

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

RUTLAND **Community Forum Day notes** **December 4th, 2007**

The following notes were collected from focus group meetings and forums throughout the day spent in Rutland 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 December 4th.

- Rutland Regional Planning Commission and guests
- Central Vermont Public Service
- Bennington-Rutland Opportunity Council
- Poultney Downtown Revitalization Association and guests
- Rutland Area Farm and Food Link (RAFFL)
- Green Mountain College faculty and students
- Rutland Evening forum

Local Hosts and Sponsors include:

Bennington-Rutland Opportunity Council
Castleton College
City of Rutland
Central Vermont Public Service
Green Mountain College
Green Mountain National Forest
Poultney Downtown Revitalization Assn
Rutland Regional Planning Commission
Rutland Regional Medical Center
Rutland Area Farm & Food Link
Rutland Economic Development Corp
Shrewsbury Fire Department
Vermont Marble Museum

Facilitators: Paul Costello, Steve Gold, Sarah Waring

Scribes: Bonnie Smoren, Steve Gold, Paul Costello

Listening Team members: Jenny Nelson, Pat Menduni

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report – Rutland Regional Planning Commission
Rutland December 4, 2007

Scribe: Bonnie Smoren

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

- It is a place to balance work and a personal life.
- It is a place where people know and care about their neighbors. This is in part due to the scale of the state and because we have protected the institutions that keep those values at the core.
- Vermont is an oasis – the most beautiful piece of real estate in the country.
- Vermont has a balance of preserved land –it takes only a few minutes to get away from the city.
- Agriculture, open lands, small business
- The high quality of Vermont products. It is so much the fact that it is locally made, as it is the high quality of what we produce.
- A Vermont value is independence
- The Vermont Country store a good employment strategy and has targeted older workers by responding to their desire for a flexible schedule.

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

- Vermont is a scenic refuge, but this comes at an expense to property owners. Land use controls limit landowners.
- There is a price to live here from land use to business costs and income taxes.
- There are income limitations.
- Jobs for the local economy are needed. It is difficult to buy local when those items are more expensive.
- The twenty to thirty five year olds are leaving.
- The cost of living is an issue now and it will continue to be one. This contributes to a loss of that younger demographic. This is rooted in low wages.
- A balance of population distribution will be a challenge.
- We need to boost our family age workforce. There is a disproportionate amount of near-retirement age people – those with the highest skills will be leaving.
- How can we keep skilled, aging workers in the equation? Perhaps as mentors. We need to think about how we work in Vermont.
- Some jobs seem to be unfilled or are going to workers outside of Vermont.
- There is a skills gap. Vermonters take minimum wage jobs due to lack of skills – often Vermonters have multiple low-skill jobs.

- Even high skill jobs are not filled because the salaries are too low.
- There is a sense that quality of life offsets low wages.
- There will be a shortage of volunteers, in part because people have busy lives. Also because many people are not raised with that service ethic.
- Schools and other services, such as fire departments, may need to consolidate.
- Plans need to be made – a “what if scenario” developed to address changing demographics, such as a lack of youth or shortage of volunteers.
- Communities need to look more toward regional collaboration.
- Climate change and the effect it will have on the economy and our way of life is a concern. This could be an opportunity in a developing “green” marketplace. Vermont values and resources could place the state well in developing a green economy and could be tied to our identity
- We need to diversify the housing stock by thinking about town plans and density building that could provide housing for the elderly and young families.
- Regionalism is an opportunity. It could make more efficient use of our resources.
- Regionalism needs to be balanced by a tax base and understanding of land structure.
- There is a loss to schools with regionalism and consolidation. There can be financial savings, but schools are community centers
- The ethic and culture of people in their teens and twenties need to be understood. Technology has a major impact. It could provide some opportunities, such as distance learning. This could help maintain the local school, but could supplement that education with distance education.
- More people working from home could redevelop a sense of community. They may have more time and flexibility to participate.
- Housing is not affordable for Vermonters, especially young people.
- There is a problem with ancient infrastructure, particularly water and sewer, in many of the villages. They are in need of repairs but there is a shortage of federal and state funds. The cost is prohibitive for residents to carry.

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

- Young people need to come out of schools with the skills ready to enable them to work. Not just academic knowledge, but work-ready skills.
- There needs to be “soft skills”, like an understanding of a work ethic, particularly for those with only a high school education.
- Vermont needs a trade school system. This would encourage retirement age people to pursue new careers.
- There is a shift in where people work – from family farms and businesses, to a commuting culture, to an increase in home-crafted products and at home work via electronic tools. There is a demand for working from home that we need to encourage.
- Appropriate affordable housing with an efficient energy footprint. Numerous people named this as their first priority.

