

VILLAGE OF WEST PAWLET MASTER PLAN



The Next 25 Years



PREPARED BY:

Pawlet Grants Steering Committee

PREPARED FOR:

Town of Pawlet, VT Selectboard

IN ASSOCIATION WITH:



REGROWTH
PLANNING



June 23, 2023

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TOWN SELECTBOARD

Mike Beecher, Chair
Rich Hulett
Bob Jones
Perry Brown
Jessica Van Oort

GRANTS STEERING COMMITTEE

Jessica Van Oort, Chair
Rhonda Schlangen
Mike Beecher
Frank Nelson
Bruce Sirjane

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RUTLAND REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Prepared by:



REGROWTH
PLANNING



PHOTO CAPTION



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West Pawlet Master Plan

Executive Summary

The Village of West Pawlet has completed this planning effort to identify community needs, a vision for economic growth and overall improvements. A number of immediate priorities emerged from this process. At the forefront of residents' minds is the need to address issues at the wastewater treatment plant to reduce the high user fees. These fees have been an economic burden on the community and stifle future growth. Short-term upgrades are necessary to improve the operational efficiency of this facility and reduce costs while longer-term goals of establishing more users can be realized.

The community also identified a number of important changes which should be made to improve vehicular and pedestrian safety in the village, which was a priority for many. A solution to solve this problem was found which would likely enhance the village center and better showcase the WWI Monument.

Residents also identified a strong need to establish a new corner store in the village that could help fill the void left after the tragic fire that destroyed Dutchies. This was seen as an important first step in attracting new activity and local business growth.

In the larger sense, West Pawlet seeks ways to strengthen their sense of community, bringing old and new residents together, and inspire measured growth that supports the unique and simple personality of the village. Finding opportunities to adaptively re-use existing properties in the village is an important first step toward that goal. This plan also outlines a number of measures and ideas which, over time, are intended to help realize the vision of a stronger and livelier community. As West Pawlet works to achieve some of the changes set out in this document, one is reminded that the village should remain a quiet, peaceful and friendly place to live. Changes should be implemented with care. This effort will require support from the Town as well as a strong commitment from local volunteers to help achieve it.

Sincerely,

Pawlet Grants Steering Committee

PART I

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

All communities need a vision to help guide them and plan for their future. The ability for all communities to develop their own Town Plans or Village Master Plans is authorized by the state to help empower local citizens to have a voice in the long-term vision for their community which should span multiple elected administrations. This helps to provide each administration with a guide to future decision making that remains on course with the overall will of the people.

The State of Vermont also provides municipalities with the ability to establish designated “Village Centers.” The purpose of the Village Center Designation is to identify historic settlement and population areas which are opportunities for revitalization and infill redevelopment, helping to create economic development while reducing sprawl and growth from spreading out into the more rural portions of the state. Designated village centers receive priority consideration in a number of state grants and qualify for other funding opportunities which are not otherwise available, helping to support and incentivize the revitalization of our older settlement areas.

In 2016 the Town of Pawlet applied for, and was awarded, official Village Center Designation for a core area of West Pawlet. The boundaries of this village center (see map on page 7) were approved by the Town Selectboard on May 23rd, 2016. Utilizing

the new grant opportunities it provided, the town applied for a Municipal Planning Grant to develop a community-based plan for the Village of West Pawlet. The purpose of this plan was to identify issues and opportunities in West Pawlet, and draft a vision for what could be done to address them. In December of 2021, the Town of Pawlet was awarded the grant, and the master planning process was begun in the spring of 2022.

Although the focus of the planning effort centers on the area within the village center designation boundaries, it is recognized that these lines are invisible to the people who live and work here. What happens just outside that boundary can have a profound impact on the village itself, and so we recognize that some ideas outside the village are also important to the improvement of the overall community.

Grants Steering Committee

This planning effort, and the grant which funds it, was spearheaded and overseen by a group of volunteers who form the Grants Steering Committee. These volunteers include Jessica Van Oort (Chair, and town selectboard representative), Rhonda Schlangen (resident), Mike Beecher (resident and town selectboard representative), Frank Nelson (resident), and Bruce Sirjane (property owner).

West Pawlet, VT *Circa 1891*

1. Welch Presbyterian Church
2. Welch Congregational Church
3. Baptist Church
4. Church of Christ
5. Academy
6. D&H Railroad Station
7. S.D. Dennison's Slate Quarry
8. Rising & Nelson's Slate Quarry, No. 4
9. W.H. Hughes' Slate Quarries
10. Rising & Nelson's Slate Quarry, No. 3
11. Rising & Nelson's Slate Quarry, No. 2
12. Rising & Nelson's Slate Quarry, No. 1
13. Powell House, J.B. Powell, Prop.
14. F.J. Nelson, Speculator & Carriage Repository
15. General Merchandise & Post Office, Owen W. Williams
16. Brown & Mayo, Meat Market
17. Variety Merchandise, H.W. Owens
18. D. Hawkins, Manufacturer of Wagons and Potato Starch
19. Drugs & Groceries, F. Johnson
20. Jewelry & Fancy Goods, Geo. R. Pratt
21. Furniture & Undertaking, H.B. Jones
21. Office of Rising & Nelson
22. Hardware, G.W. Beecher & Bro.



The History of West Pawlet

Originally known as “Mark’s Corners” before being chartered as part of the Town of Pawlet, VT in 1761, West Pawlet has witnessed many industries come and go with the changing times. Early industrial activity in the area centered on the extraction of potassium fertilizer (“potash”), as salts were leached from the ashes of trees which were cleared to make way for new fields. This fertilizer was essential in replacing lost potassium in the soil after repeated farming harvests, and its long shelf life made for a good export commodity to distant places.

By the early 1800’s merino sheep were introduced to the United States by William Jarvis, a Weathersfield, Vermont resident, leading to a wool craze later known as “merino mania.” This introduction gave rise to the first fulling and cloth-dressing mills being established in West Pawlet around 1812, along with a woolen factory. Later tariffs on imported wool created a huge demand for this material, and great profits could be found producing it locally. At its peak of popularity around 1837, there were over one million sheep in the State of Vermont, a number given greater weight when one considers it is almost double our human population today. By





the late 1840's however, changes in wool tariffs—as well as competition from larger farms out west—severely hurt local sheep farms and eventually led to the decline and closure of many farms and wool mills in Vermont. As it declined, dairy farms began to dominate afterwards, with milk and cheese being produced locally at many homesteads.

The opening of the Rutland & Washington Railroad in 1851 ushered new opportunities, allowing for milk, cheese and other local goods to be transported from the center of the village to cities down south. The first cheese factory in Vermont was opened in 1864 by C. S. Bardwell in West Pawlet, just south of the village center, where it remains a locally known farm today. The 1860's also witnessed the establishment of the first slate quarries in West Pawlet, including the Rising and Nelson Slate Company, founded in 1869. Fueled by the nearby railroad, slate roof shingles and flagging could be shipped off to distant lands. The opening of the slate quarries saw a wave of Irish, Welsh and Italian immigrants, often

▲ **Railroad Ave.** View looking west towards the J.E. Roberts Ice Cream Parlor (later known as Dutchies Store) building in the background and the adjacent storage building (foreground). It is believed that the edge of the existing railroad freight building roof can just be seen at the right edge of the photo across the street. Date unknown.

▼ **Hotel Pawlet.** West Pawlet was once home to this 3-story hotel, although its location in the village is unknown.



quarrymen from their own lands, come to make West Pawlet their home. Rising and Nelson would go on to become the dominant mining company in West Pawlet. At its peak, there were more than 100 individual quarries in operation.

West Pawlet grew to become the epicenter of industrial and commercial activity within the entire Town of Pawlet. Home to numerous businesses, it was more populous and active than its sister hamlet Pawlet to the east. When people spoke of “going into town” in those days, they were usually referring to West Pawlet. It was home to a variety of commercial and industrial activities, including a grist mill, distillery, tavern, grocery market, drugstore, meats, and a large hotel, among others. So populous and active was West Pawlet at that time, that in 1886 they considered splitting off from the town and becoming their own entity, although this never came to pass.

▼ **Layden & Burdick General Store.** Once home to the local Pharmacy and Soda Fountain, today serves as community space and apartments, known as the “Celery Compound” in reference to the antique advertisement painted on the west facade.



▲ **Rising & Nelson.** The Rising & Nelson Roofing Slate building, with Copeland Boots, Shoes, Groceries and Dry Goods Store, today serves as the Post Office.

In 1895 the Great Fire of West Pawlet destroyed many of the buildings in the village, and resulted in the loss of three lives. Much of the history of the village was lost that day, though much was rebuilt. By the turn of the century, West Pawlet was experiencing the approximate peak of the slate industry. A new railroad station was built in the village in 1905 to help the transport of goods, however it wouldn't be long before this heyday would be challenged. The turn of the century also saw other innovations, including the development of asphalt shingles. Designed to be lighter and cheaper than slate, these would begin to compete with slate roofing at an increasing rate. By the 1940's, the slate roofing industry began to suffer steep declines, and would shrink to only a shadow of itself by the 1970's. Many of the quarries in West Pawlet, including the surrounding region, would close.

Gone are the days of sheep and dairy farming, wool production and slate mining. Times changes, and we adapt to new ways of keeping ourselves productive as always.





West Pawlet, Vt. 9-C



West Pawlet Today

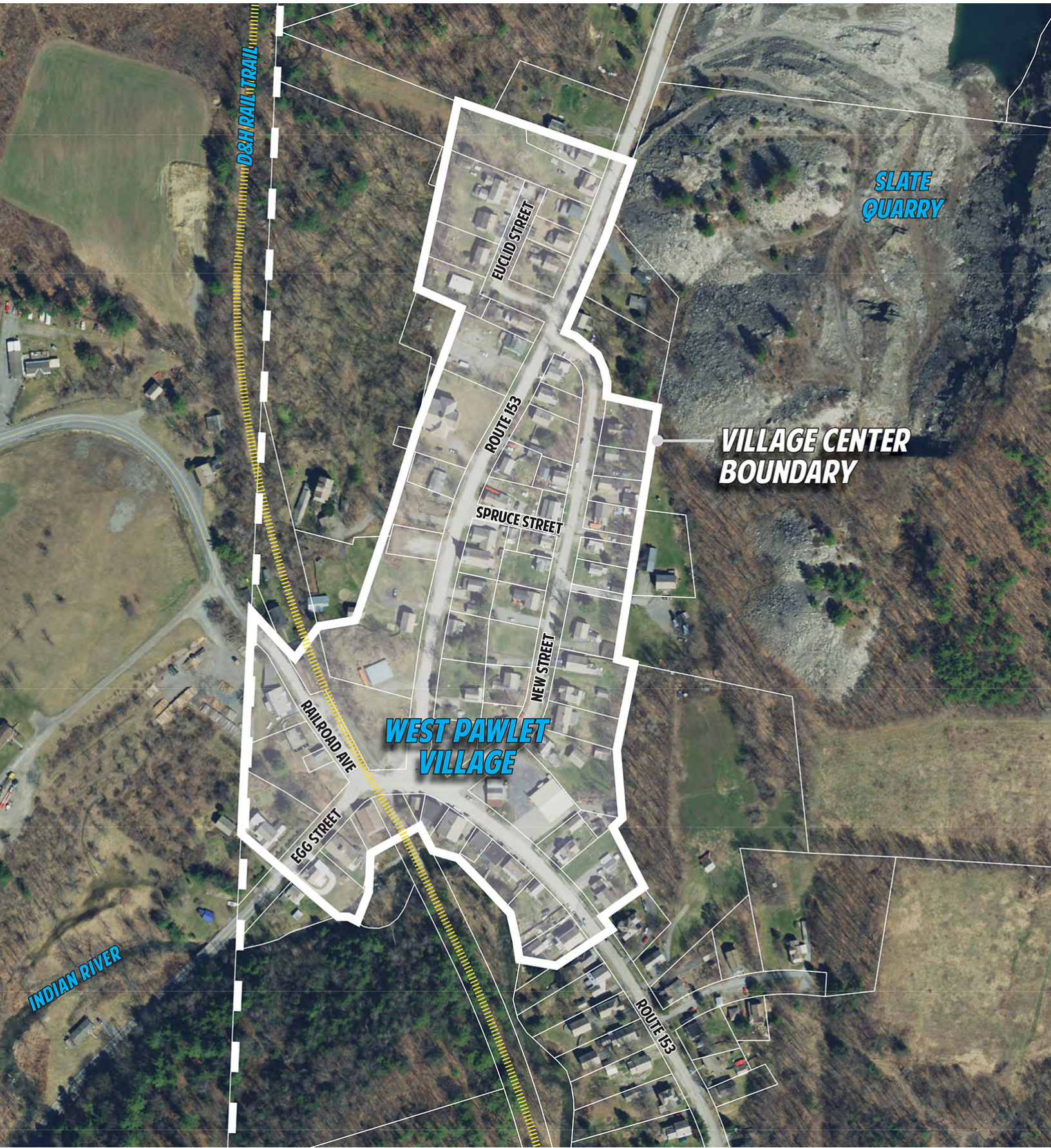
Today, West Pawlet remains a quieter version of its once self. As an unincorporated village, it includes two National Register Historic Districts (including the main village and Spruce Gum to the north) with over 90 historic buildings representing a cross section of history and varied architectural styles.

The Indian River still meanders through the valley, but without the mills which once took their power from it. The slag pile remnants of the quarries mark a visible feature of the landscape, with one quarry still remaining in operation even today. Many of the more recent activity centers which were once here have since disappeared, including the local school, an iron works, and the local general store, destroyed by fire in 2011.

The village, now home to an estimated population

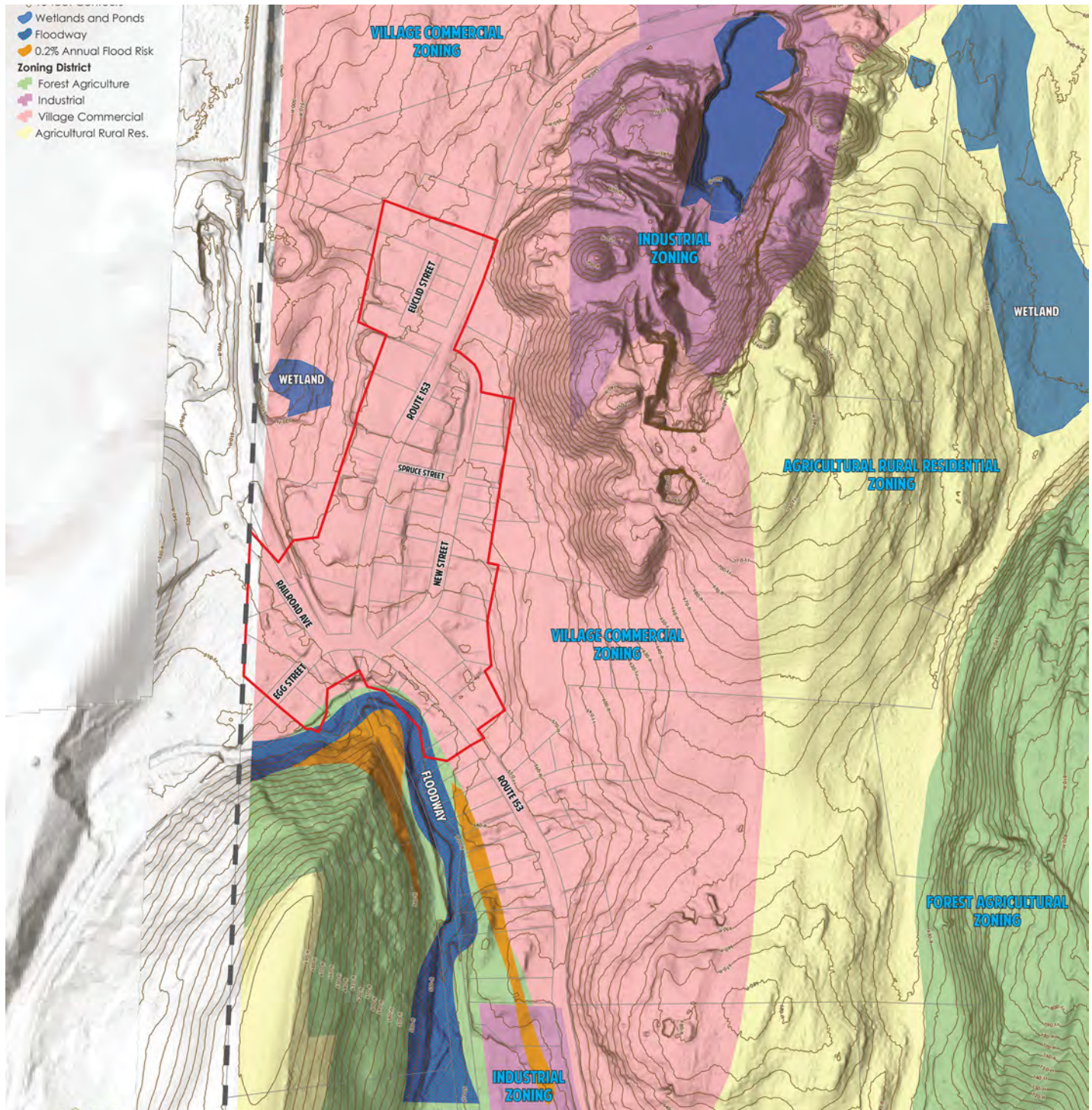






of 220 people (2020 Census) is primarily composed of single family homes and a few commercial buildings. The zoning in this area is predominantly Village Commercial, with some Industrial to the north and south, and surrounded by the more rural Agricultural Rural Residential and Forest

Agricultural zoning. The village holds potential to restore some of its former activity, and it will be interesting to see what the next generation of changes and opportunities can bring.



PART II

PROCESS & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The planning process used to develop this master plan was designed to rely heavily on recurring public input opportunities to collect ideas, concerns and feedback from residents.

The process began with a walking tour of the village with members of the Steering Committee and several members of the general public to take a fresh look at the village and discuss ideas. This was followed by an open house event to officially kick-off the planning effort, introduce the project to the public and invite people to identify the general issues the community might want to discuss. The input from the open house was used to help design a community survey which would help identify what residents felt were the top priority issues in

the village and gather other ideas for exploration. Using the results of the survey, different discussion meetings were developed to explore some of the top issues in more detail and discuss potential solutions. Once the draft ideas and recommendations were developed, a public workshop was held to review them and get feedback on any changes to the draft plan which people felt were needed.

Meetings and events were advertised locally with posters, announcements in the town e-Newsletter, as well as local social media for the West Pawlet Facebook group and Front Porch Forum. This process allowed for an orderly community discussion which provided many opportunities for residents to take part in the effort.



OPEN HOUSE EVENT



▲ **Open House Event.** *The open house introduced the planning effort to the residents of West Pawlet and collected preliminary ideas and concerns to help design the community survey.*

On June 27th, 2022 an Open House event was hosted at the West Pawlet Volunteer Fire Department as an official kick-off to introduce the public to the planning process. The overall goal of this event was to identify early ideas and concerns which could be evaluated by the wider community in an upcoming survey.

Attendees were provided maps of the village and surrounding area, with a series of preliminary ideas and issues for them to react to and help spur discussion. People were also invited to answer a series of specific questions, including what do they think would improve the quality of life in the village, what would they like to protect, and what would they like to see change in the village?

Not surprisingly, attendees were quick to note several suggestions which had already been anticipated by the grants steering committee, including reducing the wastewater treatment plant fees, the need for a new corner/general store, and desire for more community events or spaces which bring neighbors together. However, a number of new ideas and issues also emerged from this session which had not been identified before, such as adaptive re-use concepts for the former slate quarry, bicycle road-race events, and fire department facility needs. This input was useful in helping to design the upcoming community survey.

Meeting notes from the open house have been provided in the Appendix for reference.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Using the preliminary input from the open house event and steering committee, a brief survey was designed help identify what the top priority issues in West Pawlet were, and provide residents with the ability to suggest other improvements. Paper copies of this survey were mailed to about 130 households, and an online version was also created which was advertised on social media through the West Pawlet Neighbors Facebook group and the local Front Porch Forum. This survey collected responses from late August to early October.

The results of the survey indicated that there appeared to be five topics which easily rose to the top of the priority list among local residents. These included decreasing the wastewater treatment plant fees, roadway and intersection safety improvements, creation of new local businesses, cleanup and restoration of vacant buildings, and pedestrian



▲ **Community Survey.** Social media advertisement for the community survey. Hardcopies of the survey were mailed to 130 households, and was also made available online.

sidewalk/safety improvements. Specifically, a new corner general store to replace the former Dutchies Store topped people's needs for the type of new local business needed.

Overall, the community survey seemed to indicate that people very much wanted to maintain and protect the relaxed charm that makes the village unique, but there was need for some specific improvements. Enhancements which improved the rail trail and supported tourism were desired, but these were secondary to meeting the immediate needs of the locals first. There was also a desire for more community events and socialization opportunities, which many felt was important to maintaining the fabric of the community which was changing with an influx of many newcomers moving to the area in the aftermath of Covid.

The survey also reflected some lesser-priority issues, such as a desire to improve and take better economic

advantage of the rail trail, increase tourism, simplify and streamline local zoning requirements, better speed limit enforcement, restoration of some of the old slate sidewalks as well as some general village beautification and landscaping.

A copy of the full survey results report has been provided in the Appendix for reference.

RAIL TRAIL SURVEY

In addition to the community survey made available for local residents, a separate survey was created to capture input from visitors passing through the village along the rail trail. This allowed us to ask—from the outsider's perspective—what amenities and services people would like to find when they come to West Pawlet. Laminated signs were posted at the West Pawlet trailhead inviting people to participate



▲ **Rail Trail Survey.** Poster inviting travelers along the D&H Rail Trail to participate in an online survey to learn what amenities they would like to find in West Pawlet.

in the online survey, which collected responses from August through October.

A majority of respondents indicated that they either stopped in West Pawlet or began their trip here, stopping to take a break, have some food or drink, sightsee, and look around for any shops, food choices or restrooms that might be available. When asked what would they have *liked to find*, the most popular answers were public restrooms, sale of light refreshments, shaded seating areas, water station, as well as a restaurant, outdoor dining and the sale of local goods and crafts. Other desired amenities included trash/pet waste receptacles, local tourism information, and picnic tables.

With more than half of the rail trail respondents coming from out of state, the rail trail represents a good potential driver of local tourism interest in the village, particularly if some of the desired local amenities could be provided.

POT LUCK DINNERS

To discuss some of the priority topics in more detail, a series of four pot luck dinner meetings were held. These meetings began with a short presentation showing the results of the community survey, followed by a discussion period as people enjoyed the food dishes brought by their neighbors. The topics selected for these meetings included Roadway & Intersection Safety, Village Revitalization & Cleanup, New Corner Store, and The Firehouse and Community Events. These topics were selected because they covered high priorities identified by village residents, and were considered the most productive in terms of brainstorming ideas and solutions. The presentations often included preliminary ideas or designs to help solicit feedback and discussion from the attendees, and were extremely productive in identifying desired options for the village.



PROJECT WEBPAGE

To help facilitate public outreach, a project webpage was set up to act as a home for information about the planning effort. The webpage provided documents for review, maps, as well as copies of meeting notes and presentation materials for people who were unable to make it to some of the meetings. It also included a link to an online comment form which was made available for the length of the project so that residents could submit comments or ideas for review by the Steering Committee.

AREA STORE OWNERS

Because of the popularity of the Corner Store topic, additional outreach was added to solicit input and advice from the individual owners of a half-dozen local “general” stores in the wider area from Pawlet, Wells, Rupert and Dorset, Vermont. Short questionnaires were delivered to each, followed by phone calls or interviews to discuss responses. Although this resulted in mixed input, it was useful

in identifying obstacles which a new store in the village might experience, and determining that there was very little interest in expanding their existing operations.

DRAFT PLAN WORKSHOP

On April 20, 2023, a public workshop was held at the West Pawlet Volunteer Firehouse to review the Draft Plan (provided online) and discuss the initial findings and recommendations. Residents suggested some corrections, additions or improvements to the draft text, but overall seemed in favor of the ideas presented. A few people voiced disagreement over the proposed intersection concept, noting that they did not feel the monument was a problem and feeling it should remain where it is since it serves as a deterrent to speeding. Others noted that the plan should try to incorporate more of the town-wide energy plan initiatives where they would apply to the village, and alternative wastewater treatment solutions should be investigated. Notes from this meeting have been included in the Appendix.



West Pawlet Volunteer Firehouse Meeting - April 20th, 2023

PART III

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

The Village of West Pawlet, like many small-town American communities, is trying to adapt to a changing economic landscape in which the industries and professions which built it have been replaced with something often less tangible and more difficult to predict. What has not changed have been the assets of the community, including the beautiful countryside, the meandering Indian River and a small community of people who love their village. Discussions with residents on what they would like to see for the future of West Pawlet identified a number of issues and opportunities which they would like to see addressed.

Wastewater Treatment Plant

The West Pawlet Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) once served as the backbone of a more populous and industrial village, and represents a significant asset to the potential growth and economic vitality of the area. Many small towns and villages in Vermont would very much like to have a similar facility, as the lack of municipal sewer services often limits their ability to accommodate new growth and activity. Today, West Pawlet is a smaller community than it once was—employing over 100 people as recently as the 1990’s—but that activity has since diminished. Over time, the demand for local sewer service has also diminished,



with many users no longer connected to the system, and currently the plant is operating at under 25% of its designed capacity¹. At the same time, growing operational expenses—coupled with stricter health and environmental regulations—have increased the costs of running this facility. Wastewater sludge currently needs to be trucked to the regional treatment facility in Rutland on a regular basis, accounting for a considerable expense. It also requires daily visits and monitoring from a contracted operator. Operational expenses of running this facility have increased over 30% from 2021 to 2022, fueled by a 55% increase in biosolids management and disposal (its highest expense) and a 183% increase in testing expenses. In response, total user fees have jumped from \$95,721 in 2020 to \$103,700 in 2022 in an effort to help cover these costs.

This one-two punch of less users and higher expenses has resulted in higher operational costs being saddled on a smaller number of households, resulting in extremely high wastewater fees for each user. Over time, these costs have led local property owners to disconnect from the system, converting once duplex housing units down to single dwelling units in an effort to reduce their utility bill. This in turn begins to lead to a downward-spiral effect, where less income from connection fees means more burden on the remaining users. These rising service costs also create a chilling effect on potential economic development which would otherwise help to solve the problem. This unfortunate circumstance has put the Village of West Pawlet in a difficult position where it needs to break the cycle that is creating an economic burden on local residents

¹ Estimated percentage of total flow capacity. The facility has capacity for an average of 200 hookups, but is currently only serving 120 - Source: 2016 Town Plan. Actual flow from each hookup varies.

while also holding it back from potential recovery.

This single issue was identified as the top priority for the village based on input collected from the community survey, testimonials at public meetings, and individual comments. The wastewater service issue is a burden on most village residents and is dampening future growth.

To help mitigate this issue, the Town of Pawlet has been working to subsidize some of the operational costs of running the facility to help reduce end-user costs, and has been actively working to help enroll local residents in the Household Wastewater Payment Assistance program through the State of Vermont Economic Services, a relief program which helps to offset some of the user fees residents are experiencing. These efforts have been successful in reducing service fees from over \$1,000 per year down to about \$825. While this has helped somewhat, and has been successful in keeping costs from continued increases, a more permanent solution to reducing operational costs is desperately needed before the cycle can be broken. The wastewater treatment plant represents a critical asset that the town and village are not currently able to take proper advantage of until this issue is resolved.



▲ **Wastewater Treatment Plant.** Currently operating well under capacity, this facility represents growth potential, but needs new users to help bring down operational costs.



Intersection / Roadway Safety

The center of West Pawlet Village hosts the convergence of four separate roadways in a uniquely non-traditional arrangement which served the village well in the early decades of its growth, but does not lend itself well to modern automobile speeds. The roadway arrangement, wide asphalt coverage, absence of typical signage or obvious right-of-way procedures creates confusing conditions, particularly for unfamiliar travelers. The many issues experienced from different approaches into the village are illustrated in the accompanying photos and map for reference ([page 18-20](#)).

These conditions have led many residents to be concerned about vehicular and pedestrian safety in the heart of the village, especially when not everyone obeys the posted limits. [This concern for intersection safety was identified as one of the top priority issues during the master planning process, and was the topic of its own public meeting during the pot luck](#)

[dinner](#). A critical variable in this discussion is the presence of the WWI Memorial stone, which has stood prominently in the center of this roadway convergence for decades, and represents a proud part of village history which many residents would prefer not to see changed. Although many people supported changes to improve the safety of the intersection, most respondents in the Community Survey indicated that they wanted the war memorial to remain where it was. Many people have felt that the present location of the monument gives it the attention it deserves, and that relocating it could undermine its visual prominence. However, the present location of the monument has so far been an obstacle to making intersection improvements that would address some of the safety concerns.

It was also noted by many people that vehicle speeds in the village often exceed the posted limits, and they very much wanted additional measures put in place to help deter such behavior.



