

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission

FY 19 Annual Report

Founded in 1967, the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) leverages the power of people working together to assist its 23 member municipalities in providing effective local government and to work cooperatively to address regional issues. CVRPC is governed by representatives from the 20 municipalities of Washington County and Orange, Washington, and Williamstown in Orange County. Each legislative body selects a representative to the Commission.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

RPCs act as a cost effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years has been focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education, enhanced consultations (on-site training), bylaw modernization, facilitating transition to Development Review Boards and implementing new requirements for economic development and flood resiliency planning. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential in smooth state and local permitting. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map; highlights include:

- Assisted Berlin to secure Village Center Designations for Berlin Corners and Riverton, providing property owners with access to resources and incentives for building investments.
- Assisted Fayston and Roxbury with Town Plan surveys that characterize the perspectives of town residents on municipal growth and resource conservation.
- Supported Town Plan updates for Berlin, East Montpelier, Marshfield, Middlesex, Orange, Plainfield, and Waterbury through feedback on draft documents, information on flood resiliency, energy planning, forest integrity, and/or mapping to support forest integrity.
- Approved municipal plans and confirmed the local planning process for Berlin, East Montpelier, Marshfield, Middlesex, Orange and Waterbury and issued a Certification of Energy Determination for the Waterbury Town Plan.
- Hosted municipal trainings on community engagement, Essentials of Land Use Planning, housing ready bylaws, State highway access and work permits (Section 1111), prohibited effects of zoning regulations, new on-site agricultural accessory uses zoning provision, and wastewater solutions for rural communities.
- Created a floodplain management meeting-in-a-box for Waterbury, Montpelier, and Berlin. The "box" includes materials and presentations local officials can use to discuss floodplain concepts and requirements with stakeholders, which helps the municipalities maintain their National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System (CRS) status.

REGIONAL PLANNING

RPC's coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

In FY19, CVRPC focused on plan implementation. A sampling of activities is included here:

Addressing the Social Determinates of Health:

- Participated in THRIVE, Central Vermont's accountable care organization, which is working to align resources at more than 15 agencies and organizations to improve social outcomes in Washington County. Social determinates of health include economic stability, physical environment, education, food, social context, and the health care system.
- Contributed to the Central Vermont Medical Center's Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) via its community workgroup.
- Discussed transportation gaps not met by public transit with multiple organizations, resulting in creation of a Community Action Network focused on transportation in FY20.
- Created a food access map to assist the Washington County Hunger Council with next step decision making for filling gaps in low-income Vermonter's access to food in retail settings. The map allows the Council to analyze relationships between demographics, socio-economic factors, structural and infrastructure challenges, and food retailers accepting benefits.

Fostering Regional and Intermunicipal Activities:

- Invested \$115,535 to support joint stormwater planning for eight towns in the Mad River and Kingsbury Branch watersheds. The stormwater plans identified five priority projects in each municipality. CVRPC and Woodbury secured design funding for improvements at three sites.
- Completed *Water Wise Woodlands*, a joint effort among Cabot, Marshfield, and Plainfield linking forest integrity, private forest stewardship, and watershed resilience. Building flood resilience through a forested upper watershed requires incentives, supportive programs, and helping woodland owners learn informally from neighbors and respected experts. CVRPC and the towns partnered with Friends of the Winooski and Vermont Woodlands Association.
- Assisted the Wrightsville Beach Recreation District with financial management and acted as payroll administrator for the Cross Vermont Trail Association.

Reviewing Projects, Plans, and Policies:

- Reviewed state permit applications to ensure proposed projects conform with the Regional Plan. Three major Act 250 applications were reviewed; two were determined to be in conformance with the Regional Plan. CVRPC participated in the Act 250 site walk and public hearing for the Montpelier Hotel and Parking Garage application to monitor issues of potential regional significance. CVRPC designed three sites as "preferred sites" for net-metering energy generation systems under the Section 248 Certificate of Public Good process.
- Provided feedback on the draft State Emergency Management Plan Base Plan. VEM incorporated more information on potential human-caused threats/hazards to meet emergency management standards.
- Reviewed The Commission on Act 250 report, facilitated Commissioner understanding of proposed changes, and framed CVRPC's input on the report's recommendations.

BROWNFIELDS

Vermont RPCs have sought and have been awarded over 10 million dollars for this economic development initiative. Environmental site assessments allow properties to be sold, developed or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs and increase housing opportunities.

In FY19, CVRPC had an active brownfields assessment grant. It worked with owners and prospective developers at five (5) properties to sample sites or plan for contaminant remediation. It also worked collaboratively with three other RPC's for underutilized sites.

