

Nomination for Citizen Planner Gary Gulka

Name of person or board: Gary Gulka

Contact Person(s): Jackie Cassino, CVRPC

The first three items are for citizen planner, citizen board and professional planner. Check just one of those, then go on and fill in as much information that you can to support that item.

Check one box only:

1. Serves as a volunteer on a committee, board or commission or as citizen activist
Names of board(s) Chair, Cabot Planning Commission
Citizen activist or neighborhood leader _____
2. Serves as a volunteer board for a municipality, region or state
Name of board _____
3. Serves as a professional planner on behalf of Vermont, on the local, regional or state level or in the private sector (for example, consultant).

Criteria:

4. About how many years has this individual or board committed to planning, as part of a group, program, initiative and/or cause? Give details:

The Town of Cabot, Vermont is small but complex. It contains the unincorporated villages of Cabot Village, Cabot Plains, South Cabot, East Cabot, Molly's Pond, and Lower Cabot. Cabot Village contains a village store, hardware store, post office, public school (Pre-K through 12), an inn, a fraternal hall, and a church. Formerly an incorporated village, Cabot Village disincorporated at the end of 2010 and reverted to the town of Cabot. Another village store is located in Lower Cabot. Cabot contains several ponds, and dairy farms. The population of Cabot Village is about 230, and the population of the whole town is about 1400.

The town has an active planning commission, a zoning board of adjustment, and a very part-time zoning administrator. Often towns of this size deal with planning and zoning at a very basic level, doing the minimum required by state law. But not Cabot, thanks to Gary Gulka.

Gary is chair of the planning commission, and has been active on the commission for 19 years. As a member of the commission, and primarily as chair, he has upheld that good planning is vital for the well-being of the town, and is focused on maintaining an enhanced planning process that gets sophisticated results for a town Cabot's size.

5. To what extent has the nominee's time and dedication increased the understanding of planning principles and the planning process as well as the goals of the organization of which he/she is a part? How has this advocacy role been pursued?

Gary goes above and beyond when it comes to planning. He has pushed the planning commission and the selectboard to do an extremely thorough plan, in its latest update. The new plan contains many smart growth principles, as well as detailed goals and strategies (which include those responsible for implementation, as well as implementation measures). It also contains a high level of analysis not normally found in small town plans, including a refined build-out analysis. The 2012 town plan can be found at the following link:
<http://www.cabotvt.us/planning.php>

Gary has also advocated for securing funding to conduct special studies, including a village study, as well as a complete streets one. He also had the town apply for a municipal planning grant to update their outdated zoning regulations, in order to bring them up to compliance with state requirements and to make sure they are consistent to the new town plan.

6. Within what sphere of influence has this effectiveness been realized (local, regional, statewide, national)?

Gary's sphere of influence is mainly local; he has had a strong influence there, making a big impact. But he and his work are also a good model for other communities in the region and the state. Thus his influence is potentially regional and state-wide.

7. To what extent has this person or board exhibited outstanding leadership in his, her or their endeavors? To what extent is this person or board respected and emulated by peers? List example(s)

As chair of the planning commission, he has exhibited strong leadership qualities, pushing for a higher and higher standard of planning than normally would be attained by a town this size. He takes on the initiative necessary to get outstanding results.

Gary is respected by his fellow planning commission members and selectboard members, as well as by other town officers and members of the community. In addition, staff from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, have a high degree of regard for him. Tara Rogerson, Town Clerk sums Gary's work up well, simply stating, "His volunteer efforts in Cabot has made this community a better place."

8. To what extent has the nominee been effective in formulating and implementing his/her plans and furthered the cause of planning?

Gary was instrumental in encouraging the selectboard to hire a full-time planner and zoning administrator for the first time in the town's history. He felt this was necessary for the town to accomplish all that they needed. Caleb Pitkin, until recently Selectboard Chair for over twelve years, had he following to say about Gary, "as chair of the PC, Gary has been responsible for countless

public surveys and public outreach efforts in conjunction with the development of the several town plans he has developed. He can take nearly full credit for (at least) our two most recent town plans.” In addition, Gary has maintained the Cabot Flood Hazard Bylaws, taken steps to initiate a PACE program in Cabot and is spearheading a redraft of the Cabot Zoning Regulations in 2013.

In addition, he was instrumental in organizing a community visit from the Council on Rural Development last year. The report from the visit can be found at the following web link: http://vtrural.org/webfm_send/630

9. Other – for example list involvement in public outreach and citizen engagement, or if this person or board has any publication related to planning.