Approach from North. Vehicles approaching the main West Pawlet intersection from the north on Route 153 are presented with a road which splits both left and right to either side of the WWI monument, creating a potentially confusing condition. A lack of signage indicating that Route 153 continues to the left may add to this uncertainty, especially when yellow roadway markings are faded or obscured by snow. Vehicles coming the opposite directions can also travel left or right of the monument, leading to potential confusion about who has right-of-way.

(See viewpoint marker '1' on map, next page).



Rail Trail Crossing. The D&H Rail Trail crossing currently does not have a marked crossing, and visibility of vehicles approaching up the hill from Egg Street is obscured by the hill. Although the rail trail provides a stop sign for pedestrians and bicyclists heading east on the trail, there is no similar sign in the westbound direction, where visibility of vehicles coming up the Egg Street hill are even more obscured.

(See viewpoint marker '2' on map, next page).



Approach from West. Vehicles approaching the main West Pawlet intersection from the west on Railroad Avenue do not have a stop sign, and can turn right or left. These vehicles may not be able to see cars coming from their right up the hill on Egg Street, which also does not have a stop sign. This can lead to potential confusion about who has actual right-of-way.

(See viewpoint marker '3' on map, next page).



Despite some relatively minor accidents over the years (some involving the WWI monument itself) and close calls, this intersection has so far avoided any serious vehicular incidents in recent memory. This is possibly due to the relatively lower volume of traffic which passes through the village, and the local's knowledge of its peculiar nature. However, with a gradual increase in local travelers unfamiliar with the area, the issues identified should be addressed.

▲ **Existing Roadway Conditions.** *Potential vehicle turning conflicts at the intersection are illustrated here. Without clear right-of-way rules it is sometimes uncertain which vehicles have right-of-way as they pass through the intersection.*

"I feel the traffic intersection at the World War I monument is confusing to visitors and outdated by current standards."

~ Community Survey Response



Approach from South. Vehicles approaching the main West Pawlet intersection from the south on Egg Street are presented with limited line-of-sight visibility until they reach the top, providing no warning of pedestrians crossing along the rail trail just ahead. They also may be unable to see cars coming from the left on Railroad Avenue, which also does not have a stop sign. The stop sign which was once at the top of this hill for this approach was removed because larger trucks climbing this hill were unable to stop and start moving again in slippery conditions, often getting stuck or sliding back down the hill.

(See viewpoint marker '4' on map, previous page).



Approach from South. Vehicles which have crested the top of the hill on Egg Street are suddenly presented with a roadway which veers to the right, and then splits to either side of the WWI monument, creating a surprise condition and potentially confusing choice for those not familiar with the road. Travelers in this direction are sometimes confused if they should stay to the left of the monument to continue north, or if they should pass around the right side of it and then turn left on Route 153 like a traffic circle.

(See viewpoint marker '5' on map, previous page).



Approach from East. Vehicles approaching the main intersection from the east on Route 153 are presented with a very wide roadway which splits left and right on either side of the WWI monument, without a clear indication of which way the road actually continues. Adding to the potential confusion is a sign which says "Yield Left to Oncoming Traffic".

(See viewpoint marker '6' on map, previous page).

Loss of Local General Store

West Pawlet Village used to be the home of several local businesses, including the Dutchies General Store on Railroad Avenue. Dutchies served the community for decades, providing much needed supplies, foods and other goods to area residents. Unfortunately, that changed in March of 2011 when a fire broke out in the neighboring storage building and consumed both structures, resulting in the tragic death of one person and two dogs. While the store owners were able to escape the blaze with relatively minor injuries, the building was a complete loss. The community rallied with a robust fundraising effort to help the owners rebuild, but it was ultimately unsuccessful. This tragic loss left the community without a local store, which was not only a source of goods, but also served as an important landmark and social hub within the village.

The site of the adjacent storage building has since been redeveloped, however the Dutchies site itself ran into financial and administrative difficulties shortly after a new foundation was poured, and construction was halted. Today, the property remains vacant, with the new basement foundation filled in for safety. The Town of Pawlet has since acquired the property in the hopes that it can one day be redeveloped, or that it may be useful to help resolve issues at the adjacent wastewater treatment plant. Environmental questions about the site and its redevelopment potential have been raised due to its proximity to a former industrial railway. The town has since completed a Phase I environmental assessment of the property to resolve these questions, and funding has been earmarked to complete a Phase II assessment this year. It is anticipated that these investigations will help clear the way for future active use of the property.



▲ **Dutchies.** Photo courtesy of Pawletvermont.com..

The community still mourns the loss of Dutchies today, and has identified the need for a new local general store to replace it as one of the top priorities for the village. Whether any replacement would occur on the same site or a different property remains an option. Within the broader goal of generally attracting new local businesses to the area, a new local corner store which could provide basic household goods and supplies was identified as the most needed type of service. This need outranked other more specific uses such as a bakery, deli, coffee shop, or cafe (which could ultimately be rolled into such a store) as well as a restaurant, bike shop or commercial employer. Respondents in the community survey also noted that if such a store could be established, a majority would frequent it several times a week. Such a store would also provide much needed amenities and goods to rail trail users, providing a compelling reason for travelers to stop, and a catalyst for new activity in the village.

The feasibility of constructing a new store in West Pawlet however faces several hurdles. Small local general stores such as this in Vermont are having an

increasingly difficult time remaining economically viable in today's modern economy. The West Pawlet area has a relatively low population, providing a small market to support what are already slim profit margins. Finding an experienced store operator (preferably someone local) was also needed. Outreach was conducted to six existing local store owners in the wider area to learn what obstacles this effort might face and inquire if they had any interest in opening a smaller satellite operation of theirs in West Pawlet. Despite being generally supportive of the effort, none of the existing store owners were interested in opening up another store—anywhere—because they are already working overtime running the one store they have. Some also expressed skepticism about the population of West Pawlet being able to adequately support a profitable

venture, and noted their own struggles in finding reliable labor.

An informal discussion was also held with Stevens and Associates, an architect/developer firm in Brattleboro, to discuss the feasibility of preparing a “shovel-ready” store site as a strategy for attracting potential developers willing to construct a new store in West Pawlet. A shovel-ready site would include a pre-approved design, site plan and all necessary permits among other incentives. Again, the low population density of the village was identified as being an obstacle to making such an investment very attractive. The developers did note that a strategy with housing units above the store may work better, since housing was in high demand and the rent could help subsidize the store below. Overall however it was viewed as risky. The premise of constructing or operating a conventional “for profit” store in the village was seen as financially difficult.

▼ **Dorset Union Store.** *Despite being a well-established businesses with high visibility and a relatively wealthy tourist population, small general stores such as this still often struggle to remain profitable.*



Alternatives to the conventional model were also suggested by the group, as well as by some local store owners and residents. These ideas included local membership cooperatives and community supported fundraising models which have seen some success in similar Vermont towns. These options would likely require some creative solutions and leveraging the support of the whole community, but may be able to overcome the traditional hurdles.

Underutilized Properties

There are a number of vacant or underutilized properties within the village and immediate surrounding area, as illustrated on page 24 and accompanying photos. Importantly, many of these properties are right in the heart of the village, or owned by the Town of Pawlet. These properties represent an opportunity to bring in some new local businesses, and increase the general activity of West Pawlet. [The creation of more local businesses was identified as the third highest priority in the community survey, followed by the cleanup and restoration of vacant buildings.](#) Activating these underutilized properties with new uses would address two of the top interests of local residents, and could represent a big win for the community. It would also represent increased tax revenue for the town. While a new corner store was identified as the most desired type of business, other needs were raised including local child care, farmer's market, restaurant, larger commercial employer, as well as a bike shop or local arts and crafts store to cater to visitors.

Freight Shed. (#3 on map, page 24) Specific opportunities of note include the 1890 railway freight shed, located directly adjacent to the D&H Rail Trail and occupying land controlled by the



▲ **13 Egg Street (Antiques Store).** Contributing structure circa 1910 store, featuring original storefront design. Currently vacant. Owner would like to rehabilitate building and turn into small store serving community and rail trail users.



▲ **Railway Shed.** Railway freight shed, contributing historic structure circa 1890 featuring original stickwork and extended rafter tails. Unfortunately, due to the building's proximity to the road, the rafter tails and corresponding roof overhang were cut off to avoid vehicle collisions. Currently vacant, ownership in dispute.



▲ **21 Railroad Ave.** Non-contributing structure, recently rebuilt to replace 1910 structure lost in Dutchies fire. Currently vacant.



State of Vermont (VTrans). The future of this historic structure has been in limbo due to ongoing bankruptcy proceedings of the private owner. Up until recently, the State of Vermont has wanted this building removed from its land. More recent discussions have opened up the potential that the building might be allowed to remain on state land if it were fixed up and converted to a use which supported the Rail Trail. However, the current legal proceedings would still need to be resolved.

Quarry. (#9 on map, page 24) The former slate quarry north of the village has remained dormant for many years. Now filled with water, it is surrounded by unstable slag piles which make it unsafe for casual visitors. Nevertheless, it represents a highly visible landmark to the history of West Pawlet and remains a local resource. Although not open to the public, the town has developed official procedures which allow local contractors to access the site with permission to collect leftover slate for use by Pawlet residents. Contractors are permitted to charge for their labor and hauling, but are not permitted to charge for the slate, which is intended to be provided to town residents for free. In community conversations, many ideas were discussed for the adaptation of this site including an outdoor concert venue, community solar farm, fire department tanker refueling spot as well as a potential gravity-fed water supply for village sprinkler systems. It remains however a difficult and expensive property to adapt to other uses.

Town-Owned Vacant Parcel. (#11 on map, page 24) South of the former quarry, on an adjacent second lot, the Town of Pawlet owns 82 acres of other vacant land. While the north half of this parcel was used for slag storage, the southeastern portion remains mostly untouched, including a 7-acre meadow which appears to still be farmed for



▲ **Former Slate Quarry.** *The former slate quarry located just north of the village is currently owned by the town, and represents a difficult but potential opportunity for adaptive reuse.*



▲ **Parcel South of Quarry.** *The adjacent parcel south of the former quarry is town-owned and contains a significant amount of vacant land which is not being utilized.*

hay. This parcel represents a significant amount of land for the Village of West Pawlet which is currently not on the town tax rolls. Approximately half of this parcel is currently zoned Village Commercial while the rest is Agricultural Rural Residential, and has limited road frontage accessed from the end of Spruce Street. Converting a portion of this lot back over to private ownership to be utilized for other uses may have potential benefits to the village as well as the town, provided future uses there are carefully planned.



Growth of Existing Businesses

There are existing businesses within the village which are opportunities to support further growth and economic activity in the village. The Indian River Furniture Makers, occupying the former garage building at 39 Egg St, produces high-quality handcrafted custom furniture and cabinetry.

The industrial park, former site of Leslie Iron Works (aka the Hookery) is located just outside the village boundary and offers large amounts of space and several buildings on industrially zoned land. The new owners of this site are in the process of ramping up a CBD production facility with room to spare. This large property may also offer potential space to be home to other small startup businesses. Other businesses in the village have emerged as home-occupations, particularly in the wake of the Covid pandemic. It will be important to recognize and support these and other local businesses for the economic livelihood of the village.

▲ **Existing Industries.** *Indian River Campaign Furniture & Cabinetry (Above); the industrial park campus (below) commonly referred to as the Hookery.*





The D&H Rail Trail

Running right through the heart of West Pawlet Village, the former D&H Railroad line has been converted to a recreational trail connecting the neighboring towns of Granville, Rupert and beyond. This trail represents probably the best economic development asset within the village. However, it is not being utilized to its full potential. Currently, most travelers along the trail pass through the village, with little or no reason to stop because there aren't much in the way of amenities or services to capture their attention.

Rail trail enhancements ranked 6th in overall priorities in the community survey. Discussions with community members suggested that they would prefer to see improvements which addressed local needs before those of tourists, however there may be many overlapping needs. When asked what rail trail improvement might be needed most, a place for sale of refreshments and foods was the most

popular response. This of course would tie directly into the need for a new local corner store. When actual rail trail users were asked what amenities or services they would most like to see in West Pawlet, the most popular responses were public restrooms; sale of light refreshments; shaded seating areas; water station / drinking fountain; and restaurant / outdoor dining. Providing these and other amenities would attract more people to use West Pawlet as a waypoint destination along their travels, and generate more activity.

*"A little country store like
East Poultney or Wells
would be great."*

~ Rail Trail User Survey Response

Pedestrian Amenities

Historically, the Village of West Pawlet enjoyed a small network of beautiful slate sidewalks connecting most of the historic homes to one another, courtesy of the local abundance of this native rock. Much of these slate paths have since disappeared over the decades and sunk beneath the surface of new sediment and growing lawns. The slate paths that are still visible have typically fractured and heaved, creating a very uneven and awkward path to walk, with many people often preferring to walk in the roadway instead. Other areas of sidewalk that have since been replaced or patched with concrete or asphalt are also falling into disrepair. Years of repaving the local roadways have also raised the street surface in some areas to the point where it is level with (or even above) the adjacent sidewalk, and the once grand slate curbs have disappeared in many cases. Lastly, there are no crosswalks to be found.

The sum of all these factors has created a very unwieldy and uneven pedestrian environment which is not accessible, particularly to the elderly and those with mobility issues. For these reasons, pedestrian and sidewalk safety improvements were identified as the 5th highest priority in the community survey, and was the topic of one of the pot luck dinner meetings. Local residents particularly wanted to see better sidewalk, curb and crosswalk conditions in the vicinity of the post office and rail trail where conditions are often the worst. There was limited consensus on specific sidewalk needs in other areas, noting that in some cases the sidewalk area is used for parking.

Importantly, residents expressed an interest in shunning conventional concrete sidewalks for the

use of slate, which would be more attractive and appropriate for the historic village. The use of slate in some instances may need to be considered with respect to meeting ADA (American's with Disabilities Act) requirements, however slate inlays in concrete were discussed as an acceptable solution. Restoration of these sidewalks and crossings would not only improve pedestrian safety and mobility, but enhance the visual appeal of the village in attracting new residents and businesses.



▲ **Existing Sidewalks.** The existing sidewalks in front of the Celery Compound (former Fish & Game building) and Post Office are in an advanced state of disrepair. The water wellhead which serves the Celery Building can be seen protruding up in the middle of the sidewalk, creating a potential hazard.



Community Cohesion

Vermont has always been an attractive destination for people to relocate to. The covid pandemic amplified this attraction, bringing a wave of new home buyers to the area, many of whom come from a different way of life. This turnover can result in a loss of community cohesion as new residents may be slow to adapt to local ways and longtime residents may not have much in common with them. People have a tendency to remain in their own bubble. The covid pandemic also caused the shutdown of many regular community events which have traditionally been social gathering opportunities for neighbors to get to know one another and become friends. [The effects of this are already being seen, and many West Pawlet residents noted that there was a need for more community and social events to bring people together again.](#) At issue is the importance of maintaining social opportunities, and welcoming new residents while helping them appreciate and respect local living so that we may avoid becoming a fragmented community.

The Fire Department

The West Pawlet Fire Department has been the heart of the village for years, serving as protectors as well as the social hub of the neighborhood on many occasions. Discussions with residents and fire department members has revealed that both of these roles have been harder and harder to fill each year. [The fire department greatly depends on fundraising events throughout the year to maintain operations, yet has been noticing a lack of enthusiasm and participation from local residents.](#) Many events they have held in recent years, even before Covid, relied on people from out of town to support their efforts due to a low local turnout. It has been increasingly



difficult to run and maintain some events, with the fire department abandoning some because it was no longer worth the effort to continue doing them. This has made fundraising more challenging, and reduced local socialization opportunities as well.

The fire department has also experienced a dramatic loss of local volunteers, a problem which is not unique to Pawlet but is a national concern. Volunteerism is down across the country. The Rutland Fire Department recently went from 50 members down to 24 in a span of 8 years. The average age of West Pawlet members is now over 50, with few young recruits to replace the ranks. This issue is on track to become a serious problem if not addressed. [While some of these issues can be attributed to the lack of community cohesion discussed above, steps must be taken to help activate community participation and incentivize more local volunteers.](#) A recent report by the Firefighter's Association of New York underscored the financial savings which that state's many volunteer departments bring. Converting these volunteer stations to full-time paid positions

across the state would cost over \$4 billion annually in salaries, benefits, debt servicing and operational costs. Many small communities would not be able to support the cost increase.

Inspired by a new legislative action signed into law last December in New York, the Village of Round Lake recently passed a resolution providing volunteer firefighters a 10% break on their village taxes to help encourage more volunteers. Similar legislation is being debated in the State of Vermont, however the current draft of that bill appears to cap the tax reduction at around \$500. As one West Pawlet fireman joked, "That maybe would cover my gas bill from responding to calls." The time commitment of increasingly long hours of state-mandated training have also made volunteering less attractive. A solution to increasing community participation and incentivizing volunteers must be found to help address this issue.

The Fire Department has other needs as well. They are currently looking to demolish the Annex

Building at the corner of New Street, potentially replacing it with greenspace which can be used to host outdoor events and expanding storage elsewhere. This corner building, although somewhat dilapidated, would make an excellent home for a new local store if renovated. Highly visible at the corner, with three large garage doors opening up onto an outdoor eating area at the corner like an open-air market. The Fire Department is currently not interested in this option, with concerns about parking and public activity potentially blocking their site access during emergency calls. The department is also seeking to expand and complete their kitchen to host more dinner events. It remains to be seen if there are any potentially creative solutions where the commercial kitchen of a future store could also serve the Firehouse, freeing up the kitchen space in the firehouse to meet other needs such as storage, but these options should at least be considered.

The Indian River

One of the most notable natural features of West Pawlet is the beautiful Indian River which meanders through the village, however this river is shrouded from view behind the many buildings and homes lining the main road. There are few vantage points where one can see it, and a visitor to West Pawlet might be forgiven for not even realizing it is there. The river is a wonderful feature and asset which is unfortunately not being fully appreciated. Several residents as well as rail trail visitors have suggested that better access and visibility with the river would be a welcome improvement, possibly with a walking path or lookout, although much of this waterside land is privately owned. There is a 1.6 acre private parcel locked between the rail trail and the river's edge which does not appear to have any road frontage, but is accessed from a small gate off of the rail trail. It is unknown what plans the owner has for this land, or what options it may present for them.



Energy & Sustainability

Energy independence, sustainability and resilience are becoming increasingly popular and often necessary practices, particularly with climate change concerns. At the state level, Vermont is pursuing the ambitious goal of reaching 90% renewable energy by the year 2050, and 75% by 2032. Other measures coming down from the legislature in Montpelier include proposed bill S.5 to establish a clean heat standard in Vermont. This controversial bill has yet to be tested, as many people are questioning what impact it will actually have on home heating costs, as well as fuel suppliers, before it should be considered. Nevertheless, solar adoption and cleaner, more efficient heating systems are the current trend.

Locally, the Town of Pawlet Energy Group is currently working to draft an updated energy section of the Town Plan, which is due to be reviewed by the Rutland Regional Planning Commission this year.

Solar adoption in Vermont has grown steadily over the past several years. Unfortunately, the historic slate roofs and small lot sizes of the village makes residential solar unworkable for many residents. [Considering this limitation, some residents in the village have envisioned community solar solutions on nearby sites such as the former quarry and town landfill which could serve the village.](#) However, this idea has some obstacles.

The local energy grid infrastructure is already nearing capacity for accommodating new large solar installs, as the remaining capacity (up to 95%) is earmarked for other large solar installs already in the planning pipeline, such as the Bullfrog Lane project between Pawlet and Wells. Green Mountain Power reserves the last 5% of capacity for private residential solar systems that may be requested. This means that the grid cannot accommodate a new community solar project in this area until the infrastructure and substations are upgraded,



something which will likely require significant investment and years to complete. For now, the idea of community solar in West Pawlet may have to wait.

It should be noted that solar development projects are currently directed to areas within the town which have nearby 3-phase power and are industrially zoned, however larger energy projects (solar, wind, etc) are regulated by the Public Utility Commission, not by local law. The former town landfill, which would make a more suitable solar site than the quarry, has been identified by the town as a preferred site, even though it is not currently zoned Industrial. The town garage in West Pawlet has also been identified for potential smaller-scale rooftop solar. Overall, the town is encouraging the use of rooftop or other impervious surface installations wherever possible to minimize ground loss.

The Town of Pawlet is more suited to solar energy generation than wind, and has concluded that industrial-scale wind generation should not be included in the town Energy Plan. However, the town is considering allowing small-scale wind generation in areas identified with high wind-energy potential. A number of high wind-energy locations exist within the town, but only a limited amount of these areas exist just outside of West Pawlet. Likewise, hydroelectric generation has been determined to be not optimal within the town, and therefore not a priority of the energy plan.

Reducing energy consumption and waste is also an important goal. The Town of Pawlet should continue to find ways to incorporate energy savings through the use of more efficient heating and electrical equipment in all municipal facilities, town-wide as well as in West Pawlet where appropriate. A FLIR (forward-looking infrared) camera uses

thermal imaging technology for a variety of uses, including being able to detect and see heat loss in a structure. Once prohibitively expensive, the costs of these cameras as come down considerably, and can now be purchased for just a few hundred dollars. Some consumer iPhone cameras are even equipped with this technology with the assistance of downloadable apps. Such a camera could be provided at the library for individual homeowners to borrow and use to detect heat loss locations in their homes so that they can improve insulation and weatherstripping weak points.

Housing & Zoning

The Town of Pawlet received a Bylaw Modernization Grant in 2022 and the Planning Commission has been working with the Rutland Regional Planning Commission to make changes to the Unified Bylaws in order to address the need for housing and for economic development in the two village centers of Pawlet and West Pawlet.

Currently, the town is considering zoning changes which will ease zoning requirements in the Village Commercial district, which comprises a majority of the West Pawlet village area. These changes are intended to address setback, lot coverage and parking restrictions to make it easier to redevelop properties and bring the dimensional requirements more in line with the actual historic building patterns of the village. This is anticipated to allow denser development, particularly where West Pawlet has a municipal wastewater system to support it. The changes are also intend to make it easier to get permits for common village center businesses such as restaurants and shops.

PART IV

VISION & RECOMMENDATIONS



A Brief Disclaimer

This planning process has revealed a number of improvements desired by the residents of West Pawlet, however the word “improvement” can sometimes be a double-edge sword. No one would take pleasure in seeing West Pawlet’s uniqueness transform into a Starbucks-sipping suburban everywhere township. Roadway changes, for example, which might only be executed with a hundred reflective yellow directional signs, would undermine our vision and goals for improvement.

When implementing any of the recommendations of this plan, care should be taken to use a light touch. West Pawlet should maintain its casual and quirky personality. Modernization, where necessary, should be gentle and unassuming. Utilizing local natural materials, skilled craftspersons and artists instead of off-the-shelf solutions reflects who we are as a community. This vision should always be in the back of our minds.

Keep West Pawlet funky. Keep it unique. Keep it simple.

PRIORITY PROJECTS

#1: Reduce Wastewater Treatment Plant User Fees

Resolving the current system inefficiencies and high operational costs of the wastewater treatment plant is the top priority for the Village of West Pawlet.

In order to achieve this, a multi-pronged approach will be necessary to break the cycle of rising costs and declining users. The Town of Pawlet should continue its effort to mitigate rising end-user costs with the use of subsidies and available state program rebates as may be possible to temporarily delay the problem from worsening while more permanent remedies are prepared. In the short-term, the Town should seek grant funding through the CRRP grant program (See Resources, page 62) and others to directly improve the efficiency of the plant operations to reduce costs, particularly related to current storage limitations, staffing and monitoring needs, and energy costs.

Currently, accumulated sludge must be pumped out of the facility and trucked to an off-site processing center in Rutland on a regular basis, representing the largest expense of the plant at over \$14,000 per year.¹ A potential solution identified includes retooling the existing sludge tanks to distill or bake a much more concentrated waste mixture, allowing the plant to increase its effective storage capacity and reduce the number of times the waste must be trucked out of town. A second potential solution—which would

likely require the expansion of the facility and grounds—involves expanding the overall capacity of the plant with additional storage to achieve the same reduction in trips, or potentially a combination of these two measures. It is recommended that if facility expansion is required, that a lot-line adjustment be conducted with the adjacent former Dutchies lot to expand the property only as much as necessary, with planted landscape buffers, so that the remainder of the adjacent lot can be sold off and redeveloped, placing it back on the tax rolls.

It is further recommended that alternative wastewater volume reduction solutions also be considered. This could include diverting a portion of the wastewater to a separate off-site shared community septic field, located in the vicinity on reasonably drained soils.

The costs associated with properly managing the facility must also be considered. Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators are required to be licensed by the Secretary of State's Office of Professional Regulation (OPR), a position with an average salary of \$48,000/year. The long-term cost-benefit of reconfiguring the facility to permit remote monitoring could potentially reduce the costs by eliminating the need for an operator to regularly travel to Pawlet for on-site inspections.

With a significant portion of plant expenses (18%) coming from energy and fuel costs, the Town should continue to investigate potential electrical cost savings by evaluating more efficient variable-frequency pumps and motors, pumping more during

¹Source: Town of Pawlet Wastewater Budget 2022

off-peak hours, and investigating the use of a solar panel system to supply electrical power. Utilization of solar power may also have a secondary benefit of maintaining some operational capacity during power outages and providing the Town with renewable energy credits. These potential cost-saving measures should be analyzed as part of an overall cost-benefit analysis and energy audit to determine the feasibility and efficacy of each so the Town can make strategic decisions that improve operations.

It is unclear if state legislation under consideration regarding the treatment of PFAS's "forever chemicals" may translate into additional local costs, however rising inflation, labor and energy prices will likely continue to make operational costs more difficult to overcome over time. It is for these and other reasons that the wastewater facility remains a top priority.

In the longer term, the Town of Pawlet should work to actively encourage and support the establishment of new businesses in and around the village center which would be able to take advantage of the available wastewater service. This would provide the triple benefit of increased tax ratables for the town, creation of some new local jobs, and increased service connection fees to support the treatment plant. The potential for a small to medium-scale light industrial operation to be eventually established at the former Hookery site on Route 153 south of the village center would be a strong start to such an effort, as well as other underutilized properties. The Town of Pawlet should continue to reach out to and coordinate with these landowners and businesses to discuss how we may be able to support their plans, including pursuing joint grant-funding options.

Finally, the provision of some additional housing stock should be explored which is carefully scaled

Summary Recommendations

Wastewater Treatment Plant

- » Continue efforts to mitigate rising end-user costs using subsidies and available state rebate assistance programs;
- » Apply for and secure grant funding for short-term facility upgrades/expansion to reduce operational expenses of trucking accumulated sludge to off-site processing facility;
- » Investigate available alternatives for operational cost savings related to plant operator salary, having a part-time operator shared with other municipalities, and available grant funding for remote monitoring or inspections;
- » Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of potential savings realized from reduced electrical usage from more efficient equipment, off-peak operations and solar power;
- » Actively encourage and support the establishment of new businesses in and around the village center which would utilize the wastewater plant to increase user fee revenues;
- » Remove any unnecessary obstacles to housing conversions with multiple dwelling units;
- » Allow for new housing growth which is appropriately scaled to the historic village in terms of form and lot size.

and aligned with the older character of West Pawlet. Steps should be taken to ensure that the zoning code does not present any unnecessary obstacles to the conversion of larger, older homes into multi-unit residences. New housing options should also be explored, however it is not recommended that the Town pursue the creation of new housing solely for the purposes of filling untapped capacity of the wastewater plant. Any new housing in West Pawlet should be allowed to grow organically, driven by actual demand, provided it is scaled appropriately to the village. This could include small cottage houses on small lots with a shared greenspace which might appeal to older residents seeking to downsize and new families seeking relatively affordable starter solutions. If and when the time is right, some ideas for how this could be accommodated have been included later in the Housing recommendations.

#2: Road Safety Improvements

[Addressing the awkward convergence of roadways into the village center is one of the top priority issues in the community.](#) This issue was discussed in greater detail during a pot luck dinner meeting on January 12th to discuss and consider different design alternatives. Three separate design options were presented at this public meeting which reconfigured the roadway, reduced unnecessary pavement areas, and added traffic control signage with crosswalks to address the identified problems. These alternatives included a simple “T” intersection, a traffic circle, and a central median design, with proposed ideas for moving or re-accommodating the existing WWI Memorial stone. Each option also included a partial re-alignment of the Rail Trail as it crosses Egg Street, providing better view and safer distance separation from northbound traffic as it crests the hill.

Of the three options presented, attendees were unanimous in their support of the “T” intersection (See conceptual design, next page) due to its relative simplicity and obvious safety benefits. Although this option required that the WWI Monument stone be moved approximately 40 feet south, people were supportive of its proposed location because it remained a highly visible and prominent feature at the intersection. This location would also be more safely accessible, and provided space for decorative landscaping which created an attractive and honorable setting befitting its importance. The Rail Trail crossing was moved to the end of the new intersection, providing a crosswalk at the new stop sign for a much safer crossing condition. This revised crossing location had the added benefit of giving visitors a better view into the village and more welcome arrival as they entered. A crosswalk was also added connecting New Street to the Post Office.

It is recommended that the town take steps to advance this preferred design solution and work toward its eventual implementation. Initial steps should include outreach to VTrans to review and refine the design concept as may be needed, followed by securing grant funding for survey, engineering and design work.


