



MAD RIVER VALLEY VERMONT

Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce Minutes of Board Meeting November 7th, 2018

Present: Peter MacLaren, Brad Long, Lori Klein, Jack Sharry (by phone), June Anderson. & Jim Tabor
Also, ED Jasmine Bigelow

Apologies: Roger Nishi, Kevin Begin, Ana Dan. Absent Ted Fisher.

Also Present:

from the MRVPD Steering Committee:

Bob Ackland, Jared Cadwell, Steve Shea, Don Simonini, Jim Westhelle, Peter MacLaren. (A quorum of at least one member from each town.) Also ED Joshua Schwartz and Community Planner Mariah Noth.

from the MRV FLO Subcommittee:

Bob Ackland, Jared Cadwell, Daryl Forrest, Don Simonini, Jasmine Bigelow, Peter MacLaren. Also Michael Levine, assisting the committee with documenting the proposal.

from the Public:

Robin Morris, Kelly Mazey

The meeting was for the purpose of a presentation of the current proposal of the MRV FLO from the MRV Vitality Committee to a joint meeting of the MRVPD Steering Committee and the MRV Chamber Board.

A quorum of 6 Chamber Board Directors was declared by the Chair.

The meeting was called to order by MRV FLO Chair Jared at 11:05AM.

Intro by Jared covering background of our committee, set up as sub-committee of the MRVPD in cooperation with the MRV Chamber. At this meeting we are making a proposal for feedback and dialog - not an edict.

Bob then presented the current proposal based on the committee's work over the last 8 months, building on the prior 4 years of community engagement and studies. A copy of the presentation is available on the MRVPD.org website and also enclosed here. Also a summary of the highlights of the presentation is included in the corresponding minutes for this same meeting for the MRVPD Steering Committee and also included here following these minutes.

The floor was then opened for questions and discussion.

- Lori asked for confirmation that the priorities of affordable housing and transportation are addressed? The answer was yes.
- June expressed concern about not having specific budget targets, as in specific investments that will be made in the early years, as opposed to general buckets. Bob answered that the plan is being respectful of the organizations that could be funded to bring forward their plans, rather than having the FLO dictate what is done. Jared added we will try to provide more specific illustrations of examples.
- June asked if we can plan for a single MRV entity as opposed to three towns. Answered that while such an approach has lots of merit it is not realistic in the short term. However it was emphasized that the FLO

is deliberately a Valley wide initiative, recognizing that the Valley to a very large extent is a single economic entity.

- June asked about the analysis that 55% of the proposed proceeds would come from visitors and only 12% from residents. Some discussion followed about the detailed research that formed the basis of these figures and that the FLO Committee are confident that they are very close estimates. A copy of the analysis will be sent to June.
- Robin stated that he likes the idea of the FLO, but he is concerned about the implementation. How do we really address workforce housing aspects, and the underlying planning and infrastructure issues. Need to make it a higher priority as a pre-requisite to addressing the other areas. More funding for this area up front is a better plan. Suggested that we have “under-balanced” the 26% for Community Projects. While we need to have some fixed allocations (e.g. staff) we should maximize flexibility based on proposals. Jared replied that while the actual detailed proposal provided for considerable flexibility in how the funds are allocated among the investment areas, we note Robin’s comments as excellent input to improving how the plan is laid out. We will update to ensure the Commissioners have the mandate to address priorities using the major part of the available funds.
- Robin noted that we need to have full integration with town planning and commitment. Maybe think about it as a 10-year plan, as sustainable availability of funding is key. Jared responded that the process fully anticipates this type of tight coordination, particularly as it would be the towns carrying out these types of projects. Robin also suggested that TIFF district opportunities should be considered. Steve pointed out that criteria have become more difficult although there may be possibilities to leverage TIFF.
- Robin pointed to the need to have a quality process for assessing grant requests. Jared answered that our proposed method of selecting the Commissioners, and the associated Bylaws that have been prepared to guide their work, is designed to ensure a quality, accountable and transparent process for allocating the funds.
- June asked what is the launch process? Bob & Jared replied that these details are now being addressed. Following the presentation to the Select Board on Tuesday November 13th, two public meetings will be planned in each of December and January. Then the details of the voting will be warned by January 17th for the vote at the town meetings in March. A sub-committee is being set up to plan the full details of the roll-out and communication plan – with its first meeting immediately following this meeting.
- In response to a request for copies of the proposal, Joshua advised that the material will all be posted on a new page on the mrvpd.org website shortly.

Following discussion Peter then pointed out to the MRV CC Board that one of the important aspects of the FLO would be to provide sustainable funding to significantly ramp up the work the Chamber is already doing in the areas of Destination Marketing and supporting Valley businesses, which will both lead to improving the local economy and the success of local businesses.

Lori then moved that the Chamber Board support the ongoing work of the MRV FLO Committee to continue to gather feedback to improve and fine tune the proposal, leading to a vote at Town Meeting in March 2019, subject to the approval of the Select Boards. Seconded by June and carried unanimously.

