

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

BARRE and WASHINGTON COUNTY

Community Forum Day Notes July 10, 2008

The following notes were collected from focus group meetings and forums throughout the day spent in Washington 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 July 10:

- Barre Granite Association
- Washington County Youth Services Bureau
- Central Vermont Adult Basic Education
- Barre Area Clergy Association
- Waitsfield Champlain Valley Telecom
- Yestermorrow Design Build School staff
- Valley Futures Network citizens
- Institute for Sustainable Communities
- Evening public forum at Barre's Old Labor Hall

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report BARRE GRANITE ASSOCIATION
July 10, 2008

Scribe: Bill McMeekin

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

- Way of life; Quality; Craftsmanship; Heritage; Family
- “Down home atmosphere”
- Small businesses critical
- Working hard.
- Pride in what you do. People continue to put in hard work, not sacrificing quality. “The rest of the world doesn’t know what quality is”.
- Quality comes from “Blood” – generation to generation.
- Value in employees – care of the employees. Family comes first.

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

- There is an economic challenge for every industry in VT. Quality will not be forfeited.
- C – Job market. “I don’t see a generation to take over my business”. And we’re not necessarily encouraging it, either.
- C – Training is an issue. We are not training new people in our industry.
- Craftsmanship is giving way to technology.
- It is normal for kids to leave VT , but “I’m not sure if the kids (of this present generation) will come back”.
- Monuments are no longer a priority for families. They don’t seem as relevant today. People have lost sight of the fact that a monument is not only honoring someone; it is part of the grieving process. This is combined with the fact that many can’t afford memorials.
- C – Cost of doing business (fuel, transportation, Workers’ comp, healthcare, etc.).
- We didn’t learn the lesson of the “70’s (Reference to Oil dependency)
- In our industry, opportunities have fallen by the wayside. Not much innovation, and attitude is not to take risk – “Let the other guy do it”.
- C – Sense of pride limits strategic collaboration
- Many references to the State of VT not doing its part. The example of heavy state support/research around maple syrup versus very little active support for the Granite industry.
- C/O – We need to diversify. We are thought of as “Death Care”. Need to think outside the box, e.g., how do we utilize the byproducts or waste of our manufacturing process? Maybe we can partner granite with wood.
- C/O – We need to educate people about what we do. Most have no idea what it takes to manufacture a quality monument.

- C/O – Marketing. It's very difficult, because most no longer think ahead, so they are desparate when a relative dies, and don't always act or think rationally.
- C- Competition from foreign imports is major. Also, right now, there is growing preference for colored granite, versus "Barre Grey"

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

- Executive Director plans to spend more time at the Statehouse in 2009. There is a disconnect between the business community and the legislature.
- Legislature doesn't understand the financial stress businesses are experiencing.
- We need programs and incentives to help us stand out as the granite industry.
- Cooperative programs (e.g., Green Mountain Power) to increase efficiency and reduce costs.
- Diversify our product offerings.

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

The participants acknowledged that the fortunes of Barre are tied directly to the granite industry. Again, much was said about the lack of direct support from the State of VT, and the need for the state to recognize the plight of the small business base of VT.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report BARRE AREA CLERGY ASSOCIATION
Community Forum day

Scribe: **Bill McMeekin**

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

- There is a difference between “recent VTers” and the older generations, in terms of values, and we must consider this. Youth are oriented to small peer groups rather than to community.
- Individualism. This sometimes hinders progress. In terms of serving the community, there are often too many people or agencies doing the same thing.
- Value nature, and importance of environment.
- “Collaboration” has become the “watchword” today. In VT, towns have power, as opposed to counties (speaker from another state). Planning commissions need more authority, broader governance. (She was referring to land use planning where a large tract of land was located in more than one town, and the difficulty to get agreement.)
- Towns have strong sense of Community, which may hinder collaboration. However, Montpelier seems to exhibit strong community, which reaches across generations.
- “I have been in VT since 1958”, coming from NYC and Boston. VT is very rural in its landscape and its thinking. VT also has a way of joining together, e.g., sports and social services. The number of non-profits (service agencies) has exploded. Membership in service groups (Rotary, etc.) is declining, but they are still an important factor - who will pick up the work they do, if the decline continues?
- Value of aesthetics. “I breathe a sigh of relief when I cross the border to VT.” VT seems to keep a balance between economic expansion and environmental concerns. Values don’t seem “as deep” elsewhere (used the example of prohibition of billboards in VT). VT has “a respect for aesthetics”.
- “Others have sprawl.”
- Strong, very lively arts community in Central VT. It doesn’t touch everyone, but “speaks a language that is quite universal”.
- Value of democracy – everyone has a voice (used the example of Town Meetings).
- You can “be who you want to be”. Individualism.
- “Peaceableness and neighborliness”
- Barre has many poor. Their experience is very different than for those with means, and this impacts value system. (Inference was that there are often different values for different economic strata)
- Religious and service clubs are “weakening” Values for many seem focused on “ME”, with a heavy reliance on services. The focus on community is “a weak spot” There seems to be a resistance to establishing relationships.
- There is tolerance and acceptance of the gay/lesbian community in VT.

