

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

RANDOLPH **Community Forum Day notes** **November 19th, 2007**

The following notes were collected from focus group meetings and forums throughout the day spent in Orange 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 November 19th:

- Randolph High School
 - 9th Grade Class 1
 - 9th Grade Class 2
 - 10th Grade Class 1
 - 10th Grade Class 2
 - 10th Grade Class 3
- Two Rivers- Ottauquechee Regional Commission
- Randolph Municipal Staff
- Chamber of Commerce
- Evening Session

Local Hosts and Sponsors include:

Central Vermont Community Action Council

Chandler Center for the Arts

Randolph Area Chamber of Commerce

Randolph Area Community Development

Corporation

Randolph Union High School

Town of Randolph

Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission

Vermont Technical College

Facilitators: Paul Costello, Sarah Waring

Scribes: Bonnie Smoren, Sarah Waring

Listening Team members: Kevin O'Connor (Rutland Herald/Times Argus), Richard Mallary, Tom Debevoise

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report – **Randolph High School Class One - 9th grade**
Randolph Community Forum Day – 11/19/07

Note Taker: Bonnie Smoren

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

- I don't like it. It means unhappiness.
- One student observed that there is too much space between homes, however another thought that open spaces provide freedom.
- Several students stated that Vermont is a good place for the very young or the very old, but it is boring for teenagers.
- "Vermont is a horrible place to live." The state is too quiet and if you don't have a car, it is limiting. It is difficult to walk to activities.
- Vermont provides freedom to do what you want because there are not many people.
- There are too many tourists who don't speak English. Tourists who ask for direction in another language are annoying.
- Vermont is a comfort zone; on the other hand young people like adventure and there is nothing to do. Cities provide more stimulation and adventure.
- One student thought the state was too rural. Conversely, another student finds the open space is appealing
- Numerous students declared that Vermont is boring.
- "New York was more fun because they have subways and you can go places."
- "There is not much violence so you feel you are safe, but it is boring."
- The school system is good. Educators care about the students.
- There is a sense of neighborliness. People will help each other.
- People are involved in community activities.
- Vermonters value the environment.
- Several students spoke about the value of Vermont agriculture and products unique to the state such as maple syrup.
- Farms are connected to Vermont history and are part of the culture
- Many Vermonters like to hunt – it is a tradition that some people look forward to. It is a chance to get outdoors in a rural environment. It can be a family activity.
- You can do what you want in your house, like having a party, and not have to worry about disturbing neighbors with the sound. There is privacy.
- Vermont is valued for being a quiet place, but there are areas that are noisy. Vermont is a mix of cities like Burlington and rural areas.

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

- There could be problems getting electricity. Our energy future, including oil, could be a challenge.
- Global warming could affect skiing and maple syrup production. It could affect Vermont foliage.
- We need to think about gas prices because Vermonters have very little public transportation. Vermont gas prices seem higher than anywhere else.
- Prices are high because we need to import everything. We need to be more self-sufficient around energy.
- We should look at alternative energy more. We should make our own energy.
- Not many people care about Vermont so we need to be aware of important things ourselves.
- Taxes are high and people are leaving.
- Vermont will get bigger and more crowded. More land is being cleared.
- People have to drive a long distance to get to work and gas to get there costs a lot. Jobs often pay low wages. This will increase the debt load people carry.
- More people will try to move here. We will try to make it bigger, but people will hate it.
- If there were more things for people to do, like shopping, it would be better.
- Communities need to support what young people want, like skate parks.
- Vermont is geared toward adults and older people, rather than youth. People need to listen to young people more and provide more youth-oriented activities.
- We have opportunities for some jobs, but not enough. Young people who want a job have limited options in their own areas and need a car to get to work.
- Vermont needs better public transportation.
- I've heard that housing costs are high and it is expensive to live here.
- Vermont should have better technical centers in its schools with more vocational options.
- Many young people will leave the state. The music industry is horrible. You have to go to New York to get anywhere in the music industry. There are no opportunities for musicians.
- It is hard to find CD's
- Drinking and driving is a problem in Vermont.

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

- Make sure that the young generation is happy. Make youth a priority.
- Young people should be more involved in order to have power to make things happen.
- Maintain open space.
- Young people can relax on their front porches – this is unique to the state.
- The health of Vermonters is important. We need more health and dental care, more hospitals.
- Alternatively, one person thinks Vermont has progressive health care, but people don't use those opportunities. People need to learn what is available.
- Vermont should have more box stores and it needs more affordable shopping.
- Certain areas should be developed for commerce with box stores.
- Conversely one person said what makes Vermont unique is opposition to box stores.
- Keep the small scale.
- Have more quality, for example better restaurants – like a good Chinese place.
- Focus on developing renewable energy.
- Alternative energy could attract more people to the state, especially young people.

