

VERMONT'S VOICE

AGRICULTURE

GOVERNMENT

NATURAL BEAUTY

Comprehensive Planning Meeting Held

By Earl Brandt

The first public meeting on the state mandated "Smart Growth" Comprehensive Planning Process for Vermont Township, was held January 18 at the town hall with 50 or so town residents in attendance, in spite of cold and blustery weather. The purpose of the meeting was to allow residents to learn about the process and offer their suggestions and opinions.

Bill Rizzo, Community Resource Development Educator with the Dane County UW Extension served as facilitator. Our Plan Commission and Town Board were also present. They are responsible for coming up with a plan for our Township that will also serve to update our Land Use Plan that was approved by the Board October 1997. Members of the Plan Commission are Jim Elleson, Don McKay, Marian Swoboda, Barbara Grenlie, Marc Robertson and David Stanfield. Bill Hanson serves as Chairman.

Residents were asked to list what they thought were the key "issues" in our Township on forms provided. They were then invited to share their concerns verbally if they wished to do so, which many of them did. They were then asked to share their "visions" of the future for the township in similar manner. Ideas expressed were many and varied. The forms have been given to the Plan Commission. Judging from comments after the meeting, most residents seemed to appreciate the opportunity to participate in the process.

It is anticipated that there will be more opportunities for public input and participation by serving on a citizen advisory committee, attending monthly Plan Committee meetings and future public hearings. To volunteer your services, ask questions or offer your opinions, contact any member of the Plan Commission (phone numbers on the back of this newsletter).

FOCUS GROUPS

The next phase of our Township Comprehensive Planning process

The Planning Commission met recently to prepare for the next phase of our Comprehensive Planning process – the formation of Focus Groups to review the results of the first public meeting and to identify the most important issues to be explored in a survey of town residents. The elements of each Focus Group and the meeting date are listed below.

→**Tue. March 8, Housing**

Thur. March 17, Transportation

Tue. March 22, Economic Development

Wed. March 30, Utilities and Community Resources

Wed. April 6, Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resources

Thur. April 14, Intergovernmental Cooperation

Tue. April 26, Land Use

All meetings will be held at the town cty. JJ, at 7:30 pm. Town residents are welcome and encouraged to attend any, or all, of the meetings.

**CALLING ALL CITIZENS TO VOTE
APRIL 5 AT THE TOWN HALL 7AM-8PM
AND ATTEND THE ANNUAL
TOWN MEETING
APRIL 12 AT THE TOWN HALL 7:30 PM**

To see Bill Rizzo's overview on Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning law, visit our unofficial town website at www.vermonttown.com and visit the town's official website at www.townofvermont.com.

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Summary of Comments from 1st Town Comprehensive Planning Meeting

By Marc Robertson

1) Issues and Opportunities

2) Housing

- a) Density limits
- b) Blend development with natural character of land (hilltop development).
- c) Small vs. large parcel development
- d) Income diversity (land prices & taxes)
- e) Age diversity (affordable for retired to remain, allowance for retired parents)
- f) Transfer of development rights
- g) Maintain agricultural/rural/natural character
- h) Rate of development (building permits/year)
- i) Develop only designated areas
- j) "Green" building methods
- k) Enforcement of rules
- l) "Agricultural" vs. "nonagricultural" housing
- m) Keep development one residence at a time

3) Transportation

- a) Keep twisty roads w/vegetated shoulders (or not - safety)
- b) Lower speed limits
- c) Provide services efficiently
- d) Public motorized & non-motorized paths in addition to roads
- e) Clean roadsides
- f) Restrict right-of-way condemnation
- g) Control bicycle events
- h) Discourage through-traffic
- i) Encourage car pooling or mass transit
- j) "Rural" view from roads

4) Utilities & Community Facilities

- a) Emphasize renewable resources
- b) Assure support for schools
- c) Make sure that infrastructure keeps pace w/development
- d) Facilitate sense of community & community involvement

5) Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources

- a) Preserve Town as agricultural township
- b) Support agricultural enterprise diversity

- c) Protect native plant & animal species/inhibit exotic species & pests
- d) Support quality hardwood forests
- e) Reduce use of non-renewable resources
- f) Protect groundwater supply & safety
 - 1) Sanitary regulations
 - 2) Wetland/woodland/natural area preservation
- g) Protect air quality
- h) Protect family, cultural and architectural history
- i) Limit light pollution
- j) Town purchase of natural areas
- k) Limited logging/bulldozing
- l) Maintain ability to hunt

6) Economic Development

- a) Maintain as much individual control as possible
- b) Allow farmers/retired the income from sale of land
- c) Support "sustainable" businesses
- d) Control size of commercial buildings & business operations
- e) Enhance self-sufficiency through local economic opportunity
- f) Support tradesmen, craft workers
- g) No cell phone/radio towers
- h) Limit economic development -- let MH & BE provide services

