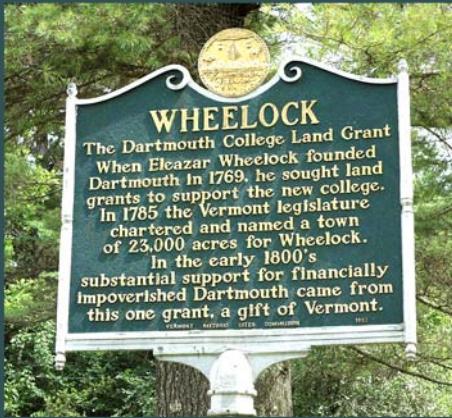


# Wheelock's Future

Report and Action Plan ~ March 2020



Produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development  
in partnership with the Vermont Community Foundation



# Table of Contents

I. The Wheelock's Future Community Process .....	1
II. Wheelock's Future Ideas & Opportunities.....	2
III. Task Force Action Plans .....	4
Action Steps, Resources, Task Force Members	
IV. Community Forum Notes .....	10
V. Community Visit Participants .....	13
VI. Resource Team Members.....	13



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Photos courtesy of Eileen Boland

# I. The Wheelock's Future Community Process

Wheelock is a small community of about 820 residents nestled in the hills of Vermont's Northeast Kingdom. A rural and scenic town, Wheelock is characterized by residents with deep commitment to this place, to the land, the history, and the future success of the community. Dedicated volunteers have worked for many years to build connection and to address key challenges around infrastructure, capacity, and communications. In the Winter of 2020, community leaders built a process, in consultation with the Vermont Council on Rural Development, to turn to the community to identify priorities moving forward and build a plan for next steps around Town Facilities and Community Communications and Unity.

Through the Wheelock's Future process, community members identified and prioritized goals, fostered local leadership, connected to resources and developed achievable action plants. **The Wheelock's Future process consisted of two phases:**

**Phase 1:** 40 Residents came together for community forums and a locally catered dinner at the Wheelock Town Hall on **January 13<sup>th</sup>** to review assets and challenges and brainstorm action ideas around two topic areas: **Town Facilities** and **Community Communications**.

**Phase 2:** About 40 residents then attended a community meeting on **February 10<sup>th</sup>** to review action ideas shared in January, vote on top priorities, form task forces and then build action plans to advance those priorities. At the end of the evening, community members signed on to continue to work in these key priority areas.

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It is not easy to narrow down key steps for action, but in the end, Wheelock built task forces around solid priorities for action, listed in the report below, that will lead to a stronger and more vibrant community for all Wheelock residents. These initiatives set challenging but strategically achievable goals, and there is much work to do, but Wheelock is a town that is ready to take action.



## **II. Wheelock's Future Ideas and Priorities**

**Determined by Wheelock residents at the Wheelock's Future Community Meeting  
January 13, 2020**

This is a list of the ideas for potential action that VCRD staff heard from Wheelock community members. After sorting through the action ideas, it was clear that two areas for action emerged: Communications and Community Unity, and Town Facilities. On February 10<sup>th</sup>, the community chose to create two task forces focused on these key areas. Residents sorted through action ideas and voted on priorities within those action arenas to inform action planning.

### **Priority 1: Communications and Community Unity**

#### **Action Ideas** (In order of priority as voted on 2/10)

##### **Improve Community and Town Communications**

A Communications Task Force could work with the Town to develop a platform for community communications including online forums such as social media and the expansion of Front Porch Forum, develop a town website, create a community calendar, and disseminate a newsletter or bulletin.

##### **Improve Broadband and Cell Connectivity**

A group could form to work with regional, state, and federal experts to advance strategies to improve connectivity to high-speed internet and cell service in the area.

##### **Revitalize and Beautify the Village**

A Village Beautification task force could improve the appearance of Wheelock's designated village center. The group could focus on area clean-up and could plan and implement flower plantings, benches, attractive signage and other work to showcase Wheelock's assets and capture the character of the town.

