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# Introduction

Over the course of the late winter and spring of 2003, the Vermont Council on Rural Development produced a “Community Visit” with the town of Enosburg Vermont. Visits are designed to help the community review issues, then evaluate challenges and prioritize them, and engage in action toward their resolution.

Rich in tradition and character, hub of Vermont’s northern dairy lands and historic market center, Enosburg is a vibrant community with tremendous opportunities for the future. Enosburg is big sky country. Its gentle hills, winding river, open fields, patchwork forests, and tidy village center make it a post-card image that features much of what we idealize about Vermont.

We know that this landscape is neither an accident nor the result of a landscape design exercise. It is, rather, the result of innumerable decisions of private citizens working for a living in agriculture, forestry, milling and value-added agricultural operations over the last two centuries.

Behind each of the focus forums, town meetings, and task force planning sessions in the Enosburg Community Visit process were profound questions about the economy of the region, and how the town can take advantage of its superb assets and build on its historic role toward prosperity for the future. It is no accident that the challenges eventually deemed to be of the highest priority are all concerned with future economic and community development: Downtown Revitalization, Town/Village Merger, Public Safety and Crime, Education, and Economic Development. Each is a fundamental challenge. Progress on one of these challenges builds momentum for the community as a whole. Together, as central points for community engagement and action, these priorities can serve as grounds for a united effort, even a movement, to help Enosburg achieve goals for the future.

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## **The Community Visit had three major parts:**

1. On the **Community Visit Day** on March 24<sup>th</sup>, Visiting Team members heard testimony from Enosburg residents in nine focus group areas that had earlier been identified by the local steering committee. Notes and issues raised in these sessions are detailed in Part V. Based on the testimony received, the Vermont Council on Rural Development identified an initial list of the Major Challenges before the community (Part II).
2. The second stage of the Community Visit occurred at the Enosburg **Community Meeting** on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, when VCRD presented the Major Challenges list and facilitated the review and prioritization of these issues by town residents. The resulting list of **Prioritized Challenges** (in Part I) were then the focus for the formation of five Task Forces established to build plans that would address them.

3. In the third phase of the Visit, the **Community Resource Day** on May 21<sup>st</sup>, the Task Forces met with a second Visiting Team to get organized, build Action Steps, and consider state, federal, non-profit, and private resources that may be available to support their work. The resulting **Task Force Action Steps** are listed in Part IV.

**Resource Team Members** (listed in Part VI) signed on with a commitment to serve in an on-going way as sounding boards and referral agents for the Enosburg Task Forces. Many of these visitors can be partners in the work before the committees, others can be great sources of advice or connection to other resources; *call on them for help*.

Members of the Resource Team listened closely to the issues brought forward by town residents and have made suggestions in support of Enosburg's efforts in each challenge area. Their **Recommendations** (Part III) are not prescriptions; community members are in the best position to make decisions about their next steps and strategies. Recognizing existing local efforts and the leadership of the Task Forces, these recommendations are offered, rather, as suggestions for next steps, and as lists of potential resources as the Task Forces make their way forward.

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We need to thank each of the Community Visitors listed at the end of this report for putting themselves on the line for Enosburg.

When it comes down to it, success for rural communities comes from **local** leadership. VCRD and its partners were impressed by the great team of Enosburg residents who signed up to work on Task Forces, to chair these new groups, and to lead them to success. We appreciated the strong start that the Local Steering Committee gave to the event as a whole, and the openness and dedication of the Village Trustees and Town Selectboard to taking such a broad look at the challenges ahead and building community engagement. Gary Champy and Harold Foote provided guidance, support, and hard work to get the word out and organize sessions. We are especially grateful to Richard Brodeur, the Enosburg Community Visit Chair, for taking the lead with local organization and logistics and for his willingness to 'hold the fort', 'rally the troops', and provide ongoing coordination and leadership to help the Task Forces work together. With his leadership, and the commitment of the energy and vision of the Enosburg community, the town has momentum and a plan to move forward!

The Vermont Council on Rural Development is dedicated to helping Vermont communities develop their capacity to create a prosperous and sustainable future through coordination, collaboration, and the effective use of public and private resources. The primary recognition of the Council and the Visiting Team has been the great capacity that Enosburg has if residents work together to meet the opportunities ahead. We hope that the Community Visit process has provided a useful framework and we are eager to support the progress of the Task Forces in the work ahead!

# **Enosburg – Priority Challenges**

## **Identified by Community Meeting—April 23, 2003**

- ❖ **Village Revitalization Issue:** Many Enosburg residents want to work with the strengths of the downtown today and address needs for parking, attracting tourism, marketing the downtown as the regional hub, retaining and optimizing the presence of the cheese industry, dealing with traffic issues, especially truck traffic, finding further retail anchors, equalizing retail hours, and building momentum by strengthening the business association with new energy and leadership.
  
- ❖ **Town/Village Division Issue:** Enosburg Town and Village work in relative isolation from each other. Duplication and lack of coordination may result. Few can cite a positive reason for the division. A Town/Village Merger could have the potential to streamline communications, reduce some costs, and, perhaps more importantly, build an atmosphere that Enosburg is a community moving forward all together. A feasibility study could be instituted and funded, and a committee could be assembled to provide leadership depending on its results.  
**Electric Services:** With rates as high as anywhere in Vermont, Enosburg needs to build a long-term plan for restructuring its electric services. Village ownership of the Electric Department is seen as a liability, one that interferes with any potential Town/Village merger.
  
- ❖ **Public Safety/Drug and Alcohol Issue:** There are widespread concerns about drug and alcohol issues, vandalism, and resident insecurities with youth ‘hanging out’ downtown. There are widespread fears that children are abusing drugs and alcohol at younger ages and that this issue is a factor behind truancy, drop-out rates, and crime in the community. These issues are magnified by the perceived lack of police presence. There is a feeling of powerlessness around this issue that could be answered by expanded police coverage and potentially the development of the restorative justice and pro-active work of a “Community Justice Center” in Enosburg. There are also concerns about traffic safety issues that could be dealt with concurrently.
  
- ❖ **Education Issue:**  
**Literacy:** Residents are concerned about the lack of early educational opportunities, low reading scores in school, the high percentage of special needs children, high truancy and dropout rates in the High School, and challenging home environments. A community-wide literacy campaign could directly address the early reading deficits and mobilize educational resources in the community to build momentum toward improved academic performance at all levels.  
**Educational Engagement:** Many Enosburg youth feel dis-empowered and are not actively engaged in driving their educations forward. Teachers are stressed by multiple demands and challenging youth. Many kids fall through the cracks, partly because they do not develop a vision of what they want to accomplish after they leave school. Others feel “bullied” or subject to negative peer pressure.  
**Community/School Partnership:** Many residents and school personnel feel the need for a closer partnership. Many young people are stressed or angry and need volunteer mentors through the school’s program; others lack adult supporters and positive role models. Community/School Communications could be improved, and volunteers in the school could provide enrichments.

❖ **Economic Development Issue:**

**Development of the Industrial Park:** While much has been accomplished to establish the industrial park and attract and retain business in the community, many residents believe that a concerted effort must be maintained to create new jobs and help Enosburg move forward.

**Cellular Services:** The lack of cellular phone services in Enosburg may impede future development and currently leads to communications gaps for particular businesses and services. As one part of an economic development strategy, Enosburg residents could negotiate with a provider of cell service and facilitate tower placement within an existing structure, or on a site acceptable to the community.

**Website:** Residents believe that Enosburg needs to build a strong website to provide a central point for its own communications, to allow on-line government and information exchange, and to attract new business to the community.

**Tourist Economy:** While Enosburg in many ways represents something of the “ideal Vermont” that tourists come to the state to experience, the community has not thoroughly developed this part of its economy. There are few overnight accommodations. Signs for local attractions and activities like the rail trail or canoe access points on the river could make the community a more welcoming destination point for tourists. There is also a significant, undeveloped agro-tourism potential with the town’s farms and dairy foods industry.