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

- We could write letters.
- Be aware of what is going on. Don't just think, but act.
- There are no jobs and that is why everyone is moving. We should have more offices, hospitals and stores
- School food should be healthier. There should be better produce. We could use local foods.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report – **Randolph High School Class 2 – 9th grade**

Note Taker: Bonnie Smoren

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

- Vermont has a lot of local opportunities, such as food and music. This encourages buying local.
- Local products such as maple syrup are an important part of Vermont's identity.
- Vermont values natural products such as foliage, cheese, maple syrup
- One student's parent works at Community Action and he cited that as an example of Vermont's skill at helping people in need.
- People are friendly and help their neighbors and others
- "Vermont is settled and calm – there is less violence than elsewhere." People are low-key
- Vermont's small size is a value – its scale. Vermont stands for community.
- There are many opportunities in Vermont colleges.
- Outsiders may view Vermonters as hicks
- Vermont has a "home touch". You can't get lost, even in the largest city, but there are things to do.
- The change of seasons and what that brings, like skiing is valuable. "I love how it's muddy in the spring and the foliage – these natural elements are a source of pride and identity".
- Many students cited Vermont's small population, which provides privacy and open spaces, access to wildlife and the land. .
- The band Phish. Vermont has a hippie connection
- Vermont is not commercial, but that means people have to travel a long distance to shop.

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

- There is not a lot for young people to do.
- Vermont is boring; there is nothing exciting to do.
- Young people want to leave Vermont to see what else is out there.
- It is hard to get around. You need to drive a lot to do anything
- “I don’t think global warming is real and I don’t want to hear about it.”
- Solar panels and wind turbines will change the landscape.
- Vermonters need to realize that alternative energy is a tradeoff. Wind turbines can obstruct the view, but help offset energy needs.
- Trees are being cut down – there is destructive forestry.
- The price of gasoline will make travel difficult and present financial challenges.
- There is no public transportation for getting around.
- Gas prices affect agriculture and create rising costs. This will impact the cost of food.
- Vermont will become an older state as youth leave.
- Young people are becoming more materialistic, so they will want to move to get material things. There are generational differences in value.
- Young people have less respect because so much is given to them without working. Young people don’t have to work as hard.
- It is hard for people under 16 to get jobs.
- There is a sense that young people need money – to buy a car for example.
- There are not many career choices. One person said she would move to a city to have a greater choice in business opportunities. She wants to be an architect and feels there is not much need for that here.
- Vermonters may move to cities, but urban people may get tired of the city and they will move here.
- It is expensive to go to college in Vermont. People go out of state for a more affordable school.
- Less people will work in agriculture. There may be fewer dairy farmers or maple producers.
- Vermont has smaller farms, and they are difficult to sustain economically.
- “I’ve heard that Taxes are high in Vermont. There are lower taxes in New Hampshire.”
- The climate is changing in Vermont. The cold comes later and there is less snow.
- It is scary to grow up because everything is so expensive. How will I get a house?
- Jobs will have to pay more so people can pay for their everyday needs.
- Vermont’s rural nature requires a lot of driving and gas is expensive.
- People may build more malls so they don’t have to drive so far. Vermont could lose its essence if we build too many stores.
- Vermont’s character is related to its small size. It is cozy, like a home.
- It would be hard to live somewhere else. People are close – you know everyone.
- There seems to be a growing number of sex offenders in Vermont.

- Vermont stands out; it is distinct, but someday it will be just like everywhere else.

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

- Energy and the environment. Look toward alternative energy to combat pollution and use the technology we have.
- Keep the Vermont the same – not developed. We would lose the essence of the state.
- The cell towers detract from the landscape. Satellite technology would be better.
- Keep the ‘no billboard’ policy. It is important to keep the landscape.
- Covered bridges will deteriorate. We need to repair and maintain them.
- Develop local businesses with good products but they should not have offensive marketing strategies.
- Address the price of housing and make it available for all.
- Rude and aggressive people from cities may move to Vermont. Native Vermonters could try to teach civility.

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

- There should be more to do in Randolph for youth recreation.
- Local people lose site of their assets.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report – **Randolph High School Class One - 10th grade**

Note Taker: Sarah Waring

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

- VT is home and no matter where I go it feels like home.
- Vt is a place that's clean and beautiful. It's good to look at.
- It's a beautiful state in the Northeast. It's where I was born. It has gorgeous mountainsides, farming communities all over the state and barns everywhere.
- VT is a sanctuary for wildlife. It is a place where natural habitat is protected for endangered and non-endangered species.
- VT means a lot to me: it is quiet and it is the country. Big cities have too many cars and people screaming.
- VT means sugar maples.
- VT means a place to live. There are others like it, but when you turn 18 here you can participate in town meeting.
- VT is too quiet.
- VT doesn't mean anything to me; it's too cold and it smells. I don't like farms.
- I hate Vermont and I've lived inside and outside of towns here. I liked New York because of the summers and the malls.
- Most VTers are farmers – in the sense that they love the land, they live and work on it. You have to take care of the land – even if your stewardship is modest (like keeping the weeds down). This is a common value. Lots of Vermonters grow food and have animals.
- Most VTers care about their schools and towns. They want to see their kids and grandkids go to school.
- Independence is a common Vermont value – we don't have to live with each other to get along fine. We also have political independence:
 - Examples of VT independent people are: VT Castings, Finneaus Gage, Jake Burton, Ben and Jerry's, Sanders, Jim Douglas
- State pride is a Vermont value: we are all proud of living here and we're proud that we still have rural areas. We get lots of tourism in the fall around foliage – we're proud of that natural resource.
- Welcoming newcomers is a Vermont value: we treat people coming in pretty good. Sometimes we don't treat tourists well, but in general we treat people who are new to the state pretty well.
 - Example of Thunder Road being a welcoming community to newcomers.
- Community/Small town life is a Vermont value: we stop each other on the road to talk – and not just the backroads either!

