



Business Development Committee Meeting Minutes **Thursday, January 10th, 2024 | Via Zoom**

Present: Russ Marsan, Alan Hochberg, Jenney Izzo, Jerry Hansen, Lyle Jepson, Cooper Babbitt, Bill Lucci, Kim Griffin

The meeting was called to order at 8:20 a.m. Jenney made a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting, seconded by Russ. The motion was passed unanimously.

Introduction to Bill Lucci, Program Director at the Hub CoWorks

Lyle introduced Bill Lucci and provided background on his professional experience. Bill gave an overview his background, beginning with work in higher education and then his move to Vermont to work for Russell Corporation and finally adult education at Stafford Technical Center. He discussed plans for The Hub, including bringing coding courses, entrepreneurship programs, professional licensing and certification testing, and grant writing programs to The Hub. With respect to the grant writing courses, he plans to broaden the scope to a proposal writing program that allows entrepreneurs to develop the skills to pitch their businesses. Additionally, he hopes to work with Gwen McShay to develop an Amazon-specific marketing course to teach local businesses how to leverage ecommerce to grow their business. Bill also explained his plan to develop VSAC-qualified courses so that students of Hub courses could access state tuition assistance and provide an additional revenue stream for The Hub. Members of the committee expressed their excitement about Bill's joining. Jenney asked how we planned to market these programs. Lyle explained that Joel DeSota, Operations Manager at the Hub, has been working on marketing thus far and that we plan to leverage CEDRR's broader marketing assets to develop a comprehensive plan. Lyle and Bill explained the initial strategy, focused on getting people in the door for programming and expanding their offerings as the Hub grows. Russ noted that as programs expand, we can highlight The Hub in the broader RMI program. Alan expressed excitement with the plans and asked to be looped into any programming that is related to the healthcare industry.

MINT Makerspace Update – Kim Griffin, Executive Director

Lyle introduced Kim, who provided an update on The MINT. Kim explained that they expanded in July and the additional space has allowed them to expand their ability to work with the community. She noted the new office space, which includes office space, rapid prototyping spaces, and a computer lab provided a more professional feel to the space, which has helped with growing membership. The MINT added 62 new members in 2023 and doubled their revenue, which she attributes to the expansion. Additional revenue allows for additional staffing, marketing, and infrastructure investment, which allows for future growth. Russ asked about how The MINT plans to market and grow. Kim explained that growth so far has been mostly organic. In 2024, they plan to leverage their infrastructure upgrades to enter the small business development space and hope to collaborate with StartUp Rutland and programming at The Hub. The MINT currently has ~8 small businesses who can grow as The MINT grows. Kim expressed interest in collaboration with CCV and recently announced a collaboration with Boys & Girls Club and Tapestry programs for Middle School age programming. Kim explained that this tied in to iBots Rutland Robotics Club collaboration. Russ explained the need to modernize the entrance – noting the importance of appearance in all aspects of life. – and encouraged future support of the MINT by CEDRR.

Old Business

None.

New Business

None.

Adjournment at 9:12 a.m.



Finance Committee Meeting Minutes | Friday, January 12th, 2024 | Via Zoom

Present: Karen Garrow, Russ Marsan, Chris Keyser, Deb Quirk, Andrew Simons, Norm Ladabouche, Scott Gregg, Mark Foley, Jr., Scott Dikeman, Jess Anderson, Cooper Babbitt, Shasta Mattino

The meeting was called to order at 8:18 a.m. by Karen. Mark moved to approve the minutes; Andrew seconded. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

CEDRR Internal Financials

The committee reviewed and discussed CEDRR's monthly financial reports for November 2023. Cooper and Shasta provided additional details on the P&L and Balance Sheet. Norm asked a question regarding a negative accounts payable line item on the. Due to technical difficulties, Shasta was not able to review the line item but promised to follow up via email after the meeting. Norm also asked about why certain accounts appeared to be over the FDIC deposit insurance limit. Shasta explained that the UBS line item is actually two separate CDs, each under the limit, and that the Community Hub account is over and that she expected draws upon that account to bring it below the insurance limit in the coming weeks.

Revolving Loan Fund

All loan clients are current on payments, including Sabataso, who is paying an additional \$500/month to catch up from certain missed payments earlier in the year.

Cooper presented to the committee a proposal for re-financing of the Branch Brook Holdings loan, set to balloon in January. Karen asked whether all new loan documents would be drawn up, which Cooper confirmed. Additionally, Cooper expressed his intent to enter into an LOI with Branch Brook if the loan was approved, to reflect the parties understanding and payment expectations while counsel prepared final loan documents. A motion was made to approve the loan and passed unanimously. Deb abstained from voting.