7) Intergovernmental Cooperation

- a) Safeguard/ expand autonomy of Township
- b) Protect against domination by Dane Co. urban planners
- c) Cooperate w/other communities; regulatory consistency
- d) Minimize county and state mandates
- e) Prevent "urbanization" of our town government
- f) Closer relationship to county & state programs
- g) Work w/other local govts to defend comprehensive plans
- h) More comfortable chairs in town hall

8) Land Use -- Included in above categories

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MEET THE CANDIDATES

Our Town of Vermont elections will be held April 5 at the Town Hall, Cty Hwy JJ. Five positions are up for election: Town Chairman, Town Clerk, Treasurer, and Supervisors for positions #1 and #3. Candidates for Chairman are Steve Frame (incumbent) and Steve Cowen. Candidates for Clerk are Marian Swoboda (incumbent) and Marc Robertson. Treasurer Sarah Danz, and Supervisors Bill Hanson and Mark Sherven are running uncontested. We asked each of the candidates to answer five questions to assist you in your voting decisions. They are listed alphabetically under each office for fairness.

TOWN CLERK CANDIDATES

MARC ROBERTSON

Why are you seeking this office?

I will insure compliance with the legal obligations of town government and facilitate the timely flow of information about Town activities, both official and unofficial. Through technology, we have the ability to improve public access to information and improve communication among ourselves. We should be using that ability to further strengthen the effectiveness of our self-governance.

What are your qualifications?

- 1) MS in Agricultural Economics, with a specialization in natural resource economics, from the UW-Madison
- 2) Responsible for the bookkeeping, budgeting and reporting requirements of a small business since 1988
- 3) Web site developer since 1995
- 4) Planning Commission member since 1998

What would you like us to know about your background and how it might help you serve?

Beginning in 1973 I worked at the University of Wisconsin on issues related to water quality and family/sustainable farming. Moving to the Town of Vermont in 1977, my wife and I began raising sheep in 1980. I learned first hand that the success of sustainable agriculture depends on improving the ability of agricultural producers to control their markets. With that in mind, we started Blackberry Ridge Woolen Mill, which provides wool processing services to sheep farmers all over North America and natural fiber yarns to customers all over the world. The agricultural economy that defines our town's history is changing rapidly, and we need to be preparing for that change.

What do you think are the main issues facing our Town?

Three main forces that are now competing are: 1) regional population growth, 2) a desire to preserve the rural character of the town, and 3) the reality that many of us moved to and remain in this area to enjoy natural beauty and personal freedom. We need a strong, informed local government that will effectively safeguard the qualities that we cherish.

What is your vision for shaping the future of the Town of Vermont?

The clerk, while being an active citizen, should not be trying to shape the future of the Town. The clerk should have the technical ability to carry out the routine functions of the position and a willingness to facilitate the incorporation of diverse viewpoints, new ideas and new technology into Town governance.

MARIAN SWOBODA

Why are you seeking this office?

I am seeking reelection to the office for three basic reasons. First, I believe I am the most qualified candidate for the position based upon my work during the past four years and the collective experience and education I bring to the office. Secondly, my work ethic fits in well with the needs of the office. I work long and hard to do the job well and on time. And thirdly, I am confident the public will, by in large, continue to support my efforts and give me encouragement in my work.

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(Swoboda, continued)

What are your qualifications?

- Four years as town clerk
- Four years as a Plan Commissioner and Commission Secretary
- Twenty years of university experience in senior level administrative positions
- Ten years of teaching experience at the University of Wisconsin
- Eight years as a corporate secretary with Wisconsin Electric Cooperative, a service organization for rural electric cooperatives

What would you like us to know about your background and how it might help you serve the town?

I was born in the Town of Brigham...grew up in the Town of Wyoming in Iowa County ...attended a country school through the 7th grade(from that time on I knew I wanted to live in the country)...moved to the Village of Ridgeway where my mother became the village clerk (she was my role model and I was her assistant)...moved to Madison for my last two years of high school ...attended the university for two years...vocational school for one year all the while working for my room and board...worked as a corporate secretary in the world of rural electric cooperatives (little did I how much that experience would help me in my clerk position)...returned to the university to complete my studies in American Institutions with a focus on government (this is when I became aware of the important role of towns in our culture)...devoted the next several years to completing a master's and doctoral degree in educational administration while working at the university and serving as business manager in my husband's business...my husband and I purchased our first parcel of land in the Town of Vermont 40 years ago building a home and moving here 23 years ago. I am now settled in about 7 miles as the crow flies from where I was born.

What do you think are the main issues facing our Town?

The increasing property tax load being placed upon the town positioned along with the question of maintaining the town's operations under threat of the levy freeze and state funding withdrawal.

What is your vision for shaping the future of the Town of Vermont?

A well-informed citizen body prepared to work together to save the rural character of the town as well as the independent nature of our government.

TOWN CHAIRMAN CANDIDATES

STEVE COWEN

Why are you seeking this office?

The variety of our neighbor's lifestyles and occupations are an important and unique characteristic of the Town of Vermont. I am running for the office to maintain the quality of the lifestyles within our community.

What are your qualifications?

