



Windham Regional Commission

October 2009

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www.rpc.windham.vt.us

Local Emergency Planning Committee 6 has a new website ready to be used!

www.lepc.windham.vt.us

Area Farmers are Eligible for Microloans; Workshop Planned

Many Vermont and Western Massachusetts farmers are eligible to apply for loans from the Strolling of the Heifers Microloan Fund for New England Farmers. The deadline for the current round of applications is November 27. Loan applications for amounts ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000, for terms up to five years, will be accepted from prequalified applicants.

Applications are limited to farms located in Western Massachusetts (Berkshire, Hampshire, Hampden and Franklin Counties) and Vermont with a primary focus on small-sized farms that use sustainable and organic methods (or are moving toward them), and that are marketing at least a portion of their products locally. Also, to be eligible, farms should have no more than 250 acres in active production, and annual gross revenue of no more than \$250,000.

Loans may be used for capital investments and other expenses that help improve efficiency or quality, or that expand production and sales; repairs necessary to maintain farm operations; short term operating needs such as inventory, supplies or labor; and emergency funds to deal with business interruptions from fire, natural disasters, or other unforeseen events.

Prequalification questionnaires are available at www.thecarrotproject.org/farm_financing. Applicants may also email info@thecarrotproject.org or phone Dorothy Suput at 617-666-9637.

An educational workshop for interested farmers will be held at 10 a.m. on Wed., Nov. 4 at the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture office in Amherst. The workshop will cover whether credit is right for your farm business, and how the Microloan Fund and other financing and business planning resources can help.

To learn more about the workshop or to register online, visit www.thecarrotproject.org, contact workshop@thecarrotproject.org or call 617-666-9637.

The Microloan Fund is a joint project of Strolling of the Heifers, of Brattleboro, Vt., an organization that works to help sustain family farms, and The Carrot Project of Somerville, Mass.

On the web:

www.thecarrotproject.org and
www.strollingoftheheifers.com.



Transportation Board Public Hearing

The WRC and SWCRPC will be hosting the 2009 Transportation Board Public Hearing. The general public is encouraged to attend. The hearing format is open and many transportation topics can be discussed.

Topics that have been discussed in past hearings include: bridge maintenance, scenic byways, public transit, bicycle movement on state highways, passenger rail movement in the state, and access management. This board is responsible for the regulatory and quasi-judicial functions relating to transportation, providing appellate review in regards to issues of transportation when requested, conduct public hearings for the public interest and hear and determine disputes involving the decision of a select board of this title not to plow and make negotiable a class 2 or 3 town highway or section of a highway during the winter (Title 19 VSA Chaps 1&3).

The Public Hearing will take place at the Selectboard's meeting room (3rd floor) in the Springfield Town Office (96 Main Street) at 6:30 PM on Tuesday, Nov. 3. Please contact Matt Mann (mmann@sover.net, x120), with any questions.

Town Highway Bridge Project Candidate Rankings

The Transportation Committee devoted its entire October meeting to discussion of a completely new task in the Transportation Planning Initiative. In September, the VTrans came to the Committee with a request for assistance in obtaining local and regional perspective on prioritizing local bridge projects as candidates for state funding. VTrans expressed purpose is to establish a “list which reflects the current condition of Vermont’s Town Highway bridges and their priority for repair *based on condition and importance to the community.*” Discussion at the October Transportation Committee meeting centered on efforts to help all our region towns identify the bridges that merit consideration as candidate projects with the state. Factors considered in criteria for evaluating prospective candidate projects include:

- Extent of structural and functional deficiency (Data provided by VTrans inspections)
- How important/critical a bridge/project is to the community and region.
- Alternative routes, detours, or emergency access.
- Traffic volume. (Data may be provided by VTrans.)
- Other factors influencing local importance. For example: Existing or planned service facilities or economic development; or a bridge that serves a relatively small number of residents, but where only alternate route would add major time for daily commuting, or would potentially cause congestion.

The expectation is that this process will become a regular annual review, but this first year the time available is limited. Information on prospective bridge projects will need to be submitted to the WRC by November 11th in order to be considered for inclusion on the candidate list in VTrans FY2011 budget. Later submissions will be taken up for consideration for FY2012 or later.

WRC staff has already sent all the Region towns a request for information in this process. As of the October meeting, seven towns had responded. This week, a follow up request will go to Selectboards, Town Managers or Administrative Assistants, as well as to Road Commissioners and/or Foremen. Any town may ask for a bridge to be added or removed from the initial list. It is also conceivable that a town may want to support inclusion of a bridge that serves their town, but is not located in it. Each town may nominate up to 3 bridges, and is asked to rank these in order of their priority. Information for adding a bridge to the list should include:



- Identification of bridge: Bridge number, or road carried by the bridge; name of what the bridge is crossing
- Why the town thinks the bridge should be on the list. (Note the evaluation criteria above.)
- In the case of asking to remove or switch a bridge from the list, town should also explain reason(s.)

VTrans has limited the total number of bridges submitted to a maximum of eight from each Regional Planning Commission. Determination of those eight will be made at the WRC Transportation Committee meeting on 16 November. While VTrans will make the ultimate determination on priority, the local and regional input from the process described above could move a project up in that ranking.