##### **Advance Community Events and Celebrations**

Community events are a way to celebrate together, showcase local talent, and build engagement and connection. Volunteers could sign on to support and expand the Wheelock Community Initiative effort to expand offerings to include concerts, Circus Smirkus performances, local story-telling events, trivia nights, a local "hobby night", and more. Events could bring the community together and help to showcase the importance of local gathering spaces.

##### **Develop Civic Engagement Interest and Skills**

A group could form to develop a series of community-based workshops to share current municipal issues and teach skills to more effectively engage in the local democratic process. The group could also work to consolidate, clarify, and share current town issues, especially ahead of Town Meeting Day, to ensure that residents feel invited, informed, and engaged in local process.

##### **Strengthen the School and Community Connection**

A School and Community partnership could form to strengthen the connection between Miller's Run and the Wheelock community. The group could work with educators and administration to ensure connection to Wheelock history and current issues in the curriculum and could also connect students to community leaders and members through story-telling events, invitation to Wheelock events, and other ways to increase connection, understanding, and engagement of young families and youth in the community.

## **Start a Community Café and Coffee Club**

A task force could form to develop a “community café” and/or a series of roaming coffee conversations that would meet monthly and rotate to different locations in the community to help build community connection, engagement, and trust.

## **Priority 2: Town Facilities**

### **Build a Task Force to Reignite Work to Improve Town Facilities**

A task force could form to work with regional and state experts and resources to engage the full community in a process to review past facilities plans, build out and share existing or new proposals, engage deep community discussion and input, and identify the best plan to move forward. The group then form a fundraising plan, with support from community and outside experts, that pulls together all funding options – from local crowd-funding to major donors and federal grants. The group could also build a strategy to facilitate community discussion, connection, and support by holding events and forums to unite the community around the proposal.



# III. Task Force Action Plans

Action Planning Meeting, February 10, 2020

Wheelock Task Forces are comprised of community members and an appointed chairperson or lead group. At the February 10<sup>th</sup> action planning meeting committee members worked closely with a facilitator and a visiting resource team to develop step-by-step action plans and a list of human and financial resources to help achieve their goals. Next, residents will truly take ownership of the work, and begin the exciting process of turning ideas into action.

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## ✓ Priority: Community Communications and Unity

Community Lead: **Wheelock Community Initiative**, [wheelockcmtty@gmail.com](mailto:wheelockcmtty@gmail.com)

Facilitator: **Jenna Koloski**, *Community and Policy Manager*, VCRD

Resource Team Members: **Ben Doyle**, USDA Rural Development

**Liz Gamache**, Preservation Trust of Vermont

Task Force Signups: Steve Amos, Don Bredes, Kathryn Buck, John Fairchild, Walker Hartt, Ann Lawless, Susan Raslund-Dangel, Linda Rhodes, Tyler Roy, Emily Purdy, Kathy Schmidt, Lorraine Poulin, Donna Camber, Kim Crady-Smith, Rich Radley

## Current Issues/Action

- Losing the school is very challenging for any community – lose the place to connect.
- We need to build community spirit.
- We have a NEW Wheelock Community Initiative website!
- Wheelock Then and Now Facebook page
- No current venue for general communications
- Bulletin Board at the store
- We used to have a Field Day, but don't anymore
- Millers Run is helpful in sharing info
- The Town does not mail Town Reports for Town Meeting Day
- Seed Swap was a successful WCI event
- Misinformation often gets out – likely due to lack of places to share correct info
- There are not many events – we used to have many more – all were invited!

## Community Priorities (by votes received on February 10th)

1. Improve community and town communications – 12
2. Improve broadband and cell connectivity – 12
3. Revitalize and beautify the village – 10
4. Advance community events and celebrations – 9
5. Develop civic engagement interests and skills – 5
6. Strengthen school and community connection – 4
7. Start a community café and coffee club – 2

## Priority Action Steps

1. Develop a communications protocol utilizing social media, phone call lists, emails, press, etc. to have a consistent plan for community communications.
  - a. Consider a weekly/monthly regular communication that is consistent and expected to channel communications.