In the short-term, the town should install a radar speed sign on Route 153 to slow traffic coming down the hill into the village. As a longer term solution, the town may wish to install a new “West Pawlet Village” sign (similar to the one in front of the firehouse property) with posted speed limit in a similar location approaching the village to help remind people they are entering a populated area and discourage speeding.



The intersection redesign work and crosswalks should be coordinated and combined with the restoration of the slate sidewalks in front of the post office commercial block. It should also incorporate wherever possible the craftwork of local artisans and tradespeople in creating amenities such as signs, planters, benches, bike racks, sculptures and similar items that are called for in the final design.

Once completed, the new intersection work should be recognized with a re-dedication ceremony honoring the WWI veterans commemorated in the memorial as an event to bring village residents together.

▲ *Proposed Intersection Concept.*

- 1 Original monument location
- 2 New monument location
- 3 New crosswalk location
- 4 New sidewalks and landscaping
- 5 Rail Trail
- 6 Landscaping to help redirect rail trail
-  New stop sign

Summary Recommendations

Road Safety Improvements

- » Review proposed roadway and intersection reconfiguration concept with VTrans to determine initial feasibility and any necessary design modifications;
- » Install radar speed sign on Route 153 on approach to deter speeders coming down hill into village;
- » Seek grant funding for any necessary survey, design or engineering work required for intersection reconfiguration;
- » Construct new intersection configuration with relocated WWI monument and crosswalks in coordination with VTrans re-alignment of D&H Rail Trail;
- » Coordinate intersection construction work with adjacent sidewalk and landscaping improvements in front of Antiques building, Celery Compound and Post Office;
- » Consider longer-term installation of a new or relocated “West Pawlet Village” sign at the top of the hill across from Hookery to help slow traffic approaching village from the south.
- » Complete the intersection and sidewalk work with a re-dedication ceremony honoring the WWI veterans at the new memorial stone location.

#3: New Local Store



Establishing a new local store to fill the void from the loss of Dutchies is a top priority project within the Village of West Pawlet. Such a store would have multiple benefits to the village beyond the obvious convenience of selling goods and supplies to area residents. It would also help to re-establish a common socialization spot for people to gather and see their neighbors. It would become an attraction and destination waypoint for visitors traveling along the rail trail, providing them a place to stop and rest for a bite to eat or use the restroom. A store would also provide a space to showcase local goods and crafts for sale, helping to support area businesses. Perhaps most importantly, it would bring some additional activity and attention to the village, acting as a catalyst to help jumpstart other projects.

Initial outreach and research into a conventional for-profit retail store identified several obstacles and risks discussed in Part III. However, alternative strategies of community-supported and cooperative models were increasingly pointed to as examples of how it could be done in West Pawlet. Community Supported Enterprises (CSE) have been experiencing a lot of success in re-establishing small local stores in several communities across Vermont in recent years. Notable examples include the Barnard General Store (Barnard, VT), W.E. Pierce Store (North Shrewsbury, VT), Albany General Store (Albany, VT), and Hancock General Store (Hancock, VT). More locally, this same strategy is being employed nearby in Rupert with the Sheldon General Store Cafe & Community Space.

CSE's work by establishing a non-profit organization for community fundraising. The organization would use the fundraising to acquire and renovate

a property to create a local store, leasing the space to a store operator at a very low cost. The strategy of this approach is that most of the financial burden of rent, building maintenance and taxes is taken care of by the non-profit, allowing the store to operate with much more room to breathe. Also, if the store operator should leave for some reason, the organization (and space) is still there to find a replacement.

There are many grant programs available to assist with such an effort, particularly if they involve the restoration of older, historic buildings. The Preservation Trust of Vermont has been instrumental in helping to support and fund a number of the revitalized stores noted above, and also offers technical assistance and training to people looking to do the same in their community. This community-supported approach has a lower barrier to entry than establishing a new for-profit business, with smaller investment risks. Likewise, the renovation of an existing building would generally require less investment over construction of a new building. [For these reasons, it is recommended that the community establish a membership cooperative or non-profit organization to acquire and adapt an existing building for the creation of a new store in West Pawlet.](#) The preliminary steps to achieve this are provided in the Summary Recommendations box on the next page.

Start Small. It is recommended that the organization goals start out small initially, acquiring a relatively small space to get started and work toward establishing larger presence later. Although the future decisions of the organization will need to be made by the organization members, two example scenarios for how this process could work with existing properties are provided as examples.



▲ **13 Egg Street Concept.** Computer rendering of potential remodeling of the former antiques building at 13 Egg Street, adding windows and covered entry porch on west facade facing the Rail Trail. Building could provide outside seating and high visibility along the trail for a local store. (Image courtesy Bruce Sirjane)

Example One. In this example scenario, the organization works to acquire the historic former antiques building at 13 Egg St., currently vacant. Although a small space, this property has excellent visibility from the rail trail, provides shaded outdoor space and would be suitable for historic restoration funding. The store provides a small selection of goods, coffee, food and drink geared directly toward the requested needs of local residents, but also rail trail visitors (particularly in summer). It may be beneficial to query local residents for exact items they would like to see sold in store, and provide those. During this period, the store works to establish itself while the organization plans and fundraises for an eventual move to a new space in the coming years.

If developed as a cooperative, it is important that non-members (such as rail trail visitors, still have the ability to purchase goods, albeit at a higher price than local members.

Summary Recommendations: New Local Store

- » The community should identify core individual volunteer(s) who would be dedicated to taking on the responsibility of establishing a membership cooperative or 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and recruiting like-minded individuals in pursuing an ongoing, concerted community effort.
 - » It is recommended that the organization directors/officers be composed of a diverse group of people representing different local perspectives across a range of income levels. This includes locals from multi-generation Pawlet families as well as new residents.
 - » The organization should consider including representatives from the greater Pawlet area or similar measures to help make this initiative more of a town-wide effort, rather than a village-only effort. This may help with volunteerism and fundraising.
 - » It is recommended that any potential directors/officers should agree in advance on some basic expectations in terms of everyone's ongoing time commitment and level of effort to this cause. This will be important to set expectations and help reduce attrition or burnout over the course of the effort.
- » The group should seek initial guidance and technical assistance from the Preservation Trust of Vermont, taking advantage of their educational resources and experience in the initial options, setup of the organization and first steps identifying potential target properties.
- » If a non-profit, the organization should be established with the broader goal of West Pawlet revitalization and economic enhancement, rather than the specific goal of only establishing a local store. This will allow the organization to also take on other related village improvement efforts if desired, and allow their cause to appeal to a wider audience.
- » The organization should assess options and identify a target property for acquisition and renovation, with preliminary plans/concepts prepared in order to help the general public visualize the goals and support fundraising.
- » It is recommended that the organization goals should start small, potentially working to acquire a small space as a first "trial phase" of the new store, and getting something established. It can then use this time to work toward later goals of expansion or acquiring a larger property. Two examples of how this could work are provided.
- » Once a property has been identified and progress is being made toward establishing a store, the organization should seek assistance from the Vermont Retail and Grocers Association, who can assist them with finding a potential store operator.

Store Recommendations, Cont.

- » Buyback/Repurchase Agreement. The organization may wish to consider a “buy back” or repurchase agreement with the property seller for the property they wish to acquire. This would potentially give the seller more reason to sell their property knowing that they can get it back at a later time, perhaps when they have better use for it. This would also allow the organization to get a cash inflow which they could use to move into a larger space later.
- » As the store and organization grows, it can then seek to expand or move to a larger space, providing more goods and amenities to local residents and visitors.

At a later date, the organization could then potentially purchase the railway freight shed at 42 Railroad Ave, providing a massive increase in space to better serve the community as well as create a rail trail welcome center and attraction as described later in this chapter.

Example Two. The organization works to acquire the small commercial building at 21 Railroad Ave., adjacent to the Dutchies site, currently vacant. Although a small space and not a historic structure, this property also has excellent visibility from the rail trail, has outdoor space and most importantly has plenty of room to expand utilizing the adjacent Dutchies land. The store operates much the same as in example 1, working to establish itself initially while fundraising for a future expansion. The organization eventually acquires surrounding land from the town, constructing an addition and outdoor seating/dining space and landscaping in front with parking and deliveries in the rear.

Sine it is unknown which organizational strategy local residents may eventually decide to take, both of these examples are intended to illustrate potential paths, but it is important that one path be agreed

upon for the community to rally behind.

Should the Fire Department ever be willing to sell the Annex Building on the corner, it could provide ample space for a store without the need to later expand. Funds from the sale of that structure could go toward meeting other Fire Department needs, such as increased storage and new equipment. Other case studies (a few featured on the following page) can also serve as useful examples of how this has been done in other communities.

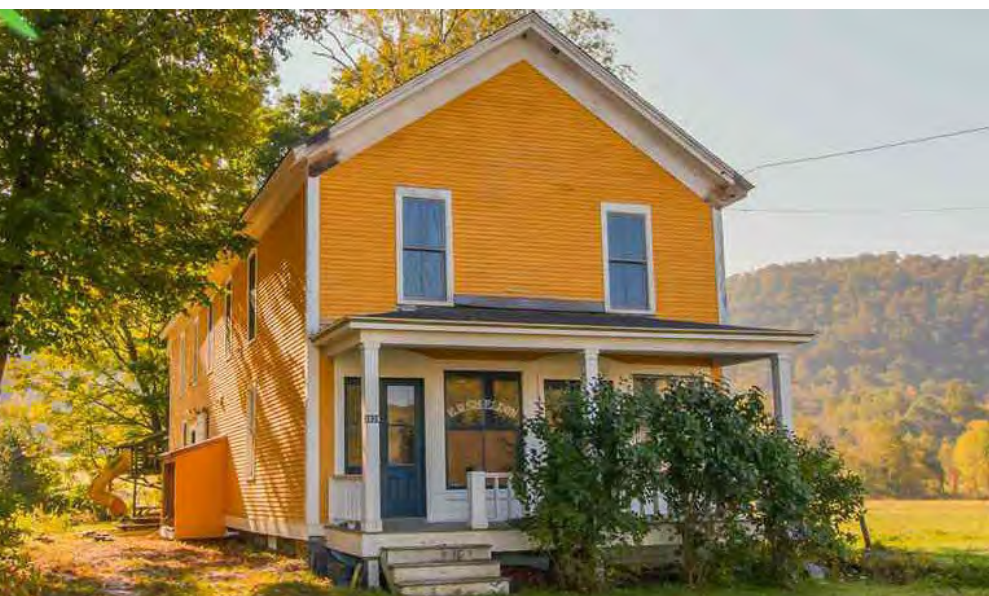
This effort, if truly desired by the residents of West Pawlet, will require a dedicated group of people who are passionate about its potential and a concerted effort by the greater Pawlet community to help support it. It will be important to recognize that this goal is not just about creating a store, but starting momentum on a catalyst project in the village which will generate activity that gives birth to other business and local growth. Achieving this goal will make progress on a number of other village goals related to community socialization, economic development, tourism, municipal tax revenue and reducing wastewater treatment fees.



Albany General Store, Albany, VT. After a fire destroyed the previous business in 2013, the Albany Community Trust—a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization—was founded to establish a new store on the property. Partnering with the Preservation Trust of Vermont, they purchased the building and raised over \$200,000 in donations and were awarded over \$400,000 in grants to renovate and expand the building. Donations made to the cause are sent to Preservation Trust of Vermont, who in turn passes these funds down to the non-profit organization. The new store was opened in 2021. The store is operated by the owners of the Craftsbury General Store who have partnered with the non-profit organization.



Barnard General Store, Barnard, VT. The original store, founded in 1832, closed in 2012. Members of the local community established the Barnard Community Trust—a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization—with the goal of bringing the store back into operation. With the assistance of the Preservation Trust of Vermont, the organization raised over \$650,000 to purchase the building and make necessary repairs. Volunteers ran the store part-time in exchange for donations while they worked to get the store running more permanently again. The trust now leases the building to new store operators, and the store was re-opened in 2013.



Sheldon General Store - Cafe & Community Space, Rupert, VT. The Rupert Village Trust—a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization—was established to purchase and expand the building with the goal of developing a local cafe and community space. Partnering with the Preservation Trust of Vermont, the group has raised \$145,000 in community donations and \$490,000 in grant awards. The building was purchased in 2019 and completed necessary structural upgrades the next year. They currently host regular local events including game night and yoga while working toward the goal of constructing a 2-story addition to accommodate restrooms, stairs and elevator and completing a commercial kitchen in order to serve a variety of food dishes designed for both affordable and fancy budgets.

OTHER VILLAGE GOALS

Volunteers Needed!

Some of the recommendations in this plan will require implementation by the Town of Pawlet, and others are more suited to grassroot-efforts of local village residents. During the course of planning discussions, a number of people offered to volunteer to help with various initiatives, offering their time or expertise on everything from planting flowers to computer help and grant writing. They wanted to know what tasks were needed and how they could help. [It became clear that an overall strategy was needed to help identify volunteering tasks and organize the proper people around them to take advantage of this untapped potential.](#)

Ironically, the first step toward getting this strategy organized is to find a volunteer willing to start it.

The use of an online platform or phone app may be a useful tool in organizing and recruiting people, especially through social media pages like the West Pawlet Neighbors group on Facebook. Habitat for Humanity uses their own proprietary online app (“Volunteer Up!”) to allow people to sign up for certain tasks or donate materials, but there are many other similar ones available which might be suitable.



Within this plan, goals or tasks which could possibly benefit from a larger overall volunteer strategy are indicated with a raised hand icon for easy reference.

Summary Recommendations

Local Volunteerism

- » Identify a person within the community willing to maintain a simple list of volunteer needs in the village and help recruit and organize people toward different tasks.
- » This person does not need to lead any of the individual tasks, but serves only to help recruit and organize others.
- » Initial volunteer topics may include:
 - Establishing a non-profit for local store
 - Fire department volunteers
 - Grant application writing
 - General village cleanup
 - IT/web design for non-profit fundraising and marketing
 - Landscaping, flower planting around monument and other public areas
 - Design services / renovation labor to establish a new store in the village
 - Community events coordinator
 - Artists and craftspeople to construct various improvements like flower boxes or bike racks
 - Rail trail marketing
 - Donating money or materials



Replace Sidewalks

The existing sidewalks and curbs fronting the main commercial block from the Post Office to Egg Street should be replaced in coordination with the intersection re-design and proposed monument location. This sidewalk design should attempt to incorporate local slate as much as possible to reflect the history of the village, as well as the handiwork of local craftspersons or artists willing to donate their efforts. A standing table / flower box design should be considered as a removable cover to the wellhead which protrudes from the sidewalk.

In the longer term, the village should seek grant funding for a bike and pedestrian study to take a closer look at the actual needs for other sidewalk improvements in the village later on, such as missing connections where new sidewalks are needed or existing slate sidewalks could be restored.

Summary Recommendations

Improved Sidewalks

- » Construct new sidewalks, curb repairs and landscaping along the Post Office commercial block in coordination with new intersection design, utilizing slate materials where possible;
- » Develop a creative removable cover for the wellhead currently protruding out of the sidewalk;
- » Seek grant funding for a Bicycle and Pedestrian Scoping Study to identify other sidewalk connections and areas which should be candidates for restoration later on.
- » Utilize local talent when possible.



Replaced Sidewalks. Conceptual rendering of new slate sidewalks, with decorative planter to cover wellhead. (See page 28 for photo of existing conditions)

Support Business Growth

While the municipality of Pawlet does not have control over the private sector, they can adjust the levers of what may be permitted and approved. The allowable uses in the zoning for Village Commercial and Industrial zones should be reviewed to consider what additional uses, if any, may want to be added. These may include (but not limited to) child day care, microbrewery/distillery, winery, bar, farmer's market, bakery, enclosed autobody work, garden center nursery and landscaping supplies, recreation rentals, equipment rentals, marijuana farm or cannabis dispensary. It is not clear if these specific uses already fall under any of the uses in the current code.

If some of these uses are deemed appropriate for West Pawlet, but not in other areas of town where the same districts occur, then a separate district for West Pawlet should be considered.

The municipality may also want to be proactive in finding out what individual landowners might be planning for their (business) property and identifying ways it can help. This is especially true of existing vacant or underutilized properties. Although several business and property owners were approached during this planning effort, others remain. It is not known what plans they have for their property, or if there are real (or perceived) obstacles to them moving forward with their plans. This effort could be lead by a liaison who can report any findings back to the Selectboard, helping to identify problems or select grant applicant candidates.

The municipality should select one local property or business owner each year and coordinate with them in applying for CRRP (See Resources, page 62) or similar grant funding in establishing or expanding



Summary Recommendations

Business Growth

- » Coordinate with and support West Pawlet property or business owners in applying for CRRP grant funding to help spur ongoing community revitalization.
- » Review allowable uses within the West Pawlet Village Commercial and Industrial zones to identify any additional uses which may be added;
- » Be proactive in outreach to individual landowners, particularly vacant or underutilized properties, to discuss potential plans and how the town may be able to support or assist them;
- » Consider a liaison to the Planning Board or Selectboard who is tasked with reaching out to property owners and identifying problems which may be preventing them from implementing their future plans.

their business in the West Pawlet area for the purpose of spurring economic revitalization. Volunteers may be able to assist with the grant application process.

The municipality may also consider being somewhat lenient in granting necessary variances where it could help promote economic growth. Although this was not identified as a current obstacle or problem, it may be helpful during this special phase where our goal is to generate positive momentum.



Supporting the Fire Department

The West Pawlet Volunteer Fire Department is an important hub of the community, and they need our support. In the short-term, the Town of Pawlet and West Pawlet residents are encouraged to contact legislators in Montpelier and register their strong support for Bill H.263 (2023) proposing to establish a refundable income tax credit of \$500 for emergency responders (including volunteer firefighters) among other provisions.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the Town of Pawlet and local residents express strong support for the passage of a bill similar to H.156 (2019) authorizing local municipalities to exempt (in whole or in part) local property taxes for volunteer firefighters. It is believed that these measures may help Pawlet and other communities offset the steady decline in volunteer members which threatens to undermine our ability to protect citizens and property. These campaigns could be coordinated with the help of a local volunteer.

Hosting events is a core element of fundraising, and the community should inform the department what types of events it would most like to see, and make an effort to participate in them. Identifying and inviting new families who have moved to the area will be helpful in this.

The department may consider introducing themselves to new area residents each Spring, and providing them information about the different events held during the year. This effort could be supported by the Town Clerk who could provide info on what households have changed hands over the year.

Summary Recommendations

Support the Fire Department

- » Provide strong support for pending state legislation giving a \$500 income tax credit for volunteer firefighters;
- » Encourage state lawmakers to pass legislation which would enable local municipalities to provide property tax exemptions for volunteer firefighters;
- » Residents should encourage friends and neighbors to attend events hosted by the Firehouse, including new residents who can meet their neighbors and learn to become part of the community;
- » The Fire Department should consider an annual outreach program to new residents;
- » The Department should continue to work on reviving lost events such as the pancake breakfast, and establish outdoor space for department events and social gatherings.

If the Fire Dept ultimately decides to demolish the annex building, it is recommended they work to replace it with something which can benefit both the department and the community, such as an outdoor gathering space which can be used to host community events. This could include an open-air pavilion and BBQ pit which would be the centerpiece of summer events, while also being usable by residents for a random picnic lunch or reserved for small gatherings.



Community Events

During the planning process many people expressed an interest or need for more social events in the village which bring neighbors together, however there has been lower attendance in recent years and Covid has also caused many events to be suspended.

It is important that these and other events are established once again to help nurture a strong sense of community. Local groups are encouraged to re-establish lost traditions and explore the creation of new ones.

A variety of hosting locations is recommended to help share the responsibility and provide different venues and exposure. In addition to the Firehouse, events could be coordinated with the Hookery/Industrial Park, Celery Compound (former Fish & Game building), Consider Bardwell Farm, or Wayward Goose.

It will also eventually become helpful to promote West Pawlet to people from outside the area who may not be familiar with the village. The “Tour de Slate” rails to trails ride annual fundraiser—which begins and ends in West Pawlet—is one such example. The village should coordinate with this existing effort and help boost marketing to increase awareness and attendance, providing local vendors or businesses an opportunity to showcase their offerings.

In addition, the village may also benefit from the creation of a completely new local event such as: Wilderness outing with geocaching / scavenger hunt; Guided historic slate walking tour around (the safe areas of) the quarry with Historical Society and Newmont Quarry representatives to learn about the history of the industry; or 5k walking event between the village and Consider Bardwell/Wayward Goose.

Summary Recommendations

Community Events

- » The Town of Pawlet, local groups and institutions should work to re-establish old community events and organize new ones. Some examples may include:
 - Community Pot Luck Dinners
 - New Resident Welcome Event
 - Farmer’s Market
 - Community Cleanup Day
 - Outdoor Movie Night
 - Trivia Night
 - Christmas Tree Lighting
 - Bake Sales
 - BBQ Roasts / Suppers
- » Pursue the establishment of one or two annual events which are designed to attract people from the larger area to come visit West Pawlet and learn about what it has to offer.
- » Coordinate local events with area businesses and groups so that they can participate and help make the occasion more interesting.



Rail Trail Enhancements

The D&H Rail Trail is currently a small asset to the community. The benefits of this trail are expected to grow slowly over time as the activity and businesses of West Pawlet also grow, much like a matching investment.

Beyond the already planned improvements and intersection redesign described in this plan, short-term goals should likely focus more on increased public awareness, visibility and cross-marketing of the trail than adding more physical features just yet. West Pawlet residents often noted that while rail trail improvements were important, our energy is better spent improving the village, which will then in-turn eventually make the trail more popular.

In the interim, steps can be taken to raise awareness and visibility of the trail. Coordinate with VTrans, neighboring municipalities and area businesses to develop a marketing pamphlet about the trail, with map showing points of interest and businesses all along the NY and VT route, including local farms, Sheldon Cafe & Community Center, Sherman's Store, Merck Forest, Granville, Poultney, etc. Ultimately, this information should be available as a dedicated webpage and downloadable PDF that is easily findable in a related google search.

If public restrooms can be accommodated as part of a new business in the village, they should ideally be made also accessible from the exterior so that visitors can use them even if the business is closed, with information directing trail users to their location.

Later enhancements along the trail should include bike racks, seating areas and local visitor information as the needs of the trail grow. It is recommended

Summary Recommendations

Rail Trail Enhancements

- » The Town of pawlet should continue to work on completing incremental improvements which support the adjacent rail trail, including establishing the new parking area along Railroad Avenue;
- » Utilize the opportunity of the intersection redesign and revised trail crossing to introduce new landscaping and tree plantings;
- » Consider relocating the trailhead information board and interpretive signage out away from the bridge to a much more visible location;
- » Develop a complete marketing brochure and map (print and pdf) of the entire trail with attractions in coordination with area businesses, towns and VTrans. Eventually work toward a dedicated website for all of this information which is easily findable.
- » Incorporate public restrooms in a future store or other business which can serve the rail trail.
- » Establish other desired trail amenities such as bike racks, seating areas and visitor information as the village grows.

that these items be developed with local volunteer craftspersons and artists who can bring a unique or quirky design perspective. For example, a bike rack modeled after the historic slate quarry lifting poles or sculptural seating, which showcases local talent and craftsmanship.

Re-purpose Freight Shed

Although currently a minor nuisance, the railway freight shed represents a very unique opportunity to restore and showcase a historic structure within the village as an important local attraction. If the ownership of this building can be resolved and local control can be secured, it is recommended that historic preservation funding be sought to save the building for future use by a local non-profit or similar group.

The recommended ultimate goal of this effort would be to restore the building and convert it into a combined Pawlet Historical Society Museum / VTrans Welcome Center directly adjacent to the rail trail. This welcome center could be used to showcase the history of the railroad, the village of West Pawlet and the local slate quarries which were once such a tremendous influence on the area, in a museum-type fashion. The Welcome Center could provide light refreshments and snacks for travelers, as well as restrooms and information about other local attractions and businesses.

If this effort were successful, it would create a local attraction in West Pawlet village which would serve visitors on the rail trail, as well as be a notable attraction to people in the greater region who are history lovers, and enthusiasts of the railroad and slate industries. It could also serve as an educational center for local schools. It is believed that this may be the highest and best use for this structure.

Alternately, if the Welcome Center/Museum were unworkable, the structure should be reserved for a local store or other supporting rail trail use amenable to the state. Relocation and demolition options should be avoided where possible.



Summary Recommendations

Re-purpose Freight Shed

- » Continue to monitor ownership status of this historic structure so that an opportunity for a local group to take ownership is not missed;
- » If ownership/control can be secured, seek historic restoration grant funding to preserve and restore it, potentially re-aligning it away from the road and closer to the rail trail, in lieu of removal or destruction;
- » Work to establish the freight shed as a D&H Rail Trail Welcome Center in association with the Historical Society showcasing the history of West Pawlet, the railroad and the quarry as a local attraction;
- » If the structure has to be removed, seek to relocate it to local buyer to keep it in Pawlet for a business expansion elsewhere, in lieu of destruction;
- » If the structure must be destroyed, seek to salvage parts which could be used and showcased in another local project.
- » If the structure must be removed or demolished, then it is recommended that the Town of Pawlet coordinate with the State of Vermont to have the site cleaned up and enhanced with lawn area, landscaping and picnic tables as an attractive outdoor relaxation space for local residents and rail trail visitors.



Improve River Access

The village should work over time, in cooperation with local landowners, to open up visibility and access to the Indian River. One potential access point may be available on the south side of the river, between the water and the rail trail. A landlocked 1.6 acre parcel without road frontage exists here which appears to have limited development potential but has great waterfront access. This property appears to have an access gate from the rail trail, and could potentially provide walking paths down to and along the waterway, creating a pleasant retreat for both locals and visitors.

It is unknown if the current property owners would have any interest in this future use someday. There is currently a small footbridge which connects this landlocked property on the south bank of the Indian River to the owners property (separate parcel) on the other side of the water, and it appears they currently use this bridge to access a private seating area along the river. However, it is being pointed out as a potential idea for discussion to see if there is any long term interest.

A second condition occurs behind the Celery Compound and former antiques building where a rock outcropping provides a view down to the water below. This spot, just on the north side of the rail trail adjacent to the bridge, may be suitable for a future patio or overlook area that could be part of any future antiques building use.

It is recommended that future discussions with these and other property owners be pursued over time to invite discussion on potential park space and walking trails along the water.

Summary Recommendations

Improve River Access

- » Conduct outreach to village property owners about the potential for creating public access and walking paths along the Indian River;
- » Preferred access would likely be from the rail trail side to avoid conflicts with properties directly fronting Route 153.



Adapt the Quarry

The former quarry lands, now owned by the town, present a challenging property for adaptive re-use. The town should continue to offer the leftover slate materials there to local residents to encourage their use in local building projects. The village should also look to coordinate with the Slate Valley Museum in Granville, NY to identify any collaborative ideas which could increase local tourism, such as adding West Pawlet to their popular driving tour.

Adaptive-reuse options of the actual quarry site remain somewhat limited in the short-term due to the relatively unstable nature of the slag piles and hazardous terrain conditions it presents. If the town is eventually able to pursue a community solar project, the former town landfill across the street represents a much easier and less visible location. However, the more stable portions of the quarry site are commonly used today as walking and biking trails, even if it isn't officially sanctioned. The site presents several lookout areas with wonderful views of the West Pawlet valley. In the short-term, it may be possible to identify limited routes within the quarry site which could be made official walking trails, with overlooks and interpretive/educational signs showcasing the history of the site and slate industry. This could create a local recreational asset and tourism attraction.

In the longer term, the site does present a unique yet challenging opportunity to adaptively re-use one of the larger quarry excavation areas as an outdoor amphitheater space. Much in the same way that the Town of Dorset has successfully converted the old marble quarry (once hidden and off-limits to people for liability reasons) into a popular summer recreation and swimming area, there could be



Summary Recommendations

Adapt the Quarry

- » Continue to offer the leftover quarry materials as a resource to local residents through approved contractors;
- » Coordinate with the Slate Valley Museum in Granville, NY to see if the local West Pawlet quarry could be added to their popular Slate Valley Driving Tour as well as other collaborative opportunities;
- » Investigate the former quarry site to determine the feasibility of any limited walking trails with safe routes and overlooks which could be created as a local recreational attraction and educational hiking tour;
- » The Town of Pawlet should review the existing quarry parcels to identify what areas of land might be appropriate to subdivide-off as separate lands and sold back into private ownership to return it to the tax rolls. (See also recommendation "Vacant Land / Future Housing" on the following pages.
- » In the long-term, consider the potential to convert a portion of the main quarry pit into an open-air performance space for outdoor concerts and similar regional events.

potential to do something similar in West Pawlet. The V-shaped formation of the quarry hillsides create a natural amphitheater space, similar to the famous concert venue in Red Rocks Park, Colorado. Potentially named “Blue Rocks” instead, the floor of this man-made valley could be excavated and filled in to create a raised lawn seating area, utilizing the south quarry face as the stage backdrop for small concerts and festivals. While ambitious, it could transform this otherwise vacant industrial land into a local and regional recreational asset.

