

# News & Notes

December 2016

## TRORC Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee REGIONAL COMMISSION

128 King Farm Road | Woodstock, Vermont 05091 | 802-457-3188 | [trorc.org](http://trorc.org)



### Don't Forget About Us!

When there are personnel changes on your boards or in your office, please help us by sending updates to us promptly. We use your contact information for a variety of purposes including: grant opportunities, upcoming road construction projects (including road and bridge closures), trainings and events, etc.

If you have any updates for town staff or volunteers, please send them to Dee Gish at [dgish@trorc.org](mailto:dgish@trorc.org).

### Tory and Kevin Speak at Vermont State Emergency Preparedness Conference

The 8th annual Vermont Emergency Preparedness Conference was held November 4th and 5th at the Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee, VT. With over 200 attendees both days, it was full of great talks and exhibitions from the Vermont State Police, state agencies, as well as federal agencies. Planner Tory Levite presented to a packed room on our regional effort to map potential response zones for hazardous materials. This project created a series of buffer maps for major roads and rail lines, as well as known fixed sites. These maps have been provided to local fire departments for improved public safety. Senior Planners Kevin Geiger and Tim Bouton (from Addison RPC) shared their wisdom and insight from a combined 45 years of experience with beginning emergency planners. The 2017 Vermont Emergency Preparedness Conference will be September 15th and 16th at the Lake Morey Resort, a great venue, by the way!



*Tory Levite presents her hazardous response project.*

For more information about these talks, contact Tory Levite at [vlevite@trorc.org](mailto:vlevite@trorc.org).

### Brownfields Work Sets Stage for Redevelopment in Wilder

The old Tip Top Tire site on Route 5 in Wilder has been assessed with our brownfields funding in the past and now has gone through further corrective action planning to come up with a cleanup plan. The site will have two duplexes built on it when fully complete. TRORC has been working hard to return this vacant parcel to the tax rolls, the redevelopment plans also include potential work with the town and Advance Transit on improving sidewalks on the site as well as upgrading the current Green Route transit stop.

TRORC continues to seek new sites that may benefit from our assessment funding. Please contact Kevin Geiger at [kgeiger@trorc.org](mailto:kgeiger@trorc.org).



---

## The Economic Benefits of Clean Water are Overflowing

Clean water has long been of aesthetic and recreational importance to the residents of Vermont. We value the way bubbling streams flow and meander over rocks and soil. We love to plummet off of rocks into cool pools of transparent water while we wash away the stifling summertime.

Clean water increases property values for both permanent and seasonal homes, it generates jobs and employment, and it fosters tourism, all of which can be quantified by economic indicators. A new report by the Gund Institute of Ecological Economics at the University of Vermont and the Lake Champlain Basin Program found there are many economic indicators that are associated with water quality, and that these economic indicators plummet when water bodies are polluted.



*RPC staff from across the state participate in a water quality training.*

Due to the wide spectrum of values water quality embodies as a natural resource, the long-term protection of Vermont's waters remains a priority. Everyone in the state shares the responsibility for the stewardship of our rivers and streams, and efforts are continuing to decrease diffuse pollutant sources and to clean our water bodies. Vermont state officials are currently working to establish a long-term financing mechanism to fund this work. TRORC continues to take leadership roles in state policy development, ensuring that the positive economic benefits of clean water continue to accrue in our region.

For more information, please contact Michael Storace at [mstorace@trorc.org](mailto:mstorace@trorc.org).

---

## Hazard Mitigation Plans Get Approval

Congratulations to the Towns of Sharon, Bethel, and Brookfield who recently received final FEMA approval for their Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMP)! TRORC sought funding to underwrite the development of the Plans. These Plans have a life of five years, and they qualify their respective towns for a larger share of state funding towards damages that occur in the case of federally declared disasters, such as Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 or the 2013 flooding that occurred throughout Windsor County. LHMPs complete one of the criterion included in the Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF), which helps lessen the local costs incurred by municipalities when hazards happen. Resiliency from large storm events and higher levels of precipitation are crucial for many in the TRORC region that live near rivers and in valleys that are susceptible to flooding.