- Sometimes Vermonters wave to each other and let each other into traffic, other Vermonters don't wave and they cut you off in traffic.
- In Randolph there are no traffic lights, so it's a slow pace and people are nice to each other. Crosswalks don't apply – people can just walk right across the street.
- Vermonters have lots of extended family – some families hunt together, some just hang out. Sometimes family is not the group you want to hang out with!
- Entrepreneurship is a Vermont value: there are lots of small independently owned businesses and people all around us have lots of good skills. Young Vermonters also want this opportunity to start and run businesses.

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

- (Challenge) Healthcare; it's expensive and lots of Vermonters can't afford it.
- (Challenge) Children's healthcare; we have a good idea but we need to make sure that we keep it. The federal government has made that hard to do.
- (Challenge) Power plants and too much pollution within the state, but also from outside the state.
- (Challenge) Increasing gas prices. Vermont is very rural and we rely on driving. This is an international problem, not one that we can solve. We have to pay for the war on terrorism and greedy companies taking out their profit.
- (Challenge) Taxes; as cost of living increases, Vermonters have to pay more taxes and they get piled on because of out-of-staters.
- (Challenge) Housing and affordability of land. This is only going up and none of us can afford to live here anymore.
- (Challenge) It's very hard to sell a house in VT because the market is not good either.
- (Opportunities) There are lots of helpful neighbors in VT and charity services. These can help people who are in tough situations.
- (Opportunities) Schooling system: it's very good in VT and there is good assistance. The more school you have the more chance you have to get a good job.
- (Challenge) High schools across the state have different standards. It would be better to have a level playing field so that schools can be compared in the same way.
- (Opportunity) Wind energy is an opportunity in Vermont. We could use our existing resources better than we do.
- (Opportunity) We should think of clean and safe ways to get energy. Right now it's not good.
- (Opportunity) We should create and maintain a better road system. Some roads in VT are marginal or have low maintenance. Sections have been patched. There's an opportunity to make roads safer.
- (Opportunity) FAST internet! We need to run lines out to homes and houses. Right now you only get good internet if you're next to a big house that's already paid for the lines.

- (Opportunity) Cell service: right now most rural folks have to keep a landline and a cell phone and so they pay twice as much as they would have before just to keep in touch with everyone.

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

- Making housing and land prices more affordable should be priority. We should create apartments to make housing more available.
- Keeping Vermont drug and accident free should be a priority. We could do this by having additional checkpoints to keep people from drinking and driving, or having radio speed detectors.
- Finding new ways to get energy is a priority. We need to look closely at our spending within the state and think about how to finance wind energy, but not waste our money on other things.
- Having a clean environment is a priority. We could have more Green Up days, more trashcans and bigger fines for littering.
- Mileage for our cars is a priority. We need better mileage and hopefully the state is enforcing new standards starting in 2009 for that purpose.

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

- Roads are especially important here. We need to have a better way to fix washed-out roads
- Here in these towns we need to make sure that businesses stay. We don't want to lose them to high taxes or to too much permitting.
- We want more stores, but we don't want SO many that we become a big town, like Montpelier.
- We need more jobs for high school kids that are interesting here. Some of us don't have cars and we want to be able to work here, not drive to work at some other place.
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COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report – **Randolph High School Class Two - 10th grade**

Note Taker: Sarah Waring

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

- VT is home, it has great views and it's quiet. To me it means snow and all the other seasons.
- VT is clean, safe. It has lots of farmers and artists. It has many seasons and nice mountains. It is more clean than other states.
- VT doesn't have a wide variety of people. There aren't a whole lot of people who look different in VT.
- VT has lots of people who are born and raised here. It is a small state so people know each other.
- VTers share certain practices: like town meeting, maple sugaring. These are a part of our culture.
- VT is safe, it's down to earth, and it's welcoming. When people from out of state stop Vermonters, they get kind and helpful replies and will answer questions.
- VT is dirt roads, and mud season! It's very different that what is elsewhere – it is frozen pips and power loss.
- VT is the Long Trail which is very nice and you can enjoy the views.
- VTers value keeping the environment good, clean and healthy. They value being welcoming to others and being nice.
- VTers care about agriculture and good education and VT made products, like milk and cheese.
- VTers care about good schools, because people want their children to succeed.
- VTers care about celebrating things like graduation and Green-Up Day. People volunteer to help keep our state clean.
- VTers value being a part of things – it seems like everyone is a part of celebrations and activities.
- VTers value citizen involvement in government and the democratic process. Politicians will go out into the communities to find important issues.
- VTers live the saying 'it takes a community to raise a child'.

