



Fairfield Community Visit

Report and Action Plan

February 2011

Vermont Council on Rural Development

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I. Introduction

The VCRD Community Visit Team all deeply appreciated their time in Fairfield and the opportunity to hear from so many citizens on their pride in the town, their love of the land and the farms, and their dedication to a strong future for the community.

Fairfield typifies so much of what we love about Vermont: the strong working landscape entailing both the beauty of the land and the agricultural heritage, the farm and sugaring operations, the neighborliness of its people, the dedication to youth and love of the community school, the strong library and the community center, the living heritage in the character of the two village centers and the named hamlet neighborhoods, the creativity and diversity in both agriculture and small scale and cottage businesses, the strength of local democracy and commitment to community. But don't all Vermont towns have these attributes? Is Fairfield really so different? Somehow, all these assets are so strong and well balanced in the town they that make Fairfield a uniquely special place...and residents know it.

Fairfield faces serious challenges to the future. Like much of the most rural parts of the state it has an aging population. It is probably as dependent on dairy commodity prices as any one town in Vermont. It has infrastructure challenges, communications challenges, financial challenges. Together, the residents of Fairfield serve ready to take on these challenges with great prospects of success.

The Visiting Team was deeply impressed by the assets of the town in line with the directions taken by residents around improving communications, enhancing the school and developing new opportunities in agriculture. It was exciting at the end of the Community Visit to be able to share that Fairfield was successful in an e-Vermont grant application that will provide significant human, technical and equipment resources to advance each of these directions. Getting things done to meet the Fairfield priorities is all about local leadership; but VCRD and our team look forward to helping Fairfield be successful in really moving the mark in the areas residents have chosen as priorities.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development Community Visit Program is a structured process that enables a community to identify and prioritize goals, fosters local leadership, and serves as a catalyst for the development and realization of concrete, achievable action plans. The program consists of three phases:

1. On the **Community Visit Day** on October 6th, Visiting Team members heard testimony from Fairfield residents in nine focus group areas that had earlier been identified by the local steering committee. Notes and issues raised in these sessions are detailed in Part VI. Based on the testimony received, the Vermont Council on Rural Development identified an initial list of the key **Opportunities** before the community (Part II, page 4).
2. The second stage of the Community Visit occurred at the Fairfield **Community Meeting** on November 4th, when VCRD presented the Opportunities list and facilitated the review and prioritization of these issues by town residents. The resulting list of **Fairfield Priorities** (in Part III, page 8) were then the focus for the formation of three Task Forces established to build plans that would address them—namely A. **Advance Agricultural Development in Fairfield**; B. **Advance Community Communications and Coordinate Fairfield Volunteerism**; and C. **Implement a School Enrichment Program**.

3. In the third phase of the Visit, the **Community Resource Day** on December 15th, the Task Forces met with a second Visiting Team to get organized, build Action Steps, and consider state, federal, non-profit, and private resources that may be available to support their work. The resulting **Task Force Work Plans** are listed in Part IV, page 10.

Resource Team Members (listed in Part VIII, page 49) signed on with a commitment to serve in an on-going way as sounding boards and referral agents for the Fairfield Task Forces. Many of these visitors can be partners in the work before the committees; others can be great sources of advice or connection to other resources. *Call on them for help.*

Members of the Resource Team listened closely to the issues brought forward by town residents and have made suggestions in support of Fairfield's efforts in each challenge area. Their **Recommendations** (Part V, page 19) are not prescriptions; community members are in the best position to make decisions about their next steps and strategies. Recognizing existing local efforts and the leadership of the Task Forces, these recommendations are offered, rather, as suggestions for next steps, and as lists of potential resources as the Task Forces make their way forward.

In the end, Fairfield has established solid priorities for action, built something of a new umbrella for coordination and set momentum toward the achievement of short and long-term goals that will lead to a great variety of successes in improving the Fairfield's life and prosperity.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development is dedicated to helping Vermont communities develop their capacity to create a prosperous and sustainable future through coordination, collaboration, and the effective use of public and private resources. VCRD is prepared to support the efforts of Fairfield as it moves forward and to provide follow up help to Fairfield Task Forces as called upon. VCRD will also serve as an advocate for Fairfield projects with appropriate agencies and organizations in Vermont. Call on us, and on Visiting Team members, when we can be of help.