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

- Fabric of Community is weak. Dependence on formal help (e.g., services) rather than personalities/relationships.
- Challenge – keeping young people here.
- Small business – problem is regulatory barriers to the “little people”, who don’t have the means to go thru the process. This stifles and “weakens” entrepreneurs and risk-taking.
- Kids do leave (which is o.k.), but they should come back. This is not happening.
- C – Affordable housing and health care.
- O – “Because we’re small, we can try things”.
- There are gaps and inequities in economic opportunity.
- The situation is very bad. There is “fuel desperation”(worry about heating oil for the winter). Some people can’t buy food.
- C – Transportation. “Grossly inadequate”, scheduling problems. This has an effect on healthcare (getting to appts), access to services, getting proper food/nutrition, etc. Structurally, “ this has the effect of ‘ghetto-izing the poor in Central VT”
- O – Alternative energy solutions.
- Foodworks and Two Rivers are two groups that are focusing on edible landscape. But we’ve lost our agricultural knowledge. This is a crisis.
- Land ownership has changed, becoming more concentrated with those of means.
- C – People don’t know how to cook or preserve food.
- C – Healthcare.
- C – Growing diversity. Montpelier has 12 languages – we haven’t acknowledged this, particularly in education, so this is an invisible part of our landscape. There are language barriers to employment.
- C- Youth job opportunities. Would like to see “CCC-type” work programs. s
- Young people want to work. Speaker cited work by young people in nursing homes, where there is obvious respect and love for the patients. Others said that some work in rather menial jobs is good in developing work ethic.
- C - There are “many VT households without a healthy male parent”, which impacts family values and economic status/level.
- C – VT has better services than surrounding states. Encourages an inflow of people seeking those services, which burdens the services system.
- C – Duplication of services. Example cited was emergency services in Barre City and Barre Town. This causes unnecessary costs.

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

- “Remember our weakest links”, and help break down barriers, including the “poverty culture”. There are significant class barriers, which limit options for many. We need more education.
- Stronger emphasis on “religious pluralism”. Teach the history of religion in schools, so we can understand our world, our neighbor. Principles of faiths outside the U.S. are very different, and reflect different norms – we need to understand that, particularly as population becomes more diversified.
- The state (VT) must acknowledge its cost-shifting for mental health and special education, and be accountable.
- “Enable communication between government groups”
- Business: We need “Innovation centers.”
 - Jobs
 - Child care
 - Transportation
- Mandatory youth work programs
- Addictions – a better system of accountability and intervention.
- We need to “tax wealth”. Drop reliance on property tax and tax all assets. And it should be a progressive tax, based on income.
- Put values discussion back on the table.
- Develop more useful, more “edible” landscape.

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

- Language issue. We need to talk about values and religion (history of religion)
- VT interfaith organizations need to establish priorities, and opportunity to build relationships.
- People of faith, active in the community, can make a difference, but we don’t communicate or collaborate effectively.
- Service learning projects, particularly for youth, are very helpful
- It is a challenge not to be overwhelmed by the problems. “The greatest evil is indifference” and that is not a good place to be.
- Agency of Human Services is effective in “pulling people into the room”.
- “We put a moat around VT”. People coming to VT overwhelm the service community.
- We are “rationing wealth and healthcare in VT”.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report Institute for Sustainable Communities
Community Forum day

Scribe: Sarah Waring

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

- Love and appreciation of natural beauty.
- VTers care about environment and natural beauty – but also democracy and civic participation – that’s what makes a community great.
- The creative economy is something people care about.
- The 1988 study that Kunin commissioned was inspiring for ISC – in Vermont every individual thinks they can solve the problem. Many of our projects are infused with a ‘speak up, take responsibility, make change’ attitude. The problems at the local level are naturally integrated.
- There’s a human scale here but it’s not isolated – there is also a larger commitment to the US as well.
- People feel obligated to be part of their community because its small.
- People like the working landscape and feel you can make a living and balance development and environment.
- I chose to come back to VT because it is very accessible place – one person can make a difference in an area that’s important to them. Corporate and community leaders are accessible – and while bureaucracy can be difficult to manage – it’s also accessible.
- It’s home.

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

- OPP –energy businesses.
- CH – how do you keep economic growth so that you have enough jobs for people? Some people with work and some without – we need to create enough growth to sustain the jobs we have. There’s LOTS of focus on the environment and green VT, but I see less focus on good jobs for people.
- CH – aren’t a lot of decent jobs for people recently out of college – the jobs are for people with high experience.
- CH – the cost of living is high but it takes a long time to earn the break even (speaker spent 9 yrs working in VT until she earned same salary she had in NY).
- CH –education funding is hard. The property tax disparity results in fixed incomes being squeezed. Maybe we have to consolidate schools to make this right? Who knows! But we are pitting property taxes versus education right now and this is a concern. We’ll end up

letting education slide because people can't pay high taxes – it's a self-perpetuating issues. If we don't prepare kids for the future than we lose.

