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**Consolidated Plan Public Hearing**  
April 2, 2018

A public hearing to receive comments on the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development's draft 2018 Consolidated Plan Annual Action Plan held on Monday, April 2, 2018 5:00 PM at Randolph, Vermont.

Attending the hearing were: DHCD Staff: Arthur Hamlin, Josh Hanford, and Ann Kroll; Consolidated Plan Advisory Group members: Rob Leuchs, Jonathan Bond, Peter Gregory, Angus Chaney, Sarah Carpenter, Emily Higgins, Kenn Sassorossi, and Beth Ann Maier; Citizens: Roger Glovsky, Bob Haynes, Judith Irving, Steve Reid, Margaret Murray, and Ken Cadow.

Josh Hanford gave a brief overview of the purpose of the hearing and instructed those wanting to testify to state their name and organization they represent, if any. Arthur Hamlin reviewed the proposed goals and outcomes based on the funds estimated to be received by the State for CDBG, HOME, ESG and the HTF.

Bob Haynes from Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation commented that they received a \$1 million CDBG grant through the town of Randolph to build a facility for LED Dynamics. The project will protect 60 jobs and add 35 to 40 new jobs. The demand is there for a lot more funding. Hartford is their main hub, Randolph and Bradford are also busy. What towns need differ widely, agency staff are very flexible about understanding differing needs.

Ken Cadow from Randolph Union High School commented that we need to work to make sure Vermont has the talent to fill available jobs. Coordinate with schools and HR directors to expose students to jobs that are available whether pursuing 4-year degree or going to work out of high school. He knows of one company with 100 employees that wants to be in Vermont, but most of their employees are in Denver and California, and only six are in the Upper Valley.

Sarah Carpenter asked what talent(s) is missing, what's needed to provide training, and how to reach young adults who "missed the boat" in high school? How do we get companies to be willing to train them? Ken said there are several programs out there, mentioning Vermont DOL and the Vermont business roundtable, and offered to follow up with Sarah.

Bob added that every business manager they talk to has the same problem. It's all levels of programmers, nurses, trades, and services. Bringing people in from out of state might work to a degree. Ken is even going to the elementary school level and asking what kinds of jobs do they know about? For example, they have program to introduce students to engineering working with Dubois and King.

Judith Irving from Fat Toad Farm commented that they're lucky to find talented people, but they don't get a lot of applications. They want to pay good wage because that's what keeps them, but it's tough for small businesses. Young people have a lot of pressures, i.e. health care and college loans. Young people are looking for "perceived" opportunities out of state or in Burlington. They're excited about what's happening in Randolph. A place needs to have a sense of "forward motion" to attract young people. It's not a new problem.

Steve Reid from Fat Toad Farm commented that all their employees are under 32 except themselves. Company has been profitable two out of ten years, but the portion of their budget that goes to wages increases every year. Are finally reaching point where they hope to be more consistently profitable and offer benefits.

Judith: They don't use any immigrant labor but try to turn part timers to full time when they can. During slow time basically pay employees to not make caramel, may work on marketing and sales. Brookfield is rural, not a lot of options for immigrant workers. Car required, business is no longer a farm. Geographically not an easy place to work.

Bob commented that housing, transportation, and high-speed access (especially for young people) are huge issues. Any number of jobs require high speed access. Companies that have recruited from elsewhere found because of the cost of housing and transportation, people must want to come to Vermont for other reasons. Companies like GW and Hypotherm are trying to grow from within, help employees who want to pursue a degree, work with the local schools.

Roger Glovsky commented that housing and jobs are related to economic development as a whole. Boost to Vermont's economy will come from entrepreneurs. We need to train and support independently minded Vermonters to develop their own businesses which will attract more workers to the state faster than anything else.

Margaret Murray commented that she is concerned that the hearing schedule as a whole does not fit into working people's schedule. She's most bothered by public meetings that are not as open to the public as they should be. Most of the participants are there representing agencies.

She said there are too many entities asking for tax money. Her main concern is the amount of tax money being spent without public oversight. Her requests are for hearings to be open to the public and having one place where a person can see how much was spent on housing in total. Margaret commented about a legal notice of a bond sale that was in the paper. Sarah Carpenter explained the notice. Margaret also commented about Housing Vermont's annual report. Kenn Sassorossi explained how Housing Vermont finances housing development.

Josh added that the Legislature requires DHCD to write a report every year that combines all the housing money and will send her the link. Ann Kroll added that today's hearing is at the high level about the state's program but there is a lot of public input at the community level as the applications for projects come from select boards and those hearings are always after hours.

Ken Cadow commented about an experience he had with students in Randolph when they stopped at a small general store to get something to eat and not finding any good food. It's easy to work from home with high speed access, but people don't want to commute for groceries. It's hard to get people to move to those towns. He added that money is needed to explore educating people about healthy eating.

As no one else wished to comment, Josh Hanford closed the hearing at 6 pm.