Full Commission Meeting  
February 24, 2015  
Marlboro College Graduate Center  
Brattleboro, VT

Commissioners Present: Jodi French  (Chair), Nick Bartenhagen, Tom Consolino, Jack Cunningham, Rod Francis, Elizabeth McLoughlin, Georgianne Mora, Steve Skibniowsky, Piet van Loon, John Whitman

Citizen Interest Commissioners Present: Greg Brown, Lynette Hamilton

Guest Present: Corky Elwell, Peter Elwell, Bill Schmidt, Arthur Westing, BCTV

Staff Present: Chris Campany, Ashley Collins, Susan McMahon, Kim Smith, Alyssa Sabetto

Introductions: There was a not a quorum with only 8 towns present.

Convened: 7:10PM

50th Anniversary Committee: WRC Associate Director Susan McMahon gave a brief overview of the Committee’s recent meetings, explaining that there will be a 4-5 minute video put together by Mondo Media Works, of the history of the Commission, its purpose, and its future. Each monthly Commission meeting there will be a guest speaker presenting different aspects of the Commission through the years. Bill Schmidt and Corky Elwell will discuss the founding and origins at the current meeting, followed by an Act 250 discussion in March, June is expected to be an anniversary celebration that the Governor will be invited to, and November will conclude the anniversary discussions with Chris Campany providing some insight on the future of the Commission.

Bill Schmidt & Corky Elwell – Origin of WRC:

Corky Elwell explained that in 1960 he was the Town Manager for Brattleboro. Corky gave a brief overview of events leading up the start of the Commission between 1960 and 1965. Exit 3 was opened in November of 1960, which helped expand water and sewer to North Brattleboro. At this time the Governor was talking about how regional planning in Vermont would be beneficial to the State; towns had local planning committees but were in need of an agency to approve their plans. In December 1964, 70 people from 13 towns convened to discuss putting a resolution forward to have on the town meeting agenda; additional
meetings and committees were assembled and at the 1965 town meeting 17 towns voted “yes” for a Regional Commission, the first in the State of Vermont.

Bill Schmidt provided the highlights from his professional career during the start-up and first five years of the Commission. Bill was appointed as a Commissioner, and then served as Chair before becoming Executive Director in 1968 to 1983. The Commission was primarily funded through the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Grant, and was intended to assist with the preparation of town plans, a regional plan, and zoning bylaws. WRC was able to get involved with more planning and development and then became the Windham Regional Planning and Development Commission (WRPDC). Bill outlined the Commission’s first year of newsletters from 1967, including surveys from landowners and students, and essay contests. Bill explained how the priorities with the towns and the select boards changed from year to year, with each getting more interested and involved with things like water and sewer, subdivision regulations, Route 9 planning, attraction of light industries, air pollution control, and solid waste disposal. He noted that Windham County had the poorest need for housing in Vermont at that time and there was a housing conference held in the region. In 1967 nuclear power was proposed, a committee was formed and helped to conduct studies and facilitate meetings with various attendees and organizations. In 1968 the Public Policy and Legislative Committee was formed to propose and lobby for legislation, which prompted the Youth Services, Big Brother Big Sister, and Community House programs.

**Facilitated Discussion:** The Commissioners continued the discussion that began at the December Full Commission meeting, building upon ideas voiced during the breakout sessions about the Commission’s structure, decision-making, Commissioner roles and facilitating meaningful Commissioner participation.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:00PM**

Respectfully submitted,
Ashley Collins