(Peter then moved that the MRVPD Steering Committee support the ongoing work of the MRV FLO Committee to continue to gather feedback to improve and fine tune the proposal, leading to a vote at Town Meeting in March 2019, subject to the approval of the Select Boards. Seconded by Jared and carried unanimously.)

Jared then thanked the members of the MRVPD Steering Committee, the Chamber Board, and members of the public for their participation and feedback. This part of the meeting was closed at approximately 12:30PM.

Minutes taken by Peter MacLaren (in the absence of Secretary Roger)

Attachment: Summary Highlights of the presentation...

MRV FLO Presentation Summary:

Bob Ackland presented the current proposal based on the committee's work over the last 8 months, building on the prior 4 years of community engagement and MRV visioning process, strategic plans, and studies in the areas of housing, transportation, economic development, wastewater/infrastructure, recreation, and natural resources.

- The mission of FLO is "Keeping the MRV Vibrant"
- The Valley's assets/resources include nature, recreation, agriculture, local foods and a vibrant food/drink environment, culture/arts, active/engaged/caring community, and a manufacturing economy
- The basis for FLO's work is the Valley-wide vision statement:

Mad River Valley Vision Statement December 2015

The Mad River Valley is an innovative, vibrant, connected and caring community honoring its past, celebrating its landscape and actively pursuing its potential.

Our vision is to...

- *Be a welcoming community that builds a healthy and sustainable environment.*
- *Support the historic settlement pattern of vibrant villages surrounded by rural countryside.*
- *Identify and promote the Valley's historic and cultural heritage.*
- *Promote and maintain a diverse economy that supports existing businesses and attracts new ones.*
- *Enhance the Valley's year-round recreational opportunities.*
- *Invest in a safe, environmentally friendly, efficient, and integrated transportation network.*
- *Provide access to safe, affordable and energy efficient housing for current and prospective residents.*
- *Steward and sustainably use the Valley's natural resources and environmental quality for the benefit of future generations.*

The challenges the Valley experiences include paid human resources as most projects are carried out with volunteer labor, sustainable funding sources that are not single-year grant cycles, an aging population (MRV avg. 49 y.o. which is older than the state avg.), shortage of affordable/workforce housing (highest concern for businesses regarding employees), land costs, declining workforce and school enrollment populations, lack of childcare, climate change, inadequate public transportation, seasonal visitation instability

- Competition for grants among the MRV's many non-profit groups and the need to chase funding cycles make it difficult to address these long term and persistent needs
 - The FLO would provide local funding to address these issues and enhance community resilience in the face of federal and state funding cuts. Its goals are to: Reinvest in the MRV so it remains attractive for future generations who will continue to enrich the community and sustain its quality of life; and Provide a more seasonably balanced customer base for MRV businesses.
 - How: The FLO is designed to allocate funds among community need areas ("buckets") based on historic studies and plans. FLO would act as a grantor, and would grant based on project's ability to meet established criteria & metrics (outlined in full case statement proposal attached).
- Community Projects (26% of funds)
 - Ongoing community needs; projects pitched by towns and MRV organizations ▪▪ Ex: stormwater, public safety, affordable housing, public transportation
- Destination Marketing (25%)
 - Chamber of Commerce would manage
 - Goal to increase tourism mid-week/off-season

- Recreation (25%)
 - MRV Recreation District (MRVRD) would manage, FLO would fund a staff coordinator
 - Would fund MRVRD to the level of current grant requests, and replace the funding by the MRV towns
 - Ex: Could fund trail maintenance to ensure sustainability of quality outdoor recreation (Annually, Waterbury spends \$111/person, Stowe \$164/person, and MRV \$11/person on rec./trails)

- Economic Development (14%)
 - The Chamber would manage; would support businesses and make MRV more attractive for investment (ex: mentoring, concierge program)

- Administration (6%)
 - Reserve/ “Rainy Day” (4%)
 - Recommending that funding come from a 1% Local Options Tax (LOT) on Rooms, Meals, & Alcohol sales
 - This would allow for local control of funding/ prioritization
 - Projected to generate \$1M annually, with revenue of \$700,000 after state takes its portion
 - Used 3 separate scientific analyses to determine that ~55% of this tax would be borne by visitors, 21% by part-time residents, 12% by skiers, and 12% by residents.
 - Would cost residents ~\$2 per person per month, and much less for those at or below poverty threshold (purchases comprised mostly of non-taxed goods) 2

 - Purchases NOT subject to LOT include: clothes, medication, medical equipment, food/beverages, gas, fuel, rent/mortgage, most services

 - Proposing that FLO be managed by a commission as a subcommittee of the MRV Planning District (MRVPD)
 - 7 commissioners: 1 from each town Selectboard, 1 elected by each town, and a chair appointed by MRVPD
 - This group would oversee funding, develop and promote the grant program
 - Would require that MRVPD adopt a charter, which must be approved along with 1% LOT by votes in each of the three towns