- CH – the cost of healthcare – especially insurance coverage.
- OPP – we need to think regionally. The human scale is great, but we need to think regionally and have economies of scale. For example, we should be doing group purchasing for New England.
- CH – there are just not enough doctors. The actual service is simply not there.
- OPP – family community element. The family connection and experiences are so valuable and pull people back here from other places because they want to raise a family here.
- CH – cities will likely continue to be drivers of growth and this is a fact Vermonters will have to wrestle with. In order to keep the things we love we have to stay peripheral – this is part of what we have to learn to live with.
- Then you have to find where Vermont presents a competitive edge. We have to develop those sectors that are appropriate.
- I encourage the Council to be BOLD and SPECIFIC in their recommendations from my experience with the 1988 study.
- CH – the prices here are up, but we still depend too much on the car.
- OPP – we need a concrete energy strategy and we need policy makers who celebrate and promote that. We should push these innovative models that are here (EarthTurbines was mentioned as example) to go worldwide.
- VT lost its edge on environment – we need a vision to bring us back. We are innovators but we're not taking advantage of it it. We don't need to be stuck waiting for contacts to run out.
- There's a cache in the VT brand, even around community and energy.
- OPP – international VT organizations and individuals are far flung. People across the globe comment on it all the time – it's a side effect of living somewhere so small, but also believing that you can change the world.
- CH/OPP – Volunteerism for planning boards, firemen, select boards; there's lots of sophisticated stuff and local folks don't always have the knowledge/expertise. There are unintended consequences and unnecessary restraints. The Regional Planning Commissions, for example, could have technical assistance, meeting facilitation; but they need financial backing to train them to do this.
- We also need more creativity around regulations. We should explore performance based regs.

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

- We should focus on the VT Brand which includes: innovation, technology, democracy, community, environment and education.
- We need a far-sighted economic opportunity agenda – right now we're short sighted. We should frame our challenges as economic opportunity so that people see the immediate connection.

- Now it's about SmartGrowth, not 'growth at all costs'. We're not chasing smokestacks, but we're being intelligent.
- We're waiting for someone to take the lead.
- Reducing carbon nationally is a priority and here in VT we've wandered away from the commitment.
- Long term and holistic vision where the issues are not compartmentalized.
- Solutions that don't demonize a certain set of people. The education system didn't quite work.
- Sectors that would create jobs and prosperity across income groups.
- Creativity around how we solve problems – regulatory changes that need to be less rigid.

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

- In Worcester the dilemma is how to keep our local school. The town would die if it was lost.
- In Shelburne and South Burlington there is unfriendly development that doesn't characterize the values and decision making harbored here in VT. It shuts out diversified growth – it's blind and unnecessary development. There are other ways to do it – we need housing and other things – but right now the human scale is lost.
- Towns should be developed to focus on these things for communities.
- We need to be smarter about what's coming down the road.
- The issue of collaboration is tough because of parochialism here and local control. But we lose efficiency if we don't think regionally.
- We run the risk in VT of having participation fatigue.
- There are lessons from other places as well – Moss Pt development happening in New Orleans.
 - We've learned how much we actually have here in VT, when we work abroad in other countries.
 - There's a complacency here because we do have so much – but there is an urgency elsewhere.
 - But the urgency is coming to Vt – the stormclouds are gathering!
 - Legacy Project in Burlington cited as an example of work here.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
SCRIBE REPORT
Central VT Adult Basic Education
Barre, July 10

Scribe: Fran Voigt

1. *What does Vermont mean to you? What common values do Vermonters share?*
 - Healthy, clean, nice outdoor life
 - Safe, good place to raise kids
 - Accessibility to leaders—input from citizens valued; they can make a difference
 - Independent spirit—opportunity to provide for yourself
 - Sense of community
 - Strong work ethic
 - Sense of tradition

2. *Looking ahead through our lifetimes, and those of our children, what challenges and opportunities do you see for Vermont?*
 - Global warming
 - Absence of jobs for young people and other age groups as well
 - Training needs
 - Outward migration of the young
 - Growing impact of variables beyond the control of Vermonters such as the national debt
 - Growing disparity between the rich and poor
 - Growing divisions within communities
 - Decline in the number of farms
 - Increase in the cost of living, eg, the cost of fuel, and its impact on the poor
 - No energy plan—missed opportunity when dams on the Ct. river not purchased by the state
 - Nothing done to solve the energy crisis
 - Young people losing work ethic
 - Better coordination needed between training opportunities and job needs. Effort should include expanded technical school programs and increased apprenticeship opportunities
 - In all of the above challenges there are opportunities especially if the frame of reference changes from seeing the downside to seeing to upside

3. *What should our priorities be as we work together to realize your vision and prepare Vermont for the future?*
 - Support technical centers more—they should flourish
 - Make comprehensive healthcare insurance more accessible—there are too many restrictions, waiting periods that are too long