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

- (Challenge) We're used to living in a small state, but it's a challenge for high school students to go away to college and have to get used to living in a big city.
- (Challenge) Taxes will go up and change our way of life.
- (Opportunity) We have a higher quality of learning in comparison to other states.
- (Challenge) The permitting process for businesses is hard to get by. As a small business people have a hard time and often give up.
- (Challenge) VT has too much logging. It makes the land look ugly and VTers get income from tourists who come to look at the land.
- (Challenge) Keeping farming affordable is a challenge for our lifetime. It's hard to keep them afloat with all the payments they have to make. To make money, you have to have a big big farm.
- (Challenge) It will be a challenge just to support our families when we grow up. Gas prices are more expensive and that will change the way we travel.
- (Challenge) Real estate in Vermont is going nuts! We need to think for the future about empty rentable houses.
- (Challenge) Global warming will affect our ski industry and growing seasons. These are two of the biggest industries in Vermont (tourism and agriculture) so we need to plan for that. It will also affect the foliage.
- (Opportunity) The Northeast has a special opportunity in that we can still get outside.
- (Opportunity) Vermont is a safe place to raise a family – we have healthy atmospheres and it's safe on the streets. There is not a lot of crime, not a lot of depression.
- (Challenge) Since we're so small we're not heard at the national level. Sometimes we come up with a good idea, but other states don't want to do the same thing. And they don't hear us when we complain to them. Example is pollution and acid rain from power plants in other states.
- (Challenge) Gas prices will make it hard to live and work in the state.
- (Challenge) for small businesses it is a challenge to stay afloat. Big businesses will come in and take over – or move their whole operations to places where it's more affordable. They often outsource jobs from Vermont to other places.
- (Opportunity) Small businesses, small towns – we can hire local people to run them.
- (Opportunity AND challenge) The pay isn't as good in Vermont as other places, but even though people can get the same kind of job, they are coming here for quality of life. Places outside the state have higher salaries, but smaller places in Vermont have better community.

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

- We need to continue to respect the environment and teach our kids how to do that.
- We need to keep our school systems good because children are really the next Vermont and they need to know that we value them.
- We need to keep people happy so that they stay here. Keep communities stable and let them have time to adjust to changes and think about them.
- We need to increase wages so people don't have to move out.
- We need to lower costs for farmers because it's so expensive to pay for farms.
- We need to follow the rules. We can keep people in state if we enforce the actual laws and follow the rules that the state makes.
- We need to stop logging. We want to make it look better as a state, keep foliage healthy for tourists and keep the environment clean and healthy.
- We want to keep Vermont the way it is, no bring in cities, because no one wants to live in a city.
- We need to make it a priority to keep young people in Vermont and more kids in school by lowering taxes and having jobs for young people.
- We need more incentives in general for young people to stay here: more things for kids to do, like a hockey rink, a fieldhouse, sports and outdoor recreation. We also need to have places for people to create their own activity – places where kids can play card games or non-active recreation.

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

- Road management is especially important here. It's pothole city!
- Gas prices and emergencies are tough for us – we need a road crew that shares the priorities of the residents.
- In Randolph, we need to fix the school. We have a leaky roof, water in the hallways and dangerous slippery areas.
- We need better equipment in the schools.
- Randolph feels like it's getting bigger and bigger: with DuBois and King moving in it's becoming more modern. I think we should keep the character of Randolph, and keep it small if that's possible. We don't want to look like Barre or have big box stores.
- We need some competition in town so that prices go down in the stores.
- We need the Coop back because it provided variety and unusual products.
- We need a YMCA like place here.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report – **Randolph High School Class Three - 10th grade**
Randolph Community Forum Day – 11/19/07

Note Taker: Sarah Waring

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

- One stop on the road of life. Probably when I get older I won't be living in Vermont, but it's where I've spent my teen years. (Plans to go on to coast guard or tech theatre.
- Where I got my feet going. May move out because job opportunities are less here.
- A clean place, A place with a beautiful environment.
- It's a place with small towns where everyone knows everyone. Kind of nice Like when you walk in the bank, people say hi to you by name.
- I also love the small towns. Most of my family and extended family are here, too.
- It's a clean state that's not polluted like big cities are.
- It's a safe state to live in and I appreciate that.
- A place of natural, rural beauty, good opportunities for education. Nature can and is appreciated.
- It's a place known for its hospitality. People are welcoming and friendly.
- A place for opportunity, a good place for a home, a place (good place) to grow up in.
- Clean, scenic beauty, good education, safe.
- A nice place to live. It FEELS like home. Safe and comfortable.
- Home. Physically beautiful. Even though I'll probably move away from Vermont, I'll always think of VT as home.
- It's a place where you can express your own opinion.
- Safe. Not much crime.
- You can do what you want to do here.
- Clean environment, keeping rural and dislike and distrust of big corporations like Walmart.
- State pride, sugaring, small rural communities, Protecting environment, being involved in the communities we live in
- We can turn to neighbors when we need help. Our neighbors are special and there for us.
- Lots of Vermont families value their Vermont roots and want to keep people in the state.
- We care about our history and where we've come from.
- It's a place where many of us are connected to relatives.
- Generosity is valued. Preservation of Nature. And wholesome local Vermont foods and products.
- Quality and care. (Small businesses)
- We care about our local products and the quality Vermont products stand for.
- Vermont is also really diverse. We have a history of being a place accepting of refugees from other countries. We are welcoming.
- We value our place in the country. We are a role model to other states (education, health care, environmental controls)
- We tend to know our government officials. They're our neighbors. We feel connected to our politicians.
- We value independence. A lot of families have independent farms or businesses so they don't have to rely on others to get by.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report – **Randolph High School Class Two - 10th grade**
Randolph Community Forum Day – 11/19/07