- b. Work with the Town to develop a town website.
    - Gather and share best practices and other towns' models
    - Identify solution for maintenance
    - Is there a free solution?
  - c. Create a community calendar.
  - d. Create a Wheelock Facebook page.
  - e. Develop a Front Porch Forum campaign to bring more residents in.
  - f. Collect phone numbers and emails – as many as possible – to use to share info and communicate.  
Create a Town Phone Book.
2. Create a plan for recognizing dedicated community volunteers. Celebrate their leadership and contributions.
  3. Build or improve a community kiosk/bulletin board to share town and community information.
  4. Develop a series of regular quarterly events. Events may include: A winter sledding party, a whiffle ball tournament, holiday events, chicken suppers, and more

## Other Potential Action Steps

- Develop a communications campaign to inform residents about the potential for Broadband development through a CUD.
- Survey residents about what they would like to see for communications and events.
- Talk to VTrans about highway signage – include Wheelock!
- Create an answering service at the town office to share info when the Clerk is not available.

## Resources

- REDI program at VHCB can provide a grant writer to help access federal funding. Contact Liz Gleason at VHCB at [liz@vhcb.org](mailto:liz@vhcb.org)
- NVU, St Johnsbury Academy, and Lyndon Institute could be partners to help connect to youth that could intern or volunteer.
- Millers Run will be an important community partner.
- The Foundry could help to develop information kiosk and other projects.
- Do North Co-Working could be a partner.
- Richard Amore at the Department of Housing and Community Development could help think about resources available to support projects that improve Designated Village Centers. Contact him at [richard.amore@vermont.gov](mailto:richard.amore@vermont.gov) or 585-0061.
- The Vermont Community Foundation has two grant programs that could support this work. One is the Spark Connecting Community Grants. The other is the NEK Fund of the VCF. For more info contact Kevin Wiberg at [kwiberg@vermontcf.org](mailto:kwiberg@vermontcf.org) or 388-3355 ext 284. Visit the website to learn more at [www.vermontcf.org](http://www.vermontcf.org).
- Vermont Electric Cooperative has a community grant fund that could support this work. Find more information here <https://www.vermontelectric.coop/community-resources/community-fund>
- Local banks could be a supporter or sponsor of community events.
- It could be useful to connect with other communities that have recently created town websites. VCRD could help connect to Vernon where a volunteer leader has set up theirs.
- The Caledonia Record events calendar would be a good place to share information.
- Dartmouth could support with student help, expertise, or perhaps performances.

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## ✓ Town Facilities Task Force

Community Chair: **Ryan Hanrahan**, [rihanrahan.24@hotmail.com](mailto:rihanrahan.24@hotmail.com), 414-793-6730

Facilitator: **Paul Costello**, *Executive Director*, VCRD

Resource Team Members: **Richard Amore**, Department of Housing and Community Development

**Rebecca Schrader**, USDA Rural Development

**Dave Snedeker**, NVDA

Task Force Signups: Steve Amos, Jason DiGulio, Kris DiGulio, Bill Ellis, Enid Ellis, John Fairchild, Ryan Hanrahan, Tyler Harter, Walker Hartt, Robyn Jarvie, Peter Martin, Nick Potter, Russ Poulin, Helene Radley, Marc Brown

**Current Setting:** The Wheelock Town Hall building is in violation of ADA accessibility standards which will require ameliorative action. Several proposals have been advanced in the past to address accessibility and other inadequacies of the building, of the town garage, and including other unmet community infrastructure needs (for example, the lack of a fire truck in town). Proposals have been unsuccessful in gaining the authorizing approval of Wheelock voters who have diverse views on what is needed. The working group on infrastructure recognizes the importance of positive communications, to listen to community ideas and needs, to gather input in advance of proposals, to consider ways to evaluate needs and frame an infrastructure proposal to answer them, and to evaluate potential state, federal and philanthropic supports that could lower the burden of any proposal on Wheelock taxpayers.