The remainder of the town-owned southern parcel—south of the actual quarry— includes a large amount of natural wooded areas and open fields which are also not being utilized. It is recommended that the town consider carving much of this area off to be sold so that the land can return to the tax rolls and provide additional income to the town. Potential housing in this area would have low visibility, provide additional housing stock to the

village, and potentially serve to increase the number of wastewater treatment plant users. (See “Vacant Land/Future Housing” recommendation below.)



▲ **Potential Amphitheater Location.**

▼ **“Blue Rocks” Amphitheater.** *Conceptual photo-simulation of what the outdoor performance space might look like.*





Blue Rocks Amphitheater.
Conceptual photo-simulation of the potential outdoor performance space looking north, with a new access road and parking area beyond. The quarry pond and Route 153 can be seen in the distance.

Former Landfill

The former town landfill, now capped, does provide an opportunity to still serve the village. If the current limitations on the regional electrical grid infrastructure are eventually upgraded to handle higher capacities, this could enable Pawlet to pursue the potential of community solar. This move would provide the town with a source of lower cost, clean energy and enable many West Pawlet residents to take advantage of solar power even though the small homes of the village are not suited to panels.

The landfill is a preferred location for this use (instead of the former quarry) because it involves far less terrain complications and the solar arrays would likely be less visible than on the hillsides of the quarry.

Summary Recommendations

Former landfill

- » Continue to monitor the ongoing infrastructure plans of Green Mountain Power and other area utilities to stay up to date on potential changes.
- » Consider an update to the Town Plan and Energy Plan which will clarify the intent and desire of utilizing the former town landfill as a potential site for larger solar installations. Update town requirements to provide design guidance on future solar installations, including desired screening, fencing, viewshed protection and decommissioning plans.
- » Consider the creation of walking and hiking trails on and around the landfill property.

Vacant Land/Future Housing

The Town of Pawlet should consider carving out a large portion of the southern quarry parcel and selling this land back into the private sector. This would get the property back onto the tax rolls, providing tax revenue for the town as well as cash from the sale. It would also provide an opportunity to provide additional housing around the village which would increase local activity and potentially connect new users to the wastewater treatment plant. Although some engineering and feasibility investigations would need to be conducted, it is believed that this hillside meadow area may contain a significant amount of rock ledge which may complicate excavation and sewer hookups.

This land is primarily zoned Agricultural Rural Residential, and appears to provide approximately 22 acres of area in the southern portion of the

property which is mostly open meadow and otherwise undisturbed by quarry operations. This hillside meadow area also provides wonderful southern views.

If the town were to simply sell this undeveloped property, it would potentially be subdivided into four or five new residential homes on 5-acre lots. Instead, it is recommended that the town proactively develop a plan as part of a Conservation or Planned Unit Development approach for a series of small cottage homes and structures on very small lots sharing a common greenspace with open fields and walking trails. Such a development would be more in-keeping with the traditional scale and character of the adjacent historic village, aimed to provide housing which is more affordable to everyday Vermont residents. This would create a





clustered area of smaller, relatively more affordable homes which would be attractive to young families seeking a starter home as well as seniors looking to downsize and reduce home maintenance. In order to avoid outside real-estate market forces and short-term rental popularity from making these properties unaffordable, some development conditions or deed-restrictions may be necessary.

Because West Pawlet is a Designated Village Center, such a project would likely qualify as a Neighborhood Development Area, making it exempt from Act 250 regulations and land gains tax on housing units sold. The actual number of units which could be built in this area would likely be limited to a threshold acceptable to area residents and within water and septic limitations, and would also require finding a secondary access point into the property. Currently, the property only has a narrow amount of road frontage accessed by Spruce Street. Having a secondary access point would help to alleviate concerns about the number of vehicle trips using

Summary Recommendations

Future Housing

- » Review the southern quarry parcel to identify lands which may be suitable for selling back into the private sector.
- » Consider a Conservation or Planned Unit Development design for this property which requires small cottage homes on small lots, geared toward providing more affordable local housing options, potentially with deed restrictions.
- » Seek to identify a potential secondary means of accessing the site.
- » Apply for grant funding to develop a design plan and associated zoning changes so that the town could specify the parameters of desired future housing development here.

Spruce Street and sufficient Fire Department access.

Municipal Planning Grant Funding is available to develop such plans and amend the zoning to help plan for and dictate exactly what the community would like to see from such development, including design, density, protection of natural resources and other considerations. (See Resources, Page 62)

Although housing needs did not rank very highly among residents in the community survey, it remains a critical issue at the state and national level. Providing more reasonably affordable housing in West Pawlet would help to support the other growth measures described in this plan.



NEW YORK / VERMONT BORDER

TOWN PROPERTY

WASTEWATER PLANT

HISTORICAL MUSEUM
TRAIL WELCOME CENTER

NEW BUSINESS

RAILROAD AVE

RAIL TRAIL PARKING

RAIL TRAIL PATH

STATE PROPERTY

RAIL TRAIL PARKING

ROUTE 153 (TH-1)

EGG STREET (TH-10)

POTENTIAL STORE

OUTDOOR SEATING

OVERLOOK AREA

RAIL TRAIL PATH

- 1 New property line adjustment for wastewater facility
- 2 New plantings buffering wastewater facility
- 3 New parking area / driveway
- 4 Relocated Trail Head Kiosk / Visitor Info
- 5 Divert Rail Trail to improved crossing location
- 6 New Monument location with landscaping
- 7 New or restored slate sidewalks
- 8 Improved on-street parking in front of Post Office with re-aligned Route 153 centerline
- 9 Potential outdoor event pavilion / barbecue pit
- 10 Potential future walking paths down to river's edge



RESOURCES

Vermont Village Center Designation Program

Managed by the Agency of Commerce and Economic Development, the Village Center Designation Program provides benefits to eligible communities which successfully establish a formal village center for future economic growth and development. Benefits of being designated include:

- » Technical assistance;
- » Historic Tax Credits - eligible for interior and exterior improvements, code compliance, plumbing and electrical upgrades, facade work;
- » Code Improvement Tax Credits;
- » Priority consideration for other state grants

NOTE: Village Center Designation must be renewed every 8 years. **The West Pawlet designation was established in 2016 and therefore should be renewed in 2024.**

Community Recovery and Revitalization Program (CRRP)

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development CRRP grant program provides funding for projects that spur economic recovery in communities throughout Vermont. These funds may be used for the following efforts:

- » Capital improvements related to the renovation or creation of **childcare** and **affordable housing**;
- » Capital projects that assist **non-profits** and **small businesses** in industries including **Food Services**, Accommodations, Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Education and Agriculture;
- » **Municipal water supply and wastewater projects** that create jobs through business creation or expansion, or build housing.

At this time, it appears that the eligible industry “food services” does not appear to include a local retail grocery or convenience stores, but seems to be limited to restaurant-type activities impacted by Covid. This funding source has a rolling application deadline. For more information, see: <https://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/funding-incentives/community-recovery-and-revitalization-program>

Vermont Agency of Transportation - Municipal Assistance

The Vermont Agency of Transportation Municipal Assistance Program provides grant funding for a wide variety of transportation projects, including **roadway design**, erosion control, best management practices, park and ride facilities, bridge rehabilitation, **pedestrian accessibility scoping studies**, feasibility studies, **design and construction projects**, small scale construction projects, complete streets, **planning, design and construction of on-road and off-road bike and pedestrian trail facilities**, safe routes to school, **rail trails, overlooks and viewing areas**. For more information, see: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects>

Municipal Planning Grants (MPG)

Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Provides annual funding opportunities for local planning initiatives which support statewide planning goals, such as **streetscape and pedestrian plans**, water system studies, infrastructure improvements, **zoning updates** and similar measures. For more information, see: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant>

Vermont Better Places Grants

Agency of Commerce and Economic Development

A non-competitive matching grant program eligible for **designated village centers**, utilizing a crowdfunding effort combined with 2:1 matching funds (up to \$40,000) from the State, as well as technical support and educational assistance through the project. For more information, see: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/better-places>

Vermont Community Development Program

Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Provides competitive grant funding and technical assistance to address local needs of housing, economic development, public facilities and services, and ADA accessibility. Funds can be used to conduct feasibility studies, **marketing plans, architectural and engineering plans**, job creation, **construct infrastructure**, and other efforts. For more info, see: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp>

Downtown Transportation Fund

Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Provides financing for Designated Village Centers for transportation-related capital improvements, such as **sidewalk and pedestrian enhancements, accessibility improvements, pocket parks**. For more info, see: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/downtown-transportation-fund>

Better Connections Program

Agency of Transportation / Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Bi-annual program provides funding and technical assistance for master planning, **transportation improvements**, complete streets, **parking**, wayfinding, **building rehabilitation**, site development and **zoning code updates**. For more info, see: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections>

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

Agency of Natural Resources

The agency provides grants and loans covering projects including drinking water and **wastewater projects, pretreatment and wastewater capacity**. For more information, see: <https://dec.vermont.gov/grant-loan-programs>

Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

Agency of Natural Resources

The agency provides assistance through their Recreational Trail Program to develop and maintain **recreational trails** and **trail-related facilities**. For more information, see: <https://fpr.vermont.gov/about/grants>

State Historic Preservation Grants

Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Provides funding through 50/50 matching grants of up to \$20,000 for repair and rehabilitation of historic buildings at least 50 years old and listed or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. For more information, see: <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/historic-preservation-grants>

State and Federal Tax Credits

Tax credits available to help incentivize private-sector investment in projects within **Designated Village Centers** including **building renovations, code compliance and exterior renovation** work to attract new business or create jobs. Federal tax credits available for eligible historic commercial buildings listed on the National Register, and State tax credits available for commercial properties over 30 years old. For more info, see: <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/tax-credits>

Preservation Trust of Vermont

The Preservation Trust provides a variety of funding, educational tools and technical assistance related to the development of **community supported enterprises** and **non-profit organizations, village revitalization, historic preservation**, and essential character and service grants related to food security, childcare, health and community engagement. For more information, see: <https://ptvermont.org/help/grants/>

Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC)

The RRPC provides technical resources for local municipalities within Rutland County, providing tools, assistance with grant applications, map production, data collection, and assistance with understanding state requirements. For more information, see: <https://www.rutlandrpc.org>

Prepared by:



REGROWTH
PLANNING

P.O. BOX 892
Dorset, Vermont 05251
518-496-3009
info@regrowthplanning.com



APPENDIX

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Overview & Purpose

To help collect public input on issues important to the residents of West Pawlet, a brief survey was distributed within the village center and surrounding areas. The purpose of this survey was to help inform locals about the Master Plan process, identify priorities, collect input on known issues, and allow people to identify additional topics or concerns that were not previously discussed. The resulting feedback was informative to identify specific topics which should be discussed further in the later focus group meetings as well as note individual suggestions for the Master Plan.

Survey Design

The survey questions were developed using input from the Open House event as well as suggested topics collected from the Municipal Planning Grant Committee (the committee). Regrowth Planning developed a list of draft questions which were reviewed and discussed by the committee, which were then refined until the final text was agreed upon. The selected questions were then formatted to fit within four pages (two double-sided sheets) to keep it brief and for easy mailing.

The first question on the survey asked people to rank the relative importance of various general topics for the village so that the committee would have information on local priorities and identify future focus group meetings. The remaining questions asked for additional input or detail on these same subjects. The last question provided an open-ended response for people to write in about any topic they pleased. (See copy of survey in Appendix)

Survey Distribution

The survey was distributed in hardcopy via U.S. Postal Service and also made available online for people who did not receive a copy or for additional household members who wished to participate. Since the official “Village Designation” area for West Pawlet is quite small, it was decided that the survey should be mailed directly to all households which were served by the West Pawlet Wastewater Treatment facility. The mailing list for wastewater bills was used as a first step to identify recipients. This list was then reviewed and compared against local tax and property data to identify property owners who lived (or had mailing addresses) out of town, so that an additional copy of the survey could be mailed directly to current occupants of the local home. A total of 137 paper surveys were mailed out.

The survey was additionally advertised on Facebook through the local West Pawlet Neighbors group, as well as on the local Front Porch Forum website.

The paper survey was mailed out on August 23rd with responses collected at Town Hall on September 20th and the closing of the online version on the evening of October 2nd.

Survey Results

Surveys Mailed Out: 137¹

Paper survey responses: 19

Online survey responses: 24

Total survey responses: 43

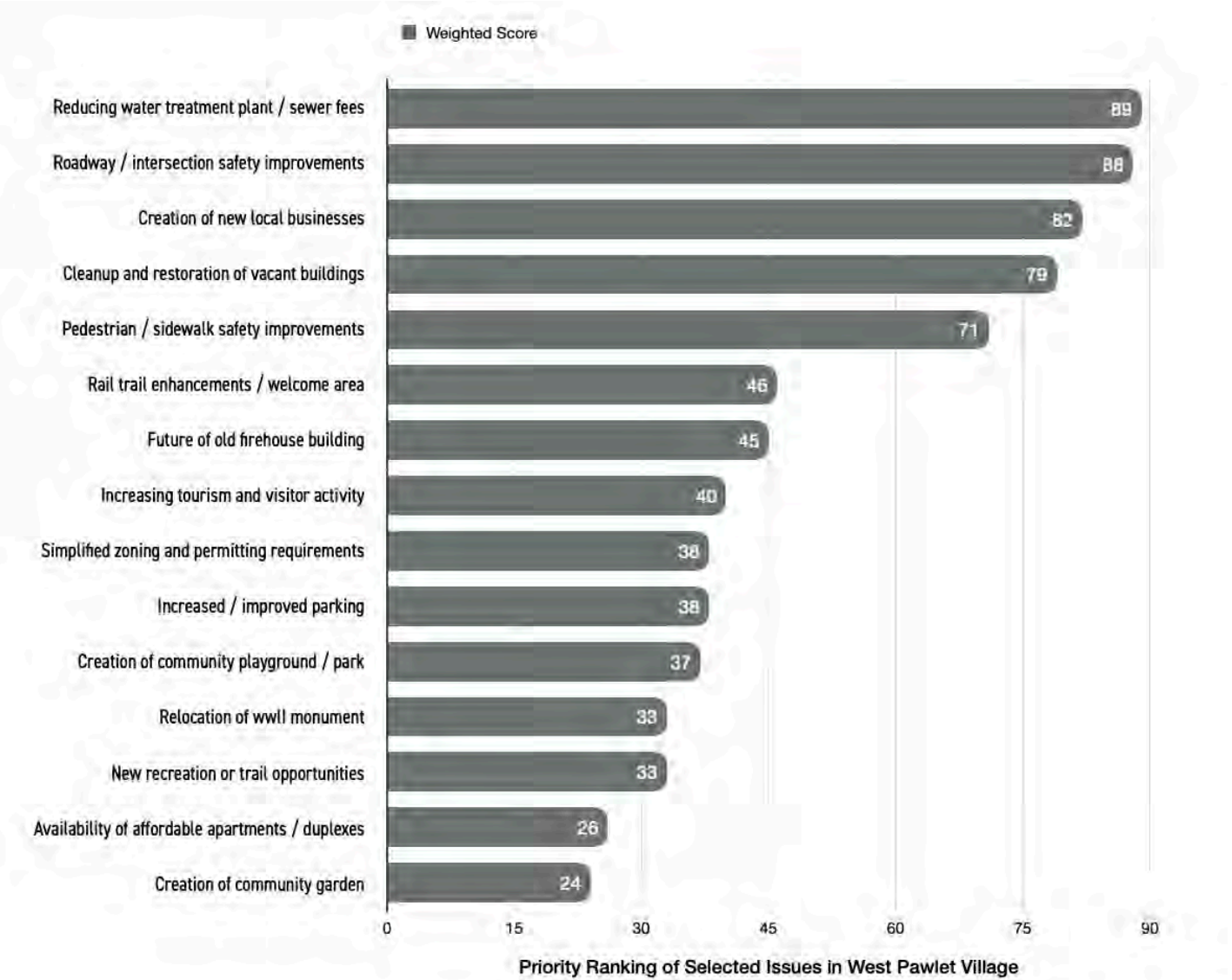
¹ 23 survey envelopes were returned by the postal service as undeliverable to the direct home address.

1 How important to you are each of the following issues in West Pawlet?

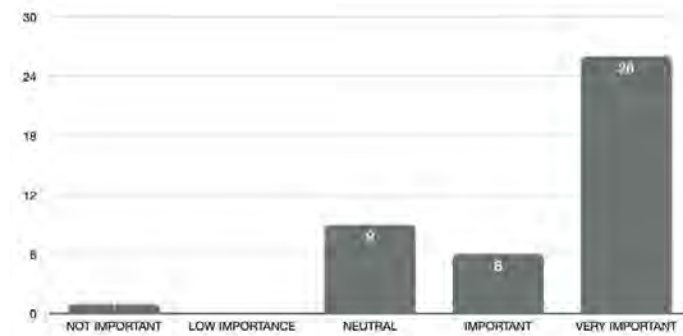
The purpose of this first question was to get a sense of the relative priorities for local residents, starting with a number of issues identified by the Committee and during the open house event. This would help to identify priorities for the plan, as well as help narrow down the important topics for the focus group meetings which would follow. Respondents were asked to rate each topic on a scale from “not

important” to “very important”. The results of each topic are provided on the following pages. For ease of relative comparison, these results were also scored and sorted into a single chart, shown below.

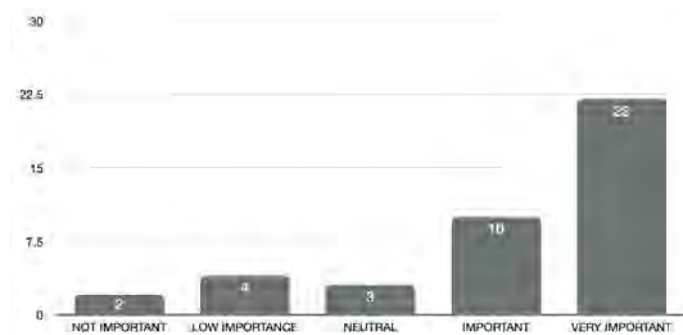
Not surprisingly, “Reducing the water treatment plant / sewer fees” was noted as the most important topic within the village. This was quickly followed by



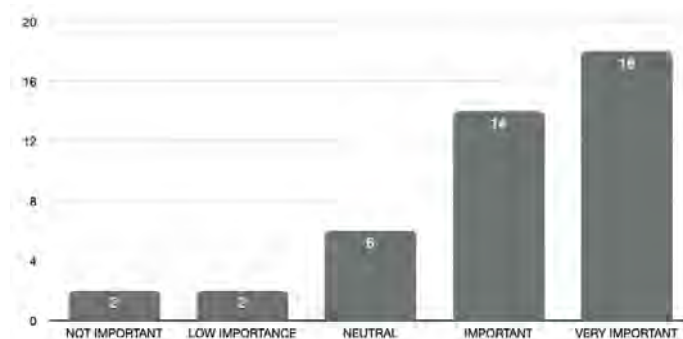
Priority Ranking of Selected Issues in West Pawlet. Results of question 1, ranked and scored in relative importance for comparative purposes. Scoring weights used as follows: “Not Important” = -1, “Neutral” = 0, “Low Importance” = 1, “Important” = 2, “Very Important” = 3



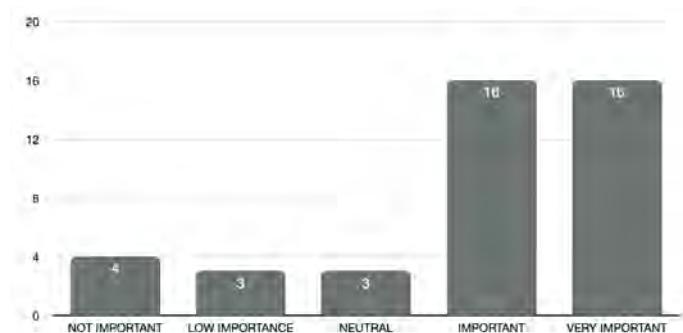
▲ Reducing Water Treatment / Sewer Fees



▲ Roadway / Intersection Safety Improvements



▲ Creation of New Local Businesses



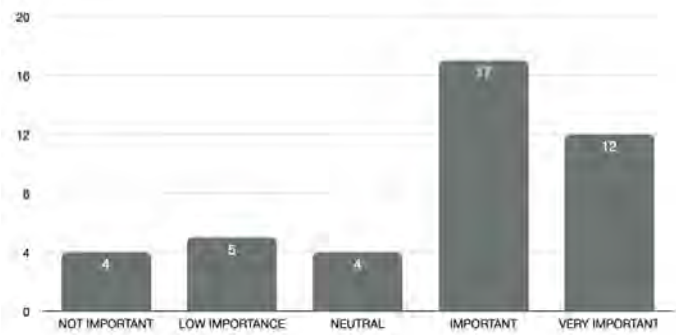
▲ Cleanup and Restoration of Vacant Buildings

“Roadway and intersection safety improvements”, which many people commented on later in the written comment sections. “Creation of new local businesses”, “Cleanup and restoration of vacant buildings” and “Pedestrian / sidewalk safety improvements” rounded out the top 5 issues of importance.

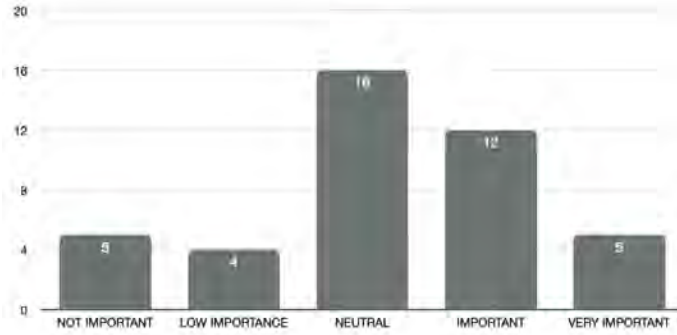
Remaining topics fell sharply after that in relative priority. It should be noted that a few people who scored the “relocation of the WWII Monument” as “Not Important” were actually very vocal in their comments that the monument should *not* be moved. This would imply that the issue of the monument relocation was in fact important (or very important) to them, however they interpreted the question differently than intended. It is likely that this topic would in reality rank slightly higher in importance than it appears here.

Residents were also given the opportunity to provide write-in answers on other topics which they felt were important to the village. These comments have been included on the following pages.

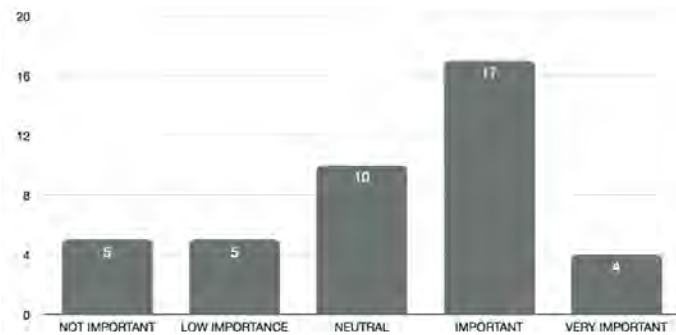
Takeaways. The planning process anticipated up to four separate focus group meetings to discuss priority topics in more detail. From this feedback there appear to be five clear issues of importance. The water treatment plant, while a very complicated and technical issue, warrants further discussion of available options. Creation of new local businesses, particularly the potential for a new corner store, should also be covered. Roadway and intersection safety improvements could very logically be combined with pedestrian and sidewalk safety improvements into one topic as part of an overall village beautification discussion. Lastly, the cleanup and restoration of vacant buildings is recommended as a focus group topic, and could include related zoning issues.



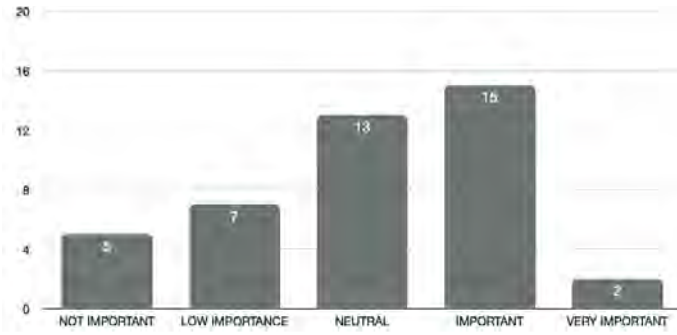
▲ *Pedestrian / Sidewalk Safety Improvements*



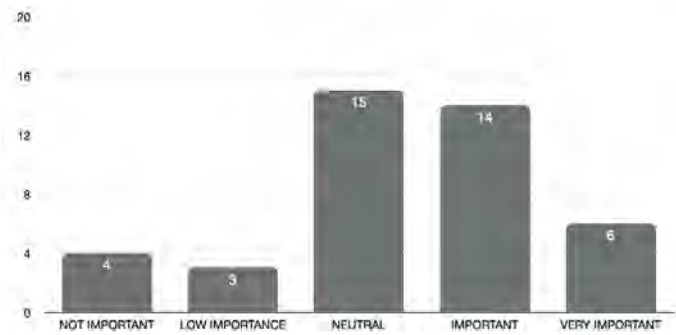
▲ *Simplified Zoning / Permitting Requirements*



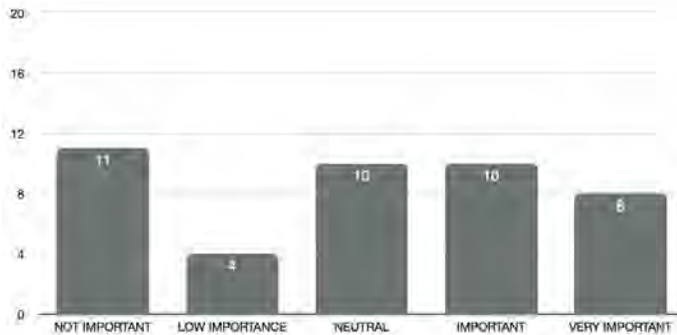
▲ *Rail Trail Enhancements / Welcome Area*



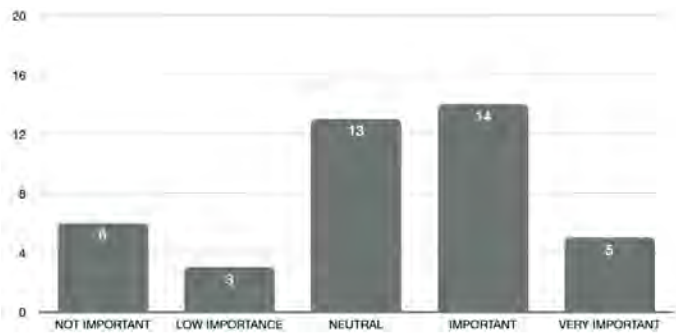
▲ *Increased / Improved Parking*



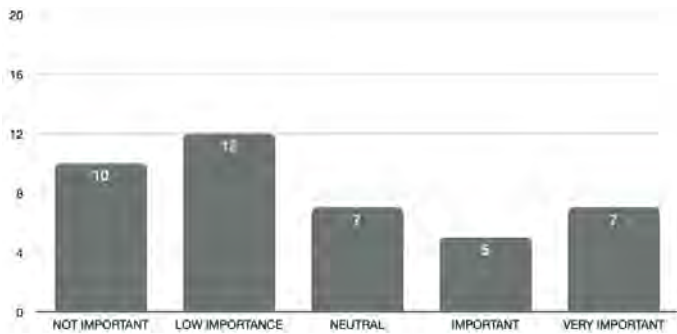
▲ *Future of Old Firehouse Building*



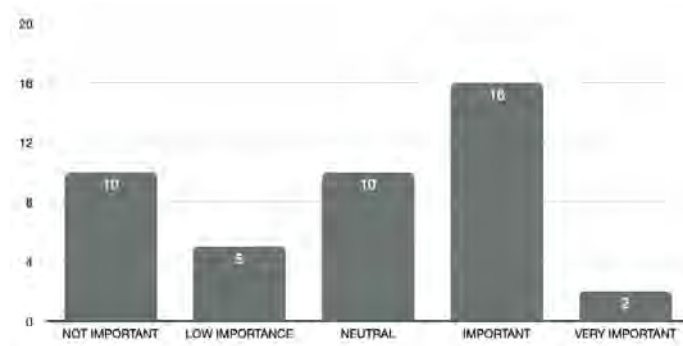
▲ *Creation of Community Playground / Park*



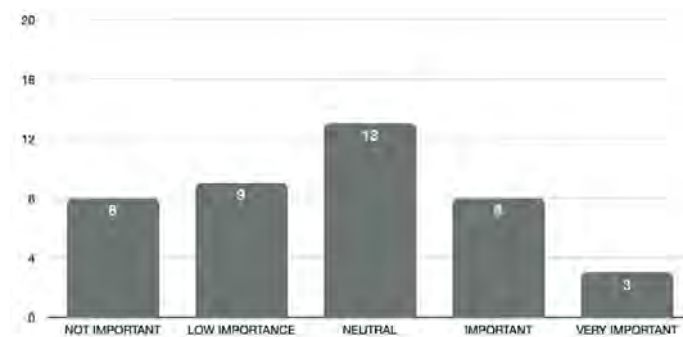
▲ *Increasing Tourism and Visitor Activity*



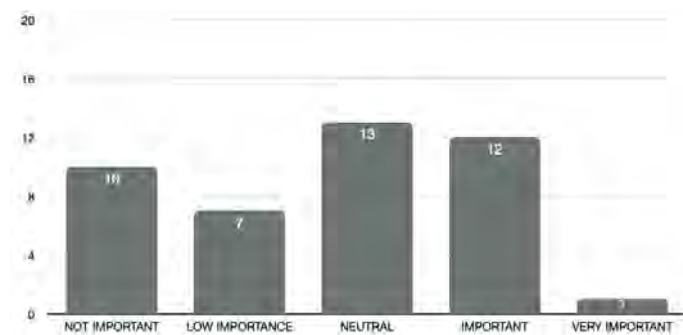
▲ *Relocation of WWII Monument*



▲ **New Recreation or Trail Opportunities**



▲ **Availability of Affordable Apartments / Duplexes**



▲ **Creation of Community Garden**

2 Are there other issues that you feel might be important to the village? *Text provided in [brackets] added by Regrowth Planning as editorial notes, noting where people wrote in the margins for a specific item or where there is uncertainty, etc.*

1. Increased spaces for community to gather and connect. Improved outreach and welcome to new community members. Improved understanding and celebration of West Pawlet's historic cultural and ethnic diversity.
2. We need stores
3. Perhaps the collapsing road over the slate quarry on VT-153
4. Local support for any businesses or recreational areas. Well defined traffic pattern at intersection of 153 and Egg Street.
5. With a park could come opportunity for farmer's market location, and could also drive tourism and creation of new local businesses.
6. Quite vital: General store in Village
7. Firehouse Annex building should be used for storage. Monument stays where it is. Very calm, quiet town that you should not try to ruin by adding more parking.
8. Remove tree and clean up outside [Editor's Note: Not sure but I think this comment might be referring to the Firehouse annex area.]
9. Fix where Reicey[?] screwed the road up by pumping that pit. Tired of driving my trucks over it.
10. I will STRONGLY OPPOSE [Firehouse Annex] building demolition and Monument move. Perfect "country" store building and location DO NOT DEMOLISH! I will design + volunteer to help renovate. Do not move monument! [Community park / playground not important] UNLESS you do this at Quarry + Amphitheater Rock Face To Quarry Pond that would be awesome.
11. Would love to see a community cooperative store for local products, produce, artwork, crafts, maybe maker space, meeting room.
12. [Re: new recreation or trail opportunities] River Road fly fishing. Maybe Dog Park at Cath Church now closed. Electric car outlets [at firehouse annex] for downtown residents reserved with small fee & lock. The empty building that sticks out in the road and the roof drops a significant snow load across the road. Resolve the issues of ownership, dismantle and open up for parking. (Forget tables due to foul breezes from wastewater plant)
13. heavy trucks illegal use of and enforcement of their use of River road
14. I just want to emphasize how important the intersection is....I think its the #1 project. Also there has been talk of Solar? Seems a good idea!
15. The old firehouse belongs to the WPVFD. Improve Rte 153 between quarries; it is caving in and has no barriers (fencing) that would prevent a fatal accident.
16. I fee the traffic intersection at the World War I monument is confusing to visitors and outdated by current standards. Please move the monument and redesign the intersection to modern traffic patterns. I wish the old barn across from the former "Duchies" could be torn down - it feels like it juts into the road. But I realize it is privately owned so government does not have control of it.