- **Bonacorsi-Capital Candy, Barre City:** CVRPC, the property owner, and two other Regional Planning Commissions invested in a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment and indoor air sampling to assist Capital Candy understand its environmental obligations prior to acquiring the Bonacorsi property, which it leases. The project facilitates business expansion.
- **Woodbury Country Store, Woodbury:** CVRPC assisted Woodbury to guide a multiagency effort to buy out a former general store and gas station in the village center. When completed, the project will reduce flooding and flood damages to other properties. CVRPC invested \$16,869 to complete a Phase II assessment and a remediation plan and invested staff time to help ensure multiple funding sources are coordinated and used efficiently. The Vermont Petroleum Clean Up Fund remove petroleum-contaminated soils.
- **Union Elementary School, Montpelier:** Modernization of the playground at the school was challenged by urban soils. A Corrective Action Plan was finalized and approved in FY19. Construction of the new playground was initiated in FY19.
- **Former Granite Works, Montpelier:** CVRPC facilitated meetings between a new prospective purchaser, the property owner, DEC, consultant, and Montpelier Planning Director to discuss sampling results and next steps clean up planning. It subsequently shepherded successful applications to fund an Evaluation of Corrective Action Alternatives to help insure redevelopment could occur.
- **Yellow Barn, Hardwick:** CVRPC assisted a property owner and development partners with a Phase I ESA to facilitate redevelopment of the former Greensboro Garage property. The large, 2-story barn formerly was used as a commercial car dealership and automotive repair facility. Redevelopment will create new production and storage space for new and existing businesses associated with the Center for an Agricultural Economy.

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long term economic gain.

- Organized a training about floodplain requirements for area Zoning Administrators and Realtors. The Realtors Association requested the training be replicated throughout Vermont.
- Facilitated a Brownfields redevelopment training to educate realtors, lenders and developers in how to approach commercial and industrial property redevelopment as it relates to the Brownfields Reuse and Environmental Liability Limitation Program.
- Presented the Essential of Land Use Planning to landscape design students at UVM as part of CVRPC's workforce development efforts.
- Hosted a *Capitol for a Day* event with the Public Service Department to highlight the region's broadband and cell service needs and local and regional energy plan implementation.
- Provided feedback to the Barre Area Development Corporation on its dynamic new on

marketing plan.

- Assisted the East Montpelier Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Advisory Committee by providing guidance and coaching on the CDBG Closeout Agreement terms and conditions which created the fund. The fund supports housing rehabilitation.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Through contract with the VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state's transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state and federal transportation network advancement.

Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities

- Held 9 TAC meetings
- Actively engaged 19 non-municipal TAC members in transportation planning
- Actively engaged 23 municipalities in transportation planning
- Coordinated 4 activities with municipalities and VTrans

Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning

- Maintained a current regional transportation plans (within 8 years)
- Reviewed Act 250 applications; no comments required relating to transportation
- Reviewed Section 248 applications; no comments required relating to transportation
- Coordinated 8 activities in support of regional public transit providers
- Participated in 3 VTrans committees
- Participated in Project Prioritization

Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities

- Hosted road foreman meetings; 13 municipalities participated
- Assisted 8 municipalities with transportation related grants
- Spent 57% of transportation budget on municipal technical assistance
- Conducted 6 municipal transportation inventories
- Completed/undertook 1 municipal transportation related feasibility/project definition study
- Assisted 1 municipality with the transportation element of its municipal plan
- Completed 6 road erosion inventories in support of the MRGP using TPI dollars and using other funding sources

Deliver Results that Advance VTrans Strategic and Long Range Transportation Plans

- Conducted 36 data collection activities specifically for VTrans

Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education

- Assisted Green Mountain Transit with public engagement during its NextGen Plan scenario development.

- Facilitated a meeting with Plainfield, Marshfield, and a legislator to identify needed improvements along US 2.
- Fostered a new Paratransit Planning Committee to help gather input into the proposed Green Mountain Transit paratransit service in Central VT.
- Fostered discussions between Green Mountain Transit and Mad River Valley stakeholders regarding continuation of seasonal service.

