



Connecticut River Byway Council Meeting Minutes

Wednesday May 1, 2013

2pm – 4pm

Windsor Welcome Center, 3 Railroad Ave, Windsor, VT

In attendance

Council: Glenn English (co-chair), Gayle Ottmann (co-chair), Ellen Howard, Kathleen Carriere, Kevin McKinnon, Katrina Spaulding

Ex-Officio: Dean Eastman (NHDOT), Rick Kendall (NPS Saint Gaudens)

Others: Katharine Otto and Tom Kennedy (SWCRPC), Peter Gregory (TRORC), Christine Walker (UVLSRPC), Bernie Folta, Donna Simons (called in on behalf of Build a Better Brattleboro)

Meeting started at 2:10pm

1. *Welcome and introductions*

2. *Update on Byways Program*

- a. *National* (report by Katharine Otto) – MAP-21 (the newest surface transportation bill which previously provided funding for the Byways Program) did not include any funding for Byways in the newest 2 year bill. The National Byways Program still exist, but without funding. Some efforts are being made to lobby for funding in the next bill (due by October 1, 2014), but there are not high hopes.
- b. *Vermont* (report by Katharine) – In light of the changes on the national level, Vermont is moving the Byways program from the Agency of Transportation (VTrans) under John LaBarge to the Department of Tourism and Marketing (VDTM) under Catherine Brooks. The existing Byways grants (eg our itineraries one), will still be managed through VTrans, but everything else concerning Vermont Byways will be fully transferred to Catherine Brooks by June 30, 2013. There has been an indication that no new Byways will be designated or expanded after that time (there have been some expansions and new designations in the last year).
- c. *New Hampshire* (report by Dean Eastman) – No decisions have been made as yet about what to do with New Hampshire Byways. They will most likely stay with New Hampshire Dept of Transportation (NHDOT). There will be designating and de-designating capacity.

3. *Connecticut River Byway Council Reorganization*

- How do we want to proceed? Biggest question is what are we offering organizations who get involved with Byways that is not offered elsewhere?
- Are there any studies on the economic impact of Byways that could showcase the worth of Byways?
- Vermont Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) may be able to continue assist the Byway, but that depends on whether they can still be funded through their existing funding sources. If not, their involvement will be severely limited.
- Most Chambers of Commerce are facing tough times – for a variety of reasons.
- Are there any successful models which are more led by Chambers of Commerce or other entities? There are some models out there in Vermont, but they don't have maturity yet to see how successful they are. It helps that some of the chamber led ones are united over a common industry – eg ski resorts and similar tourism. What unites the Connecticut River Byway?
- Task for the next council meeting – to bring one new person with you.

4. *Upcoming Projects*

- a. Note: While several of the upcoming projects are only for the Vermont side of the border, the New Hampshire communities and sites can be profiled and shown on resources of the Connecticut River

Byway – such as the website and the itineraries brochure. Most VDTM related resources do reference the Byway’s website – so it is an important resource for us to keep up to date.

- b. *Website* – <http://ctriverbyway.org/> The itineraries being developed for the Itineraries project will be uploaded onto the website. This is also a good opportunity to update the website.
- Task for all council members - Please send Katharine any information, descriptions and links you would like included on the website. Also, let her know if you have any ideas about what you would like to see on the website – eg information about the 250 year celebrations that several towns have had and will be having in the next few years.
 - Glenn, Gayle, Ellen, K and Kevin volunteered to help with website review
 - Question about whether we can get information about who is visiting the website. Katharine is going to follow up.
 - Goal to get the revised website up and running by mid June
 - Question about how we want the website to be set out and nested. What is the main information we want the website to promote? Should we lay out the website like a tourism-oriented chamber? Any other ideas?
 - As an FYI, the website will be designed so it works well on small screened mobile devices – something which will keep up with the times.
 - There is still concern that some do not have mobile devices (especially foreign visitors), so the paper-based resources are still important.

c. *Vermont*

- *Marketing projects by VTDM*
 - Started a few years ago when John LaBarge reached out to VDTM
 - Includes distributing the Vermont Byways brochure at trade fairs (within USA and internationally), www.vermontvacation.com/byways.aspx, Top 15 things to see and do in Vermont,
- *Mini itineraries with Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing (VTDM)*
 - Initial information collected back in November 2012
 - Due to be released sometime in the next month
 - Katharine will send out the web-link when it is completed
- *Videos with VTDM*
 - Project is due to start in June
 - Katharine will send out more details when she has them
- *Sites profiled on the Vermont Byways page - www.vermont-byways.us*
 - Before John LaBarge gives up his role as Byways coordinator he would like to make a few more additions to the Vermont Byways Webpage
 - On the right side of each Byway tab is the opportunity to list “Points of Interest”.
 - Katharine will email a list of the top 10 sites – and the council will chose their top 3-5, trying to have at least 1 from the south, central and northern areas. Council can add sites for consideration that were not included in the 100 historic sites voting for the itineraries project.
 - Criteria for Points of Interest from John:
 - Non-profit or natural Points of Interest with visitor access
 - A high resolution photo with each
 - Website connection for each site
 - Example – Northeast Kingdom Byway chose Lake Willoughby, Haskell Library & Opera House, Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium, Kingdom Trails and Northern Forest Canoe Trail.
- *Pinterest page - <http://pinterest.com/vermonttourism/>*
 - Pinterest is a site where people can post photos with a short sentence and weblink

- We can send contributions for the Vermont tourism Byways page to VDTM. As an example, the Connecticut River Byway is already mentioned in connection with the Montshire Museum
 - Do we want to set up a Connecticut River Byway pinterest page? Or use the idea when we revise the website?
- d. *New Hampshire* – Dean reported on some projects being done by some other Byways – including corridor management plans
- e. *Other ideas for the future*
- Proud Affiliate signs - Katharine and K Carriere have a large number of signs which were created through John LaBarge. There is an issue that the signs are too big for most businesses to display. Can we have smaller window decals? If we do, who would pay for them?
 - Passport – Could we do one to connect the businesses, like what Windsor has?
 - Northeast by Rail project
 - Check out White Mountain Attractions and the White Mountain Loop for ideas

5. *Itineraries Project Update*

- a. Brochure
- Design committee met in February to decide on some key design attributes of the brochure. Key concern was that the brochure would be easily portable – so doing 8.5 x 5.5 size. It will be about 50-60 pages per brochure – and will include all the itineraries
 - Brochure is being designed by Lorelee Morrow from TRORC and a first draft is due in the next month or so. The brochure will then be reviewed by the design committee, some revisions made and then a wider review by the Byway Council.
 - Let Katharine know if you are interested in joining the design committee
- b. Printing
- Still need cash match. Any contributions welcome
- c. Distribution and outreach
- When Katharine spoke with Kathy Murphy (VDTM) a month ago, she mentioned that it is worthwhile considering how you will distribute the brochure before you finalize design and printing – as sometimes it may have an influence
 - Ideas for distribution include Waypoint Centers, event participant bags, historic societies, community events. Other ideas? Any ideas of organizations who might sponsor distribution?
 - Could we do a small first run using the grant funds and larger second run with a private or non-profit sponsor? Katharine to check with John LaBarge

6. *Other Business*

- a. *Waypoint Centers* - Should include information about the waypoint centers in the new website – so can everyone forward Katharine information about when the centers are open (some are seasonal) and their hours of operation?

Meeting adjourned at 3:30pm