VEDA Loan Repayment

Cooper and Shasta presented a cash flow analysis of a scenario in which CEDRR paid off its VEDA loans related to 112 Quality Lane and a scenario in which we continue to pay the loan as normal. The committee discussed the analysis and determined that the savings in the long run were not sufficient to pay off the loans at this time. The committee agreed by consensus that we will keep the loans in place and continue to pay them as usual.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Russ expressed an interest in exploring how CEDRR and the Finance Committee can continue to support The MINT. He noted the solid financial position of the organization and a need to use that money to support key local partners such as The MINT. Cooper expressed his agreement, and that CEDRR will look into how we can do that most effectively, welcoming future conversations and ideas from the committee.

Adjournment at 8:46 a.m.



Policy Committee Meeting Minutes | Friday, January 12th, 2024 | Via Zoom

Present: Lyle Jepson, Ed Bove, Andrew Strniste, Cam Schaefer, Jennifer Scott, Ray Ault, Michael Ramsey, Devon Neary, Cooper Babbitt

The meeting was called to order at 12:00noon.

A motion was made by Jennfier and seconded by Devon to approve the meeting minutes from November 10, 2023. The motion passed unanimously.

The Vermont Chamber Presentation from December 8, 2023 was previously distributed. There were no questions.

The group spent time reviewing and discussing the slide deck recently released by the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development specific to House Bill H.719. (See attached.) Following discussion, it was agreed to add to the 2024 Policy Statement a request specifically speaking to H.719. That language currently reads,

1. *Support the direction being taken by House Bill H.719, with the goal of increasing quality housing options available to Vermonters. It is expected that the process will include an expeditious yet thorough vetting and discussion of immediate actions that can be taken to incentive and support the development of housing.*

The attached 2024 Policy Statement will be forwarded to the CEDRR Board for approval. Assuming the Board concurs, the Statement will be forwarded to the Rutland County Legislative Delegation in advance of the Legislative Breakfast, scheduled for Monday, February 12th.

There was no further discussion or action taken. The upcoming schedule of Policy Committee meetings is noted below.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00pm.

Legislative Breakfast – Monday, February 12th 7:30am Southside at Steakhouse – State Treasurer Mike Pieciak guest speaker [Register here.](#)

Meeting Schedule

Friday, March 8th 12:00 noon – Andrew Brewer, DRM

Friday, April 12th 12:00 noon – Andrew Brewer, DRM

Friday, May 10th 12:00 noon – Andrew Brewer, DRM

TBD Monday, June 3rd or Monday, June 10th Legislative Breakfast

Create New Housing



Act 47 Updates

- Clarify the 5-units per acre density standard, and strengthen it to enable quad-plex development.
- Clarify “Affordability Density Bonus” is meant to round up to the nearest whole unit.
- Allow secondary dwelling structures.
- Improve lot coverage requirements to allow for more density.

Create New Housing



Changes to Act 250 Jurisdiction & Triggers

- Full exemption for residential development in all State Designated Areas & Planning areas
 - Designated downtowns, Village Centers, Neighborhood Development Areas, Growth Centers, and New Town Center
- Change ACT 250 trigger in areas served by municipal water/wastewater:
 - **Current: 10 units x 5 miles x 5 years**
 - **Proposed: 30 units per project x 2 years (no mileage element)**
- All other areas:
 - **Current: 10 units x 5 miles x 5 years**
 - **Proposed: 10 units x 5 miles x 2 years**

Create New Housing



De-duplication of Permitting

- Municipal Delegation
 - Municipalities with substantial bylaws, etc. can pursue an agreement with the Natural Resources Board (NRB) to delegate review of development to the municipality and exempting development within the municipality from Act 250 review.
 - NRB to develop guidelines in coordination with RPCs and ACCD.

Tax Incentives: Value Freeze



Freeze the value on the Education Grand list for eligible new construction and rehabilitation

- Towns may opt in to enact a freeze on the Municipal Grand List (subject to local vote)

Targeted locations and types of properties:

- Designated downtowns, village centers, neighborhood development areas, and federal new market tax credit areas
- Owner-occupied or long-term rental residences only
- Requires mixed income / affordability for multifamily units
- Rehabilitation for blighted properties only
- Not allowed in TIF districts

Create New Housing



Permitting Changes for Hotel/Motel Conversions & for Development of Vital Facilities/Housing

- New limitations on municipal regulation of certain facilities with significant state investment and public interest
- New exemptions at state and local level to enable hotels/motels to be redeveloped into permanent housing

Create New Housing



Housing Appeals Reform

- No right to appeal housing development that is located both in areas zoned for residential development and within a state designated area.
- Reform the “10-person appeal”: appeals triggered by petition require support from 10% of municipality, not any 10 people.
- Financial liability for appealing party via an **Appeal Bond**.
- Judicial timelines: Appeal shall be heard within 60 days of filing. Decision provided 90 days from close of the hearing.

Create New Housing



Municipal Permitting & Process Reform

- Development Review Boards or like entity shall issue a decision on the issuance of a housing permit within 60 days.
- Parking Requirements Reform
 - Allow tandem parking to count toward space requirement
 - Reduce parking space size minimums
 - Allow pre-existing non-conforming spaces to continue to be recognized

Tax Incentives: Property Transfer Tax



Property Transfer Tax Exemption

- Proposed property transfer tax incentive would exempt buyer from tax for the purchase of blighted property that buyer rehabilitates for primary residence within 3 years of purchase.
- Buyer must show that rehabilitation of property has been completed and property is occupied as a principal residence within 3 years of purchase, or else amount of taxes exempt will become due.
- Occupancy as a principal residence may be as a homestead (owner-occupied) or as a rental, but it cannot become a short-term rental.