Note Taker: Sarah Waring

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

- VT is home, it has great views and it's quiet. To me it means snow and all the other seasons.
- VT is clean, safe. It has lots of farmers and artists. It has many seasons and nice mountains. It is more clean than other states.
- VT doesn't have a wide variety of people. There aren't a whole lot of people who look different in VT.
- VT has lots of people who are born and raised here. It is a small state so people know each other.
- VTers share certain practices: like town meeting, maple sugaring. These are a part of our culture.
- VT is safe, it's down to earth, and it's welcoming. When people from out of state stop Vermonters, they get kind and helpful replies and will answer questions.
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- VTers care about good schools, because people want their children to succeed.
- VTers care about celebrating things like graduation and Green-Up Day. People volunteer to help keep our state clean.
- VTers value being a part of things – it seems like everyone is a part of celebrations and activities.
- VTers value citizen involvement in government and the democratic process. Politicians will go out into the communities to find important issues.
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Scribe Report – **Randolph High School Class 2 – 9th grade**
Randolph Community Forum Day 11/09/07
Notes Due November 27

Note Taker: Bonnie Smoren

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- Local products such as maple syrup are an important part of Vermont's identity.
- Vermont values natural products such as foliage, cheese, maple syrup
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- Outsiders may view Vermonters as hicks
- Vermont has a "home touch". You can't get lost, even in the largest city, but there are things to do.
- The change of seasons and what that brings, like skiing is valuable. "I love how it's muddy in the spring and the foliage – these natural elements are a source of pride and identity".
- Many students cited Vermont's small population, which provides privacy and open spaces, access to wildlife and the land. .
- The band Phish. Vermont has a hippie connection
- Vermont is not commercial, but that means people have to travel a long distance to shop.

- Insurance prices have quadrupled in Florida in the last year. This may drive people to Vermont.
- There are voluntary movers as well – people with above average incomes. “If Vermont is for sale to the highest bidder, it affects the character of the state.”
- There is a fear of gentrification. Vermont will be a place for the affluent.
- Wealthy people moving into town have a ripple effect, on taxes for example.
- People make decisions based on anecdotal evidence. There is a need for defensible, real data – a good tax analysis.
- Myths can be debunked, i.e. how zoning affects quality of life.
- Ethnic and racial diversity is not a problem now. We may become more racially diverse, however.
- Vermont is starting to get up to speed on technological infrastructure. We need to keep the momentum going. It’s what people coming to the state want.
- Vermont needs to work more closely with neighboring communities and provinces on issues such as energy and transportation. We are at the end of the line and need to talk to each other.
- WE need to quantify strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities – produce a work like the Maine Brookings Institute study.
- Build on local collaboration and share resources especially for emergencies, regional health care and energy.
- Issues that promote regional collaboration are discouraged due to current leadership.
- There is a leadership vacuum – a lack of policy.
- Vermont is a very Democratic state and that is both a strength and weaknesses. This can be seen, for example, in the large number of school districts.
- Push on the state level to consolidate school districts. There is a great deal of resistance to this, but how much needs to be done locally?
- There is a perception - a “small town” attitude - that impedes regional progress.
- Logistics affects things from disaster planning to everyday work.

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

- Respect the culture that we love – democracy, small town values- trust is important
- People tend to be fearful and avoid collaboration. VT needs help to work in a more unified fashion.
- We need to think about how to hold things together in the light of change – closing schools, wealthy newcomers.
- Trust and rational thought need to be developed.
- People evacuating to Vermont in the light of catastrophes could be a problem. We could see large numbers of economic refugees
- It is important to look at New England settlement patterns

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

- Consider the Vermont landscape – fragmentation of farms, forest and wildlife habitat. More people could fit into Vermont if it is done right.
- Sprawl threatens vibrant downtowns, which impacts our sense of place. There is a disconnect between state's land use policies and what is happening in Vermont's downtowns. The general population is not aware of this threat.
- Fragmentation is a problem.
- People don't have the opportunity to pause and really evaluate projects. Give people the opportunity to develop creative solutions.
- Change the perception of development processes so people understand the benefit. This leads to more thoughtful discussion
- Vermont needs a champion – there is a leadership vacuum.
- Encourage participation in shaping the future direction of the state. Vermont is pro-development but has a need do it in "our way".
- There is fragmentation around clustered housing. Do people want that level of density for themselves or only located elsewhere? There are many myths about housing density. We have tools to deal with residential sprawl.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