- There is a need to define “affordable” and the perceptions of different demographics about that.
- Does Vermont really want an increase in population and housing? For many people, open land is the most appealing thing about the state.
- There needs to be a conversation about the size population that Vermont really wants.
- As the population ages there will be a need for more people to provide services.
- Affordable housing needs to be located in more urban centers.
- Everything we talk about is either retaining Vermonters or attracting new residents. Either way this increases population and that requires examination of infrastructure.
- Advancing business development – look at the cost of doing business.
- Discuss with students why community involvement is important. We don’t teach civics anymore.
- Require community service in schools

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

- It is difficult to get people to look at things regionally. It is necessary to show towns the cost/benefits. It is an issue of both emotion and money – especially with something like schools.
- Add an incentive to promote regionalism. Use cost to bring people together.
- Schools are emotional – start the discussion elsewhere – with infrastructure perhaps.
- Castleton is having a hard time filling volunteer positions.
- There needs to be a statewide broadband presence. Fifty years out, schools may be obsolete. Students are getting their education electronically.
- Jobs will be coming through the computers.
- The state of Vermont may become a park – it is the only way we can preserve open lands
- This region needs a big idea. This is easier than many small ideas.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report – Central Vermont Public Service
Rutland December 4, 2007

Scribe: Steve Gold

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

- Vermonters value a good education for their kids.
- Vermonters value independence and freedom.
- I love the look and feel of the Green Mountains.
- Vermonters have a consciousness about planning for the future, especially the environment. I value Act 250 and Act 200.
- I am a native Vermonter, 7 th generation, and I value Vermonters resourcefulness.
- I value the small town feel that is lacking in other parts of the US. That includes a sense of belonging, knowing your neighbors and community, being actively involved locally and volunteering for public and non-profit organizations.
- Vermonters share a strong desire to preserve whatever each individual sees as special about VT.
- Vermonters value their traditions and history.
- Vermonters value culture and arts at the local level.
- Vermonters have a values conflict between independence and freedom on the one hand and the desire to restrict others, e.g. zoning and Act 250, on the other.
- Vermont means tolerance. It's not about your lifestyle, as long as how you live doesn't hurt others, but what you do that counts.
- Vermont means children generally all having a positive experience growing up.
- Vermonters value sustainability, not growth for growth's sake.
- Vermonters value the working landscape.
- Vermont means personal safety. Clean environment and fresh air.
- Vermonter value the dairy and maple culture as an ideal stereotype.
- Vermonters value and practice hard work- a Yankee work ethic. It's about "getting the job done".
- Vermonters value maintaining their privacy.
- Vermont means people will be there when you need help. Vermont is fortunate that it has not reached the level of homogenization and sprawl of the rest of the country, i.e. strip malls, big box stores, gas stations with housing in between. Most of the rest of America looks the same everywhere. Vermont has not gone that way generally, though it has in places. Rather, there are places like the Church St. Mall, downtown Rutland that preserve architecture in very good ways and avoid sprawl. We need to stem the tide of homogenization. Vermont has its own specific identity and culture that we need to preserve. By culture I mean the Yankee mentality: small is good; civil libertarianism.

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

Challenges

- Both globalization and regionalization (beyond the boundaries of VT and even the US) pose a challenge in that the telecommuter may have a different attitude toward his/her community, e.g. road maintenance, volunteering, and also that good jobs will be harder to keep in state given the competition with other places.
- We need to fund higher education better.
- We need jobs and to have businesses that can provide good jobs.
- The aging population and loss of 18-35 year olds is a major challenge.
- The aging population presents the challenge of not having the tax base to support the elders.
- Affordable housing, and what constitutes it, is a major challenge.
- Having adequate funds for public services, schools will be a challenge.
- Attracting and retaining good K-12 teachers, because VT doesn't pay competitively with surrounding states, will be a challenge.
- Supporting, attracting and retaining businesses is and will be a challenge.
- We need to extend the "cache" of Burlington to the rest of the state.
- Having jobs that can sustain our ideals and wants will be a challenge.
- Holding on to our local independence in the face of the State taking more power and control, e.g. the schools, is and will be a challenge.
- Local control and its dependence on public, voluntary participation at the local level, "the grassroots of maintaining the mechanics of democracy" will be a challenge.
- The conflict of wanting to preserve what we have but at the same time wanting what others have, e.g. big box stores, is and will be a challenge.
- Making Act 200 work as a proactive planning process that defines what we want, versus staying only with the reactive Act 250, is a challenge.
- Keeping energy rates low yet staying "green" in energy production is a challenge.
- Making healthcare truly affordable and available is a challenge in that it is becoming the "forgotten child" now that some action was taken.
- Maintaining Vermont heritage as a place where Vermonters can live and preserve their Yankee values and not be replaced by people who want to define Vermont as something else.
- Home ownership is a big challenge. Belmont, where old simple farmhouses are now going to out of staters for \$400,000, is an example in the negative.
- Fostering buying local and eating local and organic is a need and challenge.
- Avoiding increasing sprawl and focusing development on growth centers and existing population centers is a major challenge and a critical one.
- Achieving energy independence and specifically independence from foreign oil, especially mideast oil, is a huge national and Vermont challenge.
- Replacing very old and insufficient infrastructure, especially water and sewer in our towns and cities, is a huge and expensive challenge.

