



Testimony to the House Commerce Committee from RDC's of Vermont President Bob Flint, of Springfield Regional Development Corporation, 1/26/16

Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you, as always, for the opportunity to speak about the RDC's of Vermont and our work in economic development throughout the state.

Last year, we had the honor of hosting this committee in Southern Windsor County for a series of visits. You may remember a meeting we held in Windsor's Artisans' Park, in the Silo Vodka building, where we discussed SRDC's role in facilitating that project as well as our development and ownership of the Vermont Farmstead Cheese building.

If you were to come to Artisans' Park today, you would see a construction site for the new 6,000 square foot facility that SRDC is building, through VEDA financing, for Blake Hill Preserves, which will open this summer. This will allow an existing Vermont company to continue to grow and expand, as well as establish a retail presence and demonstration area.

When the committee drove to Springfield, we went past the large former machine tool buildings that SRDC owns and is working towards cleaning up and redeveloping. The bus then took us to the One Hundred River Street redevelopment, which SRDC continues to facilitate, including the operation of the Great Hall, where the committee held a public hearing.

All of the above are some of the activities that SRDC has undertaken above, and beyond, our contractual relationship with the Agency of Commerce & Community Development. The Regional Development Corporations of Vermont proudly work with ACCD and the Department of Economic Development to serve our communities and the businesses that drive our state's economy. Within our individual regions, we also work with our boards to help "make things happen" in ways that may be different, just as areas of our state are distinct, as are their needs.

Below are some examples from several RDC's of projects that we are involved in around Vermont:

Addison County (ACEDC) –

- Operate 4 revolving loan funds. Currently have 26 loans outstanding.
- Run several peer group roundtables: one for HR directors of our larger employers and one for safety managers. We are developing another roundtable for small business owners. I also run a monthly meeting for 7 businesses that are working on their own marketing plans for their businesses and wanted to be a support and feedback group for one another. (This came out of a Marketing Bootcamp workshop we developed and ran in October.)
- We ran a Green Energy Grant Program where we gave five \$500 grants to organizations that wanted to do green energy projects that would have an impact. There was a "but for" clause and a 1-1 match required.

- Created the Addison County Development Cabinet 5 years ago with our regional partners, including DOL, CCV, Hannaford Career Center, United Way, SBDC, ACRPC, ACTR (our local transit co.), local Chamber of Commerce, downtown business groups, and VT Adult Learning. We have developed a vision for the County, use the national Opportunity Index to measure results, and are currently focusing on finding ways our group can help reduce the number of Disconnected Youth) in the county.

Lamoille County (LEDC) –

- Underwriters for www.vermontlandlink.org <<http://www.vermontlandlink.org/>>. This is a statewide website that links farm owners to potential farm buyers and leasees.
- Providing professional marketing services and underwrite website development and upgrade services for farmers and value-added producers
- Continuing to work with other stakeholders to determine feasibility of developing a virtual business incubator, perhaps associated with Johnson State College and work with potential local developers on a bricks and mortar incubator space of some kind.
- Working with the Town of Morristown and the Town of Johnson to develop new industrial parks in both towns. With Johnson we are likely going to end up as the Project Manager
- In April of 2015 we sold a building in Cambridge and used most of the proceeds to re-capitalize our Lamoille County Revolving Loan Fund, which now contains \$500,000 in assets.

Franklin County (FCIDC) –

- FCIDC has taken the lead role of a two million dollar water plant upgrade for the Georgia Industrial Development Corporation. The upgrade is being made to an existing water plant which is currently 33 years old. The primary water user is Perrigo Nutritionals which makes baby formula and without the waterplant the State will lose 350 jobs.
- FCIDC recently received a \$246,000 grant from the Northern Border Regional Commission that FCIDC will match with \$250,000 loan from VEDA. The \$500,000 will be used to further the installation of the infrastructure in the St. Albans Town Industrial Park in order to access 3 additional lots.
- The FCIDC Board of Directors is meeting on Tuesday 1/26 with Vermont Precision Tools re: the potential expansion of our Multi-tenant Facility. Preliminary cost estimates are at \$2.5 million. The project could create 50 jobs
- FCIDC also continues to commit \$10,000 per year to hire a consultant to work the Quebec region creating partnerships and contacts in an effort to promote Franklin County. We are currently in a strong discussion with a company hoping to locate in Franklin County.

Central Vermont (CVEDC) –

- Since 2013, we have applied for and received two \$1M CDBG-DR Grant, along with the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation and Capstone. The three entities administered these grants and assisted over 80 businesses in the two regions with their

recovery from Tropical Storm Irene. CVEDC identified the businesses, assisted them with their applications, sat on the award panel and did follow-up work with the businesses.

- We also strive to identify emerging business sectors. To that end, we have co-hosted two events at the Statehouse. On January 30, 2013, we organized the Gaming Day in Room 11. Along with Local 64, we brought 12 'Gaming Industry' businesses to the Statehouse to inform the Legislature and members of the Administration on the breadth and depth of this sector. 'Gamers' are involved in developing software and programs for not only the video sector but also the medical, financial, and security sectors.