### Action Steps:

1. The Wheelock Community Facilities committee will review all plans advanced in the past to deal with facilities needs and ultimately pull together key priorities for a proposal to answer key infrastructure needs.
2. This effort will begin by developing a realistic Needs Assessment of current conditions of Wheelock facilities and the necessary functions that must be addressed by infrastructure improvement, including the most immediate needs.
3. Recognizing that any project must be affordable to the Wheelock community, the working group will be basing its plans on hard infrastructure needs today and for the foreseeable future, and will frame a project budget including possible state, federal or philanthropic grants and supports as well as Wheelock long term investments.
4. The working group will work to take public input for the Needs Assessment and planning sessions and then will build information sessions, flyers, and news releases for use by local papers, radio, and person to person communications.

### Resources

- David Snedeker and Northeast Vermont Development Agency (NVDA) will provide support and Dave could potentially provide neutral facilitation for some public discussions of proposals. ([dsnedeker@nvda.net](mailto:dsnedeker@nvda.net))
- There are resources through the Lyndon Institute of potential youth volunteers through the construction and trades programs which could help with some of the work, and other students in Graphic Design could potentially help with communications efforts.
- Northern Vermont University Students in Lyndon may also be able to help on media issues, outreach and as volunteers.
- Dartmouth College may be able to assist on polling, design or communications.
- As potential projects are decided, there may be ways to engage the labor of the St. Johnsbury Work Crew.
- Wheelock is a town with a great deal of practical skill and know-how and community members step up to move concrete projects forward.

- As work proceeds, if work centers on the historical Town Hall building there are grant resources and technical resources available through Preservation Trust of Vermont (Liz Gamache at [liz@ptvermont.org](mailto:liz@ptvermont.org)) and the Agency of Commerce Division of History Preservation (contact Caitlin Corkins at [caitlin.corkins@vermont.gov](mailto:caitlin.corkins@vermont.gov)) and potentially through the Cultural Facilities Grants at the Vermont Arts Council (Michele Bailey [mibailey@vermontartscouncil.org](mailto:mibailey@vermontartscouncil.org))
- The work of pulling materials together and writing grants can be daunting. The Vermont Housing Conservation Board has provisions to provide funding and contact lists of regional grant writers who could work for Wheelock as this effort proceeds. Contact Liz Gleason at [liz@vhcb.org](mailto:liz@vhcb.org).
- USDA Rural Development has loans, loan guarantees and grants to support community facilities, and the NEK is a REAP Zone where funding for projects is prioritized. Contact Rebecca Schrader ([Rebecca.schrader@vt.usda.gov](mailto:Rebecca.schrader@vt.usda.gov)) for more information.
- To consider the implications of ADA requirements and why they are important, the Vermont Center for Independent Living could provide information or a speaker to the community (connect with Bill Bliss, [bbliss@vcil.org](mailto:bbliss@vcil.org)).
- One terrific resource is the land owned by the town in the village center.
- The municipality has also built a small but growing reserve fund for use on potential infrastructure issues and has developed a strong communications system to outreach to residents.
- Residents appreciate the strong Town Clerk, the active Select Board and the hard work of the Wheelock Initiative
- **Municipal Planning Grant Program:** State grants for a wide range of municipal planning projects including municipal land use plans, zoning and subdivision bylaws, designated downtown, village and neighborhood planning. – Would be a great grant to help develop a community needs assessment, feasibility plan for the town hall, funding/financing plan for the town hall amongst other things.  
Range: \$2,500 - \$20,000. Local match required  
Eligibility: Municipalities with adopted plans confirmed by their regional planning commission  
Deadline: Annually in September  
Contact: Jennifer Lavoie, (802) 828-1948, [jennifer.lavoie@vermont.gov](mailto:jennifer.lavoie@vermont.gov)  
Website: <http://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant>
- **Vermont Community Development Program (CDBG):** Accessibility Modification Grants – Federal grants to bring existing municipal buildings and non-school libraries into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). – Would be great to help the town hall with ADA compliance.  
Range: \$3,000 - \$1,000,000  
Eligibility: Municipalities and/or municipalities on behalf of organizations and private owners  
Deadline: Open application with funding decisions made throughout the year  
Contact: Cindy Blondin, (802) 828-5219, [cindy.blondin@vermont.gov](mailto:cindy.blondin@vermont.gov)  
Website: <http://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp>
- **Northern Border Regional Commission Grants:** A federal/state partnership that invests in economic and community development projects in Vermont. The Northern Borders Commission has seen significant increases in its funding to provide grants in Vermont and could be an important source of support if a facilities project has economic development implications (if it offered work stations with high speed internet to small businesses, for example).  
Range: Grants up to \$250,000. Match of 20%-50% of total project cost, depending on location.  
Eligibility: Participating member states, local governments (city and county), nonprofit and Native American entities  
Deadline: Annually in June  
Contact: Kristie Farnham, (802) 398-5268, [kristie.farnham@vermont.gov](mailto:kristie.farnham@vermont.gov)  
Website: <http://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/funding-incentives/Northern-Border-Regional-Commission>

