News & Notes
October 2022

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PROJECT UPDATES AND REMINDERS
TRORC Services Survey Results

TRORC recognizes that local governance isn’t getting easier. The TRORC Services Survey was designed to gather member-town input on what additional staffing and expertise towns might want or need, and how they might see TRORC’s role in filling some gaps. Responses will inform TRORC’s service offerings to member towns and influence staffing and training decisions.

The Survey was open online from 09/01 to 09/26 and was mailed and emailed to town managers, town administrators/administrative assistants, zoning administrators, selectboard chairs, and planning commission chairs. Responses were received from 38 of the surveyed, representing more than 21 of the region’s 30 member-towns. 28 survey-takers provided contact information, and 16 requested a follow-up discussion and more information.

The most-requested positions were: grants manager, town planner, and GIS/mapping coordinator. For these, and most positions, the most popular type of position was shared-service, wherein TRORC creates, fills, and houses the position and contracts with towns to cover their needs. Towns most frequently requested direct services like grant identification and management, mapping, bulk purchasing, and brokering joint emergency service contracts. About one-third of respondents were interested in human resources support from TRORC, mainly general support, but also including health insurance contracting.

For those who opted to be contacted regarding the survey, a TRORC staff member will be in touch by phone or email in the coming weeks. If you filled out a survey and did not indicate you would like to be contacted, but have since reconsidered, please email your name, position, and contact information to Sydney Steinle at ssteinle@trorc.org, and we will add you to the list.

TRORC is considering sending a similar survey annually to evaluate the Commission’s strengths and areas for improvement regarding services to its members. If TRORC decides to send an annual survey, such decision will be announced in the newsletter and on trorc.org.

Aggregate survey results may be found here. Questions may be directed to TRORC Director Peter G. Gregory by phone: 802.457.3188, or by email: pgregory@trorc.org.

Bethel and Brookfield Awarded 2021 FEMA BRIC Grants

Congratulations to the Towns of Bethel and Brookfield who were recently awarded FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Scoping Grants totaling $81,375 and $108,000 respectively. These BRIC scoping grants will look at designing replacement culverts on Gilead Brook Road and Halfway Brook Road to larger structures that will improve the hydraulic capacity and protect the roadways from repeated washouts during heavy rain events. TRORC was pleased to assist the towns on their applications. For more information about the BRIC program, please contact Stephanie.Smith@vermont.gov or application assistance contact Rita Seto rseto@trorc.org.

Brookfield culvert damage from April 15, 2019 tax day storm | Photo source: Town of Brookfield
Vershire, Vermont | Photo by John Knox

**Vershire Village Designation**

At its meeting on September 26, 2022, the Downtown Development Board found that the Vershire Village Center application met the statutory requirements ([24 VSA Chapter 76A](#)) and designated the village center to receive state benefits. The designated village center will remain in place for eight years, until September 2030.

TRORC is very pleased to have supported the Vershire Selectboard in preparing the renewal application for the village.

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**Meeting Notification: Barnard**

The Town of Barnard is wrapping up the Local Hazard Mitigation Planning Process and will be holding a meeting to review the draft of the plan. Join the Hazard Mitigation Committee and TRORC to review the draft of the Plan and provide comments and recommendations on strategies to mitigate natural hazards. The next Barnard Hazard Mitigation planning meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, October 20th, 2022 at 7:00 PM at the Barnard Town Hall, Barnard VT 05031.** A draft of the plan is available on the town website. Hard copies of the plan will also be available at the meeting.

The meeting is open to all interested community members and public comments are welcome. Local Hazard Mitigation Plans are part of an effort by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to reduce damage from foreseeable natural and human-caused hazards. Examples of projects in local plans include increasing culvert sizes, regulating flood hazard areas, stabilizing landslides, and tree trimming near power lines. For more information, please contact Kyle Katz at kkatz@trorc.org.

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Barnard | Photo source: TRORC website

**Meeting Notification: Strafford**

The Town of Strafford is wrapping up the Local Hazard Mitigation Planning Process and will be holding
a meeting to review the draft of the plan. Join the Hazard Mitigation Committee and TRORC to review the draft of the Plan and provide comments and recommendations on strategies to mitigate natural hazards. The meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, November 2nd, 2022 at 7:00 PM at the Justin Morrill Homestead 214 Justin Morrill Highway, Strafford, VT**. A draft of the plan will be available on the town website prior to the meeting. A draft will also be available for viewing at the meeting.

The meeting is open to all interested community members and public comments are welcome. Local Hazard Mitigation Plans are part of an effort by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to reduce damage from foreseeable natural and human-caused hazards. Examples of projects in local plans include increasing culvert sizes, regulating flood hazard areas, stabilizing landslides, and tree trimming near power lines. For more information, please contact Kyle Katz at kkatz@trorc.org.

