

Barre Area Development, Inc.

Barre Area Development is a 501 (c) 6 non-profit corporation established for the purpose of providing economic opportunities and development in the Barre Area. This mission is a broad and includes all activities for the general welfare of City and Town inhabitants in the areas of commercial and industrial development, recreation, agriculture, financial assistance, promotion and real estate development and management. The budget for BADC is funded equally by the City and Town.

A major economic development asset for the Town and the region is the Wilson Industrial Park (WIP). This year the Town paved Pitman Road and down Parker Road to Highland Sugarworks. BADC met with WIP businesses to discuss their needs in the Park and out of it. In general, they are satisfied with the location and made some modest requests, including removal of a tree that was in the sight line of the Industrial Park sign and traffic, and the publication of better directions to WIP for trucks. The tree was removed by the Town and BADC is completing an interactive map of the park with travel directions. BADC conducted a survey of WIP businesses for the purpose of obtaining information for potential funding of additional infrastructure improvements. Based on survey returns, there are approximately 360 persons working in WIP who support an additional 25 employees working off site, and another 20 employees are expected to be hired within a year. The latter is evidenced by a planned expansion of New England Excess Exchange which begins with more parking, and also may result in facility expansions to accommodate growth. During the past year, SoVerNet, a Vermont based Telecommunications Company, expressed interest in providing high speed fiber service in WIP, and has now commenced installation of it. This will improve data services and competition within WIP, generally considered to be advantageous for all users.

Since BADC no longer owns any property in WIP, it legally turned over its original covenants, which regulates some lands use, over to the Town since it has nearly identical covenants for the addition to WIP created by the Town. BADC and the Board of Selectmen mutually agreed that this action will eliminate any confusion among property owners and businesses about who is responsible for enforcement. At the current time, there are many solar projects proposed for Barre Town, and even though BADC supports the rights of property owners to maximize the economic value of their assets, we have concerns about the minimal control that municipalities have over siting, the State mandated reduction in property taxes, and the development of solar farms on public property that has been developed for industrial and commercial development to create jobs and add to the Grand List.

The Agency of Transportation Project Manager for the Quarry Hill Project indicated that work at the intersection of Quarry Street and Route 14 at the bottom of the hill is slated for construction in 2017 following the completion of Right of Way acquisition and utility relocation at the end of 2016. This work may coincide with work along Route 14 from Bridge Street to Spaulding High School. State funded transportation projects sometimes do not commence as scheduled and BADC will follow-up and lobby for the completion of this important work that provides access and egress from Websterville Road, Graniteville, the Industrial Park and the granite quarries, and is the only the route for heavy commercial traffic heading west and south.

The Barre Loan Fund became operational this year. It is funded by repayments made to Town from a loan made to SB Electronics resulting from a grant from the State to the Town in 2009. Based on an agreement between the Town and the Vermont Community Loan Fund (VCLF), VCLF will be the underwriter and administrator of loans in Barre Town and Barre City for the purpose of creating or retaining employment that benefits low and moderate income households. BADC will market the loans in the area and review VCLF analyses and recommendations for loans that must be approved by the Town Select Board. So far, one loan was made to an employee for the purchase Bob's Camera and Video.

BADC is now working with the Developer of 1 Bridge Street, a modest 6,000 square foot, retail plaza in South Barre with marketing and tenancy. Based on inquiries and feedback from businesses seeking space, the Barre Area and the region are challenged to meet the needs of producers and mixed use businesses in the range of 1,500 to 4,000 sq. ft. Anyone with space that can meet that need is urged to contact the BADC office at 476-0660.

Following-up on the last 2 years of data, the Town's Gross Income per return in 2013 increased 3.8% from 2012. Based on 2013 Vermont Tax Returns, the Town's Adjusted Gross Income per Return was \$ 68,772, \$2,498 higher than 2012, and 9.3% higher than the Statewide figure. On a completed calendar year basis ending in 2014, gross sales receipts and retail sales receipts in Barre Town are up 6.5% and 13.9% over 2013. Retail sales are defined by the State as "the sale of goods to the public in relatively small quantities for use or consumption rather than for resale."

BADC works with the City as well as the Town, and has assists development and businesses in the City. Since last reporting, the BADC wrote applications for Enterprise Aly redevelopment that resulted in \$1,362,000 of grant awards to the project, BADC helped Granite City Grocery obtain a grant of \$19,830 for membership development and branding, and worked the Barre Partnership, the City's downtown Main Street organization, to obtain \$35,000 for the Barre Antiques Collaborative, a joint venture of antique dealers in the area to work together to market Barre as a convenient, central location in Vermont "antiquing," which, according to Vermont's Department of Tourism and Marketing, turns out to be the second most requested information from travelers to Vermont. BADC's "Barre-centric" outlook which assumes that **ALL** activity in both the City and Town benefits everyone residing here is a good fit for new marketing strategies evolving that emphasizes community identity as a sense of place. With all that the City and Town has going for it, this should not be difficult. During 2016, BADC wishes to collaborate with all of the exceptional organizations in Barre, too many to enumerate, to make it the place to be.

The Board of Directors thanks the Barre Town taxpayers for their support.

Respectfully submitted,
Joel Schwartz

Elected Officers as of July 2015

President – Karl Rinker, (Rinker Communications) (FCS Enterprises); Vice President, Sarah Field, (Attorney, Field and Field PC); - Secretary – Jonathan Shea, (Paige and Campbell, Insurance and Financial Services) Treasurer – Al Flory (Northfield Savings Bank); Past President – Pete Fournier (FCS Enterprises)