# **Enosburg - Major Challenges**

**Identified by Focus Groups – March 24, 2003**  
**And Amended by Community Meeting—April 23, 2003**

- ❖ **Youth Recreation Issue:** There is no accepted place for young people to hang out; no teen center; no Village bowling facilities or movie theatre. There is no funding currently available to provide youth activities or hire a recreation coordinator. Many families are stressed and some youth feel left out.
- ❖ **Drug and Alcohol Issues:** There are widespread fears that children are abusing drugs and alcohol at younger ages and that this issue is a factor behind truancy, drop-out rates, and crime in the community.
- ❖ **Community Vision Issue:** Many Enosburg residents feel that the community has not defined a vision for itself or its future. They believe that downtown development, economic development, Town/Village relations, and “marketing Enosburg” all require a common vision for the future of the community.
- ❖ **Village Revitalization Issue:** Many Enosburg residents want to work with the strengths of the downtown today and address needs for parking, attracting tourism, marketing the downtown as the regional hub, retaining and optimizing the presence of the cheese industry, dealing with traffic issues, especially truck traffic, finding further retail anchors, equalizing retail hours, and building momentum by strengthening the business association with new energy and leadership.
- ❖ **Community Center Issue:** Many residents feel that there is a lack of recreational options for all ages in town and that there is a no center for recreational activities in Enosburg. With no teen center, and no movie theatre, there is no place that young people can hang out or get together for social events or where activities for adults and elders can take place.
- ❖ **Town/Village Division Issue:** Enosburg Town and Village work in relative isolation from each other. Duplication and lack of coordination may result. Few can cite a positive reason for the division. A Town/Village Merger could have the potential to streamline communications, reduce some costs, and, perhaps more importantly, build an atmosphere that Enosburg is a community moving forward all together. A feasibility study could be instituted and funded, and a committee could be assembled to provide leadership depending on its results.
- ❖ **Public Safety Issue:** There are widespread concerns about drug and alcohol issues, vandalism, and resident insecurities with youth ‘hanging out’ downtown. These issues are magnified by the perceived lack of police presence. There is a feeling of powerlessness around this issue that could be answered by expanded police coverage and potentially the development of the restorative justice and pro-active work of a “Community Justice Center” in Enosburg. There are also concerns about traffic safety issues that could be dealt with concurrently.

- ❖ **Transportation Issue:** The rural nature of the town makes it very difficult for young people to attend events in the evening; this has been a major obstacle preventing youth from being able to participate in those activities that do take place.
- ❖ **Housing Issue:** The shortage of affordable housing is seen as a obstacle to economic development. Many residents do not want sprawl. The Town provision limiting building to 10 units annually has been developed in relative isolation from Village planning; at the same time, residents believe there are no sites in the Village for building. Available units in the village are not rented, because the hassles of Tenant/Landlord laws and liability issues give owners little incentive to rent. Better planning and coordination may locate additional units in the Village with Town support.
- ❖ **Literacy Issue:** Residents are concerned about the lack of early educational opportunities, low reading scores in school, the high percentage of special needs children, high truancy and dropout rates in the High School, and challenging home environments. A community-wide literacy campaign could directly address the early reading deficits and mobilize educational resources in the community to build momentum toward improved academic performance at all levels.
- ❖ **Educational Engagement Issue:** Many Enosburg youth feel dis-empowered and are not actively engaged in driving their educations forward. Teachers are stressed by multiple demands and challenging youth. Many kids fall through the cracks, partly because they do not develop a vision of what they want to accomplish after they leave school. Others feel “bullied” or subject to negative peer pressure.
- ❖ **Community Communications and Website Issue:** Some residents believe that Enosburg lacks communications between groups. They think that the town needs to build a strong website to provide a central point for its own communications, to allow on-line government and information exchange, and to attract new business to the community.
- ❖ **Cellular Services Issue:** The lack of cellular phone services in Enosburg may impede future development and currently leads to communications gaps for particular businesses and services. As one part of an economic development strategy, Enosburg residents could negotiate with a provider of cell service and facilitate tower placement within an existing structure, or on a site acceptable to the community.
- ❖ **Community/School Partnership:** Many residents and school personnel feel the need for a closer partnership. Many young people are stressed or angry and need volunteer mentors through the school’s program; others lack adult supporters and positive role models. Community/School Communications could be improved, and volunteers in the school could provide enrichments.
- ❖ **Electric Rate Issue:** With rates as high as anywhere in Vermont, Enosburg needs to build a long-term plan for restructuring its electric services. Village ownership of the Electric Department is seen as a liability, one that interferes with any potential Town/Village merger.
- ❖ **Tourist Economy Issue:** While Enosburg in many ways represents something of the “ideal Vermont” that tourists come to the state to experience, the community has not thoroughly developed this part of its economy. There are few overnight accommodations. Signs for local attractions and activities like the rail trail or canoe access points on the river could make the community a more

welcoming destination point for tourists. There is also a significant, undeveloped agro-tourism potential with the town's farms and dairy foods industry.

- ❖ **Economic Development and Development of the Industrial Park Issue:** While much has been accomplished to establish the industrial park and attract and retain business in the community, many residents believe that a concerted effort must be maintained to create new jobs and help Enosburg move forward.
- ❖ **Conservation of the Rural Economy Issue:** Many residents are concerned that Enosburg protect and maintain the rural economy of farming and forestry that has produced the working landscape and served as core family businesses for rural residents.

# III. VCRD Resource Team Recommendations

## **In response to the Five Enosburg Priority Challenges**

### Village Revitalization

- Begin the process of becoming a state **certified “Downtown”**. In addition to potential resources over time, the process will help community leaders frame the issues and answer some key questions.
- Develop a **community kiosk** or welcome area – a central symbol of community spirit. In addition to the vision, slogan and logo having a visual home base, the kiosk can serve as a place to post important information about the community. It should clearly project a welcoming and user-friendly image. This might be paired with a public restroom for travelers, bikers and tourists. One suggestion might be to use the Dragon House for these purposes.
- **Town benches, trash bins, flower boxes** – another opportunity for promoting a unique image about Enosburg by using normal fixtures to display a town logo and/or slogan. Visually radiate the town’s spirit!
- **USDA RD** can be of assistance with run-down housing. Contact Robert McDonald at 828-6015.
- **Housing Vermont** is also a significant resource—both for revitalizing Main Street or the development of worker housing: Andy Broderick, President, or Kenn Sassorossi 863-8424.
- The Village could consider contracting with a **consultant** to build momentum. An alternative would be to contract for an **intern** in community development from UVM, Johnson or Woodbury College. A Woodbury College intern, for example, could help the community develop a Vision for its downtown, build a list of actions for a Revitalization Campaign, and support the research discussions around a Town/Village Merger. Contact Larry Mandell, President, Woodbury College, 229-0516.
- Jane Lendway from the Agency of Commerce can help! She is the Preservation Planner, Certified Local Government Program, **Downtown Program** at 802-828-3042. Joss Besse can also be of great assistance; he is with the Downtown Program at 802-828-5212. They are experts at helping downtowns make progress and know of all state and non-profit resources that can help a downtown development program.
- The Downtown Committee could coordinate work with the Economic Development Committee on the **Development of a Tourism and Marketing Plan for Enosburg**. This could proceed through three steps.
  1. **Inventory of Assets.** What are the opportunities for visitors to have authentic and engaging experiences in Enosburg? What resources/attractions does the town have to offer? What compelling story(s) does the community have to share? Is there a predominance of certain types of activities? Is there a market for these activities? Do they fit with opportunities in near-by communities that could be marketed together? What are the existing initiatives? Are they successful? If not, what are the challenges?

2. Based on the Inventory of Assets, develop **Theme-Based Initiatives** to promote the expansion and diversification of the tourism and recreation economy.
- Take all the information gathered and build a unified **Marketing Plan**.
  - Catherine Dimitruk of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission may be able to help with planning, or have resources to help the Task Force put together a Municipal Planning grant—potentially in connection with the Town/Village Merger Task Force.

### **Town/Village Division**

- The Selectboard and Trustees should schedule a **joint meeting** and set up funding to produce an economic analysis and feasibility study of a potential merger. A timeline would be useful in ensuring that good research is done and decisions made.
- The Village should evaluate its long-term interest in maintaining its own **electric utility** and infrastructure. It should explore options of selling its holdings and entering into a purchasing relationship with an established Vermont-based power supplier. In the long run, could Enosburg save rate-payers money by going out of the power generating business?
- Most often, divisions between towns and village reflect history more than a rational consideration of public needs and management efficiencies. Custom, turf issues, and personalities may, in many towns, perpetuate inefficient organization. Recognizing this and then considering non-rational interests in maintaining the status quo can be as important as thinking through a list of advantages and disadvantages of a merger.
- Enosburg should **invite representatives** of communities who have merged (or approached the question of merger) to meet with them. Al Perry from Richford could tell that town's story (848-7618). Charlie Morse from Northfield can discuss his community's decision to wait awhile (485-6121). Officials in Waterbury could overview their recent discussions. Steven Jeffrey of the League of Cities and Towns, has experience with several communities (229-9111).
- Someone in Enosburg needs to take leadership for inter-community communications. This person could coordinate the website over time, but should also oversee mailings to community members.

### **Public Safety/Drug and Alcohol Issue**

- Enosburg could consider police protection in a more unified way as its discussions of a proposed merger continue. Could a single system improve services in town and village? Could a community partnership be developed with whoever contracts to provide coverage, a partnership that would include Neighborhood Watch-type activities as well as Community Justice programming?
- **Create local conflict resolution capacity** -- All communities face social cohesiveness challenges due to crime and conflict. Routine community undertakings are often beset with conflict, and effective problem solving is overshadowed by win/lose perspectives. Having a pool of residents trained in restorative conflict resolution skills could serve the community in addressing a broad range of problems and in a variety of conflict settings, not just criminal matters. Restorative experiences and philosophy could strengthen the town's vision and enhance its future. Enosburg could establish a citizen board to deal directly with low level

crime and conflict. The Department of Corrections offers assistance in setting up “Justice Centers” to provide for Restorative Justice and conflict resolution, including school disciplinary and truancy issues. Leaders include David Peebles at 241-2261, and Hans Johnson, 786-5034.