I am qualified to run for office because I have been an active member of the town for 30 years. I have taught in the Wisconsin Heights School District and have served 2 terms on the school board. I am a self-employed contractor, rental property owner and raise Scottish Highlander cattle on our farm.

What would you like us to know about your background and how it might help you serve?

My ancestors were dairy and vegetable farmers. I was raised on a large dairy farm. I have college degrees from UW Oshkosh, Platteville, and Madison. Through a diverse educational and experiential background, I have the ability to understand multiple viewpoints and communicate effectively with many people. I am also a devout conservationist and volunteer several weeks per year to further the cause.

What do you think are the main issues facing our Town?

My goals are to keep Vermont's rural character, planning for the inevitable growth, and working with all people who reside here and nonresidents who want to use the town for recreational purposes.

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(Cowen, continued)

What is your vision for shaping the future of the Town of Vermont?

It is critical to plan and make honest negotiations with all the differing ideas for Town land and recreational use. It is important to first listen and try to see all sides of an issue before a mutually satisfying compromise may be reached.

STEVE FRAME

Why are you seeking this office?

I am seeking re-election of this office to continue having well-organized and orderly meetings. I have been approached by many encouraging me to run, including fellow Chairmen from surrounding towns

What are your qualifications?

I was first named to Plan Commission in 1987; I was elected to Town Board as a Supervisor in 1991 and elected Chairman in 1997. I have served as Chair on the Dane County Trip Committee in 2000. I also presently serve on the Mount Horeb Fire Board, appointed in 1991.

What would you like us to know about your background and how it might help you serve?

I have served on the Mount Horeb School Board for a term in 2000-2003. I also was a bus driver for the district. I helped my father, Glenn in his ten years as Assessor for the Town of Vermont. I have lived in Vermont Town all of my life and have raised my family in addition, I farmed for 30 years. I am currently an Operating Engineer, building roads for a living, which enables me both to maintain and improve our roads as economically as possible.

What do you think are the main issues facing our Town?

I believe that controlling growth without taking away Landowners rights is a very big issue facing our town. Keeping subdivisions out of our town will control density and maintain our rural character.

What is your vision for shaping the future of the Town of Vermont?

To insure everyone that comes before the Town of Vermont Board is treated fairly and equally and that their rights as a property owner are honored, without compromising the good of all.

OPEN BURNING

Guarding the pristine beauty of our township was high on the list of concerns expressed citizens at the first public Comprehensive Planning meeting held Jan. 18.

All of us have a role to play in this endeavor. We can start by adhering to the regulations regarding open burning. The only items approved by the DNR for open burning are leaves, plant clipping, paper, cardboard (which can also be recycled), and clean, untreated wood.

Open burning in Vermont Township from Jan.1 – May 31 requires a permit for each time you burn, unless there is snow on the ground. Burning in a burn barrel, while not recommended, is allowed with a separate annual permit. Both permits are issued by any one of our fire wardens (see list on back page). Items approved for burning in a burn barrel are the same as those approved for open burning.

LAND CONSERVATION

The Natural Heritage Trust is hosting a meeting at the Black Earth Town Hall Thursday, March 31, 7:00 to 9:00 pm, to give citizens the opportunity to suggest land that they would like to see protected within the Black Earth Creek Watershed. This could include stream banks, farmlands, prairies, woodlots and wetlands. You can also find out what a conservation easement is and how you can use an easement to protect your land. An easement allows the land to stay in private ownership, but it is permanently protected

To RSVP, or for more information, contact Kate Wipperman at 258-9797 or kate@nhlt.org

VERMONT'S VOICE

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Mission Statement: It is the mission of Vermont's Voice to provide information about our town and articles of interest to the residents of our town in order to promote a sense of community, encourage participation in and understanding of town government, and improve communication among residents. Vermont's Voice is a volunteer, citizen-run publication that encourages and depends on citizen participation in providing information, articles, or suggestions for articles, photos, criticism, and help with mailings. The cost of printing and postage is included in the town budget. Vermont's Voice is not the official voice or viewpoint of the town government.

Look for this issue of the Vermont Voice on the Vermont Web Page! Check it out at <http://www.vermonttown.com>.

Town Officials

Chair Steve Frame 767-3393
Supervisor #1 Bill Hanson 767-5050
Supervisor #2 Dave Dybdahl 767-3674
Supervisor #3 Mark Sherven 437-3732
Supervisor #4 Barb Grenlie 437-5856
Town Clerk Marian Swoboda 767-2457
Town Treasurer Sarah Danz 767-6017
Town Patrolman Dave Haugen 767-3313

Building Inspector Jim Ludolph 767-2272

Don McKay 437-4071
David Stanfield 767-3449

Plan Commission Members

Chair Bill Hanson 767-5050
Secretary Marian Swoboda 767-2457
Barb Grenlie 437-5856
Jim Elleson 767-3553
Marc Robertson 437-3762

Fire Wardens
Frank Hinze 767-3827
Fern Frame 767-3915
Mary Brings 767-3457

Winter 2005

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AGRICULTURE GOVERNMENT NATURAL BEAUTY

4670 Cedar Hill Lane
Black Earth, WI 53515

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