Scribe Report – **Randolph Municipal Staff**
Randolph Community Forum Day 11/19/07

Note taker: Bonnie Smoren

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

- Vermont is a place that people choose due to its rural qualities.
- Integrity is a Vermont value.
- Tolerance – there is a belief that people have the right to live the way they choose
There is tolerance for different lifestyles.
- Vermonters care for the environment and have a sense of community.
- Vermonters display friendliness and a desire to help each other
- Self-reliance as a work ethic. Vermonters are hardworking; perhaps that is derived from farm heritage.
- Education – Schools in the north are better than in the south. There is more care about the end result – helping children to be productive members of society.
- Vermont is first in many things; civil unions, health, “being green”, and pushing t back on the Patriot act.
- There is a homesteader mentality. We are constitutionalists and value independence.
- Vermont’s rural setting is (at this point) without a huge population.

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

- There are two Vermonts – the people who choose to come or to stay here, and those who cannot afford to leave. For many low-income families there is generational poverty, those who are undereducated and cannot get out that loop.
- Vermont's fastest growing job market is the service industry. Those wages do not keep pace with the expenses of living in Vermont. This is squeezing families already under stress.
- Vermont colleges are very expensive.
- Low-to moderate-income Vermonters are most negatively impacted by high college costs.
- There is a large disparity between the poor and the well off. "Vermont has a vanishing middle class and has become a two class state– the rich and famous and the poor and forgotten".
- We are destined to be a two-class state. Many hard workers cannot afford their taxes and sell their land to survive. That land is often purchased by wealthy out-of-staters – people who come here because they don't want to see their neighbors.
- Our trend is toward attracting factories and large businesses to get the jobs here, yet we want to keep rural character.
- Some jobs have been lost overseas.
- Environmental issues are important. We have the technology for wind farms, but people don't want it in their back yard.
- Alternative energies such as solar are not cost effective and banks will not support loans for them. It is very difficult to get financing. Financing for green technology needs to be developed.
- The permitting process is very expensive for alternative energy.
- The environment is an issue of both ethics and economics.
- Affordability is an issue for many people who can't afford to buy even basic needs
- "Is this unique to Vermont though?"
- Transportation in a rural area is a challenge.
- Infrastructure, especially broadband is a challenge
- Wealthy people don't leave the state – the rich from other states move here. That increases the economic divide.
- The tax base has driven local people out of town as wealthy people move in and buy houses.
- "Outsiders" come with a vision of what they want and often oppose the changes that native Vermonters seek.
- On the other hand, once they get here, they want all the things they left behind.
- Vermont has a brain drain. We're educating our children well and they have to go elsewhere for a job. There are not enough decent jobs for young people.
- We as Vermonters have come to expect more material things. We've gotten away from self-reliance and become more of a consumer society.

- We are losing family farms every day.
- More things are devolving to a municipal level. Municipalities and states are struggling with issues that need to be dealt with on a federal level. There are not enough resources. We are running with a military mentality.
- Two thirds of our tax bill goes to education and one third goes to municipality.
- There are mandated but unfunded regulations.
- Many of the issues are based on an economy of scale. Fewer people and fewer tax dollars create an increased burden.
- We need a better handle on public safety issues. Police services are fractionalized and there is a lack of citizen awareness.
- Crime is increasing and there is a need for more public safety resources.
- Any time there is an economic decline and huge economic disparity, crime statistics go up.
- Vermont has no felony gun law.
- People expressed fear about the end of the oil economy. There needs to be a major shift in both technology and expectations. We need to think about consumer choices around food and driving.
- There are opportunities to develop local agriculture.
- There is a trend toward individual ingenuity in energy. This trend should be supported.
- The number of incarcerated people has increased and that presents both a social and financial cost.

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

- Public safety, education and good jobs.
- Infrastructure, water, sewer, broadband, roads, and bridges need to be put on a realistic schedule.
- Climate change issues – the cost and how it will change our lives.
- Our electric supply is vulnerable – we need to be prepared.
- Fuel is behind everything. A balance is needed between alternative energy and reducing our reliance on imported fuel.
- Border security (public safety). Vermonters do not take public safety seriously.
- Maintain the good things that we have as we adapt to changes.

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

- Get back to the value of self-reliance – creating a local economy and relying on each other.
- A municipally owned wind-farm could produce community power.
- Reducing waste – we live in a disposable society. Things are made to be tossed because it is less expensive to throw things away than repair them.
- Information literacy. We need to train children how to use the Internet and how to use books as well.
- The focus is so strongly on digital technology that we have lost site of the importance of trades and agriculture.
- Affordable housing is needed.
- There is a clash of values. There is a resistance between rural expectations and economic growth. There is a need to move forward in an orderly manner and have a shared vision. Develop a common context that includes both growth and preservation of a rural environment. Who is responsible for providing that vision?
- Leaders need to have a high degree of political courage and not be stuck in a reaction mode.
- We need to get away from the back-room dealings of municipalities and need to continue cooperation and leveraging of resources.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