- The Vermont Children’s Forum has developed a new **Youth Leadership Training Program** which might be invited to hold sessions in town to help develop youth leadership and community service projects. Carlen Finn is their director: 229-6377.
- Federal resources can help fund rural police protection. Enosburg should explore opportunities in the **COPS** program. As a first step, call Senator Leahy’s office at 863-2525.

## **Education Issue**

- One way to build community participation in the schools would be to utilize a **Study Circles** process to inform the public about the challenges and at the same time involve the community in solutions. This grass-roots level of communication can be more powerful than a PR campaign. Winton Goodrich, at the Vermont School Board’s Association (223-3580) can explain how to use the Study Circles model. Sarah Campbell, the Program Director at the Study Circles Resource Center, can be reached at 799-7997.
- **A Weekly Speaker’s Program** at the High School or Middle School level is one way to link the school, students, community-service and community leadership together. Contact Julie Wolcott in Fairfield to learn how volunteers in that community built and continue to operate such a program, 933-4592.
- Avail the resources of the **Vermont Institutes** for reading, writing and math program evaluation and improvement. They are part of a statewide collaboration dedicated to enhanced school performance. Contact Doug Harris, their Director, at 828-0061.
- As part of the **Literacy Campaign**, the school could institute an “Everybody Wins” program where elementary school children read at lunch time with a local adult. Together they explore books, have time to chat, and develop language and social skills. The program could even build bridges to teens by allowing high school students to participate as part of a community service requirement.
- Other features of the Campaign might be:
  - a reading series in the community with famous local, regional and state residents reading on the green or in the schools.
  - A reading contest in the schools.
  - A writing contest with awards and a celebration.
  - Winning essays, poems or stories could be published in the local press and readings could be incorporated into cable access TV programming.
- Vermont Adult Learning staff may be resources to help volunteers produce or coordinate literacy events of this kind. VAL is at 229-5221.
- **School as community resource** – The school is a community asset that should widely serve all citizens. Structured activities should be designed to close the distance between stakeholders.
- **Detailed problem identification** – why and where is the school academically struggling? Is the curriculum inadequate? Poor quality teachers? Too many disruptive students? Too many Special-Ed students? Poor school environment? Inadequate resources? Find out

what's wrong. Use professional analysis and survey students, parents, school staff, faculty, administrators and school board members. What's working? What isn't?

- **Create a Community Service System** – have a blueprint and calendar to organize and ritualize community service so that it becomes a cohesive and valued community norm. Then, publically recognize students for their contributions to the community.
- **Acknowledge good students, parents and education supporters** –For instance, good performers could be featured on the town kiosk. Businesses, banks, and other organizations could feature the same thing. Here's another opportunity to be creative and comprehensive in asserting what is important to the community. Award these folks! Celebrate success!
- Bruce Parks is the Department of Education **School Improvement Coordinator**; he can answer many of the status questions and is a great resource for planning: 875-2753.
- **Ask Vermont DOE for technical help** – beyond what may be normally available, cultivate relationships and gather information that can help Enosburg. Find out what successful schools/communities are doing. Doug Dows can refer you to experts in each problem area: 828-5109.
- **Pride in school campaign** – do special things to place the school in a positive light in the forefront of the community. Another good opportunity for partnering.
- Explore the possibility of a systemic connection of the high school curriculum to offerings at **Johnson State College**, especially for AP Courses.
- Are there additional ways the college could be involved? Could **college student volunteers** or interns help with the development of community service activities or volunteer to be mentors to disgruntled youth?

## **Economic Development Issue**

- Enosburg should celebrate its identity and work from its strengths to support the expansion of value-added dairy processing in the Village. The Town's history and its position in the 'milk bowl' provide an opportunity in strategic planning to draw in or grow additional value-added operations that could potentially market and/or distribute together and expand the jobs base of the community.
- The Economic Development Task Force should start with one project that everyone likes and wants to be part of—this will help solidify partnerships and give a visible and concrete success to build on.
- **A Town web page** might serve as such a project. Beyond the usual information the municipalities post about the community, use the Enosburg site to articulate and highlight the community's vision, plans and progress. Could such a project be led by the municipalities using the skills of **high school students**? Students could survey the town for resources, conceive, design, and produce the site—North Country in Newport did something similar and won a national award.
- The Enosburg community must focus on ways of not only bringing new businesses and their revenue to town, but on keeping revenue generators like Franklin Foods in town.
- **State agencies** dedicated to supporting economic development strategies include: The Vermont Economic Development Authority, 828-5627, [www.state.vt.us/veda](http://www.state.vt.us/veda), The Vermont Economic Progress Council, 828-5626, [fkennedy@dca.state.vt.us](mailto:fkennedy@dca.state.vt.us), and the Vermont Community Development Program, 828-3211, [cdaley@dca.state.vt.us](mailto:cdaley@dca.state.vt.us).

- **Cross-promotional marketing:** Artists and artisans can serve an important function in drawing tourists to an area. Are there artists, woodworkers, crafters, who could market together in Enosburg? An inventory of studios and shops could be mapped and cross-promoted to regional visitors. For more information on this form of cross-marketing, contact Diane Konrady of Tourism and Marketing at 828-3683.
- The **Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation** could be a first line of support for Enosburg's Economic Development Task Force. They can help with strategies ranging from permitting assistance to business attraction, and maybe grant writing. Contact Tim Smith at 524-2194.
- Connie Stanley-Little at the **Economic Development Council of Northern Vermont** can be an outstanding resource for support, financing advice, and strategic planning. She can be reached at 524-4546.
- The **Vermont Department of Economic Development** can help access state resources in support of Enosburg efforts. Contact Kiersten Bourgeois at 828-5238 or Richard Smith, 828-5774.
- The **Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs** supports efforts to promote viable downtowns. Peg Elmer, 828-5220, is a good sounding board about resources in the department and the Community Development Block Grant (and Planning Grant) program.
- Make sure all Enosburg businesses are participating in the Agency of Commerce, Department of Economic Development's free online **Business Registry** ([www.thinkvermont.com](http://www.thinkvermont.com) - contact Robin Miller, 828-5240 for Technical Assistance).
- Make sure all tourism-related businesses are participating in the Agency of Commerce, Department of Tourism and Marketing's free online **Travel Planner** ([www.vacationvermont.com](http://www.vacationvermont.com) - Business must first register in the Business Registry at [www.thinkvermont.com](http://www.thinkvermont.com), then register additional data for tourist use. Carol Batchelder in VDTM, 828-3619, can help you add information to the Travel Planner).
- Contact Bev Noyes, **Lake Champlain Islands Chamber of Commerce**, 372-8400 for information on marketing the community.
- Diane Konrady in **Public Relations at the Department of Tourism and Marketing** may be able to lend support to the efforts of the Task Force. If folks need help but are not sure whom to contact, they should feel free to use her as an ongoing resource and referral agent (223-2377).

## Additional Resources

- The **Snelling Center for Government** provides excellent resources for leadership training in a variety of settings. The Center has been developing a short curriculum to teach or refresh group management skills that could support the efforts of the Task Force Chairs as they work to move agendas forward and get results. Contact Jan Eastman or Mike Reilly at 859-3090.
- The **Vermont Community Foundation** could be a possible source of funding for community projects that connect to the priorities established through the Community Visit process. Contact Ann Jones-Weinstock, Vice President at 388-3355 to discuss projects and the application process.
- VCRD and **USDA Rural Development** have established a partnership wherein USDA can provide direct follow-up support to either one of the Task Forces that emerge from the

Community Visit Process or in support of the Task Forces with the Community Visit Chairperson. Rhonda Shippee, 828-6033, may be able to lend staff assistance to Task Forces over the course of the next year.

## **IV. Enosburg Task Force Action Plans** Established on the May 21<sup>st</sup> Resource Day

### **Village Revitalization** **Task Force Worksheet**

Chairpersons: Jane Weed and Marilyn Lennane Ajami

- ❖ **Village Revitalization Issue:** Many Enosburg residents want to work with the strengths of the downtown today and address needs for parking, attracting tourism, marketing the downtown as the regional hub, retaining and optimizing the presence of the cheese industry, dealing with traffic issues, especially truck traffic, finding further retail anchors, equalizing retail hours, and building momentum by strengthening the business association with new energy and leadership.

#### **Committee Members:**

Marilyn Lennane Ajami  
Jane Weed  
Tara Champy  
Rosaire LaRose  
Daniel Smith Steiner  
Nancy Patch

#### **Action Steps:**

1. **Asset Inventory:** Do an asset inventory of what Enosburg has to offer in order to build upon what is already available, enhance what is here, identify what might co-exist well, and what we'd like to see Enosburg have. Assets would include: businesses, services, food and lodging, cultural activities, events, recreation, historic architecture, public parks, etc. Brainstorm ways to market—newspaper special stories, calendar of events, website, etc.
2. **Traffic Redesign:** Contact Northwest Regional Planning Commission, Catherine Dimitruk, and the Vermont Agency of Transportation to see if Main Street could be re-designed to slow traffic and be more pedestrian-friendly.
3. Nominate the historic center to **the National Register of Historic Places** and investigate programs to encourage building rehabilitation.