- More high speed internet access
- Better cell phone coverage
- More emphasis on the local production of foods
- Better access to education including post secondary

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

- A better transportation system is needed. Two students wanted to come to the CFV meeting but had no way to get to it.
- Adult Basic Education needs to be valued and supported as much as other educational enterprises
- Need to provide jobs for Adult Basic Education students
- Need to keep people in their communities
- Need to control a sense of excess publicly and privately
- Need to slow or stop the growing divide between rich and poor
- Too many social services are located in Barre attracting too many who are dependent on these services
- We need more personal safety in Barre and Montpelier
- Need to find jobs for the immigrants in Barre

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
SCRIBE NOTES
JULY 10, 2008
VALLEY FUTURES NETWORK STEERING COMMITTEE

Scribe: Steve Gold

1. VALUES

- Open space, farms, plant life, river, barns, architecture - the agrarian nature of the community
- "localvore" local food production
- importance of the landscape and the connection to the land
- independent communities that are nonetheless interconnected
- pride in community and landscape
- community ethic - having common goals and objectives
- VT as respite from the rest of the country
- roots in history, family, land
- work ethic
- value of people; their character, not their job or their wealth; not what you do but how you do it
- diversity of the community and acceptance of each other
- economic diversity is valued
- freedom
- independence
- leadership in civil rights
- smallness
- green
- love/passion for the land

2. CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES

- C - energy consumption - decisions now will have profound impact on the next generation
- O - local modest initiatives will impact larger world re consumption
- C - individual changes in lifestyle that are necessary re carbon footprint and global warming reduction
- O - Sugarbush efficiencies as lessons for the rest of us and rest of ski industry
- O - Vermonters "prescient" re: reducing energy use and "localvore" directions
- O - Sugarbush as educator of its clients re: reducing energy use
- C - economics of living in VT - need to be more pro-business but must be careful to safeguard land - must strike the right balance
- C - next generation leaving the state due to lack of affordability re: housing, supporting a family with a good paying job, transportation costs for those just starting out
- C - narrowing of the VT economy re: diversity of jobs
- C - public transportation lacking - geographic challenges - need commitment of resources for public transpo.
- C - tension of affordability versus why people come to live here
- C - people are the challenge, not the land - "insane culture of arrogance" here that has filtered down from State politics to local community politics level - "leader vs ruler", "my way is the right, your way is wrong" attitude
- O - creating leaders at the community level
- C - apathy re: community involvement
- O - involving people in local community activities

- O - small scale promotes involvement and accountability
- O - local processing of food - meat, dairy
- O - discovering the most efficient way to live - density vs subsistence farming
- C - cost of development re: density development

- C/O - reevaluation of agriculture on a different model than energy intensive farming

3. PRIORITIES

- leadership in infrastructure development both on State and local levels
- cluster development in existing communities driven by global energy and climate change crisis
- bike and bus use expansions aided by both supportive policy development and funding
- Incentives to promote mixed use planning re: settlement patterns and preservation of open land
- Density development combined with river corridor movement to protect people from natural disaster (floods) for new development
- Focus on community involvement and education to achieve changes rather than try to force change through regulations
- Revision of existing regulatory structures re: land use to support necessary new energy efficient models

4. LOCAL COMMUNITY

- bike paths to promote safe bike travel supporting energy conservation
- local bus route expansion
- coupling density development with avoidance of flooding danger - disaster mitigation
- reevaluate agriculture in the Valley - large dairy versus small truck

Council on the Future of Vermont
WAITSFIELD CHAMPLAIN VALLEY TELECOM
JULY 10, 2008

Scribe: Steve Gold

1. VALUES

- work ethic
- dairy farming and farming in general
- environment/green
- neighbors/community - people helping people
- preserving the beauty of Vermont
- recreation - appreciation of the recreational activities available here (shared among "pockets of people")
- entrepreneurship and cottage industries -people being their own boss and taking risks
- education - funding it and appreciating it
- hope and patience that the old VT values will come forth from old Vermonters
- stubborn
- independent

2. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- C - children will have a hard time making a living in Vt unless they are entrepreneurial
- C - cost of education, both K-12 and higher ed.
- C - cost of living is high - food, gas, electricity
- C - healthcare, especially related to aging population in relation to the tax base; access to affordable healthcare coverage
- C - young people leaving the state for college elsewhere, though many come back to finish college here
- O - good higher education schools in VT but they are poorly advertised in state
- O - access to technology is as good as anywhere else; it is a leveler and provides opportunities for employment with out of state companies. artisans and small businesses can use the internet to find their markets. post-sec. education can use technology and the internet.
- O - increasing speed of networks and access to IT in VT
- C - for Champlain Valley Tel., wireless/cell development
- O - businesses, especially big ones like IBM, should work with high schools to introduce high school students to the business world and prepare them for it (CVT has done this with Harwood students)
- C - children who come from difficult backgrounds (lack of \$, drugs in the home, abuse, "broken" families) need support and help as they are the future of the state, but the State is not helping enough. some young children (11-12 year olds) are already desperate
- C/O - immigrants with different cultures and languages; diversity is both a challenge and an opportunity.
- C/O - energy provision and local or in-state alternative energy production. there are companies

here now that are developing innovation in this area.