Tax Incentives: Value Freeze



Property Value Freeze

- Time limited to a 5-year exemption period
- No new applications after 2027
- Jump starts grand list growth for the long-term
- Modeling on other programs available in at least 11 other states around the country

Tax Incentives to Increase Housing Stock

Tax Policy Changes

- **Property tax exemption:**
 - Freeze value of newly constructed or rehabilitated residential dwellings at their pre-improvement value for a 5-year period
- **Property transfer tax exemption:**
 - Exempt buyer from transfer tax when purchasing blighted property for rehabilitation within 3 years.



2024 Policy Committee Statement

Our Mission

The mission of the Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region is to use collaboration, creativity, and ingenuity to create a regional economic climate conducive to business growth by recruiting talent and businesses of all kinds, growing and retaining employers, while creating a bridge to community and cultural organizations which promote healthy and vibrant neighborhoods and enhance the quality of life in Rutland County.

Goal – To grow the Rutland County Population

The Public Policy Committee of the Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region supports the following initiatives with the belief that our Vermont families and citizens will benefit from the growth and broadening of the tax base. We believe that population growth and business growth are co-dependent. We must attract new neighbors and we must create an environment that retains those who are already our neighbors. This can occur because of specific actions that include supporting business growth and development, as well as actions that support families and the members of those families who bring with them the skill and energy powering our businesses.

We will be a community where similarities and differences are respected and celebrated with the goal of equal advancement of opportunity within the regional economy. The CEDRR Board recognizes that cultural diversity plays a key role in economic growth, as people from diverse backgrounds bring language skills, unique experiences, new ways of thinking, innovative ideas, and creative solutions to difficult problems. The CEDRR Board condemns racism and welcomes all persons, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, age, or disability, and supports the protection of these classes. As an organization, we condemn discrimination in all its forms and commit to fair and equal treatment of everyone in the communities we serve.

We support prioritizing the following quality of life and economic development incentives and actions:

Livable Communities

1. Livable wages and benefits for essential workers, including teachers and childcare workers
2. Support to regional entities for marketing and revitalizing their communities

Economic & Population Growth

3. Supporting judiciary reform that allows for expedited adjudication.
4. Retain current and attract new population/s by reducing the overall tax burden on residents, including eliminating taxation on social security and retirement benefits for military, emergency services, and other public safety personnel.
5. Continue and grow the RDC Small Business Technical Assistance Program.
6. Support additional funding for the Rural Industrial Development Grant Fund to encourage the pre-development of commercial and industrial parcels.
7. Eliminate the sunseting of the Vermont Employee Growth Incentive (VEGI).
8. Grow our downtowns, village centers, and rural communities with Project-based economic development (Project-based TIFs).



9. Eliminate the tax stabilization provision passed during last year's session, which prohibits partnering its use within a TIF district.
10. Adjust and modernize regulatory and financial policies allowing Vermont businesses to maintain a competitive edge with other states.

Affordable Quality Housing

11. Support the direction being taken by House Bill H.719, with the goal of increasing quality housing options available to Vermonters. It is expected that the process will include an expeditious yet thorough vetting and discussion of immediate actions that can be taken to incentive and support the development of housing.
12. Incentivize private-public partnerships to increase affordable quality housing options using unrestricted low interest revolving loan funds modeled after the 10% For Vermont Program, as well as a VHIP model program for market rate housing.
13. Create an exemption from Act 250 for municipalities that have the proper infrastructure, regulations and policies in place (i.e. Department of Public Works, sewer and water infrastructure, zoning regulations, appropriate municipal panel body such as Development Review Boards). This will reduce administrative costs and duplicative fees for the developer and reduce the number of resources needed to navigate the permitting process.
14. Waive Act 250 requirements for workforce housing planning for state-designated areas. This will again reduce administrative costs and duplicative fees for the developer and reduce the number of resources needed to navigate the permitting process.
15. Speed up the Act 250 review process by supporting increased field staff and professional board members for processing Act 250 permit applications.
16. Support reform for landlord relief regarding landlord/tenant disputes.

Workforce Development

1. Provide financial resources to promote Career & Technical Education as a viable career pathway, encouraging alternative delivery models to improve student access, and increasing access to internships, apprenticeships, and other training programs.
2. Grow loan forgiveness programs to encourage student enrollment in Vermont public higher education in high-need careers such as medical/nursing, dental, behavioral health, home- and community-based service, and substance use disorder/opioid use disorder treatment and recovery.
3. Enhance funding for the Vermont Training Program to support employers with options for growing their employment base and training employees.
4. Increase workforce participation from non-working, working-age populations by finding mutual benefits between receiving state support and workforce participation.