamics of a traditional VT town are largely responsible for most of those values we listed earlier. As the communities get de-centralized and the connections to the land gets lost. But the sense of responsibility, etc is slowly getting lost. The challenge is to rebuild it.
- Fairfax is a bedroom community. The closest thing to community is schools and churches. A geographic place, a center where people can interact. We need a coherent vision that we can buy into and stick with it.
- The VT Brand is a very green reputation in the world. Green and alternative industries is an opportunity.
- Is the vision there or is it something we have to invent?
- Most of those values we talked about were more true then – there's a mythology about it.
- Maintaining well-paying jobs. Something that will keep the people the kids here and where they can stay here. The population is aging and in another 20 years it'll be even worse.
- Tax incentives and the kinds of companies that the state or communities go after – this may be part of the problem
- If we look back the youth has been a constant theme for years and years and years. We're like a little island sitting here – when you graduate from colleges, you want to 'get off the island' for awhile.
- For the future – what's going to happen with the growth? All of the economy of the state is built on growth. The school kid population is shrinking every year. You have to learn to live with no growth. This will be a necessity, because you'll see growth in Vt come to a stop. The problem is that the investment in VT right now for transportation and education alone is almost overwhelming. Will have to be pretty inventive to think up new ways to do this.
- One answer is to look to what we're good at. We're good at being small, we're attractive as a rural state. We can brand our distinctive environment. We may have to accept less growth, but if we get very smart about courting our traditional strengths, we might become a model and have industries seeking to locate here. "if we get less confused about whether we want to be New Jersey or whether we want to be Vermont" it won't be a matter of losing something to gain something.
- Challenge for young people is the lack of affordability. It's not that the jobs don't pay well, it's just that you can't afford to live here. In order to have a lack of billboards, community, landscape, etc – you have to spend ALL of your \$ on rent, utilities. The beauty of the state brings a lot of people in, but it's a hard trade off – the people who can't get gas in the car to come to the food shelf aren't looking at the landscape.
- Bring recognized as a rural community is good. It will entice local people, but will it attract businesses to come here? I don't think so. We don't want our farmers to be raising marijuana instead of cows.

- We've talked a lot about what we're good at, but we need to talk about what we're not good at. We're creative here in Vt and we shouldn't be afraid of that. We tend not to get consensus before a problem – we react to crises. We need to make those actions take place. We need to create a consensus and that's the challenges. At local government in different levels – it's difficult to get people to come back and volunteer. This isn't about politics but it does translate. We need to have a different look about what we talk about. We can't wait any longer.
- Emory Hebbert said 'VT has become a great place for other people to move here from other places. But it's become a very difficult place for the native woodchuck to survive. It's difficult for the common working man to survive in VT.' Our tax structure is not the least of these. We need to be able to have more industry and more jobs that pay good wages. Attracting good jobs and good paying jobs. Industry, jobs, business of whatever kind to have the income here to support this attractive style of living here.
- Affordability is an issue, but it's relative. We need to control our economy and what we can do. We need to take advantage of the strengths and creativity here. Taxes aren't bad if we're getting what its worth. The answer is to generate more money in the economy here so we can have the green hill and the paying jobs.
- Maintaining our agricultural heritage. The big farms aren't a way to do that, but diversified agriculture in lots of different areas. This is a big part of what VT is and it ties into the brand and the QOL.
- Global warming may be a challenge. Maybe our package will be of survivalists. We'd be the beckoning highlands as the rest of Vt goes underwater.
- Pollution; the lakes and rivers are a huge issue for all of us. That's not getting better, it's going to be much worse. Ecological problems including Lake Champlains' health.
- Sprawl is a threat.

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

- Number one: be able to feed people. We have to be able to feed people locally if it becomes necessary.
- Pockets of prosperity and pockets that get left behind. We have to make sure that what we're doing gets spread out. Why aren't we getting people here in Franklin County to visit farms, like Shelburne Farms does? There's history there, there's history here! People could come and visit them if they were more accessible, easily understood and more promoted. The spreading out of tourism.
- Feeding ourselves locally – the next basic survival needs – heating our homes and to me it means energy independence.
- Education has to be a top priority. Both for our kids and college system. We tend to be very critical of our school system in VT. Affordable higher education has to be priority, if we ever want jobs and industry.

