

## **The Purpose of Enhanced Consultation**

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission's contract with the Department of Economic, Housing, and Community Development (Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development), and Vermont Statutes require the Commission to carry out consultation meetings with all of the towns in the region. The goals are to develop a more consistent and meaningful relationship between the RPC and the Municipality, and to improve the effectiveness of municipal and regional plans, and planning programs by achieving the goals of Title 24, §4302.

## **Outcome of Consultation**

Through this consultation process we hope to better understand the needs of our communities and to have our communities understand how we can work together to advance better planning. Consultations will involve the discussion of important local and regional issues, local planning and training needs, new statutory requirements, planning programs and opportunities available through the TRORC, and importantly, consideration of how effectively the municipal plan addresses Vermont's statutory planning goals.

This consideration will include a qualitative review of the municipal plan, with suggestions as to how the plan might be improved to more effectively satisfy the statutory goals referenced above. Specific findings are reported on each of the following questions:

1. Which parts of the plan are particularly effective in implementing the statewide goals?
2. In which areas do we believe the plan falls short in advancing those statewide goals?
3. What specific opportunities exist to improve the town plan so that it more effectively addresses the statewide goals?

**This consultation and plan review is separate and distinct from the formal municipal plan approval process carried out pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §4350, but it does contribute to the municipal confirmation action specified under that section of the Planning and Development Act.**

## **Enhanced Consultation Agenda Items for Tuesday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

- Important local & Regional issues
- Local planning and training needs
- New statutory requirements
- Planning programs and opportunities
- TRORC services
- Qualitative review of Municipal Plan

## Tunbridge Town Plan Review

The Tunbridge Town Plan was drafted with assistance from staff at the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (with funding from a Municipal Planning Grant). It was adopted on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2013, and approved by the Board of the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

### Required Elements

1. **Statement of Objectives, Policies, and Programs:** The Plan contains goals, policies and recommendations for action.
2. **Land Use Plan:** The Land Use Plan clearly addresses types of uses allowed throughout the community and contains guidance as to how rural character should be maintained. Greater specificity with regard to density and intensity of uses should be included.
3. **Transportation Plan:** The present-day road system is discussed, as well as access management, public transit and multi-modal transportation.
4. **Utility and Facility Plan:** The Utilities and Facilities plan is only a general inventory. It does not contain any information regarding future needs of facilities, potential costs of maintenance or upgrades and potential financing methods as is required by statute. The Plan does recognize the need to create a Capital Budget and Program.
5. **Natural Areas, Scenic and Historic Features:** The Plan addresses natural areas well, but provides little information on historic or scenic resources.
6. **Educational Facilities Plan:** Education is briefly addressed.
7. **Implementation Plan:** The Plan contains an inventory of potential implementation methods, but responsibility for implementation is not identified.
8. **Relationship to adjacent towns and the region:** The Plan does not adequately evaluate compatibility with neighboring plans or the Regional Plan.
9. **Energy Plan:** The Energy Plan is an extensive section that addresses current energy use patterns, potential renewable energy development, land use and energy as well as proposing potential policy for energy conservation.
10. **Housing Element:** The Plan recognizes the need for multiple types of housing, including housing for the elderly. It does not contain a clear plan for how the community will expand housing options, but policies are set to encourage private development of appropriate housing.
11. **Economic Development Plan (new):** The Plan contains a concise Economic Development Plan. The Plan the location and type of commercial development, but only addresses scale in a vague fashion. Tunbridge does acknowledge the distinct value Agriculture has on their economy.

### Statewide Planning Goals

1. **Land Use:** The proposed patterns of development in the Tunbridge Town Plan should reinforce the historic pattern of compact village centers surrounded by open countryside. Strip development is discouraged.

2. **Economic Development:** The Plan encourages appropriate types of economic development, although it is somewhat vague on what types of intensities are appropriate in each land use area.
3. **Education:** Adult education and vocational education are addressed.
4. **Transportation:** The Plan discusses multi-modal transportation in an effective manner.
5. **Natural, Scenic, and Historic Resources:** The Plan identifies natural areas as well as endangered species, and includes a natural resources map.
6. **Air, Water, Wildlife, and Land Resources:** The Plan includes general policies and narrative that indicate a desire to preserve or protect these resources, but it is not specific as to how.
7. **Energy:** The Plan has policies and suggested methods that would encourage energy efficiency or the development of renewable energy resources. The State's Residential Building Energy Code is discussed.
8. **Recreation:** The Plan seeks to maintain recreational opportunities for the community.
9. **Agriculture and Forestry:** Agriculture is discussed in great detail in the Tunbridge Town Plan. The Plan includes a study conducted by the Planning Commission which evaluates the state of agriculture in Tunbridge and how it might be sustained. Forestry is not as well covered.
10. **Efficient use of natural resources/extraction and restoration of earth resources:** Mineral resources are minimally addressed.
11. **Safe and affordable housing:** While the Housing element does discuss affordable housing, there is no mention of where multi-family housing would be appropriate. The Plan encourages accessory apartments.
12. **Community Facilities and Services:** The Plan seeks to maintain a pattern of growth that does not exceed the community's ability to provide services.
13. **Child Care:** Child care is minimally addressed.

## Regional Plan

The pattern of land use proposed by the Tunbridge Town Plan is consistent with the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Plan.

## Summary

### **Strengths**

- The Land Use Plan clearly addresses types of uses allowed throughout the community and contains guidance as to how rural character should be maintained.
- The Energy Plan is an extensive section that addresses current energy use patterns, potential renewable energy development, land use and energy as well as proposing potential policy for energy conservation.
- Agriculture is discussed in great detail in the Tunbridge Town Plan. The Plan includes a study conducted by the Planning Commission which evaluates the state of agriculture in Tunbridge and how it might be sustained.

## **Weaknesses**

- The Land Use Plan could provide greater specificity with regard to density and intensity of uses.
- The Utilities and Facilities plan is only a general inventory. It does not contain any information regarding future needs of facilities, potential costs of maintenance or upgrades and potential financing methods as is required by statute.
- The Plan does not contain a clear plan for how the community will expand housing options, but policies are set to encourage private development of appropriate housing.

## **Opportunities**

- Work with the Regional Planning Commission to add additional detail with regard to encouraging affordable housing.
- Collect information regarding community facilities from the Selectboard to provide further detail to Utilities/Facilities chapter.