

CFED –Commission Meeting, July 15, 2008, 10-11:30am
Vermont College Campus – The Union Institute and University
36 College Street, Montpelier
College Hall, The Chapel

This meeting took place in advance of the public outreach meeting for Central Vermont.

Attending: Bill Botzow, Sam Matthews, Jay Kenlan, Mary Niebling, Hinda Miller, Will Patten,
Staige Davis

Absent: Kevin Dorn, Fred Kenny, Dan Kurzman, Mary Lintermann, Dave Mount

Guests/Staff: Glenn McRae, Charlie Smith, Nathan Lavery (JFO)

Jay Kenlan opened the meeting at 10am.

The minutes of the June 16, 2008 meeting were accepted as presented.

The central agenda item was to review the goals exercise and develop a method to approach goals setting for CFED, to be followed by benchmarking, after the public engagement session had concluded. Some, but not all, commissioners brought copies of priority goals statement.

Nathan Lavery (JFO) presented an example of another state's goals exercise that he thought could provide some guidance.

Will Patten cautioned that in setting goals and priorities it was just as important to point out clearly what the state is not going to do for economic development.

Jay Kenlan presented ideas for how to start to rank goals and prioritize (as a starting point for further discussion)

- cost of implementation
- is it under our control to influence
- what is really measurable
- how does it connect to our vision for Vermont
- is it proven to work elsewhere – track record
- does it have a measurable return on investment
- does it lead to economic diversification (a goal?)
 - geography, workforce, sector

Sam Matthews asked whether it would be possible for the CFED to come up with a clear bold initiative that would drive all other goals and efforts – what could be really prioritized rather than just do a lot of the same old thing. And what can be done without new dollars.

Hinda Miller offered up that there was no magic bullet. The political decision making layer will need to be acknowledged. CFED needs to add its voice very clearly to the discussions of what is important to Vermont. Much of what is needed is known (telecom, transportation, energy prices). What is the new driver to emphasize? Hinda suggested that it is the “green economy.”

Mary Niebling: If we know what sectors of the economy are thriving, even in bad times, we need to focus on the attributes that are driving them: Vermont brand, green, local. Vermont can capitalize on this and build exports as well as meet local needs. State support and activity should be focused. Focus on what we can control and where we can compete.

Bill Botzow: Need to be thinking about next steps, how to frame our work, develop clear goals and place value on them. Need to keep focused and understand how to measure.

Will Patten: I keep hearing common themes that indicate areas that need to be addressed before other efforts will bear fruit, e.g., inefficient and contradictory permit process (good goals not matched by good process); infrastructure (physical, social, technological).

Staige Davis: Need a strong economy first to meet social goals and investment in infrastructure. How green do we need to be? Need short term and long term goals. We need to speak to the economy as it is now and build toward the economy we want. What works elsewhere? We don't need to reinvent everything. What can we do to jump start private sector action. We need to focus.

Hinda Miller: Need to be able to make investments that are valued. Economists at the state and legislature current see investments by the state as a negative on the balance sheet.

Will Patten: Job of government is to support an environment in which business can prosper.

Bill Botzow: Vermont has to differentiate itself.

Will Patten: That is what all states do. What will make Vermont different?
Scale can work to Vermont's benefit. We can do things state-wide that other states cannot imagine.

Sam Matthews: Need to think about the basic first steps that will make a real difference at a policy level before investment. What generates good public transit to support businesses and communities is good land use planning. This is a basic precursor to infrastructure investment that will make a difference.

NEXT

- Get all commissioners to submit draft goals; generate a master list; look for basic agreement
- Jay, Will, Bill will work on retreat agenda and set up a basic matrix