- Efficiency Vermont Incentives:** Efficiency Vermont offers technical assistance, incentives, and financing for energy-related projects for homeowners and businesses seeking to use less energy, save money, and support a clean energy future.
  - Range: Varies by program.
  - Eligibility: Homeowners and business owners. Contact us for details
  - Deadline: Ongoing, no deadline
  - Contact: Customer Support, (888)-921-5990, [info@efficiencyvermont.com](mailto:info@efficiencyvermont.com)
  - Website: <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/rebates>
- Vermont Community Foundation:** A variety of grants are available to support projects to improve environmental sustainability, cultural heritage, social justice, historic preservation, and vitality of Vermont communities
  - Range: Up to \$25,000. No local match required.
  - Eligibility: Municipalities, nonprofit organizations, grant availability varies by geographic area
  - Deadline: Varies by grant, throughout the year
  - Contact: Sarah Waring (802) 388-3355 x 283, [swaring@vermontcf.org](mailto:swaring@vermontcf.org)
  - Website: <http://www.vermontcf.org/Nonprofits/AvailableGrants.aspx>
- Preservation Trust of Vermont:** Implementation and planning grants available to preserve and rehabilitate historic buildings.
  - Range: Varies
  - Eligibility: Municipalities and nonprofit organizations
  - Deadline: Varies
  - Contact: Lisa Ryan, (802) 917-2994 [lisa@ptvermont.org](mailto:lisa@ptvermont.org)
  - Website: <https://ptvermont.org/grants/>
- State Historic Preservation Grants:** State 50:50 matching grants for the repair and restoration of historic buildings listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
  - Range: \$1,000 - \$20,000
  - Eligibility: Municipalities and non-profit organizations
  - Deadline: Annually the first week in October
  - Contact: Caitlin Corkins, (802) 828-3047, [caitlin.corkins@vermont.gov](mailto:caitlin.corkins@vermont.gov)
  - Website: <http://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/historic-preservation-grants>
- Hazard Mitigation Grant Program:** Provides grants to implement long-term hazard mitigation actions that reduce structure damage or loss of life due to natural disasters. Examples include upsizing culverts, floodproofing buildings and mitigation planning.
  - Range: No minimum or maximum. Local match of 25% - Could help with the town garage.
  - Eligibility: Municipalities, state agencies, regional planning agencies, non-profits in select circumstances. Eligible entities on behalf of private owners.
  - Deadline: Funding available after a major disaster declaration. Rolling application deadlines
  - Contact: Ben Rose, 802-241-5386, [ben.rose@vermont.gov](mailto:ben.rose@vermont.gov)
  - Website: <https://vem.vermont.gov/funding/mitigation>
- VNRC's Small Grants for Smart Growth:** Provides seed money for community-based initiatives related to smart growth, including efforts related to housing, transportation, community revitalization, conservation, public participation, and advocacy. – Could help with community engagement for the town hall, help support village gatherings and events, and many other things.
  - Range: \$500 - \$1,500.
  - Eligibility: Local or multi-town entities, such as a municipality, municipal commission or committee; non-profit organization; or citizens group that is either working with a non-profit or seeking 501(c)(3) status
  - Deadline: Rolling throughout year
  - Contact: Kate McCarthy, (802) 223-2328, x. 114, [kmccarthy@vnrc.org](mailto:kmccarthy@vnrc.org)
  - Website: <https://vnrc.org/small-grants-for-small-growth/>