- Public transportation
- Isolation – people are isolated. We need to get back to a basic where people can afford to live in VT – it’s a sad state of affairs when we can’t keep our money in the community we live in. There’s three parts of Vt – if you look at southern Vt is Massachusetts, northern is like Canada and central Vt is becoming south. We’re here because we don’t want to have to lock our doors and we want to have our kids play outside.
- Revitalizing our downtowns. Creating a transportation networks or reclaiming our network. Our state has the most extensive railway infrastructure of any state, although it’s gone by. And wouldn’t it be nice to have low income folks to have passes? Then Green Passes where you could take to different communities and visiting different areas – tours organized around sports, antiquing, maple tours – all of these could be railway tours.
- There are great opportunities for the state to use our railroads. The state owns more railroads than any other state in the country, but we can’t do a lot with the railroad to provide commuter service or moving freight – our infrastructure is outdated. We can’t connect to their tonnage, etc. There are great opportunities to operate local and regional commuter trains.
- Creating wealth or funding what we’re talking about is a major hurdle. How do we implement these great ideas? Funding! It’s the major priority and it will continue to be so.
- We’re going to have a shortfall of funding and we’ll have to make up the difference in our own backyards. If we look to government to solve all these problems, it’s not going to happen. We can do it through local zoning, or requiring standards. We will have to make up the difference in our own backyards, we’ll have to take these on ourselves.
- Availability of high speed internet access. It allows small businesses to start up and people can telecommute. “I actually work in Madison Wisconsin, but I live here in St Albans.”
- Healthcare has got to be one of them. The quality is excellent, but it costs too much and the question is who’s going to pay for it. We have to be willing to spend some time on it and get involved.
- Affordability and AVAILABILITY of healthcare. We’re losing doctors because they don’t see the advantage of practicing here.
- We need a better support system for our elderly. People have no place to turn when they need help. All of a sudden there’s only one left when someone dies and very often it’s the one that didn’t work with the outside world.
- As the population of over 60s goes up and up and up, it’s going to affect Franklin County.

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

- In Grand Isle County they have CIDER – a senior transport system for shopping, trips, etc. It’s a network of support services that connects people in senior housing, meals, programs, etc. Franklin County ought to have something like that.

- The engagement of youth in our communities. A lot of caregiving roles are not valued or paid for. Families are stressed because two people have to work to support the families. But kids do leave – they understand that when they leave it'll be hard when they come back. It would be great to have a program that involves young people as well as seniors to the communities.
- The young population is leaving is a concern. But higher education that is strong pulls people here. Almost everyone is excited to be here. Almost everybody loves VT. If you can offer the education, you can get people who are excited about it and then could use the education platform to build the excited young people here. They could be economic drivers.
- Franklin County leader on methane digesting. We could be a leader for biomass. We could be thinking about energy independence here.
- A lot of talk about wind turbines and a lot of argument about ridgelines. If this doesn't always have to be ridgeline issue then we could have more small scale that works. Community scale wind.
- About job creation – we all want more and better paying jobs. Here in St Albans we have a strong local economy and a lot of local industry, but that's partly because there's been a lot of hand in glove workforce training. Tailoring the workforce to the industry – working through the high schools and community colleges and keeping employers happy. We're bulletproof here now, and it may not always last but we should build on it.
- In St Albans proper, there's a proposal for a multi modal transportation. We want that and we'd like to get that completed.
- Huge chunk of federal dollars because of pollution in Lake Champlain and the dairy industry here in the county – hopefully those dollars will be coming here: through USDA NRCS.
- 'most of my tax dollars get funneled up to state and federal levels and they get spent on things that aren't our priorities'. The issue is to get our spending focused at the level where the issues are.