Opportunities

- Vermont can become a leader in the effort to achieve energy independence.

Technology will emerge or is already here now to do so, but we have yet to feel the pressure to use it. I see self-contained hydrogen generators and fuel cells as a key technology. Geo-thermal mechanisms are also key. In Vermont, using wind energy is a no brainer that should be developed.

- Regionalization is an important opportunity that is necessary to efficiently use limited resources, both human and fiscal. I think economic drivers will make it happen here and around the state.
- Revitalizing downtowns and combining that with the buy local and eat local is an opportunity that we have moved on here in Rutland. We need to do more with this across the state.
- Encouraging businesses, especially Vermont businesses (as opposed to courting outside ones to come here) is an opportunity. Sustainability is important but the State needs to avoid over regulation, which I believe exists now.

- Vermont is small enough to get things done that larger states cannot, e.g. taking care of the aging population, healthcare, public transportation, access to telecommunications.
- Attracting green, smart businesses is an opportunity - The State needs to work to attract "clean, green, smart businesses".
- Maintaining Vermont's "look and feel", versus the whole state becoming like So. Burlington or Rutland Town.
- We need to go forward into the past and avoid the "suburban sprawl stage".
- We have the opportunity to plan carefully and thoughtfully how to address the challenges and the conflicts we face. We need to focus on finding the balance.

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

- We need to take a proactive rather than reactive approach.
- We need to create jobs.
- We need to identify the industries and kinds of jobs we want and go get them and retain them.
- We need to create jobs for younger people if we want to retain and attract them.
- We need to have a balance of different kinds of jobs - not just intellectual industries. Some of our children will want to work with their hands.
- Having the State do better planning for energy and growth and be accountable for that planning should be a priority.
- We need to balance economic, environmental and social equity needs in our planning.
- The State needs to coordinate its permit processes for businesses to come to VT or to expand. The State should establish a "one stop shop" to facilitate the permit process and ensure that it is predictable.
- We need to cultivate higher education and develop the State College system, not just UVM.
- We need to develop a consensus on how we will replace electric power resources (hydro and nuclear) which will take finding a balance and common ground.
- We need to develop the infrastructure needed to get those who vacation here to relocate here. We need to foster telecommuting as opposed to trying to get entire businesses and industries to move here.

- Since Burlington is in fact the hub of VT, we need to develop much better mass transit to access it.
- We need to reduce the state tax burden.
- We need to increase wellness efforts.
- We need to restructure the public welfare system to focus on helping "bootstrap" people to independence, not just giving a handout which is demotivating.
- We need to improve and increase the transportation infrastructure.
- Replacement of aging infrastructure, including transportation infrastructure for both rail and automobile - roads, bridges, rail lines - and especially as I noted already water and sewer lines in our cities and towns is essential to prevent sprawl and concentrate growth in existing population centers - designated downtowns and growth centers. This is important both for aesthetic reasons and also to preserve our cities and towns. Rutland City's grand list is shrinking and that is not good as we look to the future if we are to preserve the Vermont we love and avoid sprawl.
- Regionalization needs to be a priority, especially locally in the Rutland region. The biggest obstacle is fear of Rutland City's fiscal issue right now, but I think regionalization, at least with Rutland Town, would pass if Rutland City's fiscal house were in order. It does not make sense not to be merged because right now we are one community in reality.
- Housing is not a priority in for Rutland City. There is a lot of empty housing stock in the city. The issue is having people with sufficient incomes and values to rent the available housing stock and take care of it. Landlords are winterizing empty houses (essentially mothballing them) because they are sick of renting them to people who will trash them.

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

- We need to regionalize more effectively - Rutland City, Town, West Rutland and Proctor - for services, infrastructure, and resources sharing.
- We need to focus on roadway issues - Routes 4 and 7 - and get State \$ here for them.
- We need to focus on finding jobs to replace those lost Omnia jobs.
- We need to develop a strategy for a coordinated and effective workforce development system using the schools and providing incentives for new employers to come here to use the (newly developed) skilled workforce.
- We need to save downtown Rutland and make it a vibrant center which requires people with disposable income which brings us back to getting good jobs.
- We need to have specific workforce development targeted to specific new businesses that we want.
- We need to build bridges with the community of Killington.
- We need to establish a formal group among the regional towns that will find the common ground for a regionalization process.
- We need to develop a widespread and shared marketing plan among the little towns focusing on each's unique assets that will attract businesses and tourists.
- We need to invest in a healthcare infrastructure to serve the growing aging population, through an incubator type program.
- We need to build on the asset of the NYC train by having mass transit direct to other towns, esp. Burlington.