Scribe Report – **Chamber of Commerce**
Randolph Community Forum Day 11/19/07

Note taker: Bonnie Smoren

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

- The sustainability movement is intrinsic to the future of Vermont.
- There is a desire for a green lifestyle, and an appreciation of agriculture and farming.
- Like other mountain cultures it is welcoming and not suspicious. People are accepted on their own terms.
- People associate with each other in many different contexts. In a small community you can understand each other by observation, and are known by how you behave. We are losing that in an electronic society as we associate with people who are like ourselves. There are fewer contexts for meeting and less diversity in contacts. We are losing the accountability that comes with small places.
- One person noted she came because of community and to get away from technology.
- Schools can be the foundation of community.
- Vermonters value a connection with the outdoors.

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

- There is a contradiction between people's image of Vermont and what is real. As we become more virtual, that reality will be harder to maintain.
- People come to live in a community but don't belong to a community.
- People come here from the virtual world – to find that image – and in coming change it.
- People who come here don't really have anything to do with the local economy – they come to get away from somewhere else. But they exist in a cyber world.
- There is less human contact. A sense of community is becoming increasingly virtual and done through venues like Facebook.

- Churches play less of a role in people's lives.
- We are an amenities economy.
- There is more evidence of poverty and disinvestment. Old Vermont is often synonymous with poverty.
- There is an opportunity to maintain a rural, livable environment. Technology allows businesses to function without impacting the environment.
- Vermont has proven it can save the land, but not the farms. There can be more focus on diversified agriculture, young farm families. We have an opportunity to influence the direction of VT farming.
- Farming is not a desirable vocation for young people in Vermont.
- General student knowledge is sorely lacking – a general knowledge about the world and a curiosity about the world are missing.
- There is no shared experience and traditions are becoming obsolete. This is a problem that finds roots in television and the Internet.
- Young people don't see the value of actual physical community rather than virtual community.
- There is a lack of church, lack of family, lack of values – the mass culture that people are exposed to provides a negative influence.
- There is anti-intellectualism – a lack of intellectual curiosity.
- The lack of ethnic diversity in Vermont limits young people's understanding of the world.

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

- Address the issue of affordability. People who grew up here can't afford to live here.
- People with more money come here and are willing to pay more for things.
- School taxes are too high.
- There are many little schools resulting in fewer students in schools and higher costs. There should be more consolidation of schools. You can offer more things with greater economy of scale if resources are combined.
- The cost of running the school is driving out local people. It is possible to build a school for less. We need to rethink what is really needed.
- Infrastructure is a foundational issue that impacts many areas, including transportation
- Provide help for dysfunctional families – we need to go to the core problem and address this issue with more than Band-Aids.
- Vermont has the opportunity to change things because of its small size.
- Single parents or two working parents contribute to problem of dysfunctional families.
- Business is going global and will be more Internet based.
- Vermont is becoming a bedroom community to New York and Boston because people can do their work electronically in Vermont.
- Manufacturing as a large-scale entity is not a reality – Vermont is well suited for a boutique economy with its Vermont brand.

- There is a concern that downtowns don't have the support they need. How can you help maintain Vermont businesses

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

- There is a small customer base. People get jobs elsewhere and spend money elsewhere – we are a bedroom community.
- Many businesses have left due to global competition.
- There are many hoops for businesses to jump through which makes Randolph seem anti-business. This drives potential businesses away.
- Act 250 has many positive features, but it can be an onerous process.
- It's a mentality to make business development very hard. Development Committee in Randolph has been taken over by a no-growth committee.
- Some challenges come from a state level.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

Scribe Report – Evening Session - VTC
Randolph Community Forum Day 11/19/07

Note Taker: Bonnie Smoren

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

- Respect for the land and the working environment on the land – loggers, farmers, hunters, snowshoers, skiers.
- Vermonters have a lively interest in the newcomer, yet are comfortable with their own lifestyle. There is no xenophobia.
- People care about their neighbors and are willing to help them.
- Self reliance – Vermonters are independent and don't expect someone else to solve their problems.
- Being small works. If we are to protect our land, we have to stay small and not try to be like bigger states.
- A small scale ensures a sense of community.
- Old time Vermonters don't want new people coming in and telling them what to do.
- Freedom and unity- this concept is a paradox and some of this paradox is being lost. Vermont needs to be able to deal with this.
- People respect each other. "It is a wonderful place to let the mind move around."
- Vermont values hard working and innovation. Vermont has been on the cutting edge of some technologies.
- Town meetings are unique to Vermont and are an example of solving problems on a local level.
- Government is, for the most part, accessible and Vermont values honesty and openness in government.
- Vermonters have a sense of pride and a sense of place and heritage.
- "There is strength of community, land, independence, ruggedness."
- Vermonters represent an aspect of what an American WAS. Americans now are viewed as consumers.
- There are not a lot of strip malls or centralized consumerism.
- Vermont can seem like a sheltered place – apart from the rest of the world. This can lead to insularity.
- There is a local economy that helps keep business personal.
- Open mindedness and frugality are values.

