

MEMO

West Pawlet Village Center Master Plan

Public Meeting Notes **DRAFT**
Pot Luck Dinner Meeting 2 - Village Revitalization
January 26, 2023 6:00pm - 9:00pm WPV Firehouse



Introduction:

At the beginning of the Pot Luck Dinner, a short presentation was given to outline the background of the Village Master Plan project, goals and schedule. The presentation then reviewed some of the initial input collected from the Community Survey and Rail Trail User Survey. The conversation then focused on village revitalization ideas including discussion of desired potential improvements to public property including town and state-owned lands and road right-of-ways as well as private property improvements. A copy of the discussion slides was uploaded to the project webpage.

Discussion Notes:

- Conversation tonight will be covering public lands (town-owned, state-owned lands and public right-of ways) which we have more control over, as well as private land which we do not have any say in, but may be useful to know what is going on and share ideas.

Public Lands

- **Post Office / Celery Compound Sidewalks.** The sidewalks in front of the Celery Compound (former Fish & Game building) and Post Office are in bad need of replacement.
 - Surface very uneven and in bad shape.
 - Water service wellhead sticks about 2 feet out of ground in the middle of the sidewalk, creating obvious tripping hazard.
 - Wellhead serves old Fish & Game building, is still active, can't relocate. Could be covered and decorated with a temporary cover, such as planter, outdoor table or info kiosk to make it more attractive, useful and less of a hazard.
 - Would be nice to have replacement sidewalk be made from slate instead of regular concrete to be nicer, more interesting and reflect the slate history of West Pawlet.
 - Celery Compound owner had expressed strong interest in replacing sidewalks with new slate.
 - Slate can be slippery at times when wet, which could be a concern.
 - Town had contractors provide estimates of new sidewalks elsewhere, only provided options for concrete or asphalt. Asphalt would not last as long, also not very attractive. They did not give options for slate, possibly because of higher costs.
 - May be possible to develop a hybrid design of concrete with slate inlaid as decorative pattern as a compromise. It was noted that slate and concrete together don't always stand up well over time, due to cracks.
 - It was questioned if Granville had any good slate sidewalk examples. Example of good, long lasting slate sidewalk can be found in WP village at top of hill in front of 2724 Route 153. Regrowth will investigate when snow melts.

- May be possible to treat slate with compound to address traction/slippery concerns. Marble sidewalks in Dorset work well and look great.
- Sidewalk in front of Post Office need to be lowered, currently they are too high relative to road and cant open car doors.
- There is 12" more asphalt in parts of road than there used to be due to multiple repaving projects. Some areas of road are level with or above sidewalk areas, and a few inches above stormwater drains.
 - Recommended that next time a paving project is conducted by the town, asphalt could be milled down further and material repurposed.
 - Any future roadwork which may come from potential intersection redesign should take a more comprehensive look at optimal road and sidewalk grades to work these issue out.
- Sidewalks continue east/southeast past post office, however this road edge is often used by people to park their cars. Folks rely on this space for parking. Do we need / want to rebuild sidewalks if people are going to park on them?
- Sidewalks past the Post Office rapidly deteriorate, pavers disintegrate.
- Parking area in front of Post Office - needs more space for people to park without sticking out into roadway. This could maybe be looked at as part of any sidewalk and curb repairs.
- **Across Street from Celery Compound.** It is treacherous walking by Dave Hosley's house, across the street. Cars coming around corner. May consider sidewalk there? Already have large pothole problem there, around inside corner. Can see it on the aerial photos.
- **Route 153 Over Quarry.** Roadway issues on Route 153 crossing over quarry have started to be addressed. Town has done some repair work in here to address problem, unsure if complete, but seems much better now.
- **Rail Trail Parking Area.** Town has already secured funding to resurface this area (with gravel, not asphalt). This includes area along Railroad Ave that is in the road right-of-way, across from former Dutchies lot. Improvements possibly will include some small parking signs also.
- **Monument Intersection.** At the previous Pot Luck Dinner meeting, discussed potential ideas for the intersection around the monument to address safety concerns. Three design concepts were discussed, group was unanimously in support of 'Concept A' which would create a "T" intersection at Route 153 with a stop sign and crosswalk.
 - Rail Trail crossing would be redirected to the stop sign for better safety.
 - This would create a large greenspace and sidewalk area on the south side of Route 153 to better showcase Monument with landscaping and paths around it.
 - If this intersection re-alignment was done, this work could include the new sidewalks and curb/grade changes discussed earlier in front of Celery Compound/Post Office, since the area would likely be disturbed.
 - New crosswalk also suggested in front of Post Office.
- **Train Freight Shed.** Ownership of this structure is still in limbo, but it is on State land and they want it moved.
 - Would be really nice to find a way to repurpose this structure, but not sure where it could go.
 - Will very likely go away at some point, either moved or dismantled.
 - What would people like to see in its place when it goes away? It is on State land, but presumably some site cleanup would have to be included with removing it.
 - Since it is right along Rail Trail, would be nice to clean up the patch where it has stood with new grass, plantings, picnic tables. Assumed that the State would be ok with this idea, since it enhances the trail.
 - The Historical Society is looking for a new building to operate in, could be a home for them. Would be great to be in historic structure. Should talk to Rose at Historical Society about this idea.