- **AARP Vermont Placemaking Projects for Changing the Built Environment Grants:** Provides funding for small projects that will employ temporary or semi-permanent changes with the goal of leading to permanent change to enhance the livability of the community for people of all ages and abilities. – Could help with a small placemaking project/event to improve the village vitality – promoting awareness and adding energy to the village.

Range: Up to \$3,000

Eligibility: Statewide, regional and local government entities and non-profit organizations

Deadline: Annually in the spring

Contact: Kelly Stoddard Poor, (802) 393-9187, [kstoddardpoor@aarp.org](mailto:kstoddardpoor@aarp.org)

Website: <https://states.aarp.org/vermont/>



# IV. Wheelock's Future Town Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 40 Wheelock residents and the VCRD Visiting Team on January 13, 2020

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## Town Facilities

Jenna Koloski (scribe), Paul Costello (facilitator)

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Great transfer station
- Beautiful town hall that needs work but it is historical
- We do have a maintenance building (although it is in significant disrepair)
- 9 acre parcel of town land where the Town Hall is located
- Nice general store. We're lucky to have that.
- The Township itself has water and sewer just for village center including town hall
- The vault is adequate in space, and it will be adequate for 20 years. And most records are going electronic.
- Town purchased the first building up the hill on Sutton Road.
- We have a joint fire department with the Town of Sheffield and a fire station in S Wheelock Village. They need more space and would love to be able to use building up the road.
- We have village center designation and the Town Hall is on the National Register.

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### What is the Challenge in this Area? What is the issue or problem to be addressed?

- We need a town garage/maintenance building. The current space is a dilapidated unheated building.
- Spotty broadband – minimal coverage.
- Town hall building is not ADA accessible. The Town Clerk and SB meet here and there are no accessible bathrooms.
- No bathroom upstairs.
- The meeting space is coded for 75.
- 30% population growth every census
- Looking at other town clerk offices around the state and how they maintain records compared to here – it feels like people don't understand how valuable those records are. The vault here is inadequate. There is not enough space.
- We are now moving to the Cloud to maintain records, but at this time the land records in the vault are not preserved permanently in any way. There is a real concern about the safety of the records.
- Vital records are digitized but not sure if any of the land records have been done.
- Town Clerk office meets the needs, but if you look to the future things will be done electronically. There will be significant changes in how things are done.
- In the Town Hall building there is Comcast internet service.
- We don't have zoning so people can afford to live here and build themselves.
- The heating system is not great in the Town Hall on a cold night. The Department of Justice requires the selectboard to meet upstairs and they meet with their coats on.
- The front door of the Town Hall is blocked off and the front stairs need work.
- The basement floor seeps water from under the concrete due to failed drainage around the building. In the proposed plan to build the addition, that would be looked at.
- There was black mold behind the wall in the past.
- It is hard to come to a direction – we tend to divide and it is hard to move forward when half of the people are opposed.
- Negotiating the stairs even to make a payment to the town clerk and the bathrooms downstairs is nearly impossible for people with limited mobility.
- There have been attempts to deal with the deficiencies
  - 2015 3 options at Town Meeting had options and chose to renovate without addition
  - 2016 – bond vote for structural repairs passed – saved the building
- No working kitchen in the Town Hall.
- No office space in the garage, port-o-let, no heat, sunk a lot of money into a site that shouldn't be used anymore.
- Town hall and garage discussions have been going on for almost 20 years now. We have been through cycles of building plans and grants and then watching it get voted down (very slim margin – almost always 50/50) – we're exhausted!
- Every single plan contained good ideas, but never had a similar level of development – no one has done a full feasibility with a description, photo, comparable projects.
- We had more gatherings and events in the Town Hall, but have done less (weddings, a dance group, church group) – price is higher now to hold functions here.
- Garage sits above the waterway, it's probably dumping pollutants into the river.
- The community is separated – those that are pointed towards Greensboro, towards Sheffield, center, and South Wheelock.
- Post office service is cut down to 4 hours per day in Sheffield.
- Village store can't put seats in because they would call it a restaurant and they would violate regulations – there is no café or seating areas.
- Wheelock is a divided community.