- We need to invest in Castleton College as a regional educational center.
- We need to make wireless free.
- We need to build on the asset of the indoor farmers' market to expand the use of the working landscape.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report
Rutland Forum Dec. 4th

GROUP NAME : Bennington – Rutland Opp. Council
LOCATION: BROC Office
SCRIBE NAME: Paul Costello

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

- People helping people. This is why I came 30 years ago and decided to come back after visiting. A farmer pulled me out of a ditch. People are friendly.
- There are good helpful organizations – a women’s center and network shelter is good. BROC is good.
- Vermont is more affordable than Massachusetts.
- Vermont means home – it’s where family is and it means a hand to hold onto.
- Vermont is beautiful – after coming from an un-beautiful place where there was safety for us “I needed beautiful big time.”
- Vermont is safe and has communities of faith. Rutland is holy city where people worship together.
- Vermont has many people who believe in the ‘old ways’. This is important.
- You couldn’t ask for better people than in Fair Haven.
- Small town living without too much social stratification.
- Mountains make me feel safe.
- There is much better healthcare here than in NJ – Doctors here really care and hospital is very good to us. Very understanding about issues.

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

- The friendliness and ‘people helping people’ is changing. Now folks see only the dollar sign.
- Too many out of staters don’t have the same values.
- Fair Haven takes care of what it wants, and then takes care of ‘second people’.
- A challenge is that kids won’t be able to afford their own homes. “My daughter has no credit so she’ll never get a home.”
- Challenge is affordability of basic needs. Right now there are still banks and credit unions that trust us. But the next generation won’t have anything because we’re doling all the money out on social security, Medicaid, etc. Gas prices also are too high for people to cover – “Rich people are getting all the money.”
- Homelessness is a challenge – there are too many in Burlington and Rutland and we need to look at empty housing for them.
- Challenge is that the generation is ‘going backward’ and people don’t care any more.
- In Fair Haven, we have nothing for the kids. We need more parks.
- A challenge is gas in general – people here are siphoning gas out of other people’s tanks. We’ve been hit 5 times.

- An opportunity would be to bring a business like Great Escape or another amusement park to Vermont (like to the Rutland Fairground) where people pay a lot of money to get in and it would provide jobs to locals.
- A challenge is the predatory lending – and bad advertising. People think they can afford to rent things like TVs and washing machines, but it's beyond their means. (RENT A CENTER, e.g.)
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III. What should our priorities be as we work together to realize your vision and prepare Vermont for the future?

- A big priority is to get more money to BROOC and food shelters and to 'Fair Haven Concern'. The cost of living goes up, but the support to the poor doesn't. We're on a fixed income and there's a lot of confusion around that, because assistance happens at different levels. Sometimes you're eligible for one or sometimes for another. Clearing this up would be a priority. (BROOC doesn't get \$ from voters of Rutland City, e.g., where they used to get 20k on the ballot – where other towns just about all pay for BROOC).
- The government of Vermont is not doing what its supposed to do. If we want to keep VT, we need to 'do stuff for Vters'. We keep doing things for out-of-staters instead.
- There is no money to be made in Vt. The jobs with benefits should be a priority (e.g. Stop and Shop cutting back hours and only offering minimum wage, Rite Aid keeping hours low so they don't have to give benefits. Businesses leaving or cutting back – killington, Metro-Group, OMYA.)
- "I've looked 15 places for jobs, but no one's calling me back".
- A priority should be our landscapes – on Route 30 there's too much logging. Farms are for sale and barns are falling down. Farm families are in poverty. All that is dying and land will be developed, and this is a tragedy because we can't preserve our rural heritage. People want to see farms and barns.
- I worry about the environment and the war. "We are starving and looking for jobs and I do love Vermont, but I love it the way it was."
- Homelessness should be a priority – Houses and communities need to change (e.g. there are homeless people under River St. Bridge freezing to death now).
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IV. We've been talking about Vermont, but how does this discussion concern the future of your community?

- (This question was answered during the course of discussion.)