3 If the existing WWI monument were to be relocated, where do you feel would be the best location for it?

This question provided people with five choices:

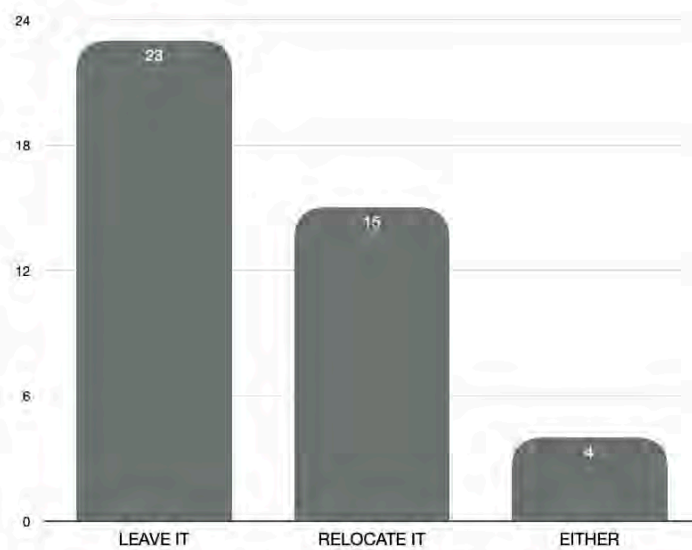
- **Leave it** where it is (but provide landscaping and intersection safety improvements around it).
- **Relocate** to a new park/seating area near the Firehouse Annex building.
- **Relocate** to a new park/seating area near the Rail Trail parking area.
- **Relocate** to a new park/seating area near the Rail Trail trail head.
- **Other** (write-in answer)

Since people were given the freedom to select more than one option, it was (for example) possible for them to select all three of the relocation options provided. This means that someone indicating they wanted the monument to remain had only one “vote”, while someone who wanted to relocate the monument could potentially vote three times. To account for this, we first look at the total number of people who wanted the monument to remain where it is (vs.) the total number people who wanted it to be relocated (somewhere)¹. The results of this breakdown shows that 23 people preferred that it remain where it currently is, 15 people wanted to see it relocated, and four were in support of either.

We then looked at only the responses which supported one of the different relocation options to see which locations were the most popular. Of

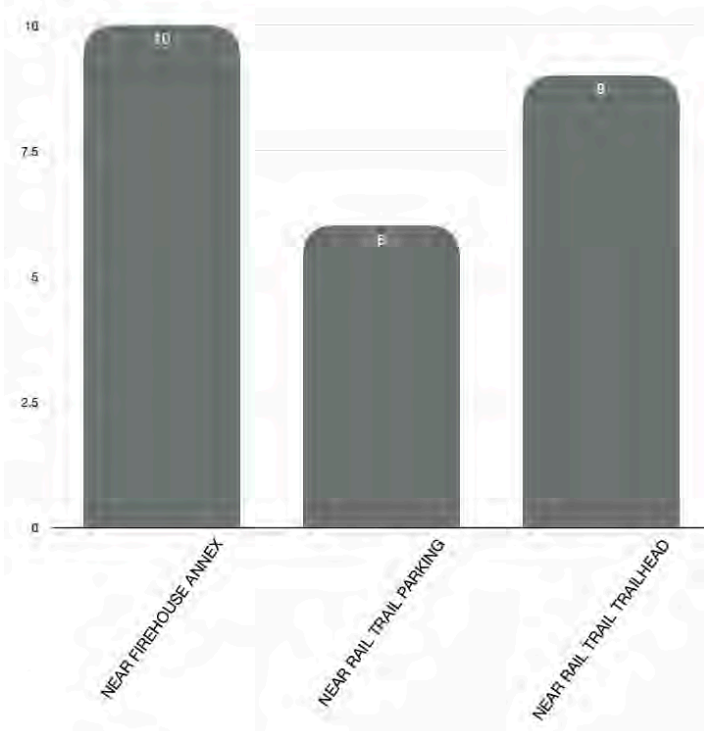


the people who indicated support for one or more relocation options, the option near the Firehouse Annex building was the most popular. This was followed by the Rail Trail Trailhead. The least popular relocation option was near the Rail Trail parking area. Note that because people were allowed to select multiple relocation options, the total number of votes for the different options (25) exceeds the number of people who voted to relocate it or were identified as “either”.



▲ WWI Monument Relocation - Response Distribution

¹ Two people did not select a leave/relocate option, however wrote in the “other” comment field that they wanted it to either remain or be moved. Others indicated they would support both leaving it where it was and at least one relocation option, so they were identified as “either”.



▲ WWI Monument - Popularity of Relocation Options

Takeaways. The general consensus from this (very small) sampling seems to indicate a preference of leaving the monument where it is. A few people indicated that they did not want to see any safety or landscaping improvements added around its current location, despite the fact that “Roadway and intersection safety improvements” were identified as the second highest community priority. It is possible that these people are concerned that any safety and landscaping “improvements” would come in the form of standard State DOT highway measures such as steel bollards or bright orange directional arrows which would obviously detract from the stately simplicity of the monument and, quite frankly, be ugly.

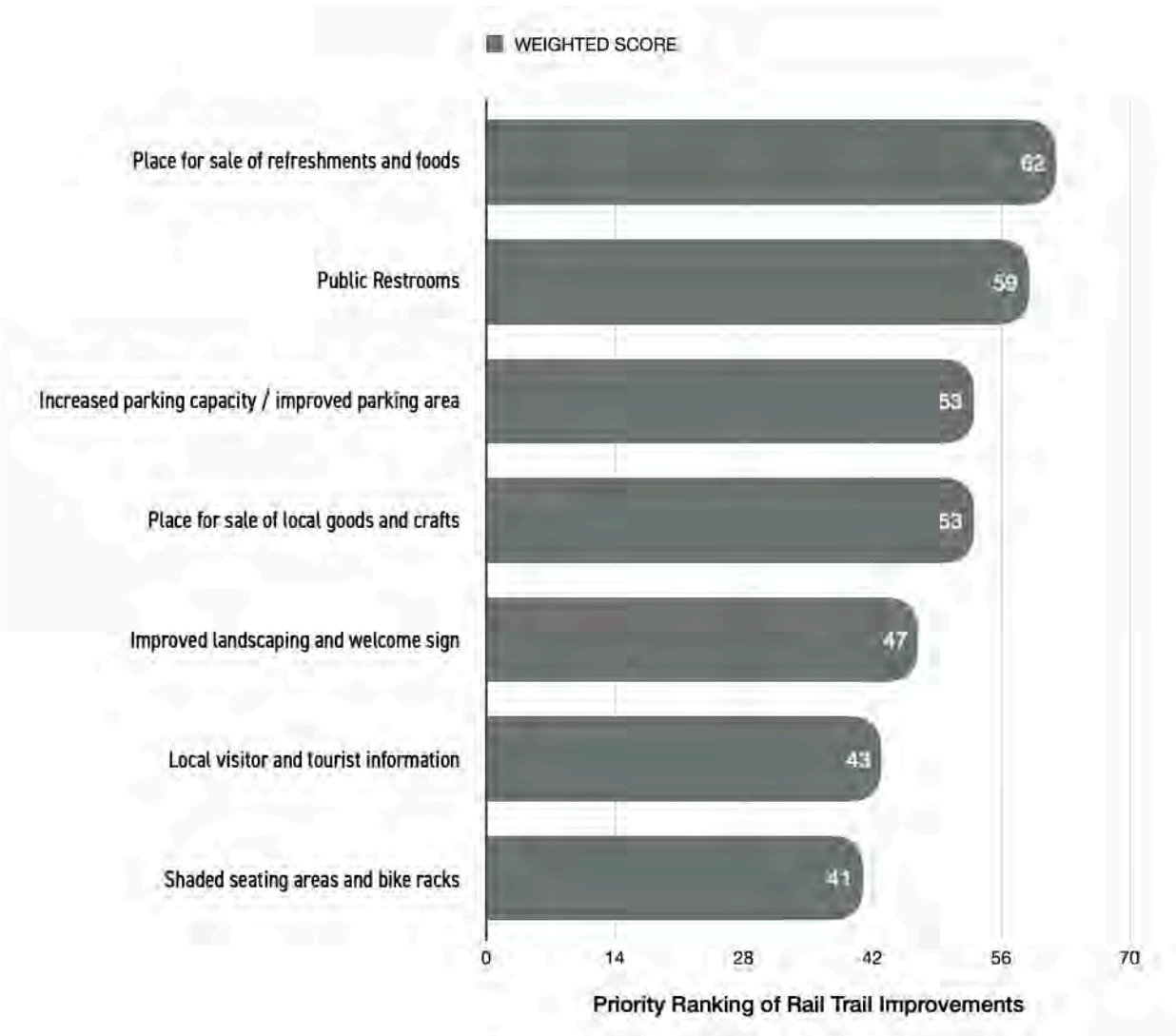
Considering the strong community interest in intersection safety improvements, it may still be worth reviewing with the public some design ideas for more sensitive and “village appropriate” landscaping improvements to see if these would

be acceptable to local residents and the DOT. The argument could be made that some non-standard enhancements, even if they don’t meet current highway design criteria, would be at least some improvement over existing conditions. It can also be argued that some sensitive enhancements around the monument could also show more respect and honor for what it represents. These questions could be further explored as part of the upcoming focus group meetings suggested for roadway and intersection safety improvements.

Write-in Comments (“Other”). *Text provided in [brackets] added by Regrowth Planning as editorial notes, noting where people wrote in the margins for a specific item or where there is uncertainty, etc.*

1. note: Dont put safety improvements around monument
2. [Relocate near trailhead] beside existing map stand. With or without monument the spot will exist due to traffic direction choices. Better traffic lines on pavement defiant stop signs and updated route signs are needed.
3. DO NOT MOVE. It is not a hazard. It keeps traffic movement at a reasonable speed.
4. Leave it where it is. Moving the monument will encourage non-local truck traffic. Road is already caving in.
5. landscaping not needed, just road signs
6. Do not relocate - its in a perfect spot.
7. I would want to know if moving this monument would cut into the budget for other improvements. If that were the case, I'd say leave where it is in order to make more important improvements. Unless the monument is causing safety concerns, than perhaps it should be moved and that would make it slightly more of a priority to me.
8. If the monument is moved, the intersection will become even more dangerous than it already is!
9. Relocate it somewhere, and near the firehouse sounds good if the building becomes something for public use and/or there's green space around it.
10. Anything would be better than the current location
11. DO NOT MOVE MONUMENT! YOU FOOLS! Keep lawn mowed or plant flowers.

4 How needed are each of the following Rail Trail improvements?

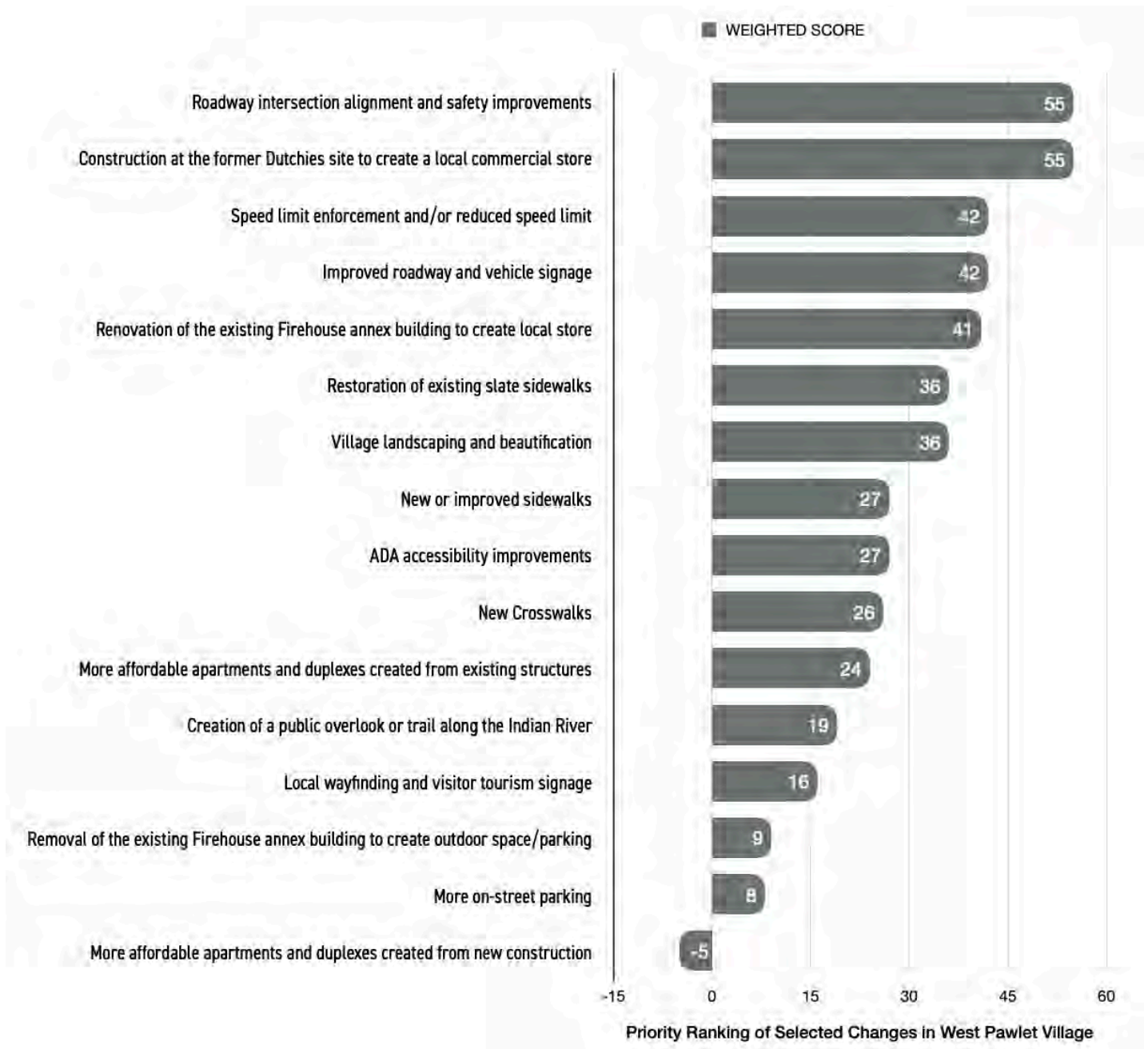


▲ **Priority Ranking of Rail Trail Improvements.** Results of question 4, ranked and scored in relative importance for comparative purposes. Scoring weights used as follows: “Not Needed” = -1, “Neutral” = 0, “Low Need” = 1, “Needed” = 2, “Highly Needed” = 3

Takeaways. While the topic of Rail Trail enhancements ranked sixth in overall community priority, the results here seem to support the overall importance of having additional local stores to provide goods and services. These should be combined with and compared to the results of the Rail Trail User Survey, which is still in progress. The number one response of “place for sale of refreshments and goods” ties directly into the issue of having a local corner store within the

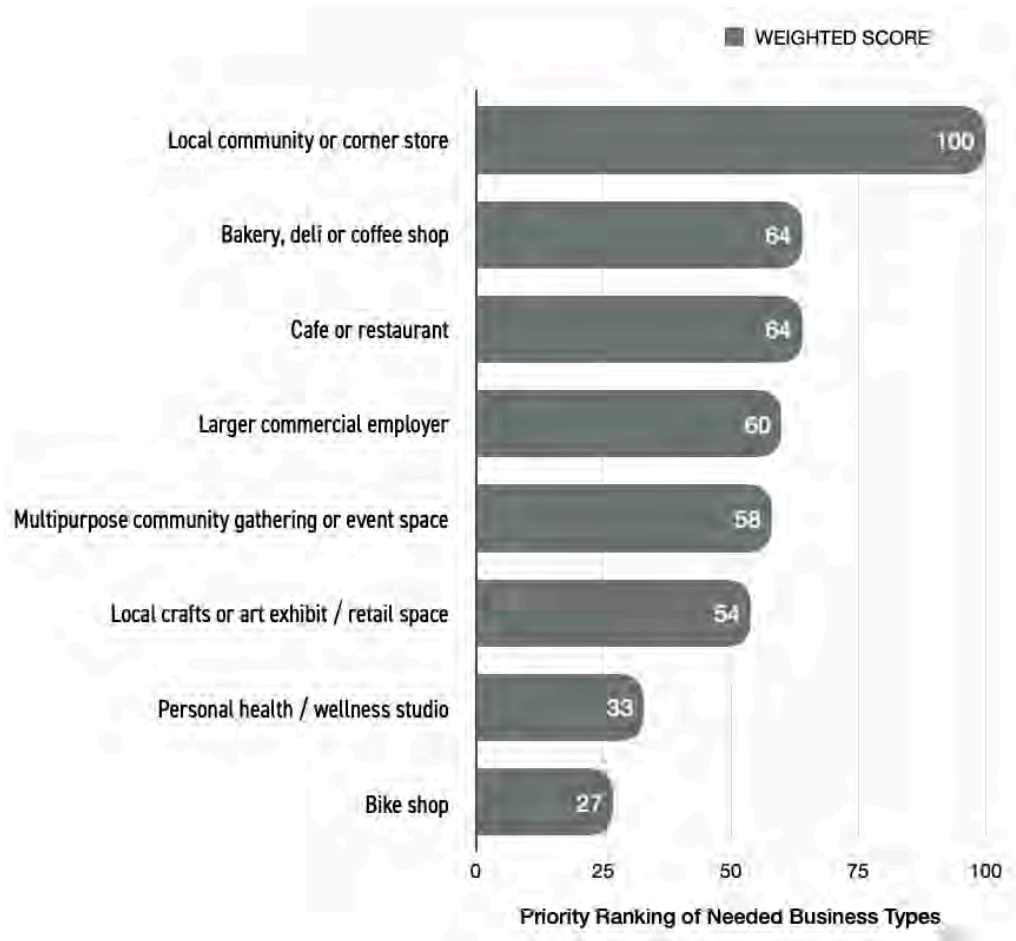
village, and could also support a public restroom. It is recommended that discussion of increased parking capacity and improved parking area be included as part of any focus group discussion on intersection safety and village beautification. The remaining topics, including landscaping, welcome sign, local tourist information, seating and bike rack improvements should be considered in the Master Plan as longer-term goals.

5 How much would you desire each of the following changes in West Pawlet?



▲ **Priority Ranking of Desired Village Changes.** Results of question 5, ranked and scored in relative importance for comparative purposes. Scoring weights used as follows: "Not Desired" = -1, "No Opinion" = 0, "Somewhat Desired" = 1, "Very Desired" = 2

6 How needed are each of the following types of businesses in West Pawlet?



▲ **Priority Ranking of Needed Businesses.** Results of question 6, ranked and scored in relative importance for comparative purposes. Scoring weights used as follows: "Not Needed" = -1, "Neutral" = 0, "Low Need" = 1, "Needed" = 2, "Highly Needed" = 3

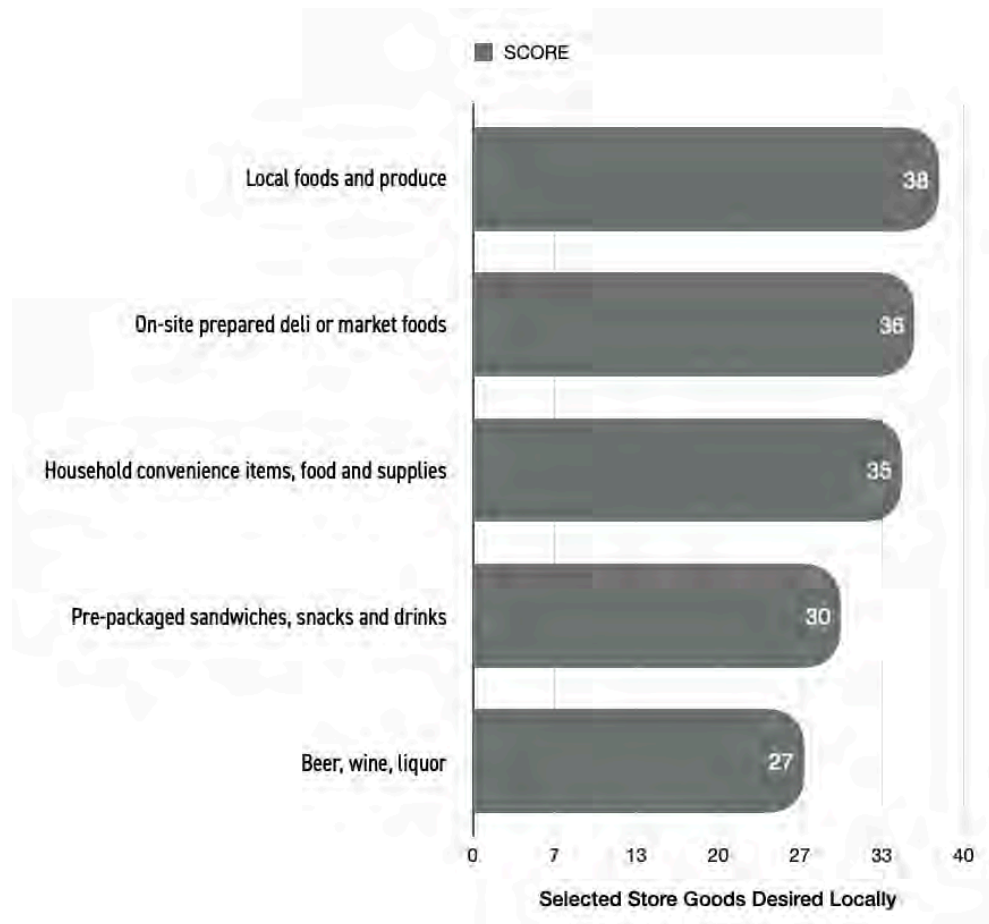
What other types of businesses might be needed? (Write-in Comments).

1. child care
2. General store, restaurants
3. Farmers Market/Co-op
4. Something affordable for the community, something for users of the rail trail.
5. NO to construction at former Duchies site - it is too close to the Wastewater Treatment Plant!
6. Reduce Taxes.
7. Bike shop + rental, Cross country ski rental, warming "shack", arts & crafts + retail can + will be done in existing buildings on rivers bend.
8. Doctor? Dentist? Acupuncturist?
9. JOBS JOBS JOBS JOBS! [Re: Bakery, cafe, corner store, gathering space,

bike shop] all located in improved firehouse annex. [Re: Bike shop] Super idea - rail trail repairs, supplies and rentals - Brilliant!!! Small engine repair shop. Whats going on with small building (home?) next to old Duchies sight? For sale or lease? Its attractive. Great potential.

10. Farmer's market area
11. antiques
12. Use Firehouse [for multipurpose community gathering space]
13. Most of these have been tried & no longer exist. Why didnt the Duchies owners rebuild?
14. Store for essentials w/ bakery or deli/coffee
15. [Re: Multipurpose community gathering space] The Firehouse already fills a vital need for community space. Bless them for what they do for the community every day!

7 If a local community or corner store could be established in West Pawlet, what goods would you like it to sell?

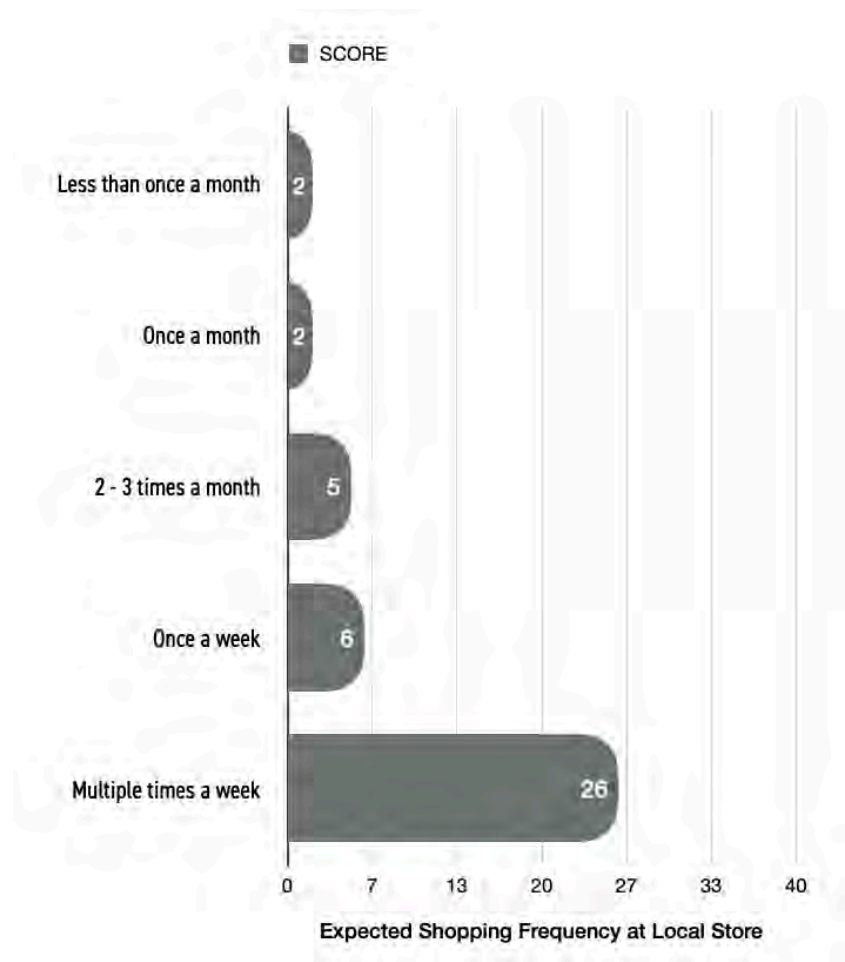


▲ **Desired Local Store Goods.** Results of question 7, showing actual number of votes for each selected good type.

What goods would you like a local store to sell? (Write-in Comments).