4. Invite members of the **Enosburg Business Association** to the next meeting of the committee.
5. **Visit successful downtowns** in Quebec and Vermont to learn from successful communities there.

### **Resources:**

1. **Vermont Downtown Program**—available for further discussion/facilitation with the committee: Jane Lendway, 828-3042
2. **Department of Housing and Community Affairs**, 828-3211. The Department helps communities with Municipal Planning Grants to fund application development for National Register nomination. Sue Jamele at the Division of Historic Preservation can provide nomination information (828-3047).
3. **Northwest Regional Planning Commission**, Catherine Dimitruk, for leadership in transportation planning.

## **Town/Village Merger** **Task Force Worksheet**

Chairpersons: Pierre Letourneau, Ward Heneveld

- ❖ **Town/Village Division Issue:** Enosburg Town and Village work in relative isolation from each other. Duplication and lack of coordination may result. Few can cite a positive reason for the division. A Town/Village Merger could have the potential to streamline communications, reduce some costs, and, perhaps more importantly, build an atmosphere that Enosburg is a community moving forward all together. A feasibility study could be instituted and funded, and a committee could be assembled to provide leadership depending on its results.  
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### **Committee Members:**

Lloyd Touchette  
Edward Heneveld  
George Moskewitz  
Walter Scott  
Carolyn Stimpson

Pierre Letourneau  
Lew Rose  
Harold Foote, Jr.  
Stephen Perley  
Hal Bill

## **Action Steps:**

1. Joint Meeting with Selectboard and Trustees to discuss action plan.
2. Development of a Planning Grant/Appraisal of Electric Department through the municipal planning grant program (applications in the fall).
  - Invite folks from Northfield and Richford
  - Get estimates on electric department appraisal
  - develop scope of work for merger analysis
3. Investigate combining/coordinating resources: planning/zoning, equipment, police protection, administration, consolidation of space, combine tax bills.

## **Resources:**

1. Department of Public Service/Public Service Board
2. Paul McGinley, participant of successful Morrisville town merger, also part of Northfield effort
3. Regional Planning Commission—for general help, and grant application help
4. Richford Residents—for successful merger model
5. Northfield Residents—for a town that decided not to merge

# **Public Safety/Drug and Alcohol** **Task Force Worksheet**

Chairpersons: Susan Riley and Josie Stoddard

- ❖ **Public Safety/Drug and Alcohol Issue:** There are widespread concerns about drug and alcohol issues, vandalism, and resident insecurities with youth ‘hanging out’ downtown. There are widespread fears that children are abusing drugs and alcohol at younger ages and that this issue is a factor behind truancy, drop-out rates, and crime in the community. These issues are magnified by the perceived lack of police presence. There is a feeling of powerlessness around this issue that could be answered by expanded police coverage and potentially the development of the restorative justice and pro-active work of a “Community Justice Center” in Enosburg. There are also concerns about traffic safety issues that could be dealt with concurrently.

## **Committee Members:**

Jeanne Smith, 933-7777 (day), 527-7889 (eve), [jsmith.Enosburg.k12.vt.us](mailto:jsmith.Enosburg.k12.vt.us)  
Susan Riley, 848-3466, [lassie@together.net](mailto:lassie@together.net)  
June Flaherty, 933-6203  
Connie Burns, 933-2750, [connie.burns@vt.usda.gov](mailto:connie.burns@vt.usda.gov)  
Hannah Hartman, 326-4896, [hartman622hotmail.com](mailto:hartman622hotmail.com)  
Jim Starr, 933-7777, [jimstarr@enosburg.vt.us](mailto:jimstarr@enosburg.vt.us)  
Joanna Jerose, 933-8789, 933-7777, [jerose@together.net](mailto:jerose@together.net)  
Gary Champy, 933-4443, 933-6277, [gchampy@sover.net](mailto:gchampy@sover.net)  
Taylor Williams, 933-5175  
Dennis Williams, 933-5175, [dennisw@lchdc.org](mailto:dennisw@lchdc.org)  
Josie Stoddard, 933-2610, [jstoddard@surfglobal.net](mailto:jstoddard@surfglobal.net)  
Beth Crane, 527-5049, [beth, fcccp.org](http://beth.fcccp.org)

## **Action Steps:**

1. **Voice of the Youth:** A forum and a survey will be developed to take input from young people about their needs and the issues they face. Jim Starr will contact 16 to 22 year olds.
2. **Work with Business and the Community:** Contact the Enosburg business community (Sandra and Deb).  
Research signage and pro-active ordinances  
Speak to Winooski Police Chief on the action plan they used  
Obtain the Community Plan Video from Dover, Vermont to consider how they approached these issues.
3. **Work with Law Enforcement:** Have the conversation to obtain information and data on infractions that actually take place in Enosburg  
Develop a **Neighborhood Watch**  
Train Community Members in **Restorative Justice**

## **Resources:**

1. Ron LaRose
2. Connie Burns on building a skate park
3. Gary Champy—will serve as contact to police/sheriff
4. Steve McQueen—Winooski Police Chief
5. Martha Maxim, Degee Weaver, Karen Ginnatt—Rutland Community
6. Dave Peebles--Agency of Human Services

# Education Task Force Worksheet

Chairpersons: Shirley Duso, Mary Jackson

## Education Issue:

**Literacy:** Residents are concerned about the lack of early educational opportunities, low reading scores in school, the high percentage of special needs children, high truancy and dropout rates in the High School, and challenging home environments. A community-wide literacy campaign could directly address the early reading deficits and mobilize educational resources in the community to build momentum toward improved academic performance at all levels.

**Educational Engagement:** Many Enosburg youth feel dis-empowered and are not actively engaged in driving their educations forward. Teachers are stressed by multiple demands and challenging youth. Many kids fall through the cracks, partly because they do not develop a vision of what they want to accomplish after they leave school. Others feel “bullied” or subject to negative peer pressure.

**Community/School Partnership:** Many residents and school personnel feel the need for a closer partnership. Many young people are stressed or angry and need volunteer mentors through the school’s program; others lack adult supporters and positive role models. Community/School Communications could be improved, and volunteers in the school could provide enrichments.

## Committee Members:

Heather Skilling  
Cynthia Weed  
Sharon Larose  
Ed Grossman

Shirley Duso  
Mary Jackson  
Michael Moran  
Andrew Bobkowicz

## Action Steps:

**Focus for the next year: Community promotion of youth and adult literacy.** Youth and adult volunteers will be engaged as partners in promoting literacy.

1. Look at how daycare providers are promoting reading. (Heather Skilling)
2. Successful High School Completion Task Force at EFMHS will look at making literacy a focus of the Leadership for School Success initiative next fall (independent study involving students in community service to address school and community needs.) (Ed Grossman and Fran Weinbaum)
2. Plan for video taping a literacy event to air on Public Access TV 15 (and do it!) (Michael Moran)
4. Include the efforts of this committee in the EFMHS Action Plan (Ed Grossman)

5. Plan community celebrations of literacy beginning this summer (Mary Jackson and Sharon Larose)

## **Resources:**

**Community** (need to get specific contact names for these groups)

(see ideas in community partnership list)

Faith Organizations

Elder citizens

Health Center

Library

Success by Six

CHCC Adult Literacy Program

High School

Increased options for students

New building – promote the opportunities in the expanded facilities

Guidance Counselors

Family Center

Programs such as “mother Goose” that promote family literacy

## **State of Vermont**

Department of Education

Vermont Consortium for Successful High School Completion – Fran Weinbaum,  
Coordinator 802-229-0940 [WeinbaumP@aol.com](mailto:WeinbaumP@aol.com) 128 Bliss Road, Montpelier, VT  
05062

Vermont Department of Health

Mental Health and Social Services

## **Literacy**

Residents are concerned about the lack of early education opportunities, low reading scores in school, the high percentage of special needs children, high truancy and dropout rates in the high school, and challenging home environments. A community-wide literacy campaign could directly address the early reading deficits and mobilize educational resources in the community to build momentum toward improved academic performance at all levels.

