



# MAD RIVER VALLEY VERMONT

## Mad River Valley For Local Opportunities (FLO) Committee

### Minutes

November 28, 2018, 2:30 pm EDT  
Waitsfield Town Office

#### FLO Attendees:

Jared Cadwell; Bob Ackland; Peter MacLaren; Don Simonini; Jasmine Bigelow; and Darryl Forrest  
Guests: Michael Levine; Bob Cook Waitsfield

Jared called the meeting to order at 2:33PM

#### Additions to agenda:

Don asked for time to discuss Liza and adding some docs to the web site.

Peter asked to include the outreach doc from Michael.

Jared asked for minutes approval. Unanimously approved.

Bob commented that he was concerned that the Waitsfield SB said we cannot continue with community outreach without their approval. He does not believe they have this authority.

Jared explained that there may be issues to be resolved with the Charter but there is no reason we should not be able to go to the public. We all spoke about remaining focused on the task at hand, which is to demonstrate to the public the value of the FLO proposal.

Darryl confirmed that the meeting has been arranged to present again to the Waitsfield SB on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

Jared explained his conversations with VLCT and Karen Horn and he explained what she said about the political reality that our 3 - town charter may be ahead of its time. Tax collection by a 3-town commission may be seen as usurping the authority of the towns and set an unwanted precedent.

Bob spoke about the MRVPD and its uniqueness and believes that our unique situation should form the basis for getting the Charter approved. More research is needed, and Bob and Jared are going to investigate further.

We reiterated that we agreed two meetings back that bringing the FLO proposal to a vote at the 2019 town meetings was no longer realistic and that we should maybe look to a special ballot in the May-June time frame. Darryl, Bob and Peter expressed concern we will lose momentum if we delay any further than that.

Jasmine expressed concern about going to the voters if we do not fully understand the legal side of this situation. It would be embarrassing if people vote yes and we then have this legal issue get in the way of making things happen.

Peter suggested we really dig into this issue of the Charter, given that we have concluded before that the charter is best approach if possible. A simple MOU among the towns, as suggested by Kari as an

alternative, would make it much easier for a town to divert the use of the funds – and this type of action following the introduction of a LOT has caused significant issues in other towns. It is very important that we have a credible structure that ensures the funds are used in the way that voters approve.

Don expressed understanding that some people were concerned about the bonding, loans etc. documented in the draft Charter. Bob confirmed that these items have now been removed in the current version. Jared said we should not feel bad for presenting what we did. It is a work in process.

Peter proposed that we work in parallel to reach out to the public to get feedback and input to the FLO proposal, while also addressing the Charter. We expect that most voters are much more interested in giving feedback on the overall intent, rather than the legalese of the implementation, which is more of a concern for the Selectboards.

Jared agreed with the parallel approach and recommended that we move ahead with public outreach. We agreed that that we should go ahead with a community outreach public meeting on the week of the 10<sup>th</sup> before the SB meeting of the 17<sup>th</sup>, as there is no reasonable time after that before the Christmas holiday period. A meeting at the Waitsfield Meeting House may be possible and Jared will see what can be firmed up.

For the Chamber coffee meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup>, Jared asked if we could make the PPT a bit shorter and Bob agreed to work on this. We also agreed that we should plan to present the shorter PPT at the Waitsfield SB meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> to help the board members better understand the process.

We discussed a reply to Kari's letter. We agreed that a reply from Darryl was necessary and we will work on drafting this reply over the coming week.

Bob & Jasmine discussed the work done to date leading up to the FLO Proposal. Also recognizing that to a very large extent what the FLO is addressing is making the 3 town plans a reality rather than the book shelf documents they tend to be today, in the absence of financial resources to make things happen.

Bob reviewed the PPT changes that he and Jasmine have collaborated on to address some of the apparent gaps in understanding when he presented the initial version. In particular to show how the grant process is intended to work.

We spoke about the experience Trevor has had previously with LOT proposals that may be influencing some of his concerns, and we reflected that those plans were not nearly as well organized as what we are proposing.

Is there a better way to describe affordable workforce housing? We agreed that this wording seems a good match for the housing challenge in the Valley.

Michael asked why we dropped some specifics in the revised PPT. Feedback has suggested that it can be a distraction from the larger message, however we will still have the detail in back-ups charts to address questions.

60% of sales tax will come from Waitsfield. If we add in all rooms, meals, liquor the Waitsfield % is less than 60% however these details seem to be causing some concern among the Waitsfield SB for some reason. We agreed that we need to reinforce again in our presentation the importance of addressing the Valley's challenges on a Valley wide basis.

We discussed the possible concern of the Waitsfield Selectboard about having the first public meeting before we meet again with them on the 17<sup>th</sup>. We agreed to explain informally to the members that the growing level of dialog in conversations, in the VR and on FPF clearly indicates that a community meeting is needed to help those interested to get a first-hand understanding of what is being proposed, and not just have the dialog be based on the spillover information from the reports of the Board meetings.

Don proposed business cards with contact information of the web site.

Jasmine asked to make the URL more understandable. We will ask Mariah to change the page address to [mrvpd.org/FLO](http://mrvpd.org/FLO).

Discussed if we would cross a line if we used the Planning District for advocacy vs. just information, and do we need a separate website. For now the focus is on information distribution. To be discussed again later if needed.

Peter suggested that is very important to benchmark communities who have the LOT and their experiences with the LOT for business.

Peter mentioned some insightful feedback from one of the Chamber's lodging members who pointed out that part of the issue with affordable rental housing is that there are indications that some existing long-term rental properties are being turned into short-term rentals often by out of state owners, leveraging booking channels like Airbnb.

There is a related issue with Airbnb as they collect rooms tax for rentals booked through their site and remit it to the State. However, it is not clear that the arrangement that the Dept of Taxes made with Airbnb provides a basis for collecting LOT and remitting to the towns. Peter will investigate further.

On the other hand, online sales companies like Amazon apparently do collect LOT tax where applicable, and the State can pass these proceeds along to the towns. Donald will follow up to verify this point.

Takeaways & things to do:

- Bob will continue the good work on PP
- Jared will check the availability of the Meeting House
- Jared will discuss the proposed public meeting on the week of the 10th with Jon and Darryl
- Don will look into Business cards with the FLO ULR printed on them
- Jasmine will continue networking with Ned and Eric on the outreach plan, with the help of Michael's outline.
- Jared will drill down on Charter legal stuff
- Jasmine will reach out to her friends in Stowe about their business after their LOT.
- Bob indicated that he had seen data about Killington having increases in rooms and lodging AFTER the LOT – he will follow up to get this information
- Michael will collaborate with Don on FAQs
- Meeting next week 2PM December 5<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting adjourned at 4:10pm

Submitted by Don Simonini, with edits by Peter MacLaren, Jared Cadwell