1. groceries and produce
2. I think Dutchies was successful when it was a weigh station during hunting season. Something that is good for the local needs as well as any potential tourist needs.
3. Milk. Soda. Juice
4. Agricultural and animal husbandry supplies
5. Yes we need a store in the Village
6. no liquor
7. Pop-Up Farmer's market - Event space
8. All above
9. Bread, cigs (ugh) all the usual "country store" items + take out - keep prices very low.
10. A few large tables for meeting students, resting, computer (laptop) use.
11. Basic hardware items
12. This is a tough decision for the operator but I honestly think we would end up going 5 mi to Granville much more frequently than 1 mi to WP
13. Although this sounds ideal, I realize this needs private enterprise willing to take risks. Efforts in the past havent been successful financially for the business people taking the risks, sadly.

8 If a local community or corner store could be established which carried the items you selected above, how often do you think you would shop there?



▲ **Expected Shopping Frequency.** Results of question 8, showing actual number of votes for each shopping frequency.

Takeaways. The purpose of this question was to try and get a sense of how much business a potential new store within the village would get, considering the uncertainty and investment risks involved of starting a new business in a small community.

The results here appear to show a great deal of support, with the majority of respondents indicating they would frequent such a store “multiple times a week.” It is our intent to use this information to

help bring potential business partners to the table to discuss this idea in more detail and identify obstacles that need to be addressed. It is recommended that we reach out to established business owners of similar operations in the area and invite them to the discussion, either as potential partners or as knowledgeable advisors. The opportunity to open a “satellite store” of an existing operation is once idea which should be pursued.

9 What 3 words might you use to describe your ideal future “vision” for West Pawlet?



- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Community together semi-modern | 12. Ideal family town | 23. Simple elegant functional |
| 2. safer more convenience | 13. Convenience Variety Participation | 24. restoration beautify desirable |
| 3. I don't know | 14. Leave As Is | 25. historical and quaint |
| 4. Connected Neighborly Social | 15. Inclusion Health Wellness Tourism | 26. Beautiful productive helpful |
| 5. Quaint local town | 16. Improved Use of Existing Buildings | 27. Beautiful Ecological |
| 6. Peaceful friendly community | 17. Overtaxed Overtaxed Overtaxed | 28. Rural Historic Simple living |
| 7. Clean lively historic | 18. Keep W-Pawlet Funky | 29. Safe Quiet Healthy |
| 8. Historic friendly quaint | 19. Active community artistic | 30. Great for Future |
| 9. Lawn care store safe | 20. Enjoy Life Here | 31. Welcoming Commerce Neighborhood-focused |
| 10. freedom from 'gunschools' | 21. Community Opportunity Beautification | 32. Hometown Friendly Relaxing |
| 11. Safe walkable pleasant | 22. Quiet Welcoming Outdoor activities | |

10 Please feel free to share any other thoughts or suggestions for improving the quality of life in the Village of West Pawlet.

1. would love to see cleanup of properties with yards full of junk cars, etc.
2. a community park with a playground for kids would be really nice to have.
3. We need sidewalks, infrastructure and businesses and community projects to help people get people out of their homes and cars and interact with each other.
4. New rentals away from residential area
5. be diligent to free townspeople from fear of local 'tactical gun fighters'
6. The suggestions in this survey are great. A park/playground, businesses/restaurants would be a wonderful starting point. This would lead to improving the town to be more approachable and inviting — it would be great. I'm not informed enough about the slate quarries and if those encroach on the livability of this town, but anything to improve how those look and interact with the neighborhood would also be welcome.
7. Dear Sir, You need to put a stop sign on Egg St people will slow when they come up over the hill or put a stop light a lot of car get hit there. Put a store wear the old store was become it was handy you did not have to go to Granville NY for one one thing or bulid a new post office for the granvill of west pawlet vt.
8. Reintroduce a carnival / fair to finance partially our services. Publicize those positives about West Pawlet. Stabilize and maintain our P.O.
9. New store should be built where Dutchies was, maybe a little smaller, foundation there should be ripped out and a new foundation not as wide, but further back for more parking out front. There should be no parking by Yield sign to turn onto New St, it blocks view and flow of traffic.
10. First of all I don't see how you csn plan for the old firehouse when it is privately owned by the Fire Dept.
11. Level top of slate pile + install solar panels to help offset [sewer?] costs. Repair all roads + sidewalks. Create local swimming hole/park @ Quarry + charge parking fees.
12. The issue of the intersection downtown: the monument should really be a landscaped circle to visually and physically make cars slow down. The intersection is hazardous because of the lack of commitment to this area around the monument (as well as no traffic enforcement!) The old Firehouse building could be used as a flexible space/stroe/greeting/meeting building. The Rail Trail Parking Areas should have gravel / improved surface.
13. Make Frank Nelson[?] mow his lawn. Less barking dogs. Move Prevost's[?] out of town with that god damn dodge pickup - making a racket with no exhaust.
14. The LAST thing we need is to change our village into a slick, trimmed + snot-gussied-up, suburbanized, 2nd Rate "everywhere else" kind of place - a 2nd rate New Jersey (See additional attached written addendum)
15. [Re: rail trail improvements] We are not at the point to be concerned about tourism. That will happen on its own (maybe 5 years). Need basic improvements for tax-paying residents. Not porta-potties please yuk raccoons, skunks, vandalism. The better potties trailer. Hiring some one to manage and clean units. [Re: Village landscaping and beautification] can be done by homeowner encouragement and friendly competitions. [Re:

affordable apartments and duplexes] requires more police/animal control, EMS waste of tax money. [Re: renovation of firehouse annex] and rest rooms. [Re: construction at former Dutchies site] wastewater plant smells. River road is enjoyed for walking and bike riding also fly fishing. River Road is a good activity road with signage for safety help Sue whrite with trespassing & littering. Signage for safety, and roadside maintenance would be appreciated. Street lights? The Newmont Quarry is an environmental disaster and eyesore, noise.

16. My hope is that the town planners incorporate balance within their vision - something for everyone, not just tourists. Money is energy. How we utilize that money energy to include every class of people in a town's growth is how we add mindfulness to West Pawlet's future development. Im excited to see how the community grows toward an enhanced future!

17. Improvement to the area of the post office, traffic safety, a trail on the indian river, a local store

18. the pick up trucks, milk truck and especially landscape truck , timber trucks slate hauling all go to fast and too often. river road has signs saying NO THROUGH TRUCKS And yet all the local town of Pawlet trucks and town of Rupert trucks use that road to Cut through to 153. There should be enforcement of their speed by state troopers or local Constable's or whatever we have to deal with the way to the trucks the noise of the trucks the speed of the trucks

19. Bringing a store would be so great. Improving the intersection is key. The speeding is very much an issue. If there could be some sort of plan for the slate piles? I dont actually know the status of these but I hear there's a solar idea? Might as well put it to use. It would be nice to spruce up the town a bit.

20. [Re: Rail Trail Improvements] This would be an interstate VT/NY project - town has no jurisdiction. The Village of West Pawlet needs to encourage working businesses that will provide employment. We do not need further low income housing. Limit further surveys to full-time residents of the village - which by the way does not end at the quarries!

21. [Re: Rail Trail improvements] An investment opportunity which could provide all other improvements without public funds. // I see Vermont headed for Hell in an electric dump truck. The future belongs to the rich. If they can find a way to protect their money here they may stay. If it costs them too much they will leave. West Pawlet will look like it did in the 30's with some big money estates scattered around. What business might be sucessful here? A glitzy whorehouse with drug sales & perhaps gambling. Right off 22. An easy shot from the city. Might incorporate an abortion center & end of life wing. We could be Las Vegas East. We can get the tourists before they get to Burlington.

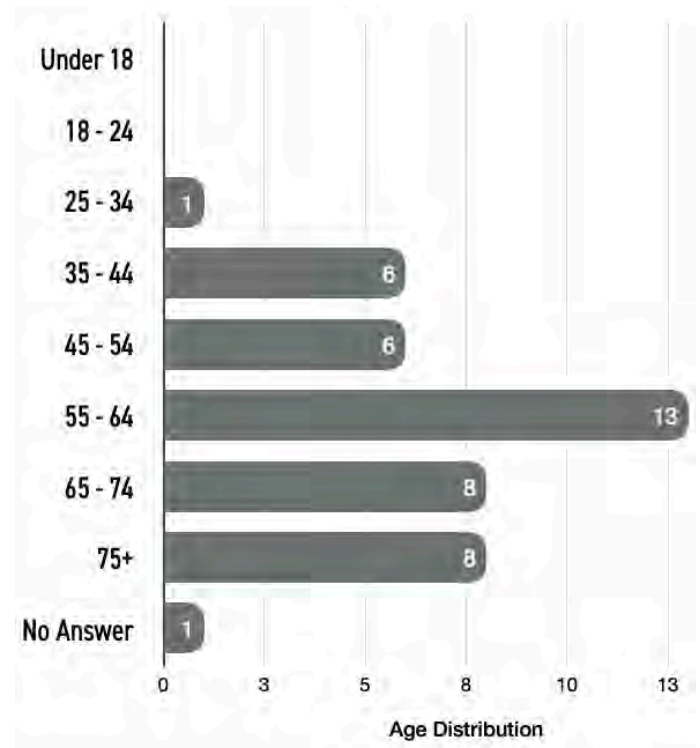
22. [Re: relocation of WWII monument] Do not relocate.

23. Thank you to everyone who is working on this!

11 Are there any issues covered in this survey which you would be willing to donate or volunteer time on to help improve the village?

1. no
2. Clean-up, participate in projects, support new businesses
3. No
4. We are part time residents for close to 30 years. Happy to donate time if we are in VT.
5. I can help with any IT design and installation
6. depends on what is decided, but yes
7. Yes. Playground/park... not sure how I could help with businesses and restaurants but would be willing to consider donating time or money if any of the ideas I voted for came to life. I'm a graphic/web/information designer so I could also potentially donate services if it helped improve the area.
8. I'm open
9. Possibly
10. Improvements to monument landscaping / traffic circle renovation of my garage for possible flex space / meeting space.
11. Yes many (I already do the flowers at P.O. and Fish+Game)
12. I'm interested in writing grant application for some of these projects
13. I need work (job, income) I would love to contribute and my skills have value. Who actually gets all the fund money if all the work is free?
14. Would like to see a list of volunteer opportunities, then decide.
15. Landscaping trail work
16. Not sure where I would be effective but willing to pitch in.
17. Historical aspects - Do you know where West Pawlet High School was located? Do you know who was the first Special Ed teacher in State of VT?
18. Skin in the game would be guaranteed by getting future surveys attached to local tax payments.

12 What is your age?



Other Takeaways

The roadway/intersection and traffic speed issues continue to top the list of desired improvements, as well as the need for a local commercial store (Question 5).

While people were correct to point out that the future of the Firehouse annex building was not really the jurisdiction of the town (and is ultimately a decision for the Fire Department), it is still important to get a sense of what the community would like to see. On that issue, people were generally more in favor of adaptively re-using that building for some other use such as a local store than removing it to create an outdoor event space or parking.

Residents were slightly more in favor of restoring the existing slate sidewalks than creating new ones. Likewise, people were in favor of accommodating more apartments and duplexes within existing buildings than the creation of new buildings, although this ranked relatively low among desired choices. Of note, the creation of more apartments and duplexes (from new construction) ranked last in desired changes within the village.

When looking at the desired types of businesses within the village, a local or community store was by far the preferred choice (Question 6). People were most interested in having a store which provided local foods and produce, as well as deli, household convenience items and supplies. Pre-packaged sandwiches, snacks, drinks and alcohol—which might be marketed more toward tourists—were a lower priority (Question 7). Comments suggested that any goods served should be reasonably priced, and could potentially include support for local hunting, agriculture and animal raising activities.

Other suggested business ideas included child care, and a space to host farmer's market or co-op.

Several people pointed out that the Fire Department already serves the community well in providing a community gathering or event space.

What Have We Learned?

Taking a step back from the details, we see that the residents of West Pawlet would like to maintain the overall charm and character that makes this village unique. People do not want to see the community changed to meet the needs of outsiders, or suffer the sterilization and modernization that typically makes other communities all look the same. “Quiet”, “Quaint” “Simple” and “Keep it funky” were suggested descriptions. While a planning process like this can be easily sidetracked by identifying all the things that people want to change, it is important to also recognize all the things which should not be changed. Priority should be given to meeting the needs of locals first before tourists, visitors and new residents are accommodated. If the village can succeed in better meeting its immediate local needs, then new visitors and interest will naturally grow from there. With this in mind, improvements to the Rail Trail would be a secondary priority to other village improvements.

That being said, there are some opportunities and needed fixes which people feel should be addressed. Roadway safety improvements, reduced living costs, better access to local good and services, and general village cleanup are among them. People would like to find ways to re-purpose the slate quarries, others suggested enhancements to the community events such as parades, fairs and carnivals which really bring the community together.

We also see that the local volunteer Fire Department is in many ways the heart of the village. The Fire Department serves an important role for the community in many ways, and is a social hub of activity. It is recommended that, as part of the focus

group meetings, we sit down with fire department leaders to identify what their long-term needs are to understand how these might be accommodated as part of this Master Planning process.

Potential Focus Group Ideas

Based on the overall survey results, it is recommended that three or four focus group meetings be organized over the coming weeks, as described below, in no particular order. (It is noted that some additional preparation work may be required for some of the topics, and those meetings may need to be scheduled later to allow for collection of data and materials.) To make these meetings more inviting and fun, it is suggested they be organized as informal “pot luck” dinner meetings where possible.

1. Roadway Intersection & Streetscape Improvements. This topic should invite public discussion on desired roadway alignment and intersection improvements, including pedestrian sidewalk safety and speed limits. Because the rail trail parking area, vehicle curb-cuts and WWI monument are a component of this based on proximity and geometry, they should be included as part of the discussion. This also presents an opportunity to include ideas for general streetscape improvements within the public right-of-way.

The Fire Department and local road crews should be invited directly to weigh-in on these design ideas. If possible, we may consider inviting local representatives from VTrans to attend the discussion, although an over-arching goal of the meeting is to establish what the community wants first, before being limited by any mis-perceptions of what “is possible.”

This meeting should be organized as an interactive workshop with maps, drawings and photos where participants are invited to draw their own ideas as

we develop concepts. Regrowth Planning may bring some preliminary design ideas for early consideration to help start the conversation. Concepts developed as part of this could later be taken to VTrans for comment and refinement. Some preliminary tax maps/roadway boundary mapping info may need to be collected in advance.

2. Village Revitalization & Cleanup. This meeting would combine the popular topics of cleanup and restoration of vacant buildings, the creation of new local businesses, and general property upkeep. The potential restoration and care of buildings should include a discussion of potential adaptive re-use ideas, any available grants which may fund construction or facade improvements, as well as volunteer or fundraising efforts. It may be useful to invite specific landowners to the discussion to learn about their long-term plans for their property and how this planning process can support them. It could also include a discussion to determine the community’s interest in any “demolition by neglect” ordinance or strengthening of code enforcement.

Based on some of the written comments, it would appear that general property upkeep—such as lawn mowing and miscellaneous front yard junk—can sometimes be an issue. Code enforcement of property condition is often a touchy subject (one person’s idea of what is “neat & tidy” may not be acceptable to others), and code enforcement officers in any community are often hesitant to come down on people for minor or potentially subjective issues. It may be possible to identify some clarification or improvements to property maintenance and code enforcement which the community finds acceptable.

This topic may be best approached as a discussion about community pride and voluntary efforts to fix things up. This could include, for example, the establishment of an annual “Village Beautification Day” as a fun community event with activities for

people of all ages. Friendly competitions, contests and prizes for general cleanup and beautification efforts around the village, perhaps hosted on Earth Day (a “Green-Up Day”?) or to coincide with any regular bulk curbside trash pickup.

3. The Firehouse & Community Events.

As noted above, the West Pawlet Volunteer Fire Department serves an important central role in the village, particularly with hosting many community events. These events, and the firehouse, are an essential social hub for the community which many people value. It is believed that the Fire Department no longer wishes to keep their annex building, but that they also have a need for more equipment storage. These needs (and others) should be identified and considered as part of the master planning process to identify how it may be able to assist them and also serve the goals of the larger community. There may be opportunities to improve their ability to host various community events. This meeting should also include a discussion of what additional community events would people like to see and how these vents can help to bring people together.

4. A Corner Store. This topic should begin with a short presentation recap on past steps to redevelop the former Dutchies site, and an explanation of where those efforts currently stand. It is recommended that in preparation for this topic, outreach to existing area business owners be established to invite them to this discussion. Potential business owners include Sheldon’s, Mach’s, Shermans’ and H.M. Williams. (In lieu of inviting them directly to the public meeting it may be necessary—or preferable to them—to speak privately in a separate meeting instead). The purpose of their business input is to identify concerns or obstacles to establishing any new business within the village, collect advice, and to discuss their potential interest (if any) in assisting us in establishing such a business.

This meeting would also be used to discuss the pros and cons of each of the “potential” store sites which have been identified as part of the public outreach. The the town-owned Dutchies site is an obvious option, while suffering from some site and environmental constrains and concerns about odors from the adjacent wastewater plant. The owner of the Celery Compound has expressed interest in redeveloping their annex building (old antique store) into a local store—although small—could provide a quicker or short-term solution to getting something established. Lastly, considering if there is any mutual arrangement potential in the redevelopment of the Fire Department annex building. As part of the preparation for this, it is recommended that outreach be conducted to the Vermont Retail & Grocers Association, the State of Vermont and other institutions to identify any related grants or programs which may be useful.

Finally, some programming of any future store must be discussed—what does it really need to have? A corner store like this in the community is more than just about walking in, paying for a few items, and walking out. This is also about community socialization, running into your neighbors, catching up and saying hello. A gathering place such as this should ideally have places to sit, socialize, pause to talk, enjoy a coffee and watch the world go by. How the store can be a central focal point of the community should be considered.

Water Treatment Plant / Sewer Fees. This topic is added here for consideration since it ranked so highly in community priority, however because this is such a highly technical and complex issue, it may not be the most productive topic for its own public visioning meeting. People will certainly agree that treatment plant fees need to be reduced, but the technical details of how this can actually be accomplished are better suited for deliberation by specialists and the Town Board. Instead, it is

recommended that each Focus Group include a brief presentation summarizing where this issue currently stands, what options we think are on the table, and allow for comment. This will allow people to be updated on the issue and provide some input while allowing the bulk of the conversation to focus on more productive visioning ideas.

RAIL TRAIL SURVEY

Overview & Purpose

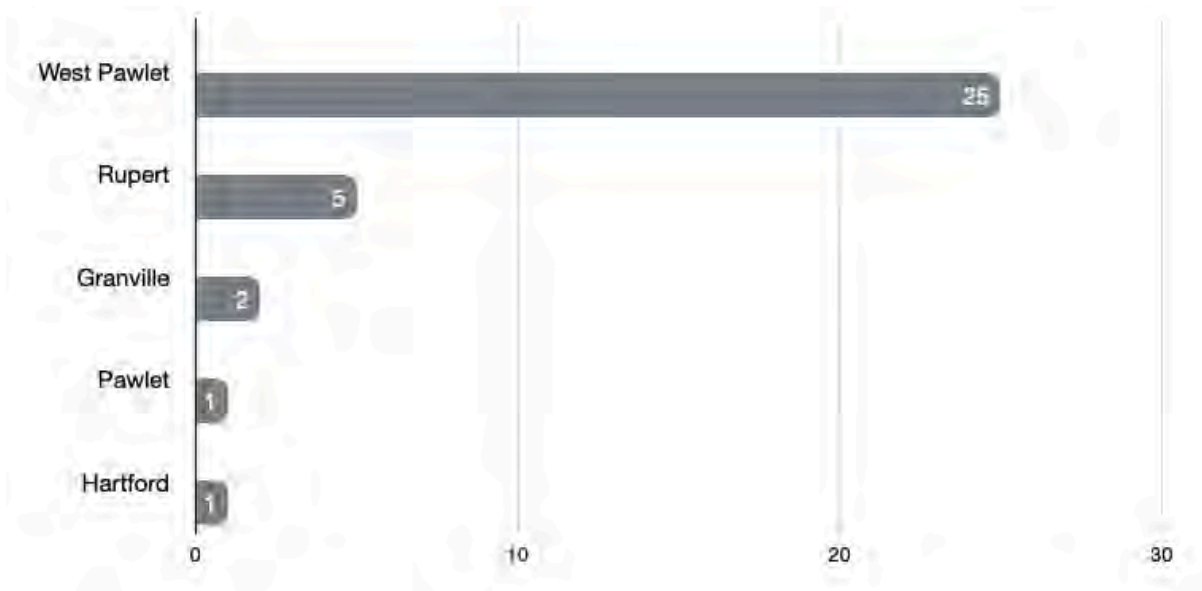
In addition to the Community Survey, a second survey was developed to collect input from Rail Trail users as they passed through the Village of West Pawlet. The purpose of this was to get insight—from a visitors and tourist perspective—on what amenities and features they might like to see when arriving in the village. With permission from VTrans, signs inviting people to participate in the survey were posted at the trailhead, providing a web address and QR code to participate. The survey was open from August 6th to October 31st, and collected a total of 35 individual responses.



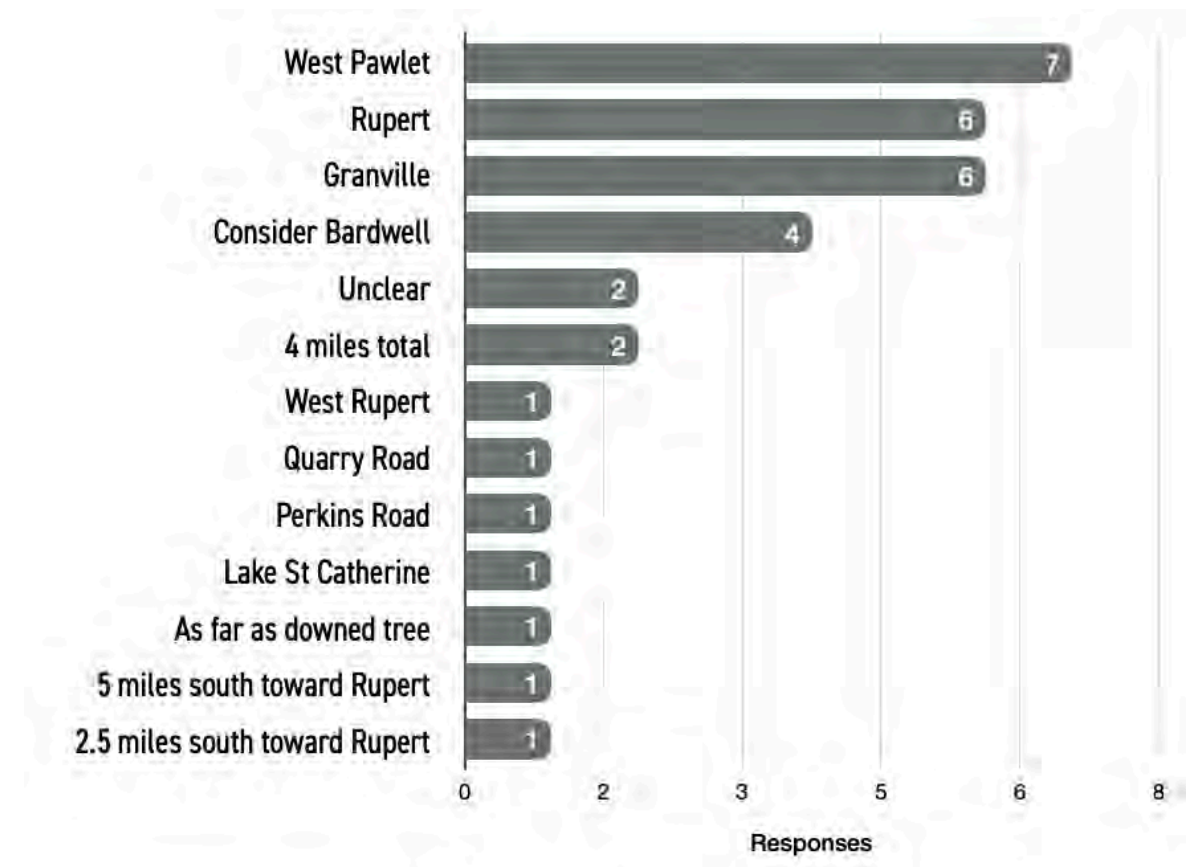
▲ **Survey Invitation.** Sign inviting people to participate in the Rail Trail User Survey.



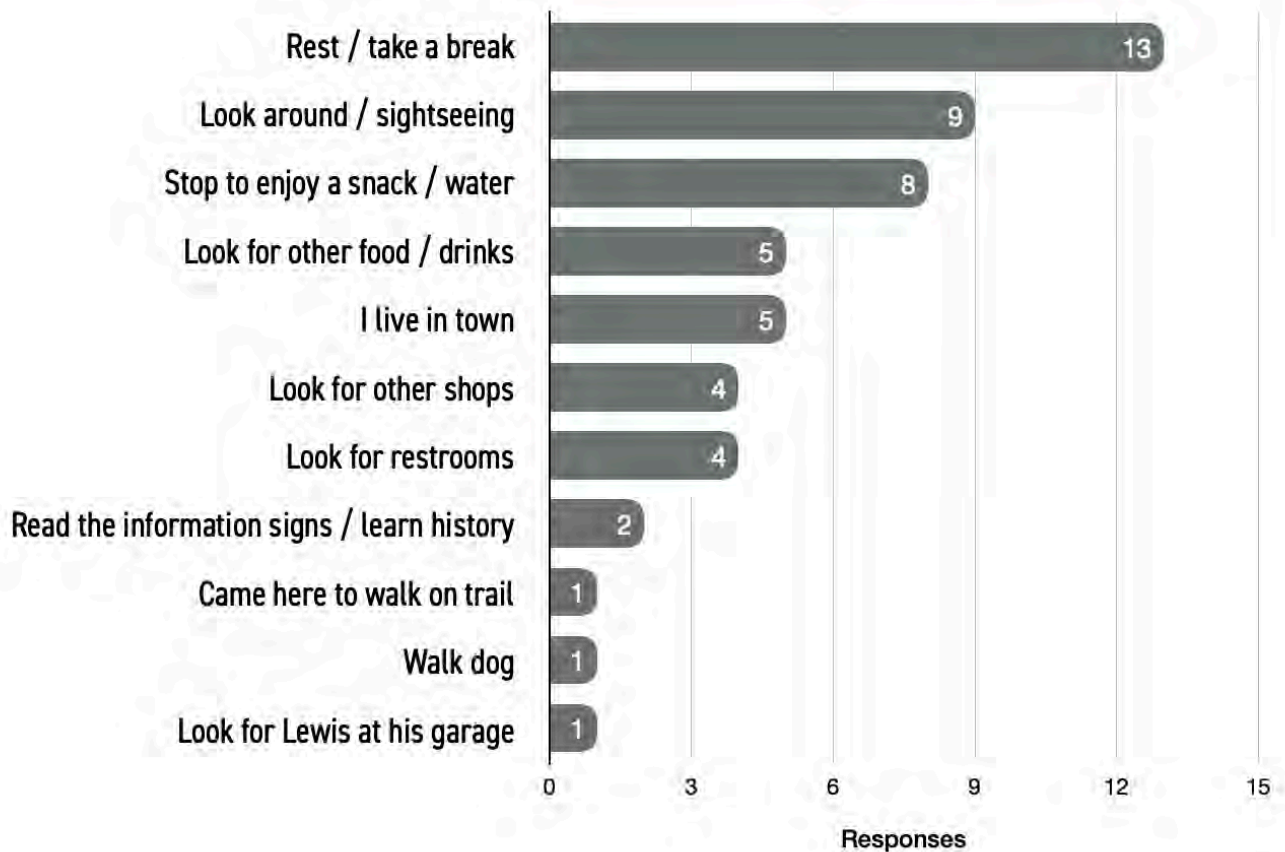
1 Approximately where was your “point of origin” on the Trail today?



2 How far along the Trail did you travel today (or do you plan to travel)?



3 Did you stop and pause in West Pawlet for any of the following reasons? *(Select any that apply)*



The first three questions were provided as multiple choice options, but also giving people the option to write-in “other” answers if they wanted. Where possible, write-in answers were combined into similar categories.