### **Existing Activities Addressing Literacy**

#### **Elementary School**

- 3 year focus on reading which is teacher driven
- Community volunteers reading to children in the classroom
- RIF (Reading is Fun) book distribution
- Author visits and book purchase (1 book per family)

## **Middle High School**

- 7/8<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts and Reading Classes (different levels)
- 9/10<sup>th</sup> grade intensive reading classes
- 7-12 and Career Center - 3 year strategic reading initiative that involves weekly in classroom consultation with teachers; development of teacher leaders; and required teacher projects related to integrating reading into their classes.
- If the CSR (Comprehensive School Reform) grant is awarded, the focus will be literacy

## **Community**

- Library: story hour (8 week sessions); summer story time
- EEE Early Essential Education
- Success by Six Books given on 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday

## **Literacy Ideas (generated by group)**

- Focus on existing initiatives at the High School
- Develop a K-12 plan that follows early reading efforts with activities in the middle and high school
- Use local access TV channel 15 to promote literacy activities
- Publicize good things that are happening; give students acknowledgement for their efforts (reading in classrooms; special events; library programs)
- HS community service: expand and organize the existing HS student reading in elementary classrooms. Make books with the younger students.
- Involve more older students in the library story hour
- Reach parents of young children (pre K).
- Reach children at daycare. Encourage daycare providers to promote literacy.
- Adopt a Reader program (volunteers reading to children in school)

## **Educational Engagement**

Many Enosburg youth feel dis-empowered and area not actively engaged in driving their education forward. Teachers are stresses by multiple demands and challenging youth. Many kids fall through the cracks, partly because they do not develop a vision of what they want to accomplish after they leave school. Others feel bullied or subject to negative peer pressure.

## **Existing Activities that Support Educational Engagement**

### **Elementary School**

- Mentoring
- Job shadowing (6<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Hands on experience arranged for individual students (ex. Time with a woodworker)

### **Middle/High School**

- Students having trouble in the classroom spend time at the Career Center for hands on experience
- Field trips to state colleges
- Professionals, business people as speakers in classroom
- Career fairs
  - Enosburg
  - St Albans
- Next year, pre tech program for 40 9/10<sup>th</sup> grade students
- Senior Interview Day
- Teacher Advisors in High School
- Successful HS Completion Task Force at high school (students, teachers, administration, community) focus on student involvement in planning for school success

### **Community School Partnerships**

Many residents and school personnel feel the need for a closer partnership. Many young people are stressed or angry and need volunteer mentors through the school's program; others lack adult supporters and role models. Community/school communications could be improved, and volunteers could provide enrichments.

#### **Existing Activities that Support Community School Partnerships**

- Parents groups
- Elementary
- Middle/High school
- A key part of the "High Schools on the Move" initiative that the high school is adopting is developing community partnerships. This includes developing internships and other community based learning for credit.
- Caring Community activities
- Lions Club and other civic organizations give scholarships
- Parent classes
- Local newspaper works with youth
- Weekly column in paper
- Teacher takes special needs students into job situations for awareness
- Select Board and others collaborated to apply for a School Resource Officer

# **Economic Development Task Force Worksheet**

Chairperson: Richard Roberge

## **❖ Economic Development Issue:**

**Development of the Industrial Park:** While much has been accomplished to establish the industrial park and attract and retain business in the community, many residents believe that a concerted effort must be maintained to create new jobs and help Enosburg move forward.

**Cellular Services:** The lack of cellular phone services in Enosburg may impede future development and currently leads to communications gaps for particular businesses and services. As one part of an economic development strategy, Enosburg residents could negotiate with a provider of cell service and facilitate tower placement within an existing structure, or on a site acceptable to the community.

**Website:** Residents believe that Enosburg needs to build a strong website to provide a central point for its own communications, to allow on-line government and information exchange, and to attract new business to the community.

**Tourist Economy:** While Enosburg in many ways represents something of the “ideal Vermont” that tourists come to the state to experience, the community has not thoroughly developed this part of its economy. There are few overnight accommodations. Signs for local attractions and activities like the rail trail or canoe access points on the river could make the community a more welcoming destination point for tourists. There is also a significant, undeveloped agro-tourism potential with the town’s farms and dairy foods industry.

## **Committee Members:**

Rep. Avis Gervais—[a/gervais@together.net](mailto:a/gervais@together.net)

Ronald Duso—933-4394

Val Bonk—933-4455

Kate Bilodeau—933-4375 [county.courier@verizon.net](mailto:county.courier@verizon.net)

Richard Roberge—933-4506

Daniel Steiner—933-2633, [octagon12@juno.com](mailto:octagon12@juno.com)

## **Action Steps:**

1. Website Contractor: Val will research information about community website development—not just for economic development.
  - Invite web company representative to a meeting
  - Hold a second and separate meeting for the economic development corporation.
2. Cellular Service: Avis will contact David O’Brien at the Public Service Board for contact information for cellular providers.  
Follow-up with Gary Champy about conversation with the Economic Development Council.
3. Tourism Promotion: Create a brochure with points of interest, make it bi-lingual and connect to Regional Planning—Richard.  
Develop the Dragon House porch as an Information Area, a welcome center—Val.

Send letters to bike touring groups to give community notification of trips so that the Dragon House bathrooms can be opened—Kate.

Check for tenting possibilities with Dairy Center (Ronald) and Lions Club (Val) to give biker and other visitors a place to stay in town.

4. Economic Development: Pursue website.

Recruit piece work from St. Albans Coop

Look for Grants for Road Infrastructure—consult with Brian Searles (Tim).

### **Resources:**

1. Web Site Company
2. David O'Brien, Commissioner, Department of Public Service.
3. Maureen Connolly, EDCNV
4. Franklin County Regional Planning
5. Leon Berthiome, St. Albans Coop
6. Cynthia Scott, Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail

# **FOCUS GROUP NOTES ON MAJOR ISSUES**

Compiled in focus groups of Enosburg residents reporting to Community Visitors on March 24, 2003

## **Resource Team A**

*Chuck Ross, State Director, US Senator Patrick J. Leahy (Team Facilitator)*  
*Jan Marinelli, Community & Economic Dev. Coordinator, US Senator James M. Jeffords*  
*Marcia Merrill, CPA, Montgomery & Merrill*  
*Jenny Nelson, Agricultural Policy Advisor, Outreach, US Rep. Bernard Sanders*  
*Mike Reilly Development Director, Snelling Center for Government*  
*Fred Schmidt, Executive Director, UVM Center for Rural Studies*  
*Connie Burns, Rural Development Specialist, USDA- Rural Development (Scribe)*

## **I. Apathy and Disconnection from Community Focus Group**

*Hal Bill*  
*Sid Berkson*  
*Ronald Duso*  
*Rep. Avis Gervais*  
*Jedd Kettler*  
*Judy Knoff*

*Nancy Patch*  
*Richard Roberge*  
*Heather Skilling*  
*Phyllis Tiffany*  
*Lloyd Touchette*  
*Lyle Willey*

## **Points of Testimony**

### **Community Strengths**

- Businesses like Franklin Foods stay because of community support.
- New developmental investments have been made to enhance economic development – Main Street Marketplace; Hannaford's Store & McDonalds; more lots are available.
- Community has received millions of dollars in grants in past few years.
- Water and Wastewater capacity is good.
- There is local Electrical Generation.
- Historical pride – Restoration of Enosburg Opera House brings variety of culture; active youth drama clubs; Enosburg Town Band provides weekly band concerts during summer. There is a vibrant and active Historical Society.
- A successful community event in 1997 brought the moveable Vietnam War Monument.
- The Farmers Market is an asset.
- Enosburg has beautiful village greens and churches.

- There is a beautiful Library.
- An 18 hole Golf Course is in the community.
- The 27 mile Missisquoi Rail Trail is a wonderful recreational asset.
- Creation of Northern Forest Canoe Trail along Missisquoi River is another attraction.
- Dairy Festival draws 15,000 people to Enosburg every June.
- Community neighbor support/connections between people help make Enosburg a good place to live.
- High School graduates attend the “best of colleges.”
- Successful School Programs include:
  - Large school music programs – Band, Marching Band, Jazz Band, Chorus
  - Sport Programs
  - Affordable Skiing Program @ Jay Peak
  - HS graduation requires 40 hours community service
  - Mentoring Programs
  - Gardens for Learning – Elementary
  - HS students own and operate a sugar bush, study forestry, horticulture, automotive repair, building trades students built new bandstand on park.

### **Challenges in this Area**

- There is a lack of people willing to serve on boards and committees – people see it as “somebody else’s job.”
- Serving on boards/taking a stand can be antagonistic and intimidating.
- Teamwork is lacking in the community.
- Voters do not turn out – the few that do make the choices.
- People either do not see or ignore notices in the newspapers.
- People are very resistant to change.
- There is a perception of “cliques” within some families and groups.
- There’s a lack of communication between trustees and residents.
- Some residents and business owners feel the selectboard and trustees never approach them to ask how they might help.
- There is a disconnect between village and town residents. (ie: The town has no say about the village Electrical Dept.)
- The town is served by the State Police – the village is served by County Sheriff Dept.
- The disconnect is evident by 3 tax rates: Town, School and Village.
- Youth and young adults loiter in parks, bandstand and Main Street steps, making it uncomfortable for pedestrians. Many simply avoid these areas.
- There is a lack of livable wage jobs. Too many people have long commutes – most families have two parents working – no time. This creates disconnect between workplace, community and home. Some move here for less expensive housing—then work and shop elsewhere.
- There are not enough services and retail shopping opportunities to keep people in town.
- Recreational opportunities are needed for all ages.

- There is a perception of “people don’t care – that they have no respect for others or their property.” This filters down to the children and youth.
- There is a feeling that Enosburg is, or will become, a “bedroom community.”