- C - VT is not seen as business friendly due to 1. regulatory hoops; 2. politicians change the "deal" after the fact; e.g. VT Yankee, Walmart in St. Albans
- C - public's negative perception and elected officials opposition to alternate energy production; e.g. wind mills on ridges when clearly wind power needs to be increased.
- C - new arrivals fight change and want pastoral setting - "Closing the door behind them".
- C - VT will become a place only for the very rich if we don't have more industry
- C - affordable housing
- C - infrastructure needs, especially roads and bridges - the negative impact on business of poor infrastructure
- O - Buy local; this will be advanced by the recent settlement of the internet tax issue as well as increases in shipping costs

3. PRIORITIES

- Companies must look toward "green" solutions to reduce their carbon footprints
- Make VT more attractive to businesses through greater acceptance of changes necessary to attract businesses and help those here grow.
- Harness the power of the rivers - hydro power in VT

4. LOCAL COMMUNITY RELEVANCE

- Essex - if VT is not more business friendly, IBM will leave and the town will "dry up".
- Waitsfield - is rich people's playground- kids born here will not come back due to costs of housing, taxes and lack of good job opportunities.
- Can small towns support more or new large businesses - No - only small or incubation businesses driven by owners who live here. As businesses grow and change ownership, they leave. The infrastructure is not here in towns like Waitsfield to support large businesses.
- Need more Park and Travel space and bus transportation
- Investment in physical infrastructure both at town and State levels
- Affordable housing needed in Valley
- Local population needs to support the ski industry, at the least by being friendly to out of staters who come here to ski.

COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
Scribe Report Yestermorrow Design Build School
Community Forum day, July 10

Scribe: Sarah Waring

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

- VT means community – we value it quite a bit.
- There is a tradition of individuality and original thought – it’s fosters and accepted and created lots of foundation. It’s a magnet for people to come here.
- I see a mix/balance between fierce independent resourcefulness, reliance on others and interdependence.
- Tolerance, open-mindedness. Because of a change in scale – people know each and can involve themselves in ways that make a difference. It’s small enough to have your voice heard.
- There’s a tremendous sense of pride. Everyone can have what they love – may not be museums and shows, but I love my pumpkin patch!
- It’s a human scale; 2 lane roads, you have to go slow here, but everywhere else I’ve been there’s so much competition it even shows up on the roads and drivers.
- Rural landscape and beauty – it doesn’t fade. What a fabulous way to live!
- People seem to really value the working landscape – and many of hold this in common. We take being a Vermonter very seriously, we reflect on it, we care about it and think collectively.
- People don’t always agree, but people are willing to listen. Having an open door is impressive and people appreciate it.

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

- CH – we have to not get too complicated. The answer is not going thru so many hoops just to do a simple task.
- CH – with the rural nature we live in – how will we function in a world that is energy starved? How will we get from place to place and get goods?
- CH – energy, transportation, housing, workforce housing, food security – each of these offers a challenge and an opportunity. Transportation for example is going from the mindset of moving cars to moving people. The questions should be flipped back to ask; how do we get population density to support these things? (for example, septic system reconstruction and denser downtown development.)
- CH/OPP – economy, jobs, good wages. It’s about growing quality well-paying jobs in the small towns.

- OPP – high quality, affordable and energy efficient housing. We all deserve this – it’s a right. (for example, 650 families in the Valley access food assistance programs, even though we think of ourselves as a relatively wealthy place.)
- CH/OPP – re-localization in Vermont. We think we’re self-sufficient and engaged but we need to be more engaged civically and locally. We need to buy and grow food here, but we also need to have the opportunity to think about control happening locally and at the state level. We should think seriously about moving away from the federal control.
- OPP – VT is seen as a place where you can ‘get out of Dodge’ and get away, escape.
- OPP – cottage industries. Without the high speed internet access we wouldn’t see the boom in this – how can we transform this so that these skills don’t all go out of state?
- CH- what will happen to the next generation, and our industries, when climate change hits? Especially the ski industry – it’s a big deal for this valley and we’d like to know the impacts.
- CH –educating people that don’t live here about how environmental changes impact our natural resources ‘getting people to get it’.
- OPP- the energy and transportation is more immediate – before there’s no snow, people simply won’t drive up here to ski.
- CH – the drive time will change demographics. And it will change the type of people who live here, or they will move to urban VT – there will be some who have to leave the rural areas to find places to live closer to work.
- CH – if people are telecommuting from homes, how do they connect to the community? Many of us connect through work! Another person mentions that sometimes working alone at home drives people to be even more connected and engaged than otherwise.
- OPP – the localvore group in the Valley is very big. Many have just moved to the Valley and many of the volunteer organizers are recent transplants. There’s an opportunity to do a lot of great tuff – sports or civic engagement – people who founded it are those that work out of their homes!
- CH – how will my 9yr old son get a college education with the pay scale and costs of higher ed?
- CH – not specifically the structure of Act 60 and Act 68, but still a major concern about what happens to landowning families.
- CH – before we get to public education, you have to think about whether you can support yourselves and your family – we need to continue high quality, affordable health care access without draining families.
- CH – health care costs, especially for small businesses are becoming more and more hard to handle. Mentioned a 23% increase every year.