Outcomes

- Completed an Existing Condition Report of the Stowe Street Bridge in Waterbury. A collaboration between CVRPC, VTrans, and Waterbury, the report will be used when VTrans moves this bridge into scoping and design.
- Worked with Barre Town to inventory over 2,000 road side ash trees and develop an Emerald Ash Borer Response Plan to guide the community's ash tree management actions.
- Assisted eight towns with grant writing and project development to expand and replace bicycle and pedestrian facilities across Central Vermont.
- Supported RPCs and municipalities statewide for VTCulvert access and management. VTCulvert is an integrated software product that handles data entry, access, and status reporting of municipal bridge and culvert inventories. Participated development of a story board, script, and audio recordings for VTCulvert training videos.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND DISASTER RESILIENCY

RPCs play key roles in the preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management (VEM), the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, Department of Public Safety, VTrans, the Agency of Natural Resources, and Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs). RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to the LEPCs and coordination among responders, municipal officials, and planners throughout the State's four Public Safety Districts. RPCs also help update floodplain bylaws, river corridor regulations, and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans. RPCs coordinate updates to municipal emergency plans and assist as needed in special circumstances like Tropical Storm Irene and other federally and non-federally declared disasters. The RPCs are a source of technical support and information and provide coordination and collaboration for trainings, workshops and seminars, often in conjunction with partners.

- Hosted 5 trainings with Vermont Emergency Management to increase local planning.
- Hosted a joint Emergency Management Director (EMD)/Road Foreman roundtable to foster understanding of roles, responsibilities, and opportunities for collaboration and coordination.
- Assisted 23 municipalities with development of Local Emergency Management Plans.
- Assisted 10 towns with Local Hazard Mitigation Plan development or approval, providing substantial assistance to 5 towns. 18 of the region's 23 municipalities (78%) have a FEMA-approved plan.
- Provided administrative assistance and fiscal agent services to LEPC 5.
- Assisted with planning and/or participated in 1 Table Top Exercise and 1 Full Scale exercise to test emergency plans.
- Participated in Waterbury's Floodplain Working Group. Assisted to develop Community Rating System trainings and to update Waterbury's river corridor map.

- Provided support to EMDs in Plainfield, Waitsfield, and Moretown.
- Connected school and Town staff so that Orange could be fully reimbursed by VEM for purchasing and installing a generator at the school.
- Discussed shelter agreements with Warren to facilitate school-town discussions.
- Facilitated communications and logistics on the transfer of the CERT 5 trailer and contents to Central Vermont Disaster Animal Response Team.
- Provided State Emergency Operation Center (SEOC) support by contacting towns to ascertain damages and by acting as supplemental staff to the SEOC Situational Awareness Unit.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM SERVICES

In addition to enhancing the RPC's work, RPCs provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of its projects.

- Produced custom maps in response to requests from Berlin, Fayston, Montpelier, Northfield, Orange, Plainfield, and Waterbury (flood hazard areas, dam release flood areas, road maps, town-owned parcels, river corridor, grant applications, trail mapping, designation renewal)
- Updated maps for municipal plan in Barre City, East Montpelier, Waterbury, Worcester and for zoning in Marshfield and Cabot. Provided Marshfield with acreage calculations for zoning district changes and data for comparison of draft zoning and forest integrity resources.
- Updated web maps for Calais, East Montpelier, Middlesex, and the Wilson Industrial Park.
- Assisted Duxbury, Middlesex, and Woodbury with parcel maps.
- Created a region-wide trails map.
- Assisted 3 non-profit partners with custom maps or GIS services (identifying parcels lacking riparian buffers, bringing CAD data into GIS, and creating a service area map).
- Assisted Northfield with GIS data collection equipment acquisition.

ENERGY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation, and natural resources efforts. RPCs also work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- Assisted Middlesex, Moretown, Plainfield, Waitsfield, and Washington with enhanced energy plan development. Assistance included multiple trainings and drafting plans.
- Continued to support East Montpelier, Marshfield, and Barre Town for enhanced planning.
- Hosted a joint meeting of CVRPC's Regional Plan and Project Review Committees with Green Mountain Power, Northfield Electric, and Washington Electric about renewable energy.
- Co-sponsored a regional Button Up Vermont workshop to municipalities in their work to encourage individuals to take action to reduce their heating and cooling energy costs.
- Planned a regional energy roundtable focused on rural transportation with the VT Natural Resources Council and VT Council on Rural Development.
- Facilitated a transportation work group for the Marshfield-Plainfield Climate Economy Model Communities project sponsored by the VT Council on Rural Development.