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report – St. Raphael’s Church Poultney Downtown
Revitalization Assn and guests
Rutland December 4, 2007 Scribe: Bonnie Smoren

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

- Self-reliance, autonomy and a “live and let live” philosophy
- Pride –we are proud of our land and have a desire to preserve that land.
- We are respectful of property and of rights
- Vermonters like to solve problems from within, and prefer collective problem solving strategies rather than help from the state.
- The rural quality of Vermont is an appeal in both retaining and attracting people to the state
- Politicians are accessible. You can walk into the statehouse; sit in on any committee meeting.
- We are losing our family farms and are not the same agricultural state, but if we keep a small-town feeling, people will want to be here.
- Vermont’s small size is a value
- There is a sense of community in Vermont.
- Vermont’s size allows people to serve in many different capacities and allows people to make an impact.
- “True Vermonters are fiercely independent.” The speaker was particularly opposed to Commissioner Cate’s ideas around consolidating schools.
- Vermonters don’t want government telling them what to do.
- There is also a sense of dependence. People depend on their neighbors to do the right thing – on community to rally around to help when it is needed. There is a sense of responsibility.
- Vermonters are concerned and care about their state. They are educated and willing to hear opposing viewpoints to reach their own conclusion.

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

- It is difficult to remain rural, and also make advancements. Cell phone towers for example are necessary to draw businesses, college students and other people, but those towers impact the rural character of the town.
- Wind towers also present an aesthetic challenge, but also can advance energy needs.
- There are fewer opportunities to have community-wide discussions. People are so busy with work and kids.
- An aging population is a challenge. There is a migration of people in their 20s – 30s.

We need those people to remain a vibrant state.

- The challenge is jobs. We have to provide good-paying, interesting and challenging jobs.
- Green jobs provide an opportunity.
- There is a need to develop training for those green jobs.
- We have lost many working farms –down from 35 to 3 in Wells, Vermont. Think of the jobs that were lost. It is a challenge to preserve our farms so that we don't lose our rich agricultural history.
- Jobs – a young person said she wants to be a reporter and feels she needs to go to New York for that field.
- Education is a challenge. We need to make sure our children have a “topnotch, world class education”. That takes money.
- Partnerships need to be formed so that high schools connect with local colleges. We need to look and an ungraded education system- something more holistic.
- Vermont may have some prejudices due to its geographic nature. There has been some racial isolation, but as diverse populations move here, Vermonters need to learn how to address that. Diverse populations may bring new skills and opportunities to the state.
- Affordable housing is a challenge.
- The poverty rate is very high. Last year Poultney's schools had a 48% poverty rate.
- It is a challenge for teenagers to find things to do in a rural area.

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

- Preschool education in Vermont falls short. We need to spend more time and resources making sure every child has quality home care prior to kindergarten. The babysitter too often is the television set.
- Small towns need to get groups together that provide hobbies and activities, especially for young people. Perhaps year-round indoor sports. Community groups could address this and develop sports or arts groups.
- Transportation. Difficult rural access may keep undesirable elements, like drugs, out – but it is also an impediment to business development.
- Do we want to spend money on an automobile infrastructure as fuel goes up? We need improved public transportation.
- Alternative transportation. The speaker had been to Sweden and praised the efficient train system and thinks that exploring multi-modal or alternative public transportation would help the state.
- Everything comes down to economics. It is the root of everything. How do we pay for what we want? How do you improve education and transportation without funding?
- You need to know the cost/benefit of the options.
- The speaker sees two visions of the state; Vermont as a retirement state is one vision. The infrastructure is designed to attract retirees. It works in Florida and it could work here. The second vision is Vermont as an entrepreneurial state. This requires a certain infrastructure – technology, taxes and a friendly business climate.

- Vermont needs to be business friendly and to find a balance between business development and sprawl.
- Develop a clear understanding of education and tax systems.
- Expand on home care opportunities for young children that will provide strong pre-school education.
- Ages 4 – 7 are the most important years in terms of cognitive development. Address poverty and inadequate day care provision.

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

- Poultney needs transportation for recreational activities.
- Utilize the skills and ideas developed at Green Mountain College in this town.
- A Lack of jobs and housing will impact the young people in town.
- We sell the town to tourists but not to the people who live here.
- We don't sell the quality of life Vermont offers. This can offset lower paying jobs.
- For Poultney, develop a business about retrofitting homes for energy efficiency.
- Broadband is coming to Poultney and that might open opportunities for at home businesses. Cell phone coverage is coming as well.
- There is an opportunity to develop agricultural products to produce bio-plastics.
- Poultney needs to look at green jobs, environmental businesses.
- There are restrictive employment laws for young people. Immigrants take jobs but employment opportunities for kids are limited

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report – Rutland Area Farm and Food Link (RAFFL - at Green
Mtn College)
Rutland December 4, 2007 Scribe: Bonnie Smoren

