

TRORC

Two Rivers-Ottawa-Quechee
REGIONAL COMMISSION



News & Notes March 2024



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PROJECT UPDATES AND REMINDERS

TRORC 2024 Scholarship Reminder!

On January 4th, TRORC unveiled its scholarship initiative for 2024 where we are offering **\$2,000 to ten graduating seniors in the Region**. This program welcomes applicants from any of TRORC's 30 towns, provided they are completing a state-approved high school education and have already been admitted to an accredited post-secondary education or career program. Students are required to submit their applications via email by the end of business hours on April 12, 2024. For more information, check out [our guidelines](#) or contact Mary at molmo@trorc.org.

Thetford Makes Changes to Zoning Bylaw

On January 22nd, Thetford adopted changes to the town zoning bylaw that remove some of the barriers to new housing, specifically in the village and neighborhood residential districts. New provisions and changes also facilitate the permitting of new housing units in pre-existing homes, as well as for the adaptive reuse of existing structures for new housing. Other changes include the adoption of the neighborhood residential district and adoption of accessory dwelling unit standards that meet State requirements. This work was undertaken as part of the bylaw modernization consortium project consisting of seven towns throughout the Region.

Updated Health Chapter for Town Plans

How does your Town Plan address health and wellbeing in your community? TRORC is pleased to announce the release of the updated [Health Chapter template resource](#). The template looks at the intersection of health with housing, transportation, environmental quality, food access and choice, social inclusion, substance misuse, and

more. Health equity is a strong focus. The template includes an inventory of health-related goal, policy, and recommendation language from Town Plans across the state. If you have questions or would like more information, contact Sarah at swraight@trorc.org.



Rochester Housing: Speed Dating Event

The Rochester Housing Committee arranged a unique speed dating event on January 31st at the Rochester School gym with the aim of connecting residents who were curious to know more about Vermont's housing production. During the event, representatives from Vermont Housing Improvement Program, Homeshare Program, Banks, Randolph Area Community Development Corporation, Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation, and Efficiency Vermont attended, with each participant having 10 minutes to talk with these experts before moving on to the next table.

(Left) TRORC staff members (Kevin and Meghan) speak with Rochester residents about Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).

What Does FEMA Declaring Disaster for December 2023 Mean for You?

FEMA declared a new federal disaster for the December rain event ([more information here](#)), and will cover almost all of our towns except towns in Addison County (Granville and Hancock).

Towns wishing to recover costs should attend an applicant's briefing, some of which are virtual.

However, this declaration does not cover individual damages. For more information, contact Kevin at kgeiger@trorc.org.

Local Official Training

If you are a member of a Planning Commission, Development Review Board, Conservation Commission or Energy Committee, and you would like to partake in some training opportunities, and your town does not have the budget for the training, we can help! Let us know what you want to take, attend, and we will reimburse your town for the cost. It's that simple. With ever changing laws and grant opportunities, we can never get enough. Let us know!

Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program (VT UCF) Announces 2024 Grant Recipients

On January 30th, the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry announced the recipients of their 2024 grant program in three categories ([Communities Caring for Canopy](#), [Growing Urban Forests in the Face of Emerald Ash Borer](#) and [Urban & Community Forestry Grants](#)). Read more about the winning projects [here!](#)

Important Reminder: Local ARPA Funds

With FY25 municipal budget planning well underway, now is the time to think about obligating your town's ARPA funds. A couple of key considerations:

1. **Local ARPA funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024.** Obligation means an order has been placed for goods or services or you have entered into a contract, subaward, or similar transaction that requires payment. If you are using ARPA funds to pay staff salaries or other internal costs, this needs to be documented with a resolution by the Selectboard.
 2. There is a lot of flexibility in how ARPA funds can be spent **BUT THERE ARE ALSO SOME PROHIBITED EXPENDITURE CATEGORIES.** If you don't feel confident in your knowledge of what's allowed, please contact [Sarah Wraight](#) ASAP.
 3. **If you don't think your town can obligate all its funds by December 31, 2024, OR if you can obligate but won't be able to spend the funds by December 31, 2026** (perhaps because of permitting timeframes and the fact that contractors are booking out several years in advance at this point), please contact [Sarah Wraight](#) ASAP to discuss your options.
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Two More Trainings are Live and Ready to Go

On Thursday, February 15th, Randolph Town Hall hosted a training led by multiple panelists, which included one of our staff members, about Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). Since then, TRORC has hosted other live training sessions, with two more coming your way:

- **The Fundamentals of Data and Mapping in Planning Processes** - March 19th, 6:30 - 7:45 pm
- **Grants 101** - April 17th, 6:30 - 7:45 pm

More information about them is listed in our calendar. If you can't make it, we will also upload our training onto YouTube. If you have any questions about topics that we haven't yet covered, please feel free to contact Geena at gbaber@trorc.org.

GRANTS & FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

TRORC Brownfields Assessment Funding

TRORC has funding from the EPA to assess brownfield sites in our Region, and has received over \$1.6 million over the past decade to perform petroleum and hazardous waste assessments. TRORC works closely with Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation staff to promote redevelopment of brownfields properties, including enrolling properties in Vermont's Brownfields Reuse and Environmental Liability Limitation Act ([BRELLA](#)) program. For more information, Sarah can be reached at swraight@trorc.org.

Better Places Grants

Would your community like to expand their parks and green spaces, create a lively main street, start public art projects, or establish community gardens? Consider applying for a [Better Places Grant](#) supported by the VT Department of Housing & Community Development, VT Department of Health, and VT Community Foundation. The application is on a rolling basis, so apply anytime.

Electrify Your Fleet Program

VTrans has launched their [Electrify Your Fleet](#) program, offering organizations the opportunity to apply for up to twenty, \$2,500 incentives. The program aims to propel more cleaner transportation options, thereby reducing our carbon footprint. Eligible vehicles include electric, hybrid, bicycles, motorcycles, and snowmobiles. For more information about program guidelines, [click here](#).

Flood Resilient Communities Fund (FRCF)

[FRCF](#) is a volunteer program that supports low-income populations living on flood-vulnerable properties by reducing future flood risks and improving water quality. Some example projects include home buyouts, dam removal projects, and stormwater management. Applications are being accepted on a rolling basis, though funds are running low. Priority will be given to buyout projects following the July 2023 flooding in Vermont.