Community members in Newbury, Corinth, Thetford, Vershire, Topsham, West Fairlee, and Bradford are also working on formulating LHMP's for their Towns, with our help. Although hazards cannot be stopped, proper planning can reduce damages to important infrastructure and threats to the health and safety of community members. In these LHMP's, members of mitigation teams for each town, which are composed of community members, Selectboard members, and emergency management members, determine which hazards pose risks to their towns.

With our assistance, the towns of Barnard, Pomfret, and Strafford have completed work on their LHMP's and have recently submitted final drafts for approval to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Once FEMA approves the plans, they will need to be formally adopted by the selectboards of each town, and will then be returned to FEMA for final approval.

For more information or to find out about upcoming meeting dates, contact Michael Storace at [mstorace@trorc.org](mailto:mstorace@trorc.org)



## Kevin Geiger Speaks at State Housing Conference

Kevin Geiger presented at the state Housing Conference in Burlington on a panel session titled 'Housing is Economic Development'. He and others described the need for more homes and affordable units as a top economic development priority. There are many ways communities can revise their regulations to increase housing opportunities, helping to attract newcomers, increasing school enrollment, and satisfying employers' needs.



*Kevin Geiger gives his housing presentation.*

For more information about these issues, contact Kevin Geiger at [kgeiger@trorc.org](mailto:kgeiger@trorc.org)

## Pointers for Public Hearings

Here are some pointers for how to have a successful public hearing:

- Use a sandwich board or other means beyond the required notice to publicize the event.
- Open with a very short recap of the draft, and have a one-page summary as a handout if possible.
- Run a good meeting – nobody gets to spout endlessly. A good rule is to give everyone who wants to speak 2 minutes for any comments at the start.
- If someone says that draft you have spent countless meetings on is hogwash, say “thank you” and clarify whether they mean it all is hogwash or just one particular part.
- If someone has a COMMENT, accept it, don't get defensive, and if the comment is vague, see if they have specifics.
- If someone has a QUESTION, see if it is a technical or a value question.
- TRORC staff at hearings are meant to answer technical questions, which usually relate more to “how” something works, while town officials need to be prepared to answer value questions, which usually relate to “why” a particular wording was chosen.
- Be organized – have copies, project the text onto a screen, bring large maps – as sloppiness can come across as being poorly thought out.
- Record what people say visually by using an easel or projector so they can see that you are hearing them.
- Hearings are to hear, spend most of the time listening.
- Not everyone will be happy and that is OK. Relax, dogs fight when nervous and sometimes people do, too.
- Start and end on time.
- Cider and Lorna Doones make people feel comfortable.

## Non-profit Highlight: COVER!

Based in White River Junction, COVER is a non-profit corporation whose mission is to foster hope and build community in the Upper Valley by bringing together homeowners and volunteers to complete urgently needed home repairs for low-income homeowners, many of whom are elderly and/or disabled. COVER is a volunteer-based force that brings much needed home repairs to those in need, including accessibility remodeling, weatherization, and energy efficiency measures. Executive Director Bill Neukomm started this past April with extensive housing experience in the Boston, MA and Oakland, CA areas.



*COVER volunteers work to repair a roof.*

If you, or a person you know, is in need of important home repairs, you can apply for service on their website at [coverhomerepair.org](http://coverhomerepair.org).





Two Rivers-Ottauquechee  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

128 King Farm Road ~ Woodstock, VT 05091



Bridge in Royalton, Vermont



Two Rivers-Ottauquechee  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

## News & Notes

December 2016

### In this issue:

- Don't Forget About Us!
- Staff at EM Conference
- Brownfields
- Economic Benefits of Clean Water
- Hazard Mitigation Plans Get Approval
- Geiger at Housing Conference
- Pointers for Public Hearings
- COVER!