

Bennington County Regional Commission - 2020

The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) works with and on behalf of its member municipalities to build strong, resilient, and sustainable communities, to foster economic prosperity, and to promote a high quality of life for residents of the region. The BCRC plays an important role in coordinating work among local governments, state and federal agencies, regional public and nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and private interests.

In addition to its ongoing role in supporting the comprehensive planning work of municipal officials and volunteer boards and commissions, the BCRC serves as a regional center for work in community and economic development, transportation, energy, environmental conservation, water quality, solid waste management, and emergency management. The BCRC regularly conducts and sponsors public meetings and workshops on these topics.

During the past year, the BCRC has worked to implement its comprehensive plan through a variety of programs and cooperative work with member municipalities. Economic development planning in the region has become one of the BCRC's main program areas. Economic development planning at the BCRC, including dedicated staff directed by a committee with representatives appointed by the regional development corporation, supports business retention, growth, and recruitment. The BCRC also has provided support for the Putnam Block project in Bennington's downtown and is cooperating with local and state officials on new redevelopment initiatives in downtowns and village centers. Concern over the state's water quality has led the BCRC to identify and implement local projects that not only reduce stormwater runoff, but also protect roads, bridges, culverts, and private property. Other important accomplishments have included: assistance with updates to several municipal comprehensive plans and land use bylaws, development of municipal energy plans and support for local energy committees, village center and neighborhood development area designations and successful grant applications, implementation of the regional solid waste management plan in cooperation with the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance, and planning for roadway, bicycle and pedestrian, public transportation improvements.

Like everyone, the BCRC has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The office transitioned to remote work and meetings in April and, while staff have recently started spending some time in the office, it generally is easiest to contact us via email (see contacts at www.bcrcvt.org). Fortunately, technology has allowed us to continue work on all of our projects with little interruption in progress. Of course, significant staff resources have been dedicated to providing assistance to businesses and municipalities as they work to navigate the challenges associated with changes to the way operations are conducted, with staffing and revenue disruptions, and to chart a course forward through and beyond the current crisis.

The BCRC is governed by locally appointed commissioners from seventeen area municipalities and commissioners who represent interests ranging from public health to economic development. As of January 2021, our offices will have relocated to 210 South Street in Bennington, and post-pandemic, we expect to have regular office hours at the

Manchester Town Offices as well. Regular meetings are held on the third Thursday of every other month, with frequent special meetings throughout the year (information at: www.bcrcvt.org).

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Sullivan, Director