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**Creative Economy Fall Updates**

3CVT (Cornerstone Creative Community) hosted two workshops on Branding and Marketing on September 19th and 21st in collaboration with Rural Solutions. These workshops were part of a four-part workshop series made possible by the US Economic Development Administration COVID-19 Recovery Grant for the Creative Economy. Reaching over 75 people thus far, participants received free training on internet presence, customer outreach, grant writing, and website development. The final training of this series, The Business of Art: Money Basics for Small Businesses, will be held virtually on Wednesday, October 26 at 10:00 am. Reach out to Meghan at masbury@trorc.org for more information.

3CVT partnered with Bethel Trailfest on September 25th for a day of exploration around the town of Bethel. The event included the installation of trail benches, an e-bike Food and Farm tour, bike repair stations, and more!

Finally, 3CVT partnered with Open Door Integrative Wellness on October 7th from 5p-7p for First Fridays in White River Junction. Like all 3CVT programming, this event was free and open to the public. The event included community yoga, meditation, massage, and a nutritionist presentation. Participants were encouraged to visit nearby shops and galleries in White River Junction after the event.
TRORC Towns and Villages to Receive State Tax Credits for Building Improvements and Public Infrastructure.

In September, downtown and village centers across Vermont received tax incentives to improve buildings and public infrastructure. Thanks in part to TRORC, who helped these towns write their town plans and receive Village Center Designation, the following towns and projects in our region received portions of these tax incentives:

- Bethel: Bethel Train Depot
- Fairlee: Gas station
- Quechee: Tinkham House
- Thetford: Single-Family Dwelling, Post Mills Village Center
- Tunbridge: Tunbridge General Store
- Woodstock: Adding a sprinkler system, code upgrades, and restoration of the facade on a portion of Phoenix Block and The Shire Hotel.

Staffing Changes and Updates

Virginia Coffey and Izzy Cheney have been hired on as Fall 2022 interns

Virginia is working with TRORC this fall to support efforts in housing, specifically researching affordable housing solutions and working to visualize planning options for member towns. Her work is supported by Dartmouth’s Center for Social Impact. She is currently a junior at Dartmouth College studying Engineering and Human-Centered Design, and is interested in using collaboration and human-centered thinking to build more sustainable communities. In her free time, Virginia enjoys cooking, knitting, and spending time outdoors with family and friends.

Izzy will be working this fall on forest block planning, subdivisions, and education on fragmentation. She is a junior at Dartmouth College studying anthropology with interests in Native American studies, chemistry, and Spanish. She is passionate about environmental justice work and climate activism. Izzy is from North Carolina but grew up in New England, where she loved to spend time outside no matter the season. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, racing triathlons, traveling, cooking and baking, and visiting the Norwich Farmer's Market.
Planning for the Forests

Town plans have been required since 2018 to take into account what we have for large blocks of forest and how they connect. These blocks are critical to healthy ecosystems, clean water, as well as the wood products industry. Come learn via Zoom on the evening of November 17th why these areas are important, how to consider them in town plans, and what you can do through subdivision regulations to both allow development and preserve forests. Check out the TRORC Calendar for more details as we get closer.

TRORC IS HIRING!

Project Manager

The Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) in east-central Vermont is seeking a detail-oriented Project Manager to join our team of professional staff and help Vermont meet its greenhouse gas goals.

The Project Manager will be responsible for procuring and coordinating private contractors for town-level energy projects that replace fossil fuel heating systems in town buildings with non-fossil fuel sources; this may include heat pumps, geothermal, and advanced wood heat. As energy projects are not pre-identified, candidates must be able to work with towns to generate projects to manage. Additional energy-related projects may also include procuring energy audits to identify building needs, as well as weatherization to minimize thermal demand. The Project Manager may also work on managing other grant-funded projects that are not energy related, to improve ADA access, water quality, walkability, or flood resilience.

More information, including how to apply can be found here.

Internships

TRORC welcomes college interns interested in the work of TRORC. Interns assist or lead projects in areas as diverse as land use, water quality, forest protection, GIS, climate change, transportation infrastructure, housing policy, or emergency management. TRORC has no formal intern application form, and accepts interns on an as needed basis given budget and space constraints. Prospective interns should first familiarize themselves with with our work through our website, and then email kgeiger@trorc.org expressing interest in working at TRORC at least two months in advance of a possible start date. Interns selected to apply will be required to submit a faculty letter of recommendation and a resume. Interns are encouraged to seek financial support from their institution for the internship, but we also have a modest budget for hourly pay.
SFY 2023 VTrans Transportation Alternatives Program

VTrans is now accepting applications for the Transportation Alternatives Program. This year, Transportation Alternatives Program funding is available for all eligible activities as described in the Vermont Transportation Alternatives Fall 2022 Application Guide per the link below. 50% of grant program funds are reserved for environmental mitigation projects relating to stormwater and highways, including eligible salt and sand shed projects.