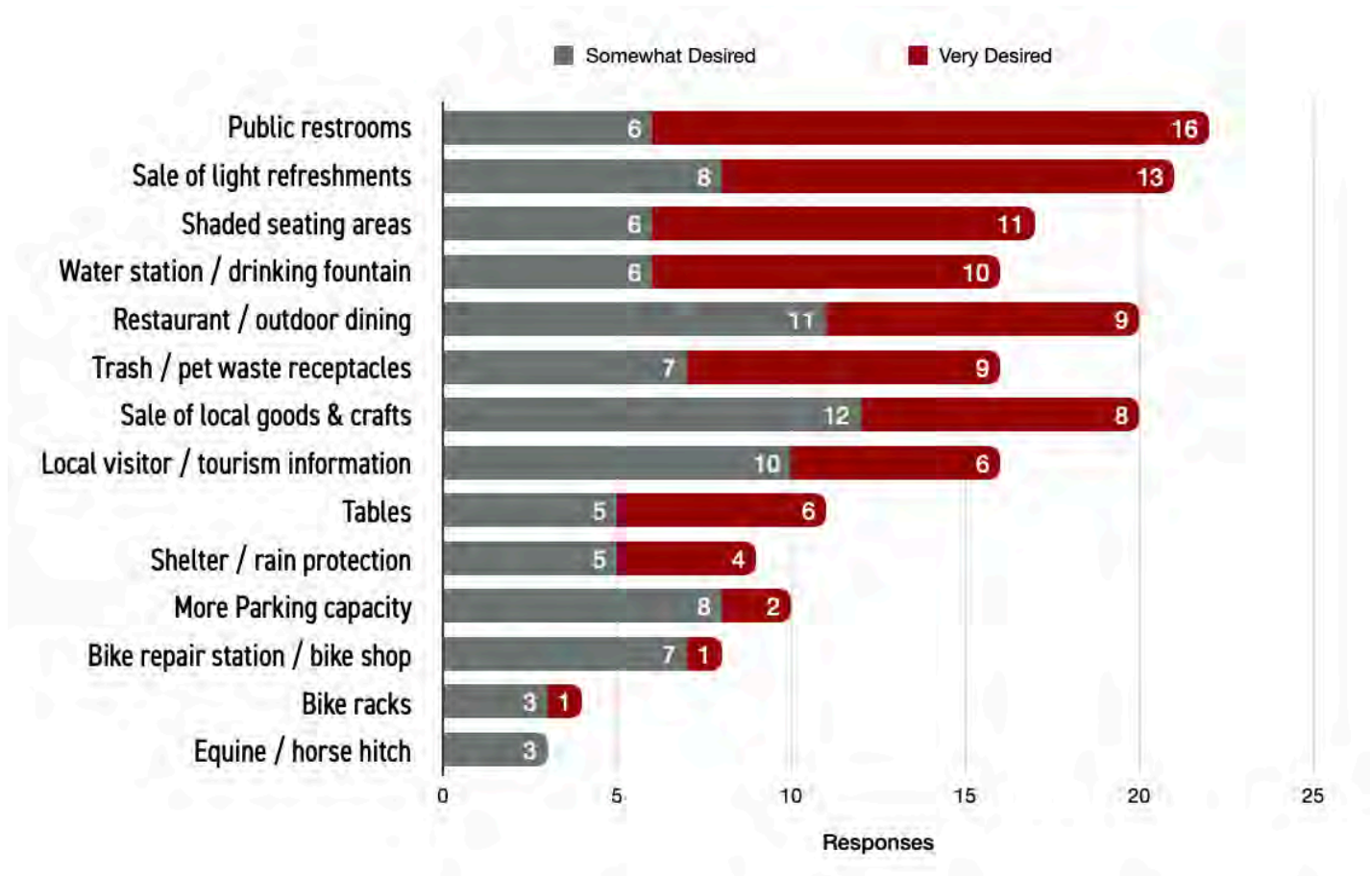
A majority (25) of trail users began (and presumably ended) their trek in West Pawlet, while only about 5 of them live in the village. The two most popular destinations were Rupert and Granville, although it appears most users typically head south toward Rupert. The responses suggest that seven of the southern travelers made it at least all the way to Rupert hamlet, about 7 miles away, or beyond. Nine

of them indicated they stayed within 5 miles, usually stopping short somewhere north of Lewis road, often at Consider Bardwell Farm.

Most trail users who stopped in West Pawlet did so to rest and take a break, with many looking around and looking for food, drinks or restrooms.

When asked to rank what amenities or services people would like to find in West Pawlet, the most popular answer was “public restrooms”, with 6 respondents indicating it was “desired” and 16 indicating it was “very desired”. This was followed closely by “sale of light refreshments”.

4 What amenities or services would you LIKE TO find here in West Pawlet?



Other popular amenities requested included: restaurant/outdoor dining; sale of local goods and crafts; shaded seating areas; water station/drinking fountain; trash/pet waste receptacles and local visitor/tourism information. These items should likely be considered for future village and trailhead upgrades over time. There was relatively less interest in any provision of tables, shelter/rain protection, parking, bike or horse accessories.

Most groups appeared to travel in pairs of two people, with some enjoying the trail solo, but fewer were found in groups of three or more.

Many of the respondents (32%) indicated that they

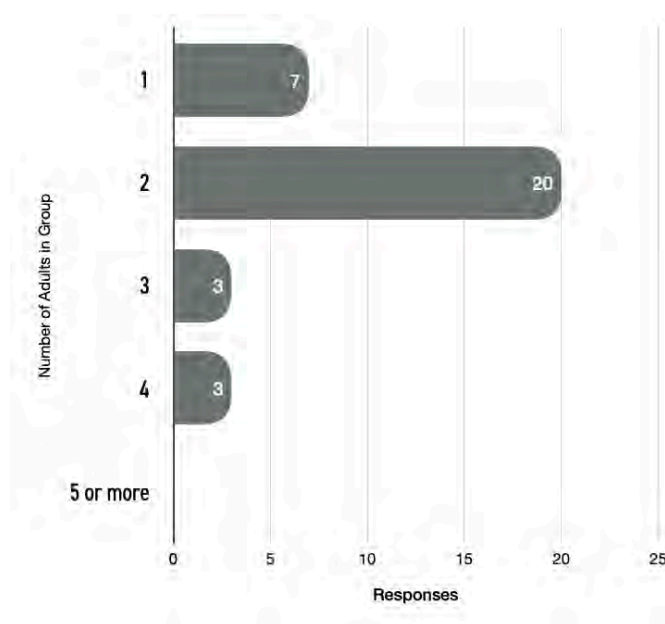
lived in West Pawlet or Pawlet, however most (68%) originated from out of town. 16% of visitors were from nearby towns in southern Vermont, while 32% were from nearby towns in New York (within about an hours' drive, including areas such as Saratoga Springs and Bolton Landing).

20% of the respondents were from a three-hour drive away or more, including distant NY towns downstate and Long Island, as well as other states outside the region including New Jersey, Virginia and Minnesota. Overall, 52% of respondents were from outside Vermont.

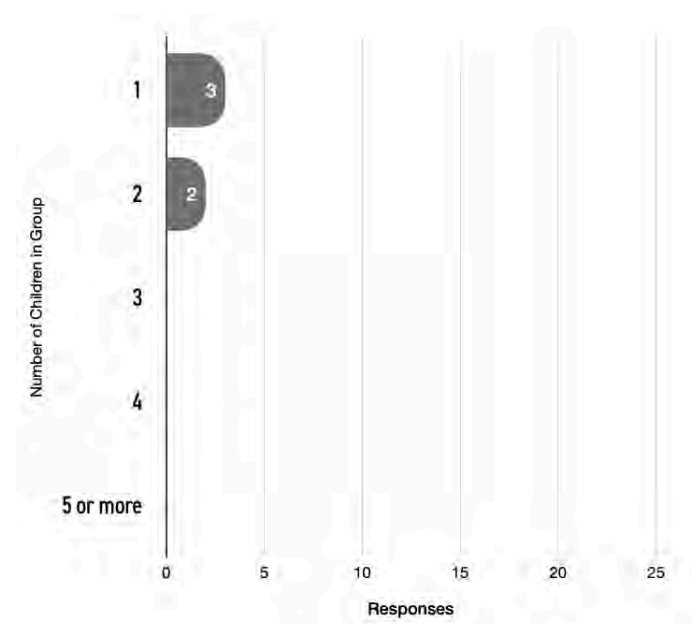
5 What OTHER amenities, services or activities might you like to find here in West Pawlet?

1. Shops and restaurants!
2. Local market
3. Cafe or small general store if the community will support it. If the store had a weigh station for hunting season it might succeed.
4. Country Store would be nice
5. A crosswalk with user-activated lights would be nice (we noticed there's a blind curve in the road that comes from NY, and cars go a bit fast...)
6. We DON'T want hear or see a shooting range (;
7. just a comment-the waystation provided by a local landowner ("just a head") was delightfully quirky! LOVED IT!
8. Thanks for asking our opinion of this trail. We'll be back again soon!
9. Trail map
10. Small store like Dutchies
11. Better maintenance of poison parsnip/poison ivy in the trail; guidance for dog owners to prepare to leash unleashed dogs
12. general grocery store
13. The gates/bollards must be improved. They very difficult to ride through and dangerous. A tandem bike, bike with a trailer, adult trike would find it nearly impossible to pass through. These gates to not meet AASHTO standards for bike paths.
14. A general store
15. A little country store like in east Poultney or Wells would be great.
16. Was not able to answer by coking option. Water station, trash receptacles, light refreshments, restrooms. And we were 4 adults and 1 baby
17. We couldn't fill out this survey at the W Pawlet site as we didn't have cell service there!
18. Bike rentals in summer, X country ski rentals in winter.
19. The gravel surface along the trail was "upgraded" last year (or so,) and that ruined it. This new surface is awful. We probably won't ride along here as often as we normally do (5-6x/yr.)
20. Small store
21. Shade trees
22. Access to the river ... more formalized?
23. Brewery. Cafe. Snack shack (crème's and or apple cider donuts.

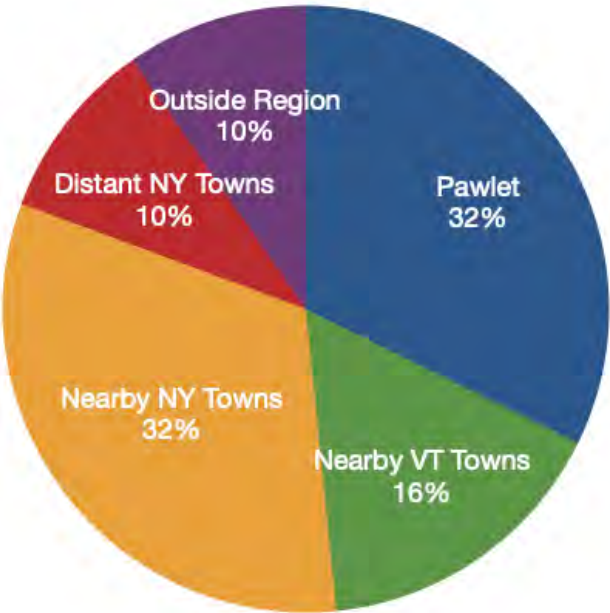
6 How many adults are traveling in your group?



7 How many children are traveling in your group?



8 What is the zip code / postal code of your primary residence?



Rail Trail Visitors - By Hometown

Prepared by:



P.O. BOX 892
Dorset, Vermont 05251
518-496-3009
info@regrowthplanning.com

MEMO

West Pawlet Village Center Master Plan

Public Meeting Notes **DRAFT**

Introductory Open House

June 27, 2022 3:00pm - 7:00pm WPV Firehouse



Public Comments and Input:

Attendees were invited to share their ideas for what they would like to see happen in the village - what would improve their quality of life, what would they like to see change, what would they like to see remain the same? What questions did they think we should ask in the upcoming community survey?

- Potential to adaptively re-use former slate quarry. Quarry pit sits uphill of village, is now filled with water. Potential to harness this as a gravity-fed system which pipes water down into the village to power fire suppression systems.
- Would like to see old firehouse building at the corner of New Street / Route 153 torn down. Building is in bad shape, no need for it any longer. Used as storage for old carnival equipment mostly.
- Fire department still has need for some on-site storage for necessary equipment. Is considering acquiring a pre-built storage shed which can be placed on the lot.
- Would like to see upgrades to the water treatment plant so it is not so costly.
- Need to make it easier to build in town, simpler for people to make property improvements. Used to be a structure across the street from Firehouse on New Street which was built close to road. That building no longer exists. Would like to build a new building there in same spot, on same footprint, however current zoning would not allow it - required setbacks are too large. Had previously put up a 10x16 shed on property but had to get approval letters from all the neighbors - if one neighbor had said no, wouldn't have been able to do it. Needs to be a simpler system, need to have reduced setbacks, reduced building coverage limits to give more flexibility.
- Used to be slate sidewalks in town. Now most are buried over, or busted up by plows. Was interested in restoring sidewalks on their property and bringing them back, and asked for permission from Town. Town said that they could do whatever they wanted with the sidewalks, but if they bring them back, sidewalks become their responsibility and liability if someone got hurt. Not interested in taking on potential liability, so no longer interested in restoring sidewalks. Would like to see that work differently.
- Village could use more parking.
- Would like to see wastewater treatment plant addresses so that sewer fees are not so high.
- Drainage and erosion issue on New Street - Town supposedly got a grant to make improvements. They started work, but did not come back to finish it. Were told that Town would fix the erosion runoff, erosion has gotten quite bad, created a large drop off along edge of road. Would like to see this fixed.
- There is an opportunity to create a very nice secluded area on south side of Indian River, between Route 152 and the Rail Trail. Opportunity to create a riverwalk path and a terraced view of the water on the hillside. Would be great for leaf peepers, tourists, visitors along the bike trail. Higher up on the hillside to the south of the Village there are views overlooking the village which would be great if they could be made accessible.
- There are blasters in the community who can blast rock. Could open up some of the ledge at rail trail parking area and make this area larger.
- Intersection in town is an issue. Police are not active in this area, Town relies on 2 constables. Should look at what Manchester did with the small roundabouts - formerly Malfunction Junction - made a big improvement.

Wife was in an accident in front of Post Office a few years ago. Added speed sign in town because it was an issue.

- Should look at opening up the river to people, an overlook with a flood resistant embankment, with riverwalk.
- There is a need for more affordable housing stock, people can't afford to live in the area like they used to. There is a new State Law about housing in the works, should look into what it is about.
- Should create an Industrial Park, where a lot of the preparation and approvals, permits, etc are taken care of in advance to make the site "shovel ready" and more accessible to businesses who want to locate here.
- Look into what (Building?) Better Places is doing in Vermont.
- There is a potential to repurpose the slate quarry into a tiered outdoor amphitheater for music performances (e.g. instead of "Red Rocks" CO., but "Blue Rocks".
- There used to be 2 or 3 hotels in West Pawlet.
- Husband is avid bicyclist, has different bike routes which he takes, one of them is named "Tour de Slate" similar to Tour de France but instead it travels along many of the former slate quarries in the area. This could be an idea where you create a bike route or road race with a similar theme that brings people to the area and promotes tourism, builds on the history of the area.
- Working on converting building into an art gallery and small/intimate community gathering spot. Have worked very hard on retrofit of building, have an interesting and eclectic collection, but progress is difficult. Never enough time and money.
- Should speak with Angela Miller about ideas. She used to be more active with organizing events in the village and is a great resource, may be able to help promote or support new initiatives.
- Would be nice to see redevelopment of the Hookery.
- Former school building at top of the hill, unsure what is happening with that property. Believe someone may be living there currently.
- Wastewater treatment plant fees are very high. Need to do something about that. Recently applied for State assistance and gets \$125 check to offset the costs. Also applied for heating assistance.
- Town is in the process of working with a grant writer who is an expert in sewer systems, they are hoping to help the town get funding to address the issue. Currently, the plant has to truck the waste away to an offsite facility up in Rutland, but this contributes a lot to the operation costs. The idea is to instead upgrade the equipment so that it can consolidate the sewer sludge into an additional tank in a more concentrated form, which would require less truck trips.
- More residences/businesses in town would potentially help to offset the sewer costs because it would divide the operation costs up into smaller amounts, but would need a lot of new hookups to make a difference.
- It is difficult to get more density out of the residential structures that are already here in the Village. There used to be more duplex buildings (two residences per house), but some of these were converted into single family houses. Zoning was changed several years ago which prevented people from converting back into duplex because they would exceed the density limits. This zoning change should be looked at again.
- Post Office is an important institution in the village, serves as community anchor. They still have 4.5 years left on their lease in the building.
- There are places along the rail trail where people can stop to rest or get a drink and some food, but there is nothing here. This needs to be a new waypoint for people along the trail. If we had something like that, would attract a lot more activity.
- Village has a lot of potential, it just needs some positive momentum, a catalyst which gets things rolling in the right direction.
- Town is working on a pedestrian study to identify areas for crosswalk or sidewalk improvements. There is potential that the village could see something similar, and that the Town could get grant money to restore/replace the sidewalks in West Pawlet.

- Have been considering replacing the sidewalks in front of my property. Would be willing to do this work at my own expense, and asked the (State?/Town?) if this was ok and they said yes. If I replaced the sidewalks now, and the Town got grant money later, is it possible I could get reimbursed later for my contribution?
- Could potentially allow people to retrofit existing homes to add more dwelling units by special permit if it is tastefully done, special permit conditions.
- There is a difference between adding more people to the Village and adding more activity to the Village. We need to bring more activity to the Village, which can generate more people and create a cycle of currency locally that helps everyone.
- Should look at what Jane Days is doing in Rupert with Sheldons Store as a model, providing coffee and yoga, etc.
- The extents of the "Village Center" as shown on the map are not what he had always understood the village to be. If you go outside the Village a way the speed limit turns from 30 to 50 mph. Have always understood the village boundaries to be where the speed limit changes, not the boundary drawn on these maps.
- The Hookery was looking into doing work with CBD, and possibly a marijuana dispensary. Unsure what they are doing now.
- The northern pond quarry is still being mined. Newmont Slate, owned by Jack Williams.
- Important to note that the State does not maintain Route 153, the Town does, even though it is a State Route.
- Project maps are odd because they seem to show that peak of the hill south of the Village ("Porch Hill") as being on the Vermont side of the border, but have always been told that the large pine tree up at the peak of the hill was the NY line.
- Master Plan name could be "Pawlet - Next 100 Years"
- Rail trail has gates which are closed in the summer, but are opened in the winter to allow snowmobile use. Can take horses on trail, but cannot take a horse and carriage because of gates. When tropical storm Irene hit, the trail was the only way to get to and from Granville.
- Would like to convert small store (former antiques building) next to Celery Compound into a potential community store with a public bathroom. Could serve/provide local goods with community volunteers / participation and minimal attention. Similar to what they do in Shrewsbury. Currently working on an idea to open up the west side of this building with larger windows and a porch to make it more visible and inviting to people passing through or along the trail. Would be able to see goods for sale inside. Potential to have a seating area outside for people to take a break along the trail.
- A public bathroom is very much needed, would help to keep people from "using" the trail for bathroom activities. Don't want a port-o-potty out there along the trail though, that looks awful, we need a real indoor restroom.
- Former Duchies site is a problem in its current unfinished state. Need to clean it up or finish it somehow. A "level 1" environmental study was already completed for the site. Expecting that this Fall money may be available for the follow up of a "level 2" to identify what needs to be done.
- Need to have a stop sign at the circle/monument - there is currently no traffic control, so any control there would be an improvement. Also, parking at the rail trail needs to be cleaned up or formalized. Right now it just looks like a place where the weeds have died, could be much improved.
- Town owns a lot of land north of the village. A lot you could do there with an industrial park, plenty of potential jobs.
- Red Rocks, Colorado is a famous place to see music and beautiful setting. Not many people know that it is owned by the Town, it isn't privately owned. When they aren't holding concerts there is still a park, not just sitting there dormant.
- Former slate quarry has potential as a solar farm, however it is limited because you cannot tie into the grid because the local substation capacity is already reserved by another solar facility being proposed. Perhaps there is an option instead for a local microgrid which only serves immediate village area?

- Sewer system extends quite a ways north from the village. It is gravity fed down from the top of the hill, however up in Spruce Gum it has to be pumped up to top of hill from other side before it comes down to village. The pumps at that station tend to burn out regularly. At the south end, sewer system extends south of the Hookery.
- Euclid Street used to be called chicken alley because of the chicken farm that was there.
- Date of Pawlet Charter is incorrect on the History board, was established 1761.

DISPLAY BOARD: “What IDEAS might you suggest to improve the quality of life in the Village of West Pawlet?”

- Reduce sewer fees
- Community Solar & Hydrogen?
- #1) Store (Dutchies); #2) Railtrail welcome center + expanded parking; #3) Monument / intersection improvement for safety.
- Fire House Annex: Re-imagine as a Community Center? (Ref: Rupert Sheldon Store); Store - Dutchies old site; Old School House - reimagine use - Apartments?; Trail head - Cafe would be great - been asked several times if coffee place in Town! Thank you!!
- Easier permitting
- Utilize funds record to reduce wastewater tax; Crosswalk in front of Post Office!!!
- Playground
- Village store - basic staples, beer/wine, food to go? Cafe - coffee, sandwiches; Pizza
- Ensure walkability of downtown areas / repair sidewalks
- Community garden
- Use existing infrastructure - like under-used buildings - to create more spaces for community gathering
- Community gathering space; Crosswalks
- Turn Antique shop (#14) into a community farm store and event space
- Re-create a micro economy where the whole community can flourish
- Putting a store where Dutchies was (#8) is a lot of logistics and a bit far fetched. Use existing infrastructure that we already have.

DISPLAY BOARD: “What aspects of the Village would you like to see STAY THE SAME?”

- Neighbors who help each other
- Industrial Park for businesses to be able to “set up” quickly
- Wonderful community school
- Use #1 Quarry H2O Hydram System for commercial & cheaper HO(?) insurance
- Quarry #2 converted into play/concert place - seating & a stage/roof?
- Update zoning!
- Quaint village center (w/ no chain stores)
- Sensible multi-unit

DISPLAY BOARD: “What aspects of the Village would you like to see CHANGE?”

- More opportunities to connect and interact as a community
- More welcoming to diverse community members

- Celebrate and learn about our slate quarries / industry / history
- Physical community gathering spaces
- Traffic
- Fix zoning setbacks

DISPLAY BOARD: “What questions or topics would you like to see us ask about in the Community Survey this summer?”

- How can the community benefit and participate?
- What is the one change that would make your life in West Pawlet easier? Why?
- What are you willing to do / contribute to improve West Pawlet?
- What actions have you seen in other communities that we should try in West Pawlet?

[** END MEETING **]

[Written comments collected via online forms to be appended when available]

MEMO

West Pawlet Village Center Master Plan

Public Meeting Notes **DRAFT**

Pot Luck Dinner Meeting 1 - Streetscape

January 12, 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 discussion of the intersection in West Pawlet, the issues it presents and potential design improvements. This meeting as attended by approximately 15 people. A copy of the presentation was uploaded to the project webpage.

Issues Identified:

A series of photographs were presented showing the main West Pawlet intersection (Route 153 / Egg Street / Railroad Ave) as viewed when approaching from multiple directions.

- When approaching from north (Route 153) no indication which way road is going to turn, or that an intersection is ahead. Only sign is indicating Rail Trail parking ahead, with an arrow to the right.
- As you approach intersection closer, it appears as an even split left-right to either side of monument, no obvious indication which way road goes. Difficult to see yellow line striping in winter.
- Speed limit along this route is 30 mph, but many people don't abide by it.
- Cars approaching this intersection often don't know which way around monument they should be going.
- When approaching from west (Railroad Ave) there is no Stop sign or Yield sign to warn motorists that vehicles traveling from other directions may think they have right-of-way. Right of way rules here are unclear, especially to people not familiar with the intersection.
- When approaching from south (Egg Street) visibility is limited because intersection is at crest of the hill. Cant see cars coming from other directions, or crossing Rail Trail bicyclists/pedestrians, until you are almost into the intersection.
- Pedestrians crossing the road at the Rail Trail likewise do not have good line of sight to see vehicles approaching from the south on Egg Street due to hill.
- There used to be a Stop sign at the top of the hill on Egg Street, however this was later removed because large trucks stopping on this hill would lose momentum and not be able to start up again when road conditions were slippery.
- There is a Trail Crossing sign at the top of the hill just before the Rail Trail, but easy to miss.
- Vehicles approaching from the south reach the top of the hill and are suddenly presented with an awkward intersection.
- Vehicles approaching from south heading north to Route 153 don't know which way around monument to go - do they go the long way around monument as if it was a traffic circle?
- Route marker signs are very old and weathered - cannot read anymore.
- When approaching from the east (Route 153) road appears to split left and right, but paved intersection is very wide and it is not always clear which way they should be going.
- Yield sign across the street from Post Office ("YIELD LEFT to oncoming traffic") is confusing - what does that mean?

- Concern among residents that too many signs may become distracting, cluttered or confusing.
- Large pothole on right (north-east of monument) has been an issue.
- People recall at least two known incidents of people hitting monument in their vehicles, one time continuing on to crash into building across street.
- Slowing vehicles down through this intersection would be a good thing.
- Monument is currently sitting in an 8 foot wide patch of grass in middle of road, could be celebrated more or made more welcoming.
- The monument itself isn't a hazard, but it is an important part of town history.
- People come to look at the monument, but have to stand in road. As younger students, we used to walk down the road from the school to go and visit it, learn about history.
- Volunteer would be happy to maintain landscaping around it.
- Keith (Mason?) - problem to maintain intersection.

Attendees were then presented a series of potential design concepts to comment on.

Design Concept A:

- This concept solves two problems at once.
- Monument is showcased better. Would be good to have local tradespeople/artisans involved in the design for their craft.
- This design concept could be improved by moving Rail Trail crossing even further east to intersection at stop bar. Would improve crossing safety as well as bring people more into village.
- It is helpful to paint/repaint lines in road, makes it clearer.
- Everyone in attendance liked this solution.

Design Concept B:

- Generally considered not as good as concept A.
- Tractor trailers couldn't navigate circle. Would need mountable curbs like in Manchester, not as much greenspace/landscaping.
- Still can't walk up to monument.

Design Concept C:

- Nice setting honoring monument, can access it.
- Larger trucks turning here would have issues, would need to increase turning radii.
- Not as good as concept A.

Design Concept Summary

- Everyone in agreement concept A is the best.
- Could modify concept A a little - move monument a little further down and stop traffic a little earlier. Improve Rail Trail crossing.
- Local artisans and tradespeople should contribute to design.
- Sidewalks need to be lowered.
-

Source of Local truck Traffic:

- What is bringing large truck traffic through WP?
- Some of it is local/regional dairy trucks, but have been seeing corporate trucks like Walmart and Amazon.
- New Amazon distribution center coming in Granville, at the former Manchester Wood facility.
- There is a new store in Rupert also, delivery routes.
- GPS is directing trucks along shortcut routes through the area.
- Large trucks aren't supposed to be coming through here. What can we do to stop them?

Old Railroad Freight Building:

- Also need to resolve condition of old railroad right building. Box trucks used to hit the roof overhang until they cut it back, but still sticks out into road.
- How can we repurpose this building?
- Railroad freight building ownership is in legal dispute. State of Vermont wants it moved. Legal issues need to be resolved first.
- Barn restoration groups can strip and sell parts, or it can be moved.
- They moved brick railroad station up in new Haven, they can move this.

Speed limit:

- Not everyone obeys speed limit.
- Town has put three speed radar signs up around town, changing locations.
- These have been very effective, helpful.
- Need more of these in West Pawlet.
- Speed limit drops down to 30 mph a ways outside of the village, may be helpful to have a second sign (reminder) closer to town.

Other Observations / Comments:

- During hurricane Irene, WP village was surrounded by floodwaters. Only way in/out was using rail trail path over to Granville.

At the conclusion of the meeting, attendees were reminded that there is an online comment form available for them to add additional comments on these subjects, or for people who missed the presentation. This can be found at the bottom of the project webpage at: www.regrowthplanning/pawlet.

[** END MEETING **]

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]

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 sideswalks 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]

MEMO

West Pawlet Village Center Master Plan

Public Meeting Notes **DRAFT**

Pot Luck Dinner Meeting 3 - Corner Store

February 11, 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 before comparing options for new construction vs. renovation of an existing building for a potential store. The presentation concluded with case studies of how neighborhood general stores have been revived in several Vermont communities using a non-profit community-supported model. A discussion followed on the options available and what the community wanted. A copy of the discussion slides was uploaded to the project webpage.

Discussion Notes:

- There are many advantages to renovating an existing space over constructing something new, especially for historic structures where there are often additional grants to preserve the community.
- Preservation Trust of Vermont has many resources, educational tools and support it can provide to assist us in this effort. They have offered to come to town when we are ready to discuss ideas.
- Should reach out to former Dutchies owners Will and Eric to learn more about the profitability of their old store and what we can learn about it.
 - Second Time Around - Consignment shop
- **Celery Compound (former Fish & Game building)** would be a good candidate location for a store, however it is in private ownership by Bruce, who likely wouldn't want to sell the property to a non-profit. He deserves credit for fixing that building up as much as he has.
 - Community-supported model using a non-profit requires ownership of the building, the non-profit then leases the space to an operator who runs the store.
 - What is the plan for the Celery Compound building? They renovated to create new apartments upstairs and currently use the downstairs for variety of flex space programming.
- **Former Antiques Building.** Also owned by Bruce, who has plans to renovate this building to create small shop / co-op space and open up west side with windows and porch toward Rail Trail.
 - Unsure if Bruce would be open to selling this structure to a non-profit to create a store.
 - Great location, and historic building, however building is very small, space would be limited especially after adding any restrooms, but still has potential.
- **Railroad Freight Shed.** 15 years ago spoke with the woman who owned the Railroad Freight building about buying it. Idea was to buy and move it. Believe we were quoted around \$50,000 to move the building, however that price included taking down many electrical lines which crossed the road in order to transport structure.
 - Moving shed across the street to town-owned property would be less effort. Should reach out to adjacent property owners (Duquette) about plans for small building, inquire about potential of incorporating shed there, with parking on wastewater treatment side, but leaving corner for greenspace, outdoor seating.

