

News & Notes

August 2016

TRORC Two Rivers-Ottauquechee REGIONAL COMMISSION

128 King Farm Road | Woodstock, Vermont 05091 | 802-457-3188 | trorc.org

In this issue: FY17 MPGs, Procurement Policies, Vigilant Guard, Energy Siting Bill, Fair Housing Trainings, Town Plan Implementation Efforts, Congratulations to Bradford and Bethel, Quintown Collaborative

FY17 Municipal Planning Grants (MPG) Program

A total of \$457,000 will be awarded statewide this year for the MPG Program. Eligible municipalities chosen through a competitive selection process may receive up to \$20,000 for projects for building more livable and vibrant communities. A wide range of municipal planning activities are eligible for funding, such as town plans, bylaws and studies for villages and downtowns, as well as walkable neighborhoods with an emphasis on housing. Applications must be submitted through the online grants management system, available for use in mid-August. Applications are due October 31st and are awarded by mid-December.

For more information, contact Chris Sargent at csargent@trorc.org.



Fairlee was awarded a FY16 MPG to conduct a Village Designation study. (Fairlee Future Land Use Map)

TRORC Adopts New Procurement Policies

The TRORC Board adopted a new set of Procurement Policies on May 25th. This replaces a version that was only a year old. So what, you might say? Well, not only are we required to have these policies by both the State of Vermont and the federal government, we are required to follow these as we hire or procure goods and services. And we are required to keep them current.

As a recipient of local, state and federal tax dollars, it is important that we procure consultants and equipment through a process that is fair, predictable and transparent. These policies ensure that this is the case.

Municipalities are required to do the same thing and many municipalities update their policies on a regular basis as laws and monetary thresholds change. Local taxpayers as well as state and federal funders need to be confident that municipal purchases are also conducted fairly, predictably and transparently.

TRORC is available to assist your municipality in adopting a version that meets these tests. Give us a call or send us an email if you want to find out more.

For more information, contact Dee Gish at dgish@trorc.org or Peter Gregory at pgregory@trorc.org.

TRORC Participates in Vigilant Guard

The State of Vermont went through a statewide emergency preparedness exercise the last weekend of July. The purpose of this exercise was to test a multi-agency response to a major disaster. Federal, state, and local agencies worked together over the weekend in response to simulations that ranged from the plague to major earthquakes. TRORC staff who participated in the exercise included: Kevin Geiger, Tory Levite, Rita Seto, and Pete Fellows. This training not only helps state emergency professionals, but also helps TRORC hone their skills and expand their expertise.



For more information, contact Kevin Geiger at kgeiger@trorc.org.

Act 174 (S. 260) Offers Communities More Say in Renewable Energy Siting

Act 174, an Act relating to improving the siting of energy projects, became effective on July 1st. This Act is in response to our communities' growing concern over the lack of input into the Public Service Board's (PSB) Section 248 Certificate of Public Good process, which governs the development of renewable energy generation facilities.

Substantial deference means to give significant and meaningful weight to the land conservation measures in the plans of the affected municipalities and the recommendations of the municipal legislative bodies and the municipal and regional planning commissions regarding the municipal and regional plans, respectively.

~Vermont Legislative Council

The new law offers communities that do "enhanced energy planning" a higher level of consideration under Section 248. For those communities who **choose** to meet the new standard of energy planning, "substantial deference" will be given during the PSB process. Enhanced energy planning is NOT required, it is entirely optional. Act 174 indicates that "substantial deference" in this context will mean "the land conservation measures or specific policy shall be applied in accordance with its terms unless there is a clear and convincing demonstration that other factors affecting the general good of the State outweigh the application of the measure or policy."

The Department of Public Service is currently developing draft standards with regard to what the nature of the "enhanced energy planning" will be and they are planning to unveil them in the early fall. Public input will be collected on the proposed standards with the final standards becoming official by November 1, 2016. What we know at the moment is that communities will need to expand the energy element of their municipal plans to include an "identification of potential areas for development and siting of renewable energy resources and areas that are unsuitable for siting those resources." The identification of these areas must be grounded in data.

As part of our Regional Energy Implementation Planning project, TRORC has developed potential energy generation maps. These maps identify areas where renewable generation is possible. They can be used as a starting point for communities that choose to meet the enhanced energy planning standards. In addition, our draft Energy Implementation Plan provides possible targets for renewable energy generation levels that, based on the model used in the project, each community could use to work toward achieving the state's energy goals. TRORC will be taking public input on its draft Regional Energy Implementation Plan in September and will hold public forums in Bethel, Fairlee and Hartford.

For more information, contact Chris Sargent at csargent@trorc.org.

To learn more about when our public forums will take place, check out our calendar at trorc.org.

Fair Housing Trainings

As a condition of receiving Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) from the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP), municipalities must have a staff member attend a fair housing training within one year of the award date.



VCDP will hold two trainings this fall for those that need the training. The first one will be in Hyde Park on September 8 from 9-11 a.m. and the second in Montpelier on October 6 from 2-4 p.m. These sessions include discussions of what municipalities need to know in order to be in compliance with anti-discrimination law as well as tools and strategies to encourage vibrant community development. TRORC will reimburse mileage for attendees to these trainings.

For more information and to register, contact Shaun Gilpin at shaun.gilpin@vermont.gov with "AFFH training" in the subject line.

Act 90 (H. 367) Requires Documentation of Plan Implementation Efforts

The passage of Act 90, the "miscellaneous amendments to Title 24," bill introduces several new wrinkles to municipal planning. The life of any Municipal Plan adopted after July 1, 2015 has automatically been extended to eight years. More significant is the new requirement that communities must be "engaged in a process to implement its municipal plan." For communities that seek approval of the Municipal Plan by the Regional Commission, this means that towns must "document that it has reviewed and is actively engaged in a process to implement its adopted plan." To do so, communities should consider the activities of local boards and commissions in relation to the policies and action items contained in the plan. When a community requests approval from TRORC, it must be accompanied by documentation of implementation efforts.

For more information, contact Chris Sargent at csargent@trorc.org or Kevin Geiger at kgeiger@trorc.org.

Congratulations to Bradford and Bethel on their Village Designations!

In May of 2016, The Vermont Downtown Development Board approved Bethel's renewal and Bradford's Village Designation requests. These villages represent compact, cohesive cores the program seeks to benefit. The Village Center Designation program is a non-regulatory state program that provides benefits to communities and income producing properties for the purposes of revitalizing and sustaining villages and downtowns. Income producing properties can receive tax credits for revitalization projects in the designated areas. Designated villages receive priority consideration on some state grant programs as well. As part of our economic development work, TRORC was pleased to assist Bethel and Bradford with their applications, and as always, we continue to offer our assistance to other communities seeking to enter the program.



Bradford Village just received designation.

For more information about the Village Designation program, contact Lorelee Morrow at lmorrow@trorc.org.



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Churchville culvert in Hancock, slated for reconstruction next year using CDBG-DR funds.

Quintown Collaborative to Conduct Resiliency Tour

The Quintown Collaborative will be hosting a Resiliency Tour on Sunday, August 21 from 2-5 p.m., starting in Rochester. The Quintown Collaborative consists of the Towns of Granville, Hancock, Rochester, Pittsfield, and Stockbridge, all connected by their geographical location on the White River watershed. The Resiliency Tour's goal is to raise awareness about on-the-ground projects that improve flood resiliency in the Quintown Valley and to gain support for culvert replacement projects. A tour bus will be used to visit areas that are in need of upgrades and areas that have already been mitigated. Please join us!

For more information, contact Tory Levite at vlevite@trorc.org.



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