Applications are due by e-mail by December 14, 2022. Contact Scott Robertson (make his name hyperlink for email: [Scott.Robertson@vermont.gov](mailto:Scott.Robertson@vermont.gov)) for more information. Contact Rita Seto [rseto@trorc.org](mailto:rseto@trorc.org) for application assistance.

RFP for Technical Assistance for Small Businesses

In order to assist struggling small sole proprietor businesses with the ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) is seeking qualified consultants to provide one-on-one technical assistance for local small businesses in Washington, Chittenden, Franklin, Grand Isle, Essex, Caledonia, Orleans, Orange and Windsor counties on the following topics:

- Website Development / Enhancement
- Financial Management (Bookkeeping) and Record-Keeping
- Branding and Marketing (digital, print, audio)

You may provide services in any or all topics. Services will be paid for on an hourly basis per-client. A client may receive assistance in one or more of the aforementioned topics, up to a maximum of $2,000 worth of services per client. The maximum expected award per consultant is $20-25,000, or approximately 10-15 clients served per topic area. Consultants are expected to work with clients selected by TRORC from any of the aforementioned counties. Assistance may be offered in-person or virtually, however part of the intended audience is not comfortable using computers. Mileage for in-person work will be reimbursed at the federal rate. Part of the intended audience may also not use English as their primary language. Consultants will be expected to work with third parties, contracted separately by TRORC, to provide clients with language support as needed.

Posted: September 22, 2022
Deadline: October 24, 2022

Contact:
Connor Rigney, [crigney@trorc.org](mailto:crigney@trorc.org)
802-457-3188 ext. 3010

More information, including how to apply, can be found at [trorc.org/soleprop](http://trorc.org/soleprop)
Advance Transit’s Executive Director to Retire after 35 Years of Leadership

On September 30, 2022, Van Chesnut, Executive Director of Advance Transit (AT), stepped down from his position after 35 years of leadership. He will remain on staff temporarily as AT transitions to new management. Chesnut will retire from the organization on November 15, 2022. Chesnut has been steady at the helm having now provided over thirteen million passenger trips and offering fare-free transit to the communities of Hartford and Norwich in Vermont, and Lebanon, Hanover, Enfield, and Canaan in New Hampshire. In 2011, Chesnut spearheaded the expansion of AT’s operation center and opened up the first LEED-certified public transit building at the time in Wilder, VT. In addition to offering fare-free transit, Chesnut has worked closely with TRORC, Town of Woodstock and the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park back in 2010 to demonstrate a unique idea of the Woodstock Full Circle Electric Trolley using cow power through the Central Vermont Public Service. We thank Van for his incredible leadership and public service to the Upper Valley region and wish him a happy well-deserved retirement. Adams Carroll will assume the role of Executive Director. Carroll joins AT with years of experience in transit planning and community building.

[Link to article]

Announcing a Special Funding Round! Downtown and Village Center tax credits available in January 2023!

In January 2023, during this special round of funding, $800,000 in state income tax credits will be competitively available to projects that enhance the historic character and improve building safety of older and historic commercial and community buildings in these designated communities. The credits support general rehabilitation work, code compliance work, façade improvements, and flood mitigation projects, and may be combined with the federal program.

Applications for the next round of tax credits are due Monday, January 16, 2023, and the Vermont Downtown Board will make its allocation decisions at their regularly scheduled board meeting in February 2023.

Applications must be submitted electronically to: accd.DowntownVillageCenterTaxCreditProgram@vermont.gov

Remember the deadline to apply for this bonus round of funding is January 16, 2023

Contact:
Caitlin Corkins, caitlin.corkins@vermont.gov

2022 VECAN Conference

TRORC is proud to sponsor the 2022 Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network Conference held virtually this winter from December 10-15. The conference will include a framing of the current state of clean energy and climate action work in Vermont with a deep focus on available funding, policies, processes underway, including the ongoing implementation of the state’s Climate Action Plan, the Inflation Reduction Act, other federal funding opportunities, and more!
Please share thoughts you have on workshop topics you'd like the conference to include by emailing ghasler@vnrc.org or filling out the Google form link here.

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**Backyard Wood Course: Orange & Windsor Counties**

The Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program is hosting the Backyard Woods Course free of charge for participants from October 3- November 11.

This online course is designed for landowners with less than 25 acres in Orange and Windsor Counties, who want to learn more about the woods in their backyard.

Learn more and register today at go.uvm.edu/woods22