### **Visiting Team Observations**

1. There is a real challenge in that no one takes charge to make certain communications happen.
2. Enosburg residents feel that the look of downtown and the groups hanging out may make downtown seem an unfriendly environment.
3. The fact that there is a separate Town and Village may interfere with communications and unified action.
4. There is a Downtown Revitalization Report but no one seems to have it or use it.
5. There is no community website.

## **II. Crime and Drugs Focus Group**

*Hal Bill*

*Barbara Cassidy*

*Michael Cassidy*

*Tricia Cassidy*

*Wendell Cassidy*

*Sen. Don Collins*

*Linda Collins*

*Lise Comeau*

*Beth Crane*

*Tammy Derry*

*Sandra Ferland*

*JoAnn Foote*

*Doreen Greene*

*Joanna Jerose*

*Joey Knoff*

*Rachel Nichols Lamoureux*

*Lise LaRose*

*Karen McEwing*

*Robert W. Norris*

*Sandra Schroeder*

*Mary Sherrer*

*Jeanne Smith*

*Bill Spears Sr.*

*Jim Starr*

*Dianne Tibbits*

*Lyle Willey*

### **Points of Testimony**

### **Community Strengths**

- Many programs are offered: Healthy Choices, Parents Group, VT Kids Against Tobacco, Mentoring, SADD, Peer Leadership, Homework Clubs, YOGA, Tai Kwon Do, Friday night program at a local church – food, organized games, spiritual learning.
- The largest percentage of kids are GOOD kids that have GOOD parents.
- There are strong school sports teams.

## **Challenges in this Issue Area**

- Children are using drugs at a younger age – Enosburg is seeing usage as early as 5-6 grade.
- Drugs and alcohol are more available due to older kids' ability to get it.
- Users are not just the kids that “hang around;” many users are from “good families”.
- There is more stealing going on, even in school.
- There appears to be broad acceptance for negative behavior.
- Because there aren't too many “things for kids to do,” they hang around too much. Some do not want to play sports, cannot afford to play, or don't make the teams.
- In some cases, accountability, family support and structure are lacking.
- There are many families who move from place to place whose children change schools several times per year.
- There are many “special needs” children in the community.
- Many adults suffer from unemployment or underemployment, alcohol/drug abuse, domestic violence, or the lack of education. Some lack parenting/relationship skills, and resources.
- Some adults are not good role models for the children of Enosburg.
- Bullying and physical fighting are huge issues. Some children do not feel safe at school.
- There are few jobs for youth.
- There is a failure to meet academic needs. Of 380 students, 120 received at least 1 F last marking period.
- Peer pressure promotes poor performance.
- Emotional needs have to be addressed – more kids are depressed and angry – even many elementary school kids are “stressed out”.
- More mentors are needed but are hard to find.
- The school drop out rate is high.
- Law enforcement feels that its hands are tied when trying to deal with troublemakers.
- Counselors feel there should be a “no tolerance” policy.
- Police feel Enosburg has housing that attracts low-income, low skill families that are not familiar with accountability and how to be part of a healthy community. They suggest the development of a stronger relationship between community and school, “zero tolerance” and a restorative justice system.

## **Visiting Team Observations**

1. Adults expressed fear to be in downtown area due to “hanging out” youth (teen age and into early twenties)
2. There is a perceived lack of police coverage.
3. There is an absence of grant-writing leadership in the community.
4. Many residents feel that Enosburg lacks a vision of what the community could be.

### **III. Downtown Revitalization Focus Group**

*Marilyn Lennane Ajami  
Sid Berkson  
Tara Champy  
Stephen Comeau  
Sandra Ferland  
Rep. Avis Gervais  
Rosanne Larose  
Amy Lefebvre*

*Deborah Moskevitz  
Michael Moser  
Nancy Patch  
Richard Roberge  
Bill Spears Jr.  
Jenna Speer  
Evelyn W. Stanley  
Barbara Wright*

### **Points of Testimony**

#### **Community Strengths**

- Enosburg has a small country town/village atmosphere.
- There are many historic and attractive buildings.
- Residents, most business owners, and groups take pride in the downtown. They plant trees, flowers, and keep the streets clean.
- Residents feel they have ample parking.
- There are many good features, such as the beautiful parks, and the Bridge of Flowers and Lights, the Town Clerk's, the Post Office, retail stores, hair dressing shops, restaurants, gas stations, and an historic hotel in middle of downtown.
- Several buildings on Main Street have vacant upstairs apartments suitable for renovation for "senior living". Seniors would be closer to the services they need.
- Some vacant storefronts are available and could be used to add retail services that are presently missing.
- Beautiful scenery and actively farmed land surrounds the community.
- Enosburg is located only 20 miles from Jay Peak Ski Area.
- The Missisquoi River runs through downtown and provides electrical power.
- The Missisquoi Rail Trail also runs through middle of downtown.
- Enosburg was named Dairy Capital of the World several years ago and has a successful Dairy Days festival. People are faithful to farming.
- Having a new Village Manager brings new energy to the community.
- The churches are active.
- There are several schools (elementary, middle, high school and tech) in the downtown area.

#### **Challenges in this Issue Area**

- Downtown needs to be "brought to life".
- Some people litter the park and streets.
- There are many empty storefronts – buildings need upgrading.

- There is no money to upgrade buildings - Banks are not supporting business loans.
- The community needs a grant writer in support of downtown development.
- There's a lack of communication.
- Village trustees need to work more closely with the downtown merchants.
- More police protection is needed.
- Enosburg needs to attract businesses and services in order to provide more livable wage jobs.
- The community is losing its youth – they are getting jobs in other places.
- Enosburg needs to identify and develop youth leadership.
- Some residents feel a lack of civic pride.
- Others see a lack of a community and/or teen center and recreational activities for teens and adults.
- The community has not developed a shared vision for the downtown or its development.

### **Visiting Team Observations**

1. The current downtown area could be made more appealing if buildings were renovated and storefronts were filled.
2. The issue of law enforcement and public safety seems to be a common concern.
3. The beauty of the area, the old-fashioned looking buildings, good churches and schools all make the community very attractive.
4. Dedicated shop keepers are providing important services in Enosburg now—that's worthy of celebration—the community should build from its real strengths.

### **Resource Team B**

*Paul Costello, Executive Director, Vermont Council on Rural Development (Team Facilitator)*  
*Kiersten Bourgeois, Economic Development Director, VT Dept. of Economic Development*  
*Catherine Dimitruk, Executive Director, Northwest Regional Planning Commission*  
*Pat McDonald, Secretary, Vermont Agency of Transportation*  
*Tim Smith, Executive Director, Franklin Co. Industrial Development Corporation*  
*Connie Stanley-Little, Executive Director, Economic Development Council of Northern VT*  
*Candy Koenemann, Executive Assistant, Vermont Council on Rural Development, (Scribe)*

### **I. Utilities-Water/Sewer/Electric/Telecom/Transportation Infrastructure Focus Group**

*Kate Bilodeau*  
*Val Bonk*  
*Dick Brodeur*  
*Rachael Nichols Lamoureux*

*Debra Mason*  
*George Moskevitz*  
*Robert O'Connor*  
*Lynn Paradis*

## **Points of Testimony**

### **Community Strengths**

- The sewer facility has had some improvements.
- There is a good supply of water.
- The water system (upgraded in 1998) is in very good shape.
- The reservoir is fairly new (1994) and has great water.
- Water sources have good security--water quality is well protected.
- There is good fire protection.
- The community has been proactive in seeking solutions to various utility problems.
- Franklin County Foods is a valued source of employment in the community.
- The Rail Trail is a good resource, and the Purple Bus, started by a grant, is a profitable transportation system.

### **Challenges in this Issue Area**

- Electric rates seem high due to two recent rate increases; one increase was due to new substation.
- Franklin County Foods, a major business in the area, feels the electric rates are higher than other towns; its management could consider relocating the plant to an area with lower rates.
- Higher rates are driven by need to purchase power; primarily from Hydro Quebec; the current utility contract is in effect until 2012.
- The transportation of sludge has become an issue since spreading sludge on farmland is no longer permitted.
- Wastewater capacity is an issue for manufacturing, both for current usage and for future tenants of the industrial park.
- Community members want to look to the future regarding needs for residential and industrial use.
- A pretreatment waste facility is needed.
- Cellular phone usage is limited by the lack of signal in the area (no towers).
- No providers have approached community to establish towers or services.
- A committee could be formed to arrange a meeting between potential cell providers and residents.
- Road improvements are needed to provide safe trucking transportation. Current routes for Franklin Foods go through residential areas which cause concern in the community, particularly regarding pedestrians and child safety.
- Enosburg needs to continue its efforts to acquire better trucking access in the industrial park area. There is no current community plan, and planning responsibility should not be left up to new occupants.
- There are no sidewalks in the Dickenson Avenue area; this could be hazardous for school children and other pedestrians.

- Speeding traffic on Route 105 and Orchard Street needs to be addressed; speed bumps were suggested as one way to slow vehicles down.
- Broadband access is limited and few residents have it. More needs to be done to explore possible options and purchasing power.
- Town Offices computers still run on a DOS program and should be upgraded.
- Parking is inadequate and needs to be expanded, particularly in the Opera House area.