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

- Energy, transportation: which edges ahead and is more important? But you can’t let go of jobs, housing, food security. The trick is that it’s all got to be thought of together. You can’t separate the issues.
- To do things like this – progressive and forward thinking – you have to integrate youth into the culture. Otherwise we continue to have large problems with drugs, alcohol, etc.

- Local energy, food and jobs. We need to tease out funding that can support these initiatives.
- Healthcare: access to healthcare coverage and affordable healthcare coverage in particular. For businesses there is at 23% increase each year – for our business since our faculty are from all around the country and the state – at least 1/3 are uninsured each year and self-employed. The fee structure is such that a single person or a couple has a specific fee, but the increase to family is ridiculous – and it doesn't matter if you have only one child or if you have seven! This seems to be a Vermont thing – other states seem to have it figured out, and the response we get from national healthcare carriers is: oh, it's because you're in Vermont.
- National healthcare carriers simply don't operate here – I think the issue is that its too complex and there are too many steps between the doctor and the patient. We need to go back to the basics and have people locally who can take care of healthcare needs.

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

- The Valley is aggressively social. They want to make sure that they have the opportunities they had in urban areas – so they creat them!
- The amount of things available in rural areas – Morrisville, say – it's bigger than in Waterbury and this is a trend or a reversal to the future. When rural people made up things to do.
- The perception is that families here in the Valley can afford the extra property taxes, but we can't. I worry about continuing to support k-12 education.
- In this area, when kids have to take an hour and a half just to get to schools, the simplification of easy commute, smaller classes, etc looks like a good option.
- Living in the Valley and not being close to a 24 hour health clinic is a challenge. There is no place local to go to get service. It's a 45minute drive to nearest emergency room. When you ask a doctor – they say that's because the costs they have to cover, they can't afford a small rural clinic and cover the overhead to run it.
- Valley has a huge population of 2nd homes. They may not be so popular in another 50 years – with a stock of empty condos on the mountain, or with these empty fancy homes, what do we do? That's our tax base.
- Those that can will still do it – the question is can the year round people still support the services they need? Can we survive not having transportation ourselves?
- The acid test is in the next 18 months – the urgency for all of these issues continues to accumulate and accelerate – and we will also see the least fortunate among us being hit hardest.
- Trades have been wickedly busy, but the cost of building versus the cost of renovating is much much higher. Some day this will hit home here, where so many 2nd homes are built from scratch, rather than being renovated old buildings.
- Ski industries here – will we have skiers when gas hits 4.50 a gallon?
- All of this is also hopeful for communities because we'll share and re-localize naturally because of these pressures.

**COUNCIL ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC FORUM BARRE OLD LABOR HALL**

JULY 10, 2008

Scribe: Marie Houghton

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

- 7th generation Vermonter – means what it used to be – isn't now. It is what was and what it is becoming. We are in a state of flux. Used to be hardworking people, content, didn't have a lot of money, did what they needed to do, right to do it; life centered around family/children; independent individualist. No longer have the right to even try to do that. Culprit is the legislature. Planning process is mortally wounded. It has nothing to do with the people who live here – has to do with a vision of how the state should “look” – focus is tourism.
- New to Vermont. From Europe. Heard about VT from many sources. After being here a year – find state easy to do things, family oriented. For his business, VT is greatest logo he could have. Very impressed. Optimistic about future.
- Been away for about a year. Originally from Plainfield. Learned about community life. Town meetings; ran the school; suited her personality. Hated to leave but needed to personal reasons. Advantage of being away is that you look all over the world and there is no place like VT. People are selling out – get a road grader on federal money, we'll let them tell us how to build the road. Values are still here, but we have to fight for them. Need to get rid of the people who got rid of town meeting. Lost most valuable institution in VT.
- Civic participation; history, town meetings, environmental concerns, sense of fairness
- State motto – freedom and unity has always meant a great deal. Recognizes individual but community also.
- The myth of VT is indeed a myth. Myth is that we welcome all – but we don't. Incredible hypocrisy. VT Compost is doing everything VTers worship, but is being stopped by state.
- Mad River Valley – either a 6th or 7th generation VTer. Left VT to go to college. Didn't ever want to come back: awful, poor, etc. Thought she would do well in city. Came back. Isn't anyone in the valley that didn't come here until after Sugarbush. I don't think we share a whole lot of values. Have a lot of diversity. Have no property rights. People in valley have imported yaks to keep tourist-y atmosphere going. Was told by older woman that she moved away so not really a VTer.
- Here for 12 years. From Ohio. Co-worker told her VT best state to live in, Montpelier best city. I've come to agree with that statement/sentiment. Hard to put into words why. Small places, get to know your neighbors, legislators. Very beautiful place, feels more real

than the place I came from. Really enjoyed town meetings. Australian ballot has a very different feel.