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

- The landscape – both the physical landscape and the economic landscape. People are self-made and community made.
- Vermonters value education and it is a “benign” industry – a very large employer in the state with no negative environmental impact.
- Community –“ you settle in and sink roots and it is home.’
- Community is more than specific components– it is how people are connected
- There is a connection to the landscape
- The state is supportive of self-sufficiency
- It is not a hands-off value of the landscape. You are using the resource and gaining from it. “There is love of the landscape – it is a deep relationship and engagement.”
- Independence – “Vermont is not sucked up into national idiocy”. Vermont sometimes avoids national trends and is therefore able to go in a better direction.
- Vermont is not influenced by media or outside influences, but makes decisions based on its own values. “We think freely”.
- “There is a blend of conservative pragmatism and liberal progressiveness.” The speaker thinks this is rooted in Vermont’s agrarian traditions.
- Vermont values history – perhaps it is an imagined or romanticized history. There is a pride in our history. Maybe the values of history can be transferred intergenerationally through community efforts.

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

- Sustainability. “My greatest fear is that we won’t be able to take care of ourselves.”
- We need to learn to take care of ourselves in food sustainability – “I want my daughter to know how to grow a garden – to be able to sustain herself and a family.” It is also maintaining the environment
- Federal expenditures on war impact what we do in our communities. This makes sustainability more of a fear issue than a value.
- I am more worried about the rest of society – not just Vermont. This is a consumer country with tremendous emphasis on malls and shopping. I wish others could look to Vermont as an example of sustainability.
- We could begin to attract “the right kind of immigrants to Vermont”. Most of the colleges in the state are now focused on the environment and sustainable principles.
- The opportunity may be to let others know about the educational atmosphere here. Be a model.

- Vermont is a very small place. It is scary because Vermont doesn't even feel rural to me anymore. There are second homes, many people moving here.
- There needs to be a balance between the working population, second home owners and agricultural land. We have a finite space
- As other communities face sustainability issues, Vermont may become more attractive and that could change the character of the state.
- There could be increased conflicts between classes such as second homeowners, immigrants, and working Vermonters.
- Transportation in a rural state is a challenge. There is a need for more public transportation.
- I worry about the regulatory environment. Some Federal regulations come down that don't fit the micro-entrepreneurial level of Vermont. Regulations need to be appropriate for Vermont's scale that support an independent economy. Regulations are monolithic structures.
- "As folks come in from the outside, they want to bring what they left" There is a danger of whitewashing Vermont. How do we balance convenience and comfort with Vermont's identity?
- One participant has a cell phone, however he declared "I only get cell phone reception in the outhouse – facing east".
- The pasteurized milk ordinance is an example of a monolithic structure imposed on artisan food vendors. It is geared toward large commodity agriculture.
- Vermont has avoided the trend toward lower taxes and lower services. We are denigrated as an anti-business state, but "you get what you pay for". We need to remain independent – in schools and government, for example – to retain the quality of life here. We need higher taxes to support a quality of life.
- I worry about the future of the citizen legislature. How will young people participate in the future? You have to be able to work part time or have a job that you can leave to participate.

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

- Small scale local agriculture.
- Sustaining the food systems within our regions
- Strengthening the regional food system through distribution and processing.
- Building the local agricultural infrastructure.
- Addressing labor and immigration in agriculture.
- We need to be constantly investing in infrastructure, education etc. We can't say "We can't afford to"
- We need to raise taxes because you get it back. We have a national mindset that we are overtaxed, but people need to put their money back into society. I worry that Vermont will succumb to pressure not to invest in society.
- Clarify the link between taxes and the public good.
- Investment needs not just financial capital, but social, natural and human capital as well.
- Affordable adult health care was mentioned by several people as being critical to the economy. This is especially true with farm workers who are seasonal and lack

adequate coverage.

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

- Gentrification of the landscape. I see the social fabric shifting – conserving land does not necessarily conserve a way of life.
- Addison: Gas prices affect everyone as they all commute or work on a farm. Extend public transportation. It is a challenge for Addison farmers to find dairy labor and this has resulted in conflicts between migrant workers and law enforcement. We need to deal with accepting people who are different in the community.
- Poultny –There is a large low income population and they can't work without a car. Better public transportation is a real need. The school has a high percentage of students with special needs and IEPs – that impacts education costs. Students without special needs are transferring. There needs to be education of families. Children are not receiving the parenting they need. Family development and childhood skills are lacking and so IEPs at school are needed. Pre-K and family education is essential.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report – Green Mountain College (students and profs)
Rutland December 4, 2007