- Six-foot wide roof overhand had to be cut back because passing trucks would keep hitting it.
- **Former Dutchies Site.** Currently vacant. Town has completed a Level 1 environmental assessment on the property, and is on the list to receive funding from Rutland Regional Planning Commission to conduct a Level 2 assessment. This is needed before any redevelopment could occur.
 - Awkward site because of its “C” shape and slope downhill, makes it more difficult to fit redevelopment ideas on.
 - Town would like to see this property redeveloped, but also may need to use the property (or a portion of it) to help solve issues with the wastewater treatment plant next door.
 - Property is too small to subdivide under current zoning minimum lot sizes, however town is currently considering making changes to these requirements.
 - If requirements change, may be possible for town to subdivide lot and sell off the remainder that it doesn't need, private owner could redevelop corner at Egg & Railroad.
 - If minimum lot sizes aren't reduced, may potentially be able to do a lot line adjustment with the adjacent wastewater plant to get the additional space they may need for fixes, without creating a new lot. The remainder of Dutchies lot could be sold off, private owner could redevelop corner.
 - There was some slate trash on the parcel, and a burn barrel, but nothing that would be cause for concern in terms of environmental contamination.
 - Potential to put small building on corner. If corner of Dutchies lot was redeveloped, what would we want to see there?
 - Could be parking. Had been looked at in the past and it was feasible.
 - Would be nice to see something more interesting and useful than parking. Want to create reasons for people to come here.
 - What is going on with small Ray Duquette property? Seems to be vacant, nothing happening. Was rebuilt in-kind after fire. Potential location for public restroom? Should talk to him about his plans, maybe willing to discuss ideas.
 - Could we relocate the Rail Freight Shed across the street over to this property and repurpose it? May be possible to re-size the shed and cut it back to fit better.
- **Slate Quarry / Town Landfill.** Potential ideas for utilizing slate quarry or landfill to site community solar project. Would make better use of the land. Landfill would be easier than dealing with installation on slag piles.
 - Community solar project here is bottlenecked. Existing electrical substations in this area are already near capacity.
 - Green Mountain Power reserves about 5% capacity for homeowners adding residential solar into the system, but would otherwise need to fully upgrade substation(s) at considerable cost to accommodate anything larger.
 - A lot of the existing capacity already reserved for new solar install planned for Bullfrog Hollow up near Wells.
- **Rail Trail.** Trail surface is soupy at times, uses a different groundcover material on other side of bridge, not as good. Could be improved.

Private Lands

- **Former Antiques Building / Celery Compound Annex.** Owner of the small white building next to the Rail Trail is looking to renovate building, fix it up and potentially put a small porch and doors on west side to serve as a small local co-op store. Rendering images provided by owner.