As part of developing the new town plan, Gary led the planning commission in conducting a community survey in 2010, which was available to Town residents online and in print. The survey sought to gather opinions on the value of various resources and qualities of Cabot, such as small town character and natural features, historic buildings, and recreational facilities. It was also the first step in identifying the need for improvement in various areas, from Town facilities and services to conservation of resources. Another major outreach effort was a public visioning session held on September 13, 2010, designed to both develop a vision for the future of Cabot and help prioritize the issues that would be addressed in the Town Plan. About 40 Cabot residents attended the visioning session held at the Willey Building, which was facilitated by a community resource specialist from the University of Vermont extension office.

In February of 2011, a second survey was prepared and mailed to over 30 farming operations in Town, to try to get better insight into agricultural practices in Town. Summaries of both surveys and a detailed description of the Visioning meeting program are included in Appendix A of the town plan.

Public work sessions were scheduled throughout 2010 and early 2011 on every section of the Town Plan, and residents were kept apprised of progress through articles in the monthly Cabot Chronicle. Residents who provided an email contact to the Planning Commission were also notified by email of all upcoming work sessions.

Gary was also responsible for contacting the various local organizations, such as the Historical Society, the Performing Arts Center, the Joe’s Pond Association, the local newspaper, and the Neighborhood Watch, to get their input into the plan.



Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission

April 10, 2013

Vermont Planners Association Awards Committee,

I am writing this letter of recommendation in support of Gary Gulka's nomination for the Citizen Planner of the Year Award.

As the Executive Director of the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, I have had the privilege of working with Gary on a project specific basis for many years. Throughout much of this time, as the Cabot Planning Commission Chair, Gary has shown a continuous commitment to improving the quality of life for Cabot residents. Gary has not only served on the Cabot Planning Commission for 19 years, but also on a number of other committees, all on a volunteer basis.

Gary has been instrumental in ensuring that throughout the planning process, the Town of Cabot not only meets its basic statutory obligations, but also considers the broader perspective of long term planning for sustainability and public participation. Facing similar challenges that smaller rural communities are facing throughout the state of Vermont, Cabot continues to "think outside the box" when looking for solutions to the age old planning question, "Do we want growth to shape us or will we shape growth?"

It is with my deepest convictions that I recommend that Gary Gulka be selected as the recipient of this year's VPA Citizen Planner of the Year Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan M. Sinclair".

Susan Sinclair
Executive Director
CVRPC



Peg Elmer
3272 Rte 14N
So Royalton, VT 05068
802-522-3844

July 29, 2013

NNECAPA Awards Committee
c/o Polly McMurtry, VPA

Re: Nomination of Gary Gulka for 2013 Citizen Planner Award

Gary is an outstanding candidate for this award. He has chaired both the Cabot Planning Commission and Conservation Committee for eons – it must be decades. He's also served time representing the town on the regional planning commission and solid waste district.

Cabot is one of those rural towns where a few people wear many hats and make it a community. Gary is one of the handful of town residents who help Cabot keep ticking in a positive direction. All towns have a certain character; some are stronger, more fun and cohesive than others. Cabot is one of those really good places to live. Gary has played a continuing role with that.

Gary is a hard worker. Whatever issues Cabot has faced over the years, he has researched the resources available, brought good outside advice to the town as speakers or consultant assistance, and generally guided the town toward sound decisions. He brings a lively intelligence to his long history of serving the town from different angles, which results in a comprehensive view of its strengths and needs as well as wisdom and patience to ride the waves of political change.

Cabot has been very fortunate to have Gary Gulka on board as its principal volunteer planner for so many years! He deserves this award!

Sincerely,

Peg Elmer, AICP
NNECAPA Past President

Karen Deasy
Zoning Administrator

TOWN OF CABOT

PO Box 36
Cabot, Vermont 05647

Office (802) 568-3139

Fax (802) 568-2423

August 8, 2013

RE: NNECAPA Citizen Planner of the Year award

Members of the Committee,

The Town of Cabot is fortunate to have Gary Gulka as an active and committed member to planning in our community. Thru his efforts and work on the Planning Commission, the planning process in Cabot has become accessible. His work on the planning commission has been guided by the want to make our community a better place and one in which a sense of community can grow.

Thru supporting local businesses, farms and planned infrastructure coordinated with care for our environment all aspects of how a healthy community are engaged are involved. An eye to current goals and future growth have given him a keen perspective on shaping our town plan and zoning accommodating all of those needs for now and the future of the Town of Cabot.

We strongly support Gary's nomination for this award and his efforts for our community.

Respectfully,

Karen Deasy RA
Zoning Administrator, Planner
Town Of Cabot



April 10, 2013

Vermont Planners Association Awards Committee,

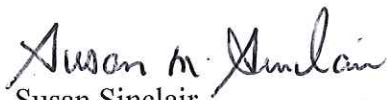
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