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### What Should Be Done? What action can be taken by the community in this area?

- We need to develop existing proposals to the point where we can compare them and make good decisions. We need more information with photos and more of a feasibility study.
- Build a new single story municipal building. This could be garage or a combination of clerks office, garage, and meeting hall – but this would leave no plan for the Town Hall building.
- The “pros” need to get friendly with the “cons” – it’s politics.
- Fundraising initiatives – a lot of the folks who vote are folks like me who are in support of new facilities but can’t pay for them and many people have to vote no understanding that we can’t afford our tax bill. Many people in Wheelock just can’t afford the increase no matter how badly we want to do the right thing.
- Our town has a special relationship with Dartmouth College, we could build on that relationship for their support.
- We could use crowd funding.
- We should keep in mind our designations as a village center and on the historic register– we should revitalize this area and showcase those assets how we present our community is important. We need to focus on cleaning up.
- Town voted to purchase land and the building on it – it would have been perfect for a garage, but that fell through. It is in the flood plain so it can’t be built on/insured – the owners refused permission for the people to look at the property to go on the property to inspect.
- We need to form a committee to focus on the Town Hall/Garage projects.
- We should think about those folks involved in discussions. How can you bring in all of the voices in town to plan the building? What features do we want? What are we looking for? How do we learn from each other ahead of time – maybe that will help sway the vote and build interest.
- Low participation on Town Meeting Day – people don’t vote.
- Dartmouth could contribute design support but will not contribute financially.
- The town should consider a capital improvement fund to spread the costs over years and use to leverage grants.
- Dartmouth could help frame the fund development strategy.
- There is a small town hall reserve fund of money that has been donated.
- Lyndon is going through the process to build a CUD and Wheelock is involved. If we had high speed internet here, we could open a space for people to use the internet – could bring people in to connect to the space and the project.

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## Session 2: Community Communications

Jenna Koloski (facilitator), Paul Costello (scribe)

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### What are the Community’s Assets in this Area? What’s working now, what’s going well?

- I have to chuckle. The people here are invested in process
- We need more clarity around the ideas for community buildings in past.
- The group that is already invested come to meetings, but we don’t seem to get others in.
- There is a core group of committed folks.
- WCI—the Wheelock Community Initiative has an email list.
- Small community and people know their neighbors.
- The transfer station and store are gathering places.
- Informal “Neighborhood Watch” initiative by individuals
- Town Clerk goes beyond duty to keep people informed. She is excellent at getting the word out and connecting and goes well above the call of duty, but she is looking for a replacement.
- Front Porch Forum is widely used, a few people have never heard of it.
- Some community members have formed a “Wheelock Then and Now” facebook page. A few people use the site to post and communicate.
- Volunteering is the way to get connected and be informed.
- Community Yard sale in the summer put on by the WCI.
- Community Initiative is only one year old.
- This is the largest gathering that the initiative has built (30 people).

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### What is the Challenge in this Area? What is the issue or problem to be addressed?

