

Creating Change at the Local Level

The average Vermont community has a population of just over 2,500 folks. Generally, about 100 people do most of the civic and volunteer work of the community collectively creating the rules, regulations and direction the community takes.

Being a citizen of 'high civic value' may allow you to accomplish things that you would never have thought possible. As a local government 'junkie' myself over the last 42 years, I want to stimulate your thinking about what you might be able to do to advance the equine industry in your community.

Here are the areas I would like to touch on:

- Planning and Zoning including Regional Planning
- Trails Committees, Recreation Committees and local Land Trusts.
- Managing your Property Tax Assessment

Towns write and adopt their own Plans and Land Use Regulations

- Land Uses can be permitted, conditional or prohibited
- An Equine business can be viewed very differently town to town

Regional Planning takes the lead with highway projects

- 10% of the budget for a Federally Assisted Project can go for 'Enhancements'. In Charlotte we got a below grade trail crossing in this manner.

Trails Committee

- A town can adopt a master trails plan and it can be used to gain trail segments as a community grows and develops. Also trails grants can be acquired

Recreation Committees

- Can also take up and support equine activities although traditionally they don't

Local Land Trusts or Conservation Funds

- Can leverage significant state and federal funding
- Vermont 'led the way' and created the national funding system – thanks Patrick!

Local Property Tax Assessments

- The current system whacks square footage
- There are three kinds of depreciation applied to structures
- Functional depreciation is not sufficiently applied to single purpose structures
- Comparable sales are often not available in your community
- Collecting and distributing this data might be useful to VHC members.
- The value of a business is often woven into the price and/or assessment of an Equine business

Hope we got some hay down where the horses could get it! Regards, Clark Hinsdale 4-27-24