Scribe: Bonnie Smoren

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

- “Vermont is a countryside dotted dairy farms”. It is the fulfillment of the sentimental values of childhood
- A respect for civic dialogue and some knowledge of civic processes. It is not a series of adversarial relationships, but a dialogue supported by small town democracy – we know how to address conflict and live with neighbors.
- Public access to land. There is a shift, though to more posting of land. The underlying value there is trust and sharing.
- Vermonters have a respect for the land
- Vermont isn’t California. Vermont’s common values protect against overdevelopment.
- Tolerance married to a sense of responsibility.
- Vermont is rural because Vermonters value preservation of the wilderness.
- Friendly and neighborly. Cars stop for pedestrians here. Drivers are respectful and more laid-back than drivers in other places.
- There is a lack of “crazy rushing”. It is a slower pace of life.
- People of more respectful of each other
- Stronger ties to the community – a sense of reciprocity because of the small scale.
- The land is an important part of everything here.
- The importance of beauty – the aesthetic qualities of the landscape are embedded in some legislation like Act 250.
- You don’t have to take a trip to see the trees, the farms. Nature is an integral part of life at all times.
- The landscape is productive.

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

- Residential development. Some rural areas of Vermont are becoming built up. “Vermont is a time bomb” becoming a more urban or semi-urban area.
- Suburban areas and sprawl will be a challenge.
- Loss of the productive landscape.
- The local economy is a challenge and an opportunity. We risk losing a lot of the local economy to the Internet and large stores, but by promoting the value of local products we can recapture this market.
- There is a tradition of conservation rooted in the hunting culture and local farms. I am concerned about where that is heading. Hunting camps have mainly older guys. There needs to be a shared, intergenerational sense of values. This butts up against

preservationist visions and increasing suburban values.

- There is nobody to hand off traditional cultural knowledge to. There is tension around use of the land.
- Education consolidation is an issue. It has been presented in a ham-fisted way.
- Poultney teachers have been working without a contract for two years.
- There is a danger of loss of the economic viability of local agriculture. Because of Vermont's agricultural history, it may be easier to reinvigorate this sector.
- A breakdown of community and social capital. There is a shift away from community gatherings toward media and virtual life. We are not accustomed to producing or meeting our own needs.
- Technology is a challenge for rural areas.
- Vermont is uniquely positioned to be a magnet and experience a growth market in higher education
- People spend time at home in front of media instead of getting out into the community. In Poultney, there doesn't seem to be support for a venue in town for people to gather.
- Private higher education institutions in Vermont are getting better at educating whole people. But the state colleges are increasingly narrow in their focus.
- We need to identify jobs that do not clash with Vermonter's values.
- I see commercial development taking over Vermont's livelihood.
- The growing size of Vermont's schools is a concern. There is value in having a small school environment that helps to develop the whole person.
- Climate change

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

- We need to find ways to engage people outside of their living rooms or in a few big towns with recreational activities.
- Vermont needs to set an example in addressing climate change.
- We should work with planning and models that involve diverse constituencies.
- Use Federal avenues to marshal resources for the development of alternative energy.
- Farm subsidies should be for those whose primary source of income is farming. This would halt abuse of the farm subsidy program.
- We need to encourage local and organic food production that we can do well in Vermont. This will help preserve land and Vermonter's health.
- A carbon tax would discourage distance imports of foods and goods and that would create market incentives for local distribution of products.
- Encourage organizations that network small farms and facilitate distribution of product.
- Small farms are maintained by small towns. We need to maintain incentives for downtown development and limit sprawl.
- Keep our technology current. The only opportunity to keep a young generation here is to provide access to technology on par with other places.
- Stronger supports for young entrepreneurs to start businesses in Vermont. Work with college career placements to integrate Vermont students into the community.
- Better data about the quality of life in Vermont will help to draw employees and will

offset lower wages.

- A decentralized energy distribution system

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

- Help in marketing and promotion of the arts could bolster the cultural sector. A shared space or incubator could be a vibrant community endeavor and could attract and keep young people.
- Poultney: Continue to sponsor and hold community events and festivals. They bring everyone together – from the college and the community -for a common goal. This is a tremendous value that we don't want to lose.
- Target out of state students who have chosen to get their education in Vermont so they stay.
- I would like to see this community (Poultney) remain small but diverse. Enlarging the size of the community would be detrimental.
- There is some room for expansion without losing what we have as a community, but we need to identify the cutoff point.
- Vermont's small size is essential to its identity.
- Stress the importance of using the natural beauty we have rather than building man-made attractions. But we have to be careful if resources are advertised and used, we could destroy what we value.
- Green Mountain College needs to continue to develop and disseminate its environmental work.
- One of the reasons Vermont is attractive is because there has not been too much economic development. Combining some downtowns, careful growth and strong locally directed development is important.
- There is too much focus on a brain drain. Don't worry about who is going out and who is coming in- focus on the net.
- "A little benign neglect can be a good thing". The speaker cautioned about over development.
- If Vermont is to be vibrant -ALL of Vermont, especially the southern part- needs attention.
- "If you are not UVM, you are nobody"
- Numerous people mentioned that the southern part of the state is ignored.
- There is a strong sense of geographic distinction.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report – Rutland Evening Meeting
Rutland December 4, 2007