- We’ve lost our identity...they took the Wheelock sign off the interstate.
- I don’t know my neighbors.
- We can’t talk to some of the people...I don’t feel safe talking with people at the transfer station. I’m gay and the community may not accept me.
- Wheelock is interesting and sparks interest by neighboring folks. People love it here.
- It’s hard to get correct information out to people because there is no town website.
- The Selectboard should think about putting a website into the town articles for vote.
- We wouldn’t need to warn it but if we do it we have to put some time into it for warned meetings and postings etc.
- With the grand list we have name and address but not necessarily the phone number and email...we should capture the other information.
- No easy collective list to use.
- The lack of internet for most people. Sloooooowwww.
- It’s more than just internet - we have a digital divide. People who don’t have it and don’t want it...don’t want to test it. It’s crummy.
- More than half can’t watch a movie at home on their internet connection.
- We need a map that shows where the cell phone reception is.
- A lawsuit might be the way forward to force the state to bring Broadband to Wheelock.

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**What Should Be Done? What action can be taken by the community in this area?**

- I think it takes a lot of courage to go to town meeting and speak about your concerns and a lot of people don't feel comfortable sharing their ideas.
- Some people don't have the skills to feel comfortable sharing in some public settings. We could work to develop people's skills and interest in participation.
- There are some people who always share their opinion and because they speak, people think they are speaking for the consensus and others shut up.
- We could print up a protocol sheet for an idea for town meeting so people would be prepared to share.
- We run a farm and don't go to meetings because we don't want to lose business over voicing a political opinion.
- How do we find a neutral ground outside of town meeting?
- Community events to build relationships between people.
- We could have a trivia night.
- We could bring in our hobbies and explain what they do for fun and share with other folks...in February when you are waiting for spring.
- We should use the Town Hall space like a library space for community. Allow people to use the internet connection and host events and learning opportunities – speaker series.
- Communications and meetings could help a lot to bring the community together.
- People didn't trust the presentations about the last facilities plan and that really surprised us.
- I think we do share some values in town. I think everyone needs a safe environment where they work. I wonder if we focused on that and walk people through the town garage to really understand the issue, people would recognize the shared value and importance of a safe workspace.
- Garage open house would be a good idea.
- The whole garage space could be an open green space looking over old mill sites.
- Facilities votes are knife edge 50/50.
- The people in this room are not representative of the whole town. How do we tap into the larger town? It will be hard to get over the split. We tried in the past. We were at transfer station last week and still didn't get all those folks to come.
- People are reluctant to speak up at town meeting. Are there a wide range of ways to connect to different people better?
- Old Vermonter guys only show up when you put money issues on the table like buying a town truck.
- Town could build a website.
- If you have a lack of trust, set a coffee circle once a week, really small, 4-5 people. Rotate to build trust...people like to tell their story.
- Planning commission did a survey a year ago.
- Wheelock Community Initiative had a survey a year ago and got 15 responses or so.
- Building a website and central site for community communications could be valuable.
- We lost community since we share a school outside of town.
- The school is involved in Sheffield and should think of ways to target young families with events and deeper connections here.
- We don't know our neighbors or trust them.
- Good facilitation helps build community.
- Programming for community such as circus smircus or VT Vaudeville
- Once a month storytime at the Town Hall or Store
- Little free library in front of the town hall or store or recycling center
- Yestermorrow could help with historic preservation or a community building structure
- We need to develop the relationship with schools to teach Wheelock history. It could help to build children's knowledge of area and skills around research
- Is there anyone famous from Wheelock? Any big donors to Dartmouth who might connect to Wheelock?

## V. Wheelock's Future Participants

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Don Bredes	Andrew Dussault	Walker Hartt	Lorraine Poulin	Carol Rossi
Marc Brown	Gertrude Dussault	Olivia Hastings	Russ Poulin	Tyler Roy
Kathryn Buck	Bill Ellis	Nick Heltzer	Emily Purdy	Kathy Schmidt
Donna Camber	Enid Ellis	Martin Holladay	Helene Radley	CJ Scott
Marina Cole	John Fairchild	Robyn Jarvie	Rich Radley	Paul Tomasi
Kim Crady-Smith	Lenny Gerardi	Ann Lawless	Susan Raslund-	
Kris Di Giulio	Ryan Hanrahan	Peter Martin	Dangel	

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