### **Visiting Team Observations**

- Team Members complimented the Village and Town residents for their proactive work on issues.
- The Team felt the Electric rates in general are a top issue and the community may want to plan for alternative sources when the Hydro Quebec contract expires.
- The Team thought the community members could probably pursue cell towers.
- The Team heard the residents express their desire to look at the wastewater needs.
- The Team heard concerns from the residents that indicated the community will want to address communication/broadband issues.
- The Team made the observation that the community feels it is critical to have pre-treatment for waste.
- Team members also recognized that residents want to improve road safety regarding Franklin Foods trucking.

## **II. Economic Development Focus Group**

*Sid Berkson  
Kate Bilodeau  
Guy Breault  
Gary Champy  
Lise Gates  
Rep. Avis Gervais  
Ward Heneveld*

*Suzanne Hull-Parent  
Sen. Sara Kittell  
Debra Mason  
George Moskevitz  
John Ovitt  
Stephen Perley  
Richard Roberge*

### **Points of Testimony**

#### **Community Strengths**

- Life is good in Enosburg.
- There is a strong sense of community.
- Enosburg is a safe place to live.
- Enosburg serves as a hub for surrounding towns; it's the historic market center for the agricultural regions around it.
- The Dairy Festival draws 15,000 people each year.
- The community has close proximity to dairy farms generally and to the St. Albans Coop.

- Trucking is available in the area; that's good for businesses.
- There is an up to date development plan, and the Enosburg Community Development Corporation is aggressive and hard working.
- The Rail Trail is an asset.
- The Opera House, golf course and nearby outdoor recreation centers are good attractions.
- Zoning is not strictly enforced, thus allowing for a number of home businesses.
- The high school and Franklin County Foods work together in an education program which helps graduates obtain jobs at the food plant.
- Retail stores provide the largest employment opportunities for residents.
- Conservation efforts produced the walking path by the river, which is considered a community asset.

### **Challenges in this Issue Area**

- There are high taxes in Enosburg.
- There is a town/village separation that some resident feel creates obstacles for development.
- The Interstate is not close and there is no easy shipping for manufacturing. Rail is good for non-food items, but not the best way to transport perishables.
- The Act 250 process and town permitting process have much replication.
- Residents see the need to preserve land, but also the need to develop some of it; they resent not being able to use their own land as they choose.
- Private individuals are able to convert historical buildings for business purposes, but commercial business struggles to meet requirements. The infrastructure downtown is seen to be underutilized.
- Tourism is not well developed. There are few overnight accommodations except for a couple of B&B's. There needs to be an effort to attract more visitors, and to make it possible for them to stay over and not just pass through.
- An historical museum and the "caboose" should be developed as tourist attractions.
- The downtown suffers from lack of police presence and is considered to be unattractive. Efforts to beautify the center with flowers have been met by destruction and vandalism.
- The local business association needs a larger and renewed membership to effectively address the issues.
- "Shop Local" needs to be promoted.
- There needs to be more unified hours among the businesses on Main Street.
- The Industrial Park needs to be developed to bring in more employees and thus more consumers for local businesses.
- Downtown parking needs to be improved and expanded.
- Enosburg could focus on farms and the cheese factory to develop as an agricultural tourist attraction.
- Enosburg could explore its tourism potential, market toward nearby residents of Canada, and offer incentives to draw visitors.
- The community must address the need for a higher level of trained workforce to meet the standards of today's technological world.

- Several residents expressed a need to improve the tech center, upgrade learning opportunities for high school students, and enlist the aid of State of Vermont to develop a program or center for specialized training and certification. Ways should be found to provide scholarships for accessing higher level training programs.
- Affordable housing is needed in order to attract workers to the area. A suggestion was made to research possible resources through USDA.
- Residents would like to explore the development of second story housing over storefront buildings.
- Home businesses are considered to be the underground economy and are seen by some as hurting the downtown business community.
- Owners of small businesses could use education about taxes and other support services.
- A point person is needed to help market Enosburg and attract new business to the area.
- The community needs to develop a current and attractive web site for internal communications and to attract businesses and tourists.
- Enosburg is a family oriented community but it needs to offer more activities; there currently is a bowling alley in the area, but, young people say, not much else.
- Several residents expressed a need to develop a dairy museum to draw people to the area.
- A number of residents feel efforts should be made to retain the Franklin County Foods plant in Enosburg and help it grow.
- Residents want to be able to retain youth in the community by providing employment and desirable activities.
- The merging of the town and village would help economic development efforts.

### **Visiting Team Observations**

1. The Team recognized the assets in the community and expressed their opinion that these assets could provide opportunities for development of the downtown, tourism, historical buildings, and agriculture as an attraction.
2. Team Members heard about the Rail Trail and other outdoor recreational assets that could be marketed to make Enosburg a tourist destination.
3. Team Members understood that residents need to retain Franklin County Foods and make the community more business friendly.
4. The Team praised the proactive efforts of residents to solve their problems, the obvious strengths and assets available in the community, and indicated that development in all areas be done simultaneously to optimize outcomes and realize the tremendous potential Enosburg has to become strong economically.
5. Team Members expressed concerns about the level of energy in merchant leadership and some questions about unity in that leadership.

### **III. Town/Village Merger Focus Group**

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*Peter McDermott  
Sandy Murphy  
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Kathleen Swallick  
Lloyd Touchette*

### **Points of Testimony**

#### **Community Strengths**

- The Village and Town each have their own town employees (Manager, Administrator, Clerks, Auditors).
- There is a good Fire Department housed in a new Town owned building, but both Village and Town pay for services.
- Town and Village have differing philosophies about development, but feel the benefit is that both perspectives are represented.
- There is a large number of involved citizens.
- Residents from both Town and Village are willing to discuss these ideas and are open to positive outcomes if a feasibility study indicates that a merger is justifiable.

#### **Challenges in this Issue Area**

- Village road positions are unionized and parallel Town positions are non-union.
- There is little contact between Town and Village government--so no one really knows what the other is doing; poor communication.
- Differences in taxing authorities (5 in Village and 3 in town) sometimes cause confusion.
- Town residents feel that the Village ownership of the electric utility is a huge issue—really a liability that could interfere with a merger. This issue was raised repeatedly.
- Villages taxes are higher than the Town's; Town residents don't want to take on Village debts—like those connected to the electric plant.
- Residents feel both that Village and Town residents will need to be convinced of the reasons to merge; if there are enough benefits to doing so, either financial or otherwise, it might well pass.
- Several residents expressed the need to pursue the idea of a feasibility study to research whether or not to try to merge. A Town Meeting survey showed interest but no committee or budget has been set yet for a feasibility study. Residents may want to look into finding a grant to fund such a study.

- Residents want to know how other merged communities have done and about the results from other communities' merger studies.
- Residents want to know if duplicate positions would be reduced and if there would be a savings in that area.
- There was concern expressed that since Village and Town residents have differing views, a vision would need to be developed that would include both perspectives.
- Housing is a critical issue due to space and building restriction differences between Village and Town. The Town can issue only 10 building permits per year. The Village is reported to have no space and there is no land for sale.
- Schools have a separate board, thus adding a third governing body to the community. The residents need to add the school element to the feasibility study to build a path to common goals.
- Lack of police force is an issue for residents.

### **Visiting Team Observations**

1. Team Members complimented residents for planning to do a feasibility study. This shows the community is at least open to considering the idea.
2. Once the study is done, and if results indicate the merger is beneficial, the Team noted the importance for residents to be committed, have a vision and work together to reach goals acceptable to both town and village viewpoints.

## **Resource Team C**

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*Chip Evans, Executive Director, Human Resources Investment Council*

*Carlen Finn, Executive Director, Vermont Children's Forum*

*Duncan Hastings, Municipal Manager, Town of Johnson*

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*Kenn Sassorossi, Vice President-Program Development, Housing Vermont*

*Chuck Stander, Director of Career & Workplace Development Team, VT Dept. of Education*

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*Kelly Goss*

*Jane Greenwood*  
*Mary Jackson*  
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*Walter Scott*  
*Mary Sherrer*  
*Jenna Speer*  
*Josie Stoddard*  
*Kathleen Swallick*

## **Points of Testimony**

### **Community Strengths**

- Many stated that there are a large number of individuals that are willing to donate time in the community.
- The Athletic programs are enthusiastically received and supported.
- Plenty of children do participate.
- Teens are willing to help out the younger children.
- There is Open Library, computers and gym, and chess club.
- Vacation bible school is available during school breaks and some of the summer.
- Scouting is popular in the grade school.
- Many participants stressed there is good parental involvement in the programs.
- The Recreation Committee is set up and organized; it helps to raise funds for ball fields, and to maintain the tennis court.