- Could provide refreshments and a place to stop for people on the Rail Trail. Small co-op store for the locals.
- Seating areas out back, picnic tables for people to rest next to Trail.
- Would this compete with any new corner store? Yes, but we don't have a corner store yet. Lets get this started first.
- **Celery Compound Building.** Owner has been working on improvements to the building, window replacements, upstairs apartments. Using downstairs as multipurpose space. Could potentially bring back old style storefront windows?
 - Large old storefront windows on the building were replaced with smaller windows long ago due to winter heating concerns.
- **Former Garage Building.** The vacant 3-bay garage building adjacent to Rail Trail parking area. Owners Sara and Lamont had considered opening a store at some point, may want to contact them to inquire about future plans.
- **Hookery.** Owner has been trying to get different operations set up here, including potential CBD processing, drying and growing at larger red building.
 - Potential for multiple rental business startup spaces to be located here in other buildings.
- **Zoning.** Much of village in the Village Commercial zoning district, which covers a lot of areas in town. Changes in this district would apply to all the areas covered. May want to consider creation of new district specifically for the "downtown" core of West Pawlet village which is a little different and more customized to what we want here.
 - For example, retail stores are a conditional use, but that is a vague, broad term. Could instead define specific types and sizes of retail we desire here in the village and make those easier. Revisit the minimum setbacks, building coverage, lot sizes and parking requirements to make things a little easier and encourage more activity.
 - Planning Commission is already considering some of these changes. There is discussion on setbacks, parking, changes of use, uses by right, etc. Thinking of loosening it up.
- **Allowed Uses.** What sort of other uses would we want to allow in the village?
 - Local child care - was suggested in community survey, not sure if that is covered under the uses in the zoning.
 - Vermont state law allows child day care in home for less than 6 kids by right anyway, so this may already be covered.
 - Cat park, instead of dog park.
 - Dispensary? (marijuana). We already have one nearby.
 - Watering hole, bar?
 - Amphitheater, concert events. Could reshape quarry into amphitheater for outdoor events, music. Like "Red Rocks" Colorado, but call it "Slate Rocks".
 - Music Venue, for local bands to play? There aren't many bands in the area, not enough to go around. Already have live music at The Barn.
 - Rail Trail events. What about a local/regional bike race or rally?
- **Other Example Communities.** What have you seen in other small communities that we might want to do here?
 - What have other "train towns" done? There are lots of other small towns that were once bustling with a train station, but after the railroad went away, have had to re-imagine themselves. What have they done?
 - Maple Corner Store in Calais. Great example, has a bar in back, has live music and open mic nights.
 - Some good case studies, such as Hancock General Store. Was community fundraised, people who donated funding got equal share back in coupons to store goods. Builds community investment.

- What can we do to make it more attractive for someone to want to open up their business in West Pawlet? More people, customers? Activity tends to attract activity, more community events help, can start to build momentum.
- **General Property Maintenance.** Some folks raised issue of yard upkeep in survey. Is a tough issue, very subjective. What about creating a new event day for community cleanup? Community wide spring cleaning day for junk removal, landscaping, painting, repairs...make it a fun thing, wraps up at end of day with BBQ or cookout at Firehouse?
 - This might work if it was tied into a fundraiser for the Firehouse
 - Historical Society hosts a once a year outing to clean the tombstones in the cemetery, people gather as a family and tend to their family plots, other people come and do others. Really strengthens historical ties and bonding. Could tie this ideas in with that?
 - Andrews Lane, across border in Granville has plenty of parking [Editors note: can't recall how this tied into conversation?]
 - Hookery would be nice location for event like this, has plenty of parking. Could tie it in with work that they are doing there. Can have beer, which is a motivator.
- **Volunteer Effort.** Several people have expressed interest in volunteering for some of this effort, or want to know what "topics" are needed for volunteering. What sort of list should we make to get the ball rolling on volunteer efforts?
 - Volunteers for plantings, weeding, flowers
 - A tool co-op for renting, borrowing tools
 - Volunteers to run Co-op store in town.
 - Logistical issues with running store like that. Poultney, Shrewsbury co-ops run well. But they all run on different programs. There are many different programs in the state, each store has to take part in several, it isn't coordinated. Would be better if it could be run under one umbrella somehow.
 - Habitat for Humanity utilizes an app called "Volunteer Up!" and is very useful for organizing people, should look into.
 - Need to set up an organizational framework for how the volunteering will work, we need a volunteer to set up the volunteer network.
 - Grant writing
 - The whole town should be involved in a Co-op or fundraising effort, not just the village. This is a town-wide thing. There are people far outside the village in this town who would be great resources for help, expertise and fundraising.

Reminder next meeting February 9th to discuss Corner Store.

[* * END MEETING 8:24pm * *]

Written comments collected via the online comment form to date copied below:

- "I am concerned that none of the proposed intersection plans addresses the issue of a badly needed crosswalk in front of the post office" [submitted January 16]
- "Thank you for your presentation last night (1/26). Lots of food for thought. - Can Habitat for Humanity work with some village residences in revitalizing their buildings? I know they do work with revitalization projects for towns. Any plans for dialogue with town people outside of the Master Plan presentations? - Bruce's presentation for the small white building for trail - if this is for public use, is he able to get any grant money to contribute to the project? - Start "what's happening in WP Village" articles - newspapers, social media to attract people who might want to visit and invest in the town - buy property, start a business, etc. - I

mentioned my restored slate side walk at 2724 Rt. 153 - could it be possible to restore the sidewalks down the hill to town? (can we convince Frank to at least clean the walkway?) The road is treacherous to even walk to P.O. - trucks and cars fly over that hill. Restored sidewalks that are slate - up to residences? - I think reconfiguring the traffic circle area as presented, and Bruce's enhancement to his little building will start to attract people to visit the town - having places for them to stop and visit - like a store, gallery, event would be great. Good to identify Pop-Up event space for craft fair, food fair, farmers market fair combined with music would be a boost. Thank you!" [submitted January 27]