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

- Freedom and nature, beauty and a small population
- Town meeting day
- Accessibility to government
- Clean air
- Agrarian roots, and the tendency to work together in a neighborly way
- Tolerance
- There is a sense of community – people are proud to live here
- Privacy is respected
- Vermonters have less common values than in the past.
- I am proud of Vermont's education system
- There is a strong appreciation of nature.
- Independent thinking and tolerance
- Decency and humane public policies. Enlightened social policies
- Vermont has a strong work ethic

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

- There has been a loss of family values. The economy has contributed to change, for example Blue Laws are no longer in place. We have put commerce over family.
- Vermont is less welcoming as indicated by more “no trespassing” signs.
- Vermont is changing very rapidly. My children and I may not be able to stay in Vermont
- The homogenization of the culture. We need to increase the sustainable connections that we have and maintain Vermont's individuality
- I am concerned about affordability.
- We've spent a lot of money on special education. Research has been done on how to deliver these services more effectively.
- There are huge economic challenges. The State should create an incentive for economic development in the state.
- The health and safety of people in the state is a challenge
- The structure of our welfare system leaves the doors open to drugs and firearms
- Changing demographics – what are we doing policy-wise that encourages young people to leave the state?

- A young college graduate stated she cannot find a job or afford an apartment. She is still living with her parents; she doesn't want to leave but feels that she can't afford to stay.
- Numerous people cited affordability as a challenge
- Getting ahead of the curve on energy is an opportunity.
- Ecological constraints and energy. Energy will get increasingly expensive. Vermont has the opportunity to adapt to a new energy environment – assess how Vermont fits into the climate change context.
- New agricultural opportunities, for example cheese and wine
- An increasing tax and regulatory burden impedes economic growth.
- Energy is in a crisis state. People are working at jobs that don't pay a livable wage and can't afford heating fuel or gas for their cars. They live in old housing stock.
- One speaker believes that the four southern counties of Vermont will lose the most 18 year olds. This will lead to bifurcation of the state with huge social and economic disparities.
- Public transportation is required, including busses and trains.
- Homes need to be better insulated
- We need to decide if we really want to increase our populations. Be careful what you ask for. If we retain our youth and attract others, we may lose our small size and that is part of Vermont's identity.
- Vermont could be a retirement state like Florida. People view Vermont as an idyllic state.
- How do people come together? The sense of community is sliding.

One woman commented that marijuana use was a challenge. She remarked on the overwhelming number of young people in the correctional system. She said: "We don't even catch the dealers, we catch the ones who don't run fast enough!"

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

- We should look at businesses that will be the most profitable and actively pursue them.
- Present Vermont as the health capital of the country.
- Politicians need to work together to accomplish common goals and be less adversarial
- Energy, affordability, education. Some groups are obstructionist. We need to value the creation of private sector jobs, rather than public sector jobs.
- Development of wind power.
- Some regulations, on hydropower for example, are onerous and prohibit development of renewable energy
- Education, especially directing resources for experiential education.

- Development of rail transportation for freight.
- Education, energy, agriculture. We support K-12 education, but do not put enough resources into supporting colleges. Vermont colleges are very expensive.
- We need to develop agriculture.
 - Tourism needs to be developed as an economic driver for the state
 - Retention of youth is essential to solving many of our problems.
 - Address the limitations to business development imposed by ACT 250
 - Protect our food supply by supporting our local farmers.
 - Maintaining infrastructure such as water, sewer, roads is important.
 - Zip cars should be promoted. People could rent a car for just a few hours.
 - Create a central location to distribute Vermont made products.
 - Local generation of power

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

- Rutland is two communities – city and town- that can't work together. A county form of government could solve that problem.
- Develop intergenerational opportunities
- Be careful of such a strong focus on development. If we bring in too many people, we will become another Burlington. We need to focus less on having more money and focus more on the things Vermont values. We don't have to be big and wealthy.
- Provide young people with business skills that will encourage entrepreneurial ideas.
- Address affordable rents for Rutland businesses.
- Community gatherings can generate productive ideas – we need more opportunities for people to meet.
- There needs to be more collaboration between organizations.
- The area need improved Internet access – that is how young people work. An online community can be a supplemental connection for business and recreation.
- Address socioeconomic factors that lead to drug dealing
- Rutland's culture is improving, but more needs to be done. Persistent boredom leads to problems.
- Center Street alleyway needs to be developed.