### **Challenges in this Issue Area**

- Everyone agreed that one of the biggest challenges is the issue of Transportation. Many high school students are not close enough to walk or attend evening activities. The area is very rural and this is a major problem.
- The lack of available space for activities was mentioned by several folks.
- Finding volunteers for the after school hours is hard due to people's work schedules. Most folks are not available until evening.
- With no sidewalks or lighting available at night, Route 105 is a very dangerous place to walk.
- No teen center is available, nor are there bowling alleys, or movie theaters in the village; everyone has to go into St. Albans for these facilities.
- Teens need a positive place hang out and positive things to do; is there a space that could work? Could an existing space be used--such as the Opera House?
- Act 250 and the permit processing is overwhelming, and, with some land in the village and some land in the town, several projects have been put on hold.
- Many families are not interested in supporting the participation of their youngsters in youth groups; some families have no commitment from the parent to get the child there.

Sometimes parental priorities are more troubling than youth behavior.

- Several participants stated that communication is an issue, especially with information sent home with the kids. Parents don't check notes or the kids don't give them to the parents--so activities are not as well attended as they could be.
- Teens need a place to "hang".
- The liability issue has prevented some existing space from opening and liability is a concern for the village and town.
- It is hard to keep the community energized to move forward with plans.
- Truancy is a big issue; the kids must keep a passing grade to participate in the after school activities such as sports. When they don't get the grades, they get kicked off the teams, then start skipping school and develop a "why bother" attitude.
- Kids don't have responsibilities at home, such as chores, and don't go home after school because the parents are not there. But there is little for them to do in town either.
- Staff volunteers are in limited supply after school because working parents may not be in town at that time.
- No funding is currently available to hire a coordinator for activities the way other towns do.
- Planning needs more of a balance; Enosburg needs to include teens in the planning process.
- No funding is available for recreational programs. Many participants agreed that money is a big issue.
- Drugs and alcohol are also a big issue. There are many high-risk children in Enosburg schools, and kids don't seem to know how to make healthy choices.
- There should be more outreach to high-risk children and their parents.
- Preschool programs such as Success by Six are too spread out. Services and activities need to be more central to be less confusing.

### **Visiting Team Observations**

1. The community feels that their varied assets are being underutilized.
2. Children in activities/athletics are doing well enough but the non "in group" kids are at risk. The challenges get greater as the children get older.
3. The community needs more volunteer help and to coordinate efforts.
4. Transportation for teens, especially on Friday and Saturday, needs to be addressed.

## **II. Housing Focus Group**

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Jon Scott  
Jenna Speer*

*Ronald Duso  
Michael Moser  
Nancy Patch  
Heather Skilling  
Kathleen Swallick*

### **Points of Testimony**

### **Community Strengths**

- The zoning administrator works well with the community.
- There is a local health center.
- 1 acre zoning is still in place.
- Land prices are reasonable compared to rest of the county.
- Elderly Housing and Affordable Rentals are available.
- There is a lot of old housing available that can be renovated.
- There are excellent Lenders with availability of loan capital.
- Enosburg is a hub for commercial items, 8 surrounding towns use the services.
- The Village has water and sewer, the latter was recently upgraded.

### **Challenges in this Issue Area**

- Many participants stated that land was not available, nothing is for sale.
- Land prices have jumped by 40% because of the demand impact from the Chittenden County.
- Lack of affordable housing is a problem; there is limited housing stock altogether.
- The by-laws in both the town and village do not address affordable housing and it gets lost in the shuffle.
- The current perception of affordable housing is negative—Not In My Backyard!
- Available units (16 currently) are not being used in the village because the Tenant/Landlord laws favor the tenants so it is easier for the owners of the buildings to leave apartments vacant.
- Liability is a big issue with landlords/owners.
- No land is available for single family housing or multi family housing since Enosburg is a big farming community. Many farmers not selling off land or are in the Land Trust.
- Utility costs have increased and have become very expensive.
- Land Gains tax and the permitting process make for prohibitive expenses, therefore the cost per lot is keeping land owners and contractors from getting to the construction stage; state policy is not helping this matter.
- No planning infrastructure exists to plan where to develop.
- Some families cannot afford to remain in Enosburg anymore and are migrating to Richford.
- There is a big antigrowth mentality among the native Enosburg residents.
- The Town cap on residential permits is 10 per year. If not used, they expire. When this happens, the process goes into the next year--this delays others from getting a permit. The Village does not have a cap, but everyone says that there is no land available so this is a moot point.
- The Town has no infrastructure like the village has.
- There has been a huge influx of folks from urban areas since 9/11.
- Incomes in the area are low so folks who own homes cannot sell because they cannot afford to buy a new home due to market inflation. Enosburg incomes are only 70% of state average.
- Town folks want responsible growth and want to prevent sprawl, therefore new construction is limited.
- Economic Development is hampered because there is no place for new employees to live.

### **Visiting Team Observations**

1. The Team heard from residents that there are no building lots and that zoning is a development issue.
2. There are 16 available units that are not being used due to liability and project affordability in the Village.
3. Differing philosophies of Town and Village residents need to be overcome so that they can plan together to reach a compromise of “smart” growth.
4. The regulatory process with Act 250 creates hurdles.
5. Tenants laws need to be changed from the Village viewpoint.
6. Families would like to live in Enosburg, but many feel they cannot afford to do so.

### **III. Education Focus Group**

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*JoAnn Foote*

*Jane Greenwood*

*Rachel Nichols Lamoureux*

*Bill Moore*

*Nancy Riley*

*Heather Skilling*

*Daniel Steiner*

*Jane Weed*

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*Shirley Duso*

*J. Brent Garrow*

*Cheryl Heneveld*

*Sharon Larose*

*Barb Paradee*

*Sandra Schroeder*

*Jeanne Smith*

*Josie Stoddard*

*Lyle Willey*

### **Points of Testimony**

#### **Community Strengths**

- Several folks stated that there is a high quality of education.
- Many participants are pleased that the parents are committed to the system financially and physically by working in the schools with the educators.
- Taxpayers show support for both the school and physical plant by approving budgets as well as the bond for the addition.
- Para educators and administrators show devotion to all students by giving extra time and being very accommodating.
- There is a lot of special needs support.
- Historically, the school system has been supported.
- The majority of the teachers are from Enosburg, and were educated in the school system, and chose to stay in the area.
- The Tech Center has an outstanding and dedicated staff.
- The Music Department is available to students on off hours.
- The programs are flexible to meet many needs.

#### **Challenges in this Issue Area**

- Many participants stated that there is rampant substance abuse among students outside the school.
- There are not a lot of programs for early education to prepare the children for school.

- The reading ability of the children is lagging.
- Discipline has become a major issue: with the change in laws, the teachers cannot discipline, so the children cannot be handled. There is not enough parental involvement in the discipline at home, and many parents are not following up or following through. This point was discussed for a long time.
- The schools need trained special education teachers; right now the special education teachers are aides and not specifically trained for the challenges they face.
- The general consensus is that there is a serious lack of resources: the school district has a high percent of special needs kids; some classes have a greater than 50% of special needs kids who are taught by personnel with limited training.
- Several participants stated that there is a need to maintain and sustain good teachers; there has been a high turnover due to pay scale, location, waivers and personal reasons.
- Literacy for kids is needed and more important today than ever. Years ago, even a high school dropout could get a job, work their way up and make a good living. That is nearly impossible today.
- Truancy is high because some older children need to take care of the younger ones when the parents go to work very early and come home late. Other kids don't have the skills to do well, and some youth don't seem to care about health issues such as hygiene, the need for glasses and medical care.
- There is a high level of stress among the teachers. The frustration level is high. The standards seem too high for many students. Some teachers have a hard time with the tolerance level for disciplinary infractions. The students don't understand limits, students act up, and the stress escalates.
- Grade 9 students sometimes slip through the cracks and don't get motivated. There is a need for one on one counseling about what they want to do after high school and how to achieve it.
- Some students' home environment is difficult; many participants expressed concern that parents are gone from 5 am until 6 or 7 pm and the students just don't know how to cope.
- There has been a large influx of kids from urban areas who are abused and neglected. The families moved to the area for the affordability.
- Class size has grown immensely in the grade school and this makes for a poor learning environment.
- The drop out rate is high because of family issues. Kids can't learn or concentrate because of home pressures and drop out because they are frustrated.
- The Tech Center classes are open to 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. They should be accessible to 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders too.
- The industrial arts equipment is gone, so the students no longer get hands-on training.
- It is difficult to reach the parents who don't want to be involved. Parenting classes are needed to teach parents what is expected of parents and kids in the education process.
- There is a lot of apathy amongst students because they do not feel involved in the decision-making; the students need empowerment.
- Some residents think that schools seem to be raising the children rather than educating them, the teachers have become the parents.
- Intramural programs would help to reach the parents since sports are a big part of student life.

### **Visiting Team Observations**

1. Team Members heard residents express their support of education, committed teachers,

- AP classes, and the Tech Center.
2. The residents acknowledge that teachers cannot meet all needs, and that the community needs to make efforts to retain good teachers, meet the needs of high number of students with special challenges, address the high dropout and truancy issues, and increase motivation.
  3. The Team heard about the high stress levels of households, teachers, students, and parents.

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