WATERSHED PLANNING AND PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA required watershed plans. RPCs also work with municipalities to design and implement stormwater mitigation projects and implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

- Provided substantial assistance with municipal engagement and project development for the Winooski River Tactical Basin Plan.
- Facilitated monthly Clean Water Advisory Committee (CWAC) meetings to provide an educational forum and a working group for basin planning and other water quality initiatives.
- Began or completed stormwater mitigation final designs for four sites in Berlin, Barre City's Pouliot Avenue, the Plainfield Health Center
- Completed final designs and began construction of Northfield's Water Street stormwater mitigation project. The project will treat runoff from 48 acres of residential development.
- Conducted outreach to interested communities on surface water reclassification under the new 2016 water quality standards.
- Engaged municipalities in public-private partnership work for complying with the new 3-acre stormwater regulation.
- Supported 20 municipalities with implementation of Best Management Practices for the Municipal Grant in Aid program.
- Assisted 4 municipalities with road erosion inventories and capital plans.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Paratransit Planning: CVRPC facilitated a Paratransit Planning Committee to gather input regarding changes being proposed to existing transit service, including the addition of complementary ADA paratransit service. The effort, funded by a grant from the Community Transportation Association of America, engaged 600+ public transit users and potential users about ridership needs using presentations, a survey of older adults, persons with disabilities, and care givers, user-story videos, and sharing information on Facebook, in newsprint, and via email.

Users of the existing system identified many barriers and potential solutions. Nine barriers centered around the need to improve public transit infrastructure and build knowledge on how to appropriately help older adults and persons with disabilities. Solutions to these barriers identify specific locations for public transit infrastructure improvements and a need to increase transit operator and the transit rider training so to create a more predictable ridership experience.

The Committee is working to address the needs. Green Mountain Transit (GMT) is identifying bus stop locations that need improvements and adding rural members to its ADA Committee. The Planning Committee, through CVRPC, is developing educational and outreach materials to build a more knowledgeable and informed transit ridership. The full report can be viewed on CVRPC's website at <http://centralvtplanning.org/programs/transportation/paratransit-planning/>.

CVRPC supported Barre Town, Calais, and East Montpelier with **Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) preparedness and response** in conjunction with the UVM Extension Service and the VT Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. Dead or dying infested ash trees can pose a significant hazard when

located in public rights of way. The trees become brittle and splinter easily, which significantly increases the cost of removal and creates more hazardous conditions during tree removal. Towns can mitigate the cost impact to budgets through planning and management activities. CVRPC:

- hosted a workshop on current information, best practices, and management plan contents,
- trained volunteers to conduct ash tree inventories and supported them during that work,
- inventoried over 2,000 ash trees in Barre Town's right of way, and
- organized a statewide training for RPC Emergency Planners in partnership with the Vermont Urban & Community Forest Program and Vermont Emergency Management to build knowledge about EAB management and a statewide support network for municipalities.

EAB Response Plan development is underway in the three communities. It includes discussions on how best to collaborate and incorporate the plan into other municipal initiatives, such as Municipal Plans, capital budgets, Local Hazard Mitigation Plans, and Local Emergency Response Plans.

ADMINISTRATION AND FUNDING

The FY19 CVRPC budget was approximately \$1.2 million. Revenue sources included state and federal performance contracts, grants, and local assessments. Virtually all of the CVRPC's revenue sources are tied to contracts with scopes of work, guidelines, and/or performance measures. This means CVRPC has limited flexibility in how it chooses to use the vast majority of its funding. Funding received through town assessments is the exception, which makes this funding stream particularly important. It gives us the greatest latitude to respond to the region's needs. The grants we receive enable us to work with our towns on areas such as transportation, emergency planning, community development, energy, and natural resources. Revenue from virtually all federal and state grantors requires non-federal matching funds ranging from 10 percent (Transportation Planning Initiative) to 50 percent (Emergency Management Planning Grant). Town assessments and regional planning funds passed through to CVRPC under a performance contract with the Department of Housing and Community Development provide matching funds.

CVRPC maintained its line of credit in 2019 due to a prevalence of product-based and construction contracts. CVRPC maintains Board designated reserve funds to cover operating shortfalls, accrued leave time, and equipment replacement. The Commission maintains a four-year plan for equipment and software upgrades and replacement.

CVRPC's annual audit will be completed in October 2019. CVRPC has had no audit findings in recent years. It is considered a 'low risk' grantee by federal agencies. Staffing in 2019 included 8 employees: Executive Director, Program Manager, Senior Planners (2), Planner, Assistant Planners (2), and an Office Manager. CVRPC supported workforce development through use of a planning technician for transportation and planning services. CVRPC contracts for accounting services.

In 2019 CVRPC continued to finalize Rules of Procedure for its committees, initiated an update to its Bylaws, and put into place the following policies: Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest, Grants Management, and GIS Cost of Services. CVRPC continues to update its Commissioner Handbook to orient Board members to the Commission and its work.