- On March 19, 2015, we again co-hosted a day -long event in Room 11 of the Statehouse on the 'Maker's Sector'. Along with 'The Generator' of Burlington, we brought 10 'Maker's ' to the Statehouse to display their products and services and to discuss this emerging sector that incorporates both the 'Creative Economy' and the more traditional manufacturing sector.

- We manage a Revolving Loan Fund for High-speed wireless Internet in our region. We have brought Internet service to un and under -served municipalities in our region for the last five years.

Lake Champlain Islands (LCIEDC) –

- LCIEDC has worked with a new business to open a meat processing facility in Grand Isle town. This has included assisting with state and federal permits as well as the development of training programs with Vermont Technical College and the Hannaford Technical Center for the future-processing workforce. LCIEDC is also assisting the owner in marketing the new facility to farm owners in the region.

- LCIEDC has been the facilitator for the first ever Business Expo in the Lake Champlain Islands, which will take place on February 6th. Thus far, LCIEDC has 19 businesses signed up to participate in the Expo.

- LCIEDC is also the Grand Isle County Natural Resource Conservation District administrator and management leader. In this role, LCIEDC acts as a convener and facilitator of the countywide soil and water conservation efforts, working with local farmers and landowners. All strategic planning, reporting and implementation work will be overseen by the District Supervisors and LCIEDC.

Northeast Kingdom (NVDA) -

- NVDA is drafting the new CEDS for the six-county northern VT region, which should be completed by the end of February, 2016.

- With VQEI and our Quebec ED partners, we are planning a B2B event at Jay Peak Resort in the Spring of 2016. We have also been responding to miscellaneous requests from our Quebec counterparts to connect Canadian businesses with VT businesses.

- Assisted VTrans with obtaining a \$250,000 Northern Borders Regional Commission grant for an expanded wastewater system at the Newport State Airport.

- Continue to own, and operate, the Orleans Industrial Park. NVDA currently as a purchase option for a 10-acre parcel in the Park.

Rutland Economic Development Corporation (REDC) –

- Creating a one-stop location to support current and future business growth and development. This includes collocation at Castleton Downtown between the Center for Entrepreneurship, Center for Community Engagement, the Small Business Development Center, the Vermont Procurement Technical Assistance Center (connecting government contracts for products and services with Vermont based businesses) and the Polling Institute.
- Co-locating with the Rutland Young Professionals; delivering professional development to their organization and supporting activities including the Young Professionals Summit of Vermont
- Offering research options to local, regional and state-wide organizations and businesses. The Castleton Polling Institute can provide essential data on current and future trends that will influence the economy. In addition, the Polling Institute employs individuals in part-time positions throughout the year, helping students and non-students with income options that were not available to them before.

Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation (GMEDC) –

- GMEDC provided assistance to Britton Lumber after a devastating fire with a resulting insurance shortfall. Similar assistance was provided to Pompanoosuc Mills for training and peer consultation, GW Plastics and Maponics.
- Involved with Brownfield redevelopment , with notable success in Bradford for Farmway. Final due diligence for two sites in Hartford is underway. GMEDC hopes to participate at successor landlord at a Federal Superfund site in Strafford /Thetford for a solar project.
- Assisting with TIF planning in downtown WRJCT for storm water separation to enable further redevelopment for office, affordable housing and a theatre project, as well as final planning of an Industrial Park on Sykes Avenue which GMEDC hopes to develop in a Designated Growth Center at the intersection of I89 and I91.

Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) –

- The Windham Economic Development Program is moving forward. Since September, the WCEDP's project manager has met with over 30 businesses and 15 non-profits who were interested in program funding. This month along, 3 letters of intent have been approved at the local level.
- BDCC is working to enhance business retention and expansion efforts through refining the ability to provide a complex suite of financing tools and tax efficient collaborative services to help leverage the value of state, regional and federal programs.
- In the last year, the BDCC led, or participated in, writing, submitting and receiving grants on behalf of 7 Windham Region businesses over the last 12 months that totaled \$7.8 million.

SeVEDS-led initiatives operating out of the BDCC offices -

- For workforce development, developed a new position to help bridge the gap between

educators and the school system as well as created an Intern Program that has placed over 55 students with a 20% hire rate.

- Developing a Green Building Cluster, which includes identification of up to 4 niche markets and development of up to 12 high-value business opportunities for existing firms or new companies. Support resources will be created to assist with program implementation.

The Regional Development Corporation structure provides a coordinated statewide vehicle for economic development delivery in Vermont. While we all have regional differences, we all share the same goal – to serve as the one-stop shop for existing value-added companies, including facilitation of available state resources, as well as assisting those looking to start a business, in partnership with the Small Business Development Center. This means we work with the largest employers in our regions, but also the single-person with a great idea, and everything in-between.

Our partnership with the Department of Economic Development helps to leverage additional funding to direct economic development projects in our respective regions as well as serving as the economic development delivery system for the State.

As always, please let me know what other information I, or the RDC's of Vermont, can provide. We appreciate the opportunity to be of service to our great state!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Flint'.

Bob Flint
President – RDC's of Vermont