- Frugality in Vermont means seeing goldmines in the junk in the shed – using what you have instead of participating in a throwaway culture.
- Vermont is hospitable and welcoming. It has “an artful quality of life”.
- Vermonters feel they can be heard.

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

- Try to maintain core values under the reality that the world has changed with a global economy.
- Education and taxes to pay for education continue to be a concern.
- Energy for electricity, heat, and transportation will require choices that will impact how well we live.
- The post high school- pre-parental demographic is not well represented in Vermont.. The 18 – 34 age group is not here.
- Keeping Vermont affordable is a challenge.
- There is great opportunity to have lots of agricultural land available, to develop sound infrastructure and stewardship principals. There is a chance to move back to a more land-based economy.
- Vermont can be autonomous in energy and agriculture.
- How can we prepare for a population influx that may occur with coastal sea-rise, or drought that will occur with climate change? How can we be hospitable and welcoming?
- Elevate farming to a respected profession. The Localvore movement taking off. and will help this.
- Create an environment that encourages innovation.
- Balance the need to be small with the pressures from the outside world. We need to avoid development decisions that will lead to a one-class state.
- The message t being sent to young people is that to be successful, they need to move away. We see our communities as being incapable of educating the smartest young people and so only the failures stay here. We are speaking from our fears.
- There is a widening gap between rich and poor and disillusion and disrespect between classes. There is much greater economic disparity than ever before.
- Maintaining a local economy is difficult while trying to make things more convenient and affordable.
- There are people with fundamental skills like plowing, building, etc. that got Vermont to where it is now. These people are not respected or nurtured.
- We have not met the challenge of honoring and respecting agricultural skills and trades people with traditional skills. This can help keep people here
- There is a disconnect with the national government. We have to work either very locally or internationally.
- The challenge in Vermont is to not over-legislate living here.

- Health care is a concern. How will Vermonters take care of their own medical needs and their parent's needs?
- There is a challenge in providing care for elders and young children. Caregivers are not paid a livable wage.
- We lose our sense of belonging to a place – not only to a community but to the landscape. There is not a cultivation of that sense of place for our children.
- Looking into the future, we need to emphasize the value of the group. The focus now is on the individual – we need to think beyond ourselves.
- What does sustainability look like? Think in terms of secession.
- Conservation and learning to do without will be of primary importance. We will need to unlearn our consumerism because we have exceeded the wise use of resources.
- Future sources of electricity need to be considered, and there should be more support for renewable energy.

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

- “Less is more. We have to change the way we think.”
- Localization – Develop small, independent, local solutions. This will cut down on long travel distances to jobs.
- Our priorities need to be the basic ones - adequate food, shelter, water, health care, access to education, and livable wage jobs.
- The people have to be the first priority. We need employment infrastructure, education, affordable housing, and a safety net for health care. Vermonters need to be more self-sufficient.
- Tap the National Forest for its resources.
- Addressing global warming, and a health care system that treats everyone the same are crucial.
- Move from consumerism to investment. Invest heavily – on the order of the GI bill or the Tennessee Valley Authority – in energy.
- “It's the capital that is missing. Stop financing oil. Use that money for alternative energy.”
- Health care – many people are one accident away from poverty.
- Vermont needs to attract a young, well educated demographic.
- Don't lose sight of conservation and history. We need to take a step back. People survive with rudimentary education and resources and we should not discount the value of that.
- Vermont universities are too expensive. Make a strategic investment in education
- We need to think in the long term – beyond our own personal and immediate needs and wants

- The community is an organism and we need to think of every member as a vital part of that body.
- Become less political and work together in an apolitical way.
- What are the fundamental rights of each person? Before filling “wants” we need to address the fundamental needs of every person.
- Think of more progressive ways to raise revenues beyond taxes. Encourage collaboration between organizations.
- There needs to be an attitude shift – stop instilling fear and promoting consumerism. We need to inspire our children and empower young people to participate. Have hope and pass it on.
- Develop more educational programs that model sustainability.
- Kids learn fear from the Internet and television. Parents need to spend more time with and to assume more responsibility for raising their children. Turn off “entertainment” get out of the “e-crazy” world and spend time together. Children’s values come from electronics – not from the people in their lives.
- The emphasis on tourism should go away. Don’t design Vermont’s future around tourists needs

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

- Randolph needs to understand the importance of local agriculture and the benefit of supporting the local economy.
- How can we support Randolph locally - food, housing, energy- and use existing resources effectively? What makes this place vibrant and how do we cultivate that?
- Develop partnerships between institutions in town to address social and economic problems.
- We can understand and present ourselves as sovereign individuals. Don’t wait for a mandate by the legislature.
- Where does the money come from to invest in priorities? We need a political voice that fights for the people’s priorities. What is the link between these meetings and Montpelier?
- We should stop selling our water.
- Provide energy education and monitor energy use in the house. Build awareness of carbon footprint of food
- Support the local economy and join the Conservation Commission and other boards.
- Don’t fear what is. Understand that people have different senses of community.
- People need meeting places to see each other face to face.
- We need more conversations like this.