- Lived here 38 years. Children are VTers. There is stress between interpretation of values. Impressed by great civility of VTers. VTers have always respected their neighbors. Civil unions process was most divisive issue we have dealt with – it was done with great civility. No violence.
- New to VT – lived here 30 years. Has a reaction every time I hear “us” and “them” Works for the state and feels very proud of that. Works for Human Services. Sees underbelly of VT. People who don’t go to town meetings, participate – sees addiction, homelessness, abuse, etc. Trying to figure out for 30 years why a state that is respectful, etc in a “movie set” environment – how can we have these values that are beautiful and meaningful – and have homeless people. Is this just a state agency problem – or aren’t we all in this together.
- Happy to be in VT. Came from Fairfield, CT. Loves Montpelier. Fairfield is viewed as paradise by many. NYC moved to Fairfield – changed everything. We still have paradise in VT. Not perfect – we all need to work on problems. Alcoholism has gone down, better education. Stay on guard for over development. Protect the land. People are very civil.
- From NYC – love it here, but love it there, too. It’s a civilized place to live. People stop to let you make left turns! Young man helped disabled friend.
- Relationship with natural environment. We value our natural environment and our ability to get out and experience it.
- Respect for the land is a value, but also a source for concern. In order to protect land requires people to behave differently and is seen as an attack by many.

What challenges and opportunities do you see for Vermont?

- Population growth has had a big impact on VT’s quality of life. Moved to Essex Town – has become suburbanized. Moved to Washington – same thing happening. Suburbanizing causes reduction in involvement in community affairs. Running out of oil, will dramatically affect our lives. Will not be able to bring in food from great distances, heat our homes. What is the population that VT can maintain/sustain? (Works for sustainable population organization) Has been decline in many quality indicators. Would like to suggest that VT appoint a commission to determine sustainable population recommendation.
- Over 150 years ago we had 3 times the population we have now. Wasn’t based on oil. Industrial growth is not going to be the pattern. Will be agriculture and steady state economy. (statistics disputed by member of audience)
- What we are talking about is happening everywhere around the world (population). Just came from Hawaii – VT is going to be my home and I’m not leaving! We are independent

and we can take back what we had before. Need to look at other states. Hawaii is ruined. Tourists came and never left. Will happen here if we aren't careful.

- Sustainable population is impossible. Can't put caps on population. Need to think how to sustain the people who are here and who will come.
- In Europe they are paying people to have babies. Population has dropped way down.
- Came from Boston. Boston needs to be fed. Opportunity for VT farmers. How to balance feeding Boston and NYC and feeding VTers?
- How can you talk about population limits if this is a democracy? How can you tell true VTer? If you have that distinction it's not a democracy. We vs. them doesn't seem to fit. Need to plan for future, population growth – rather than limit – need to develop plans to accommodate.
- Challenges are to find highest common values that we have – neighborliness, sustainability, meet basic needs, civility. Need to do it in most inclusive way. Take the best of what we have – town meeting process. Short range is figuring out how people will eat and heat homes. Need to think long range. Affordable housing on farms, training people in sustainable, organic agriculture.
- VT represents microcosm of best of our country. Better infrastructure – we had a very active rail system at one time. Recapture what made VT what it is – look to past.
- For future – most important thing we have to do. Legislature needs to assess planning – what are we planning for: people or environment? Need a vision for what VT should look like in 200 years. Focus should be back on people – freedom to live our lives as we have in the past. Legislature has not helped us. Trying to save 140 acres for children/grandchildren – can't do it. Who are legislators legislating for? Human beings – or a higher class to pay more taxes, etc. We have been forgotten in this process. Have an elitist vision.
- I'm one of them – a legislator. Planning did protect us from spec housing and did protect farms. Communities have developed. Bigger challenge – not just how many people – it's age – we are losing young people. We need to find jobs. Challenge to maintain our physical surroundings but need jobs. Don't want to be a theme park. Need to feed the people who are here. Job opportunities – oil crises. VT can be a leader in energy efficiency and conservation. Need to develop alternative energy.
- What happens to VT as oil flow declines? Economy has grown on cheap oil. Oil consumption has grown too. Happiness in this country peaked in the '50s. Wealth has tripled. Can we grow poorer and recapture happiness? When Walmart comes in – eliminates local small business – can't get them back. I see VT with a much smaller economy – fewer industrial jobs - community comes together – cares for each other