- If town still needed Dutchies land for wastewater treatment solution, could do a lot line adjustment to gain space they need, sell off remainder of Dutchies lot.
- There may be potential for Railroad Freight building to remain where it is, on State lands. Although ownership of structure is still in limbo due to bankruptcy, State has indicated that if the building was converted into a purpose which supported the Rail Trail, they might be able to entertain option where it could be left where it currently stands. State is looking into this option.
- Historic significance of railroad building may be compromised since the rafter tails and roof overhang were sawn off, that was a defining characteristic of the building.
- Railroad shed is in bankruptcy proceedings. Is it feasible that we could talk to them about donating the building to us, as a way to offset any debts they might have?
- **Why do we want a Store? How should it be organized?** We don't want a store just to get milk. It was also a gathering space, place to see your neighbors, an economic driver.
 - Dutchies was missed. A lot of money was raised to rebuild that store but it didn't happen.
 - Source of community pride, similar to what Mettawee Makers tried to do.
 - West Pawlet is very special, a unique place. We have a lot of full-time residents that other towns do not have. Many of us have lived here for years, it is a lived-in community. Need to keep West Pawlet funky.
 - Unique, creative people in this community. If we create a new local market, it should reflect the ethos of community, not just in visual character but the organizational structure of it.
 - On a spectrum of options from having a developer come in and build something for us, to renovating a space ourselves and lease it to a local co-op, where do we want to aim?
 - Probably something in between. We fundraise to get a space established, then work to find an operator for the store. Finding a co-op to come in may be difficult, might require an incentive.
 - Would utilizing a co-op create difficulty for out of owners and tourists, would they be able to buy things at the store if they weren't members?
 - Unsure if community is hardcore enough to take on that challenge of doing a co-op on top of everything else.
 - If we don't step up and do this, it is not going to happen.
 - Store should provide a place for a locals Farmer's Market.
 - Need to have someone look at the economics of how this might work, the right size of store, etc. What is the data that we need to understand how this could work?
 - Preservation Trust of Vermont may have data on this, they have hosted a few local stores, lease to the operators.
 - Rupert store is a great example of using a non-profit. They had good community support, and we could do the same here. But I think it is very important that whatever non-profit structure we set up here to be very inclusive. Include a wide variety or cross section of local members who oversee the organization, not just a few. That will help to build community support.
 - Make leadership flexible, allow turnover, be inclusive.
 - Non-profit charter should not be limited to only the store, but the greater economic benefit of the village. Charter should have broader mission to take on other roles / missions as well, will help to appeal to more interests in fundraising.
 - Co-op model like Hunger Mountain is currently running as many separate programs, would be better as a buyer club all under one umbrella.
 - Need to define a non-profit vision that many people can get interested in for this to be successful, to get people excited.

- Might be good to have Newmont Slate owners on board with this effort to be involved in local community revitalization, perhaps other higher-profile business groups such as Industrial Park, Telescope, Saint-Gobain to increase expertise and reach.
- Need to research more on the financials side of this, what are the metrics? Preservation Trust of Vermont and other non-profit community efforts should be able to give us data, other store owners to get advice on establishing this group.
- Preservation Trust of Vermont offers educational training, workshops, retreats oaths specific topic.
- **What should the store include?** Should the space also accommodate local community events?
 - Firehouse provides space for many different community events, however limited to smaller meeting room in winter when they can't leave their equipment outside. In those times don't have space for a larger event.
 - Mach's and Williams stores are doing fantastic business, but are also on major roads. Cater to both locals and tourists, though prices are very high sometimes.
 - There is a paradox - the tourists won't really like it if we make something "touristy" to appeal to them. They want authentic local Vermont. If we make something truly for the local population, the tourists will love it also.
 - Need the store to be inclusive. There are many different people in this area from many backgrounds. Need to make sure we address their needs, and also make sure they have a voice in this discussion.
 - There is a sort of "town & gown" division in the community, like in many rural Vermont towns, between different demographics. Need to recognize that.
- **Biking / Rail Trail.** Look at development in Poultney. A major philanthropist has been funding work there, biking events with Slate Valley Trails and putting big money into it as an event. They are very motivated by anything in biking culture, could be an opportunity to build upon this idea and expand it for tourism and economic development.
 - Trans has done a good job with fixing up the trail. Should there be a bike rental aspect to the store?
 - It has been suggested that a bike map be created for this area which includes the Rail Trail and how to get to off-shoot destinations such as Consider Bardwell and Merck Mountain, etc.
- **Other Building Locations.** Should look at the environmental report done for the Industrial Park (Hookery) - this could be an appendix to the Master Plan.
- **Economic Development.** Could investigate potential of negotiating internet service bought on a bulk basis / bulk purchase for everyone in the village, negotiate a better price.
- **Next Steps.** Once pot-luck dinner meetings are concluded, draft master Plan will be developed with direction from committee and presented to the community. Community will have opportunity to review and provide input if it aligns with their vision, what might be added, etc. Based on that feedback, draft will be revised before finalization.
 - Where to hold presentation / meeting? Firehouse meeting room may not be large enough, main garage bays can't be opened until April.
 - Could hold presentation at Mettawee School, much larger capacity and relatively close. Regrowth Planning to contact school about arranging this.

Reminder next meeting February 23rd to discuss the Firehouse and Community Events.

[** END MEETING 8:30pm **]

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]

MEMO

West Pawlet Village Center Master Plan

Public Meeting Notes **DRAFT**

Pot Luck Dinner Meeting 4 - Firehouse & Community Events

February 23, 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. The conversation then focused on ways to bring back different community events which had been lost over time, including events hosted by the Firehouse, new event ideas, and how these events might be improved. The Firehouse serves as a primary hub of the community for social events and bringing people out to meet one another. Potential improvements at the Firehouse to host them were discussed, and how these could also help meet the needs of the larger neighborhood in a mutually beneficial way. Potential for more events which also provide opportunities for the Firehouse to fundraise. A copy of the discussion slides was uploaded to the project webpage.

Discussion Notes:

- **Pancake Breakfasts, Community Pot Luck Dinners.** COVID killed many of these events, have not come back yet. Firehouse in the process of trying to upgrade their kitchen to host food again, but have been unable to find contractors to do the work. Because it is a commercial building, law requires licensed contractors to do all the work. Contractors are very busy, hard to get a hold of, and more expensive. Funding is an issue. This has been a hold up.
 - Pancake Breakfasts won't come back until they fix their kitchen. Unknown timeframe.
 - ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Covid relief funds may be useful to help them. Town ARPA funds have already been earmarked for current funding, but there is a new round of applications. Jessica and/or Town Board may have info on when/if new funding options are available.
 - 4H would bus tables for breakfasts, help out.
 - Would like to bring Breakfasts back, and also a Supper event as well.
- **Carnival.** Firehouse used to host the annual Carnival event. It turned out to be too much work, with not enough reward. Crew would spend days setting up and coordinating, but with lackluster attendance and very little fundraising to show for it. Made it too much of a hassle to keep doing it.
 - Carnival could come back, but Firehouse isn't willing to do all the work for it. Someone else would need to step up and take charge, or help.
- **Firehouse Auction.** Did this for a few years but found that they didn't get a lot of donated items, and much of the donated items were junky. After the event they would be left holding the bag with a bunch of stuff no one wanted, and the Firehouse would have to find a way to dispose of it. Became a hassle for relatively small gain. Scrappers sometimes come and clean up some of the leftovers.
 - Pawlet FD gets a much better haul of donated items for their auction, and seems to sell it all somehow. Discontinued this event when COVID hit and don't plan to start again.
- **Monthly 50/50 Raffles.** These are successful. All of their tickets are sold already.

- **Movie Night.** Baptist Church used to host a movie night at the Firehouse, leftover proceeds of ticket sales and concessions would go to Firehouse, but not much money collected. Movie night hasn't come back since Covid, but could see a return.
 - Potential for other movie night hosts, such as Historical Society?
- **Volunteerism / Attendance.** Events at the Firehouse serve multiple purposes - community socialization, fundraising and potential recruitment. People don't seem to show up for a lot of events anymore. Attendance is down.
 - Pawlet and Vermont in general has seen an influx of many new people who have moved to the area, they are new and aren't tied to the community as much. More of a bedroom community now. Maybe new folks don't know about events or don't care, maybe just aren't interested?
 - Firehouse relies on community exposure and relationship to help recruit new members / volunteers. Has been very difficult finding new recruits. People just don't seem to want to volunteer like they used to. Average age of members is over 50, need younger members to fill in.
- **Bus Trips.** Used to host bus trips to destinations like Boston, etc. Was a lot of work organizing and is expensive to run, left very small fundraising profits. People would still complain cost of tickets were high.
 - Would not get a lot of local people signing up for bus trips, but would instead get most of the people from out of town, including Salem and Rutland, who would want to join.
 - Bus routed up through Rutland, and that is where they filled up half the bus.
- **Farmers Market.** Used to be hosted out of the Celery Compound (former Fish & Game building), then it eventually moved down to Consider Bardwell Farm.
- **Family Fun Day.** Firehouse held this event as part of their 75th Anniversary celebration. Again, was a lot of work to organize and set up. Had good turnout during the day, but by the end only had 2 people attending the Dance, and they were from out of town.
- **Casino Night.** Also hosted as part of 75th Anniversary [confirm?]. Was successful, attracted many people from far out of town, but again did not get many locals.
- **Railroad Freight Building.** VTrans has indicated that they may allow the structure to remain on State property if it could be repurposed to support the Rail Trail, such as creating a Welcome Center, rest stop, store, etc.
- **Firehouse Priorities.** Top priorities for the Firehouse right now are:
 - Finishing kitchen to host meals again.
 - Taking down dilapidated Annex building - need to find storage space to relocate items currently stored there.
 - Creating outdoor park/gathering space, perhaps with monument.
- **Woodchuck Festival.** Hosted this at Mettawee Community School, inside gymnasium in February. Would tape out 10x10 foot spots on floor for table/booth locations. Typically sold about 20 spots total, and sold some concessions. This was good.
- **Chicken BBQ.** This was probably best event, most popular. However, now everyone does it, there are BBQ events and places all around, and there is much more competition now. Harder to do.
- **Valentines Breakfast.** Again, need kitchen back in running order.
- It seems that everything is more supported now by "outside" the community, rather than local West Pawlet residents.
- **Fundraising.** Most successful fundraising efforts the Firehouse has is when they send a letter out to the whole community, asking for donations. Not an event, just outreach to residents.
 - A lot of funding comes from area companies, including across the border in Granville. Quarry owners, Telescope, other area businesses.

- **Volunteer Firefighters.** Long-term need is increased membership in the firehouse. Getting harder and harder to get volunteers. Members are aging out. A few members they haven't seen in two years. This isn't just a West Pawlet issue, this is happening Nationally. FD can always fundraise, but it won't do any good if there aren't people to respond to emergencies.
 - Representative Sally Achey spoke to them about this issue, discussed idea of college credits or tax relief as an incentive to get younger people to volunteer again. Should reach out to Robin Chesnut-Tangerman and keep pushing this issue.
 - Rutland Fire Department went from 50 members down to 24 in just 8 years.
 - Volunteering in general is down everywhere, even to find a baseball coach.
 - What can the Town of Pawlet do to help address this? Need to find a way to help incentivize this, perhaps tax credits / tax relief for active volunteers.
 - Difficulty is that State mandated firefighter training keeps increasing. Is up to 270+ hours of training just for the basic skills - that does not include more advanced training such as vehicle extractions, electric vehicle fires, solar panel fires, etc. This is a big burden on volunteers, takes a lot of time. Alternative is attending Vermont Fire Academy, but that is also a large commitment.
 - Need to find incentives for new volunteer firefighters.
 - [EDITOR'S SIDE NOTE: See attached article on recent Village of Round Lake NY FD incentive program, recently adopted.]
- **Firehouse Annex / Corner Property.** Firehouse plans to demolish the aging annex building at the corner of Route 153 and New Street. Hopes to restore it to lawn/grass area for outdoor events, potentially including monument.
 - Would like to have lawn area fenced off.
 - Potential design for outdoor pavilion discussed, serving both the Firehouse as well as being used for other community events, potential rentals for larger gatherings. Could include BBQ pit for roasts.
 - Option to make pavilion open in summer, closed in winter? Could host meetings there, free up space in the main building for other programming or storage.
- **Other Items.**
 - Village Master Plan should needs to reflect Town Energy Plan, in development. Frank may be able to provide preliminary input for incorporation.
 - Town / Village would benefit from pressurized water sprinkler system. Fire Department has been installing more dry hydrants to help local supply. A fire hydrant system pressurized for sprinklers would help, potentially served by hydrant system at former quarry, pump station at quarry. Could dam the southern quarry and provide pressurized gravity feed down to village.
 - Would drastically improve ISO (Insurance Services Office) rating, lower insurance costs, currently a disincentive to new businesses and local investment.
 - Fire Department would love to have hydrant system, water source at the station - but very expensive. New fire station located at/near quarry could provide pump refills, free up additional truck during calls.
 - Would want to future-proof design, in terms of size and amenities. Radiant floor slab greatly help dry equipment and hoses. Diesel pump, cant rely on electric.
 - A 500 gallon tank truck isn't enough these days. But also can't get a supertanker up some roads, especially in winter or mud season.

[** END MEETING 8:15pm **]

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NEWS

Round Lake, citing dedication, passes exemption

Former fire chief: Daytime calls are handled by retirees



Wendy Liberatore

Feb. 17, 2023 | Updated: Feb. 17, 2023 4:14 p.m.





1 of 9

Round Lake firefighters return to the firehouse after answering a call on Friday, Feb. 17, 2023, at Round Lake Fire Department Station 1 on Curry Road in Round Lake, N.Y.

Will Waldron/Times Union

ROUND LAKE — Calling emergency responders the glue that holds the community together, the village board of trustees voted to give its firefighters and ambulance workers a 10 percent break on their village tax bill.

Mayor Gary Putnam said the board unanimously voted to pass the measure on Wednesday night after no one at a public hearing objected to the tax break. He also said he believes Round Lake is the first municipality in Saratoga County to offer the tax exemption for firefighters and EMS workers, a move inspired by a [new state law signed by Gov. Kathy Hochul](#) last December.

“A couple weeks ago ... there was a fire in the village,” Putnam recalled. “Temperature was around zero, and the firefighters were busy putting out the fire and protecting the neighboring houses, which were mere feet away from the burning house. In addition, they positioned themselves to protect our beautiful (Round Lake) Auditorium, which was only around 75 yards away. Last Saturday, they were training ice rescues on Round Lake. It is the least we can do for these dedicated folks.”

The tax exemption for firefighters and EMS workers follows a state initiative that gives municipalities, school districts, fire districts and counties a way to motivate residents to join the dwindling ranks of the fire and EMS departments. [Greene and Rensselaer counties](#) have already passed the exemptions for emergency responders. So too has the Bethlehem Central School District, which in a statement from Board of Education President Holly Dellenbaugh, noted “our volunteer first responders are terrific role models for our students. This is an opportunity to support our neighborhood volunteers and to encourage younger generations to join their ranks.”

Schenectady and Albany counties are also considering passing the tax exemption into law; the Schenectady County Legislature is holding a public hearing on the new law on March 6.

Saratoga County held a public hearing on Wednesday. In 2006, it passed a law to provide a tax exemption that must be annually approved. The new law, as specified by the state, will give lifetime exemption to anyone with at least 20 years of service in a fire or EMS department. Clifton Park is also considering the measure.

Fred Sievers, a former chief and longtime member of the Round Lake Fire Department, says the exemption is “a very, very positive thing.”

“As I’m sure you are familiar that the volunteer fire service in New York state has really suffered quite serious loss of members in the last 20 years,” Sievers said, referring to the Firefighters Association of the State of New York estimation that volunteers across the state has precipitously declined since 2000 from about 120,000 to 80,000 firefighters statewide. “It really hurts, particularly daytime response. It’s the kind of thing that will help really encourage some people to think about joining.”

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Sievers said Round Lake is “extremely fortunate” to have about 66 volunteers. But calls have doubled in the last 10 years. For one thing, he said the population has grown and he said many buildings have alarms. And if they malfunction, which sometimes happens, they are responding to false alarms, which he said have also increased.

While he is grateful for the exemption, about \$100 in annual savings, he said it doesn’t engage renters, many of whom are young, which Sievers said the fire department needs. He said the daytime calls are mostly handled by retirees.

“The retired folks are playing a significant role during the day,” he said. “That is particularly tough for us.”

At the Saratoga County Board of Supervisor’s public hearing on the tax exemption, Fred Richards of Harmony Corners Fire Department also echoed that concern. He said his department of 16 members is relying on volunteers who are 60 and older to respond to daytime calls.

William Lund of the Ballston Spa Fire Department also spoke, saying that the current proposed exemption of \$200 should go higher. He proposed exempting firefighters from the fire/EMS tax that some communities, like Clifton Park, impose.

“It’s a good start,” he told the Board of Supervisors of the proposal. “But it has to be meaningful.”

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MEMO

West Pawlet Village Center Master Plan

Public Meeting Notes **DRAFT**

Public Workshop - Draft Plan Presentation

April 20, 2023 6:00pm - 8:00pm WPV Firehouse



Introduction:

A presentation and discussion was held at the West Pawlet Volunteer Firehouse to review the draft recommendations of the plan and solicit suggestions. A PDF copy of the draft plan was made available online a few days prior to the meeting, and printed handouts of the recommendations were also provided to meeting attendees for reference. A copy of the discussion slides was uploaded to the project webpage after the event. Note that due to the length of the conversation, not all of the presentation slides were covered at the meeting. The following represents notes of the public comments and discussion which took place.

Public Comments:

- History of West Pawlet section does not reflect the many Irish immigrants who relocated to the area to work in the slate industry, this should be added.
- The current Town of Pawlet Energy Plan is still being updated, however there are elements of it which should be better incorporated into the plan. Even though these recommendations are town-wide, there are some which could apply directly to West Pawlet.
- **Wastewater Treatment Plant.** The plan suggests utilizing solar energy to help run the wastewater treatment plant and reduce electrical costs, however local solar capacity in this area is limited to what the local infrastructure can accommodate. Plan also recommends seeking grant funding to upgrade/expand capacity of plant to reduce the frequency of truck trips needed to transfer waste to Rutland.
 - The current local infrastructure does not have the capacity to add larger community or utility-scale solar projects, however it can handle smaller private residential or commercial installations. It is anticipated that the wastewater treatment plant could be served by a smaller installation.
- Increasing the size or holding capacity of the wastewater treatment plant doesn't seem attractive to me, as we would still have to truck the waste offsite.
 - It is understood that this approach would reduce the number of truck trips (currently the #1 expense of the plant) but the actual math is still being looked at by engineers. If they determine that it would not result in a significant costs savings, then the town isn't going to bother pursuing that option and will have to find a different solution.
 - Can also investigate potential for some local discharge in the area, but that is likely difficult.
 - Currently plant is only running around 25% of its capacity, would potentially only need to run 3 days a week instead of 7, but we need an exemption from the state to allow that to happen.
 - Recommendation about a shared part-time operator doesn't work, as the town already utilizes a service provider, so this is essentially the same thing.
 - The plant is currently looking to hire a part-time position, however it is not known if this is a new position or re-filling a newly vacated one.
 - Instead of increasing storage capacity, should look into utilizing a press to compact the waste products, squeeze the liquid down. This would be different than the method described to bake or distill the waste products down to a denser mix. Should also investigate this option.

- Do we have any numbers on how much this would reduce costs of the plant?
 - Not yet. Working with engineer to figure that out, meeting this spring. Our goal is to have this worked out in time to make decisions and apply for grant funding which will be open toward the end of the year.
- Have you investigated any other alternative wastewater solutions, such as aerobic or wetland filtration?
 - Can include an assessment of other alternative strategies.
- Do the wastewater fees make a difference to potential homeowners or businesses in town? Is it a deterrent to coming here?
 - Yes, we believe it is a deterrent, and also know that it has caused some people to unhook from the system which only makes the fees for the rest of the users go up.
- People are finding it is harder and harder to find places to live which aren't overpriced. The state is trying to encourage more housing to address this, especially in denser settlement areas where water and sewer can support it. Long-term we would like to increase the number of users and take advantage of the plant capacity, reduce costs per user.
- **Intersection / Safety Improvements.** Recommend that intersection be re-aligned to create a t-shaped configuration, allow for rail trail crossing at new corner. WWI memorial stone can be moved to new corner where it retains high visibility and has improved/safer setting, concluded with a re-dedication ceremony to honor them. This design concept was preferred unanimously by others at last meeting over other variations, including a traffic circle.
- I like the concept for the intersection re-alignment, however is there a way we could angle it differently so that headlights won't always be shining right into my house?
 - Potentially. Highway safety engineers will want us to likely keep this at a right-angle but can look into it.
 - May have room to move intersection south a bit to address this, and/or provide some plantings to help screen it.
- Has anyone actually been injured or killed at this intersection?
 - There have been a few property damage accidents, one or two involving the monument. Looking back through online police accident reports to the 90's does not show anything serious.
 - I was almost creamed by another car coming through that intersection some time ago, so I feel it is an issue.
 - I think if we relocate the monument, it will only make it worse. It should just stay where it is.
- Recommendations also include addressing speeding and the speed limit. Need to put the speed limit sign back in front of the Firehouse where it used to be.
 - Think we need to actually put a speed limit sign further out from the village, south on 153 up near the top of the hill by the Hookery, so gives people much more warning as they approach the village.
 - The idea to put the radar speed limit warning signs works. VTrans has told us we cannot continue to put them on Route 30 where they have been, but we can put them here in West Pawlet.
- There is a problem with overgrown brush on the side of 153 coming south into the village, (Monty's?) property on the right hand side before the rail trail parking area. This is overgrown and needs to be beaten back. They let us cut it back years ago before, but it needs it again.
- If we move the monument will it encourage people to speed through the intersection instead?
- I live out by Spruce Gum neighborhood, people in private cars speed around corner all the time. The trucks take it more carefully but the cars don't.
- How come people get tickets in Cambridge all the time but never here?
 - Cambridge has its own police/sheriff to write tickets. Same with Dorset, they an agreement with Bennington County Sheriff to patrol once and awhile. We don't have a contract with any local police to do that for us.

- Left turn at the proposed intersection pushes everything up, should look into moving things a bit and see if that is better.
- The monument is a clear deterrent to people, if we take it away I think it will create problems.
- Need to look at the space in front of the former Fish & Game building. People park in front of the Post Office but there is barely any room for this, people at risk of getting sideswiped. But there is plenty of right-of-way to work with. You can re-align the center of the road slightly north toward the fire station where there is more room. This would free up a few more feet in front of post office for parked cars there, make it safer. Could almost do it just by repainting the lines.
- If the centerline of the roadway here were moved slightly north, would that free up space at the intersection to fit a traffic circle instead?
 - Very little room for a traffic circle to function here. Would also have issue of trucks and fire engines being able to navigate it. Already the edge of 153 just skirts by the monument, but can take a second look at how it might work.
 - The smaller traffic circles like in Manchester are not appealing. Because they need to be mountable-curb and the trucks drive over them, they are paved. Looks crummy after a year or two, with cracked pavement and weeds growing out.
 - Could we look into moving monument to the south sidewalk, and then doing a traffic circle.
 - What about adding a flagpole where the monument is?
 - Possible, would give it more visibility, but that would not address any of the right-of-way issues or confusion.
 - Still believe that the monument is not a problem, and we should leave it where it is.
- Do we know what the actual traffic volume is along this road?
- I am dismayed because monument has been here for a long time without any really serious problem, however a traffic circle may cause issues, the fire department needs to be able to get around the village. After hurricane Irene we were trapped in our house and water came to within 3 inches of our electrical system. West Pawlet Fire Department rescued us. Whatever we do here we need to make sure that the Fire Department has what it needs and can work with it.
- Is the threat of more flooding something that we need to better address in the plan?
 - Irene was a rare occurrence, but we were lucky. There was a band that dropped 7 inches more rain than we got here locally, it went through Mettawee Valley instead. If that had come through this valley instead it would have been way worse.
 - There was an issue with private homeowner plugging up drainage flow, but that was a misunderstanding. Likely not an issue again.
 - There is a water-hole/pothole near the top of Egg Street which hasn't been maintained for awhile. Should be straightened out.
- A gopher or something has been digging up the area near the rail trail parking.
- We here in Vermont are surrounded by greenspace. Don't need to add any.
- General road safety - what about planning more sidewalks?
- **New Local Store.** Recommend best option for village is to spearhead effort at a grassroots level to establish a new store, through a newly formed non-profit, similar to other models used in the state with the assistance of the Preservation Trust of Vermont.
- Obvious location for a new local store is to renovate the Firehouse annex at the corner.
- Former antiques building - this has sewer but apparently no water. Would be a nice building but realistically it is too small for a store. Firehouse would be enough space, would not need to be expanded.
- In lieu of the non-profit organization model, should look at the Rutland Co-Op model.

- Owner of small building on Railroad Ave may be open to selling property. It is technically 3 stories because it has basement level below, has bathroom and is ADA compliant.
- Need to address Co-Op store options more in the plan.
- Recent article in the news about a small-town grassroots effort to get a local store in Kansas or Kentucky. Utilized creative ideas like having school kids volunteer to run the store, had a bunch of resources which can be used as a toolkit for doing something similar. Will send info.
- A great store location is right next to the rail trail. It was once Burdicks, then Fish & Game and now the Celery Compound. The owner has been fixing it up, apartments upstairs, repairing brickwork.
 - Unknown, currently the owner appears interested in keeping downstairs as multi-purpose community space, but it has potential.
- Regarding Co-Ops, the Shrewsbury Co-Op was well funded, but you go in their now and there is practically nothing in the store, only a token amount of stuff. The Barnard non-profit example is much more interesting
- Many places such as the store in Wells do pretty well but they don't have gas pumps. Gas pumps bring in customers who buy other stuff, makes business more profitable. Look at what H.N. Williams has done.
- In lieu of gas pumps, which are very costly, take up a lot of space and have a lot of environmental regulations, what about electrical charging stations? Not a lot of them in this area, would be much easier to build.
- Former antiques building would be a great place to serve lemonade, coffee, snacks, etc., but is really too small for a store. The firehouse annex is bet place for the store. Ray's place on Railroad has lots of potential for other uses.
- **Railroad Freight Shed.** Plan proposes that this building could be restored as a joint venture between the Pawlet Historical Society and Vtrans. Building could be a museum showcasing history of West Pawlet, the Railroad and the Slate industry as a welcome center and comfort station to visitors along the rail trail.
 - Could this building be a local store instead?
 - Yes, that option is in the plan also, but there are different variables. If we do one, then cant do the other, etc. Or maybe it has a store in it also?
 - Obviously this idea would require that the current owner of the shed is willing to sell it or work with us in some way to make this happen. Building is in private ownership, currently in bankruptcy proceedings.
 - VTrans previously wanted the structure off of their property, but has since opened up to the idea of potentially allowing it to stay on state land if it can be adapted in some way to supporting the rail trail.
 - Obvious problem with this idea is having the sewer treatment plant right across the street?
 - There also may be a new snafu with apparently people being unable to find the deed or ownership papers to the building.
- **Vacant Land South of Quarry.** There is a large second parcel south of the quarry, currently owned by the Town of Pawlet. Much of this property is open space, fields and forest. Town could potentially subdivide off this non-quarry land and get it back onto the tax rolls. Instead of simply allowing it to be subdivided randomly, could instead create a planned development there for small cottages on small lots with shared open space and trails, served by sewer system. Create smaller housing options more in keeping with scale of village for young family starter homes, seniors, etc.
 - Affordability is subject to market forces. We cant control that.
 - Access to property might require second route, and/or emergency access route.
 - Unknown if the town already had other plans for this property, but getting it back on the tax rolls is worth discussion.
 - Potential area for retirement homes.
- **Volunteerism.** Many of the ideas collected from local residents will need the assistance of volunteer efforts. There are people who have come forward, looking to help, but don't know where to start. Need to assign a

person (volunteer) to keep a list of volunteer items and help assign/matchmake them to how they can help. A starter list of items is provided in the plan, can be amended over time.

- Michael Allen would like to start get the ball rolling and volunteer to help with one of these efforts.
- Need people to come forward and step up.
- **Firehouse.** Supporting the firehouse is an important element of the community. Volunteerism is down, as well as general participation in community events. There are measures being considered at the state level to provide tax breaks and incentives for volunteer firefighters/EMS. Additional measures which allow municipalities at the local level to also provide some property tax breaks, similar to what is happening in NY, should also be pushed. Recommend letter-writing campaign to help support these measures.
 - Firehouse could also reach out to locals, learn what types of events they would most like to support, as well as improve outreach to new residents.
 - There has been a wave of new residents in past years, will be important to try and help include them in the community.
- **Next Steps.** Will be using the comments collected tonight to revise and improve the plan, and will be leaving the comment period open for a few weeks to collect other input. Will be meeting with Planning Commission next week to introduce recommendations to them and ask for their review as well. Eventual plan is to revise and present to the Town Selectboard for their review and comment. This plan, if accepted, would be adopted as a sub-part of the larger Town Plan.

[** END MEETING 8:15pm**]

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

[No new comments collected online since presentation]



P.O. BOX 892
Dorset, Vermont 05251
518-496-3009
info@regrowthplanning.com