- Think about the aging population. Need to take care of them. People have trouble with labor coming in from other places. Who will provide services in nursing homes, etc.
- Public transportation could save oil, energy. Can really help in my community. Poor people at the bottom of the hill, wealthy at the top. Community is talking about raising chickens in their back yard. In past town's had own welfare system.
- When we talk about the future of VT – I can't help but think about the future everywhere. My neighbors can be my teachers. My neighbors consistently support me taking care of my driveway, etc. Urban areas will fail and they will be looking for a way to feed themselves. How do we rebuild our education system so kids know how to make affordable homes, create victory gardens as we move from a corporate food economy to a local economy? Need to really think about the future – what skills do kids need to have? Schools not giving them the skills they need. Challenge school systems to challenge our kids to be peacemakers. How do we create a welcoming community with resources to help – not to build walls? Create a system of knowledge, skills, values as planet shifts. Plan to re-localize. Our kids will inherit a mess.
- Four challenges that the general public isn't aware of: when transportation slows down – there are food shortages. Congressional delegation doesn't recognize. Bellows Falls lost opportunity to purchase dam. Fed govt is big challenge. Need to claim our sovereignty now or down the road. 100% of our tax \$ pays for wars. That will stop if we declare sovereignty.
- Global warming – temperature of earth is rising. Our planning needs to consider how much global warming. Sweden has planned considering future. VT has planned using past as framework. I am a climactic refugee from the West Indies. Environment there is dying/changed.
- Another issue that hasn't been discussed is healthcare. State has been working on this. Both access and availability.
- In 20 years – rich people will come in – buy land – taxes go up – getting older. VT isn't planning for working people to live here. Most people who own homes now would not be able to buy a home if they didn't already have one. Character has already changed – it's a picture. Legislature has defined what it is – opposite form what it used to be. In E Montpelier – can't dig a hole. Planning commission can stop you from building a home for your kid on your own land. We need to do due diligence in our planning. There is economic discrimination.
- Everybody is afraid of economy, environment. Doomsday scenarios. Hard to feel you have any power to change/affect these invading forces. Island in Denmark became carbon neutral in 10 years. People did it themselves. Technology is here – but we lack will. As a county we lack resources to do this, but can do on a local level. VT has a leg up on creating this environmental neutrality.

What should our priorities be?

- Growth centers. Town in Waitsfield has voted down twice a septic system. People in mega-mansions don't want to see any growth – keep it like it is. Property rights people think select boards don't know. I live in subsidized housing. In Irasville. Water is bad, septic is awful. Need an infrastructure. Need to take care of people. Poorer people usually live in town centers. Mega mansions don't care about anyone else. Poor people don't understand either. Need education
- People. People should be our priority. How do we feed, house, get them to where they need to be? Can't live in our own little bubble. Everyone has to be involved. Think strategically.
- Challenged beyond community. Living in world of finite limits. Whatever we do for tourism, etc, have to have vision of sustainable natural environment.
- VTers are ready to face challenges that many in public don't know what we are facing. Put victory garden on the statehouse lawn, solar panels on the statehouse, make it cool to stop and talk to your neighbors. Every high school graduate skilled in peacemaking, negotiations
- Solar panels are only for the wealthy. I would like to have them to help me pay for my heat. Don't really understand what needs to be done – need help. Can't afford at today's prices. Whose values are we talking about – national, legislative. Who is being represented by our politicians – business, us?
- Sustainability and re-localization. Pathways are well-known. Have a terrible governor – visionless. Legislature the same. Need to elect other people.
- Dialog tonight is wonderful. If we can get this going in our towns it will help solve problems.
- VTers have lost a lot of cultural knowledge about what farming is. Vision of future is that we have shared understanding of farming, sustainable agriculture. Even if you are not a farmer.
- “education is a self feeding watermelon” – we need sunsets on everything in education system. We add things but we don't eliminate programs ever.
- We owe youth good manufacturing jobs – we need to expand green jobs especially. We moved here for the standard of living.
- VT should be the lead place in the green industry development and provide a range of jobs for youth.

- “Bus riding builds community” – we need good public transportation. The bus stops should have solar heat!

We’ve been talking about Vermont, but how does this conversation affect the future of your community?

- In Plainfield we have a resource directory for bartering.
- We should all learn to turn the heat down! The state buildings don’t even do this – they say they are on central heating and can’t do anything except open the doors and keep the AC and heat running! It’s ridiculous!
- There is Transition Town Handbook – it is an ‘energy descent plan’ and its an easy to follow 12 step process for communities using less energy.
- Localvore project is looking to reduce carbon footprint in VT. Warren voted to reduce its footprint by 10%. There are two CSAs in the valley.
- This forum doesn’t exist at any level in NY – this is a unique and living value in this state. You can be an active place in Vermont and define the future.
- We should all join our local energy committees.
- Waterbury did an energy fair on conservation and efficiency. Towns can have fairs. Invite the legislature and the congressional delegation and make it a celebration.
- “We are in a different world than we have been.” How are we going to heat our homes? We need to plan for the people to count in the future.
- There are corps of people helping their neighbors. We have potluck groups to help the most vulnerable for the winter.
- Finding the ways to let people cut firewood on state lands. We need to focus on alternative economics; barter economies, state subsidies for energy development. We need to tax wealth instead of just property – tax all incomes and assets. We should rebuild the tax system – and tax the wealthy.
- We have strong villages and downtowns that are great to build on.