VCRD deeply appreciates the time and energy of the **Visiting Team** and **Fairfield community members** alike. It has been inspiring to be part of the effort of the Fairfield community to address the challenges before it. We deeply appreciate the leadership of all the members of the **Steering Committee** who initially framed out the issues to explore and helped reach out to the whole community and everyone who, in the end, signed up to work on or chair a **Task Force** to get things done. Fairfield approached VCRD through the town **Grants Committee**—what a terrific asset this group is in helping the community move priorities to action! We appreciate the leadership, advice and support of the **Selectboard** for this effort and depended on the positive spirit and dedication of **Amanda Forbes**, the Town Clerk, for all sorts of logistical help. Then there's **Chester's** food, **Julie Wolcott's** wonderful hospitality, **John Baxter's** help at all the school meetings, **Kristen Hughes** thoughtfulness and leadership—we appreciate them all. And of course VCRD most appreciates the leadership of the **Fairfield Community Visit Chair Bridget Rivet** who was the perfect balance point for the public meetings and provided clear and decisive ideas on how to make the project work, and who now leads local efforts for implementation; we hope that Fairfield residents rally to support her! We are honored that this report carries her beautiful landscape images of Fairfield.

In some ways the Fairfield Community Visit acts as a snapshot of all the issues in town and all the questions in our time about its future: What will keep Fairfield the agricultural center/or food systems

center of Franklin County? What economy will bring new families to Fairfield and provide jobs for young people who grow up in town? How does Fairfield retain its leadership in dairy and sugaring while expanding the products, dollars, and jobs in adding value to these foundations and in diversifying agriculture to open land for a new generation of farms and farmers? How does the farm economy support new businesses in the villages? What will the citizens of Fairfield be called upon to do to ensure the long-term vitality of their school and the opportunities it provides for excellence to all the children of the town?

At VCRD we commend the town and the hard work of so many who put themselves on line to make it the best community it can be. With all its history and heritage, and with all the terrific assets it has, Fairfield is a fortunate town in many respects. But nothing can be taken for granted in this rapidly changing world, and to be successful, new leaders will need to step up and new and old residents from all parts of town will need to engage in helping to address challenges. All of us at VCRD and on our team were honored to be part of the dialogue and wish the community all success!



Visiting team members join listening sessions on Community Visit Day.

II. Initial List of Opportunities and Challenges

Identified by Town Forums, October 6 2010

More than 100 Fairfield residents joined with VCRD staff and a 25 member Visiting Team for the Community Visit Day on October 6, filling meeting rooms in the Town Office Building and the Community Center in East Fairfield. They took time from their workday and other commitments to attend forums and a community dinner, and to begin to work together in shaping the future of the town. The following issues emerged as initial challenges and opportunities. This list was presented back to community members at the Community Meeting on November 4th for voting and prioritization:

Advance Community Communications

So many good things are going on in Fairfield, but the town government, school, community center, library, church, recreation committee sometimes operate as separate 'cells' of information; there is no central information source. Lots of services are underutilized and groups may not feel included in invitations to events in separate parts of town, or seen as for separate groups in town, not for everyone. A Fairfield task force could build community connectivity by systematically improving cross-town communications with a common community calendar, exploring web-based ways to expand communications including a web-based clearinghouse for the work of community groups, on line forums (like Front Porch Forum), establishing a public notice board to share information, and producing a regular (and well distributed) community newsletter. Such a newsletter could include stories about interesting residents and Fairfield history, connect the school to older residents, and expand the invitation to Community Dinners, Harvest Festival, sports activities and other community events.

Expand Trails, Paths and Sidewalks

New trails could help integrate Fairfield Center and East Fairfield and historic hamlet neighborhoods throughout the town. Residents point to exercise and health benefits of trails, the long-term economic potential to draw tourists and recreational visitors who could support village based businesses, and the positive recreational benefits for residents of all ages. Sidewalks in the village center would connect the school, town offices and Chesters. Cross country skiing, bicycling and walking trails could be developed with landowner cooperation and volunteer labor. A trails task force could frame out a plan and develop a funding outline to expand these key outdoor recreation assets.

Build a Unifying Vision for Fairfield's Future

Fairfield's land and people make it unique; most residents in forums want to preserve the rural character, open land, low population, and strong sense of community for the future. But how? Many residents question the economic basis for future of the town: Is it Agricultural? Residential? Tourism-Based? Manufacturing? Many call for Fairfield to develop a vision for what it wants to be--to preserve agriculture and rural character while attracting youth (and a new generation of children, enough to preserve the school as center of the community) and an economy that is true to its history, values and best opportunities. The town can then use the vision as a set of goals for long term united action.

Expand Water and Sewer Infrastructure

Expanded infrastructure in East Fairfield and Fairfield Center could increase their ability to serve as economic hubs in the future. Residents expressed a vision for preserving the countryside and concentrating new housing, commerce and economic development, including value-added agriculture or processing, in the centers. Infrastructure in the two centers benefits the whole community through its potential to attract jobs and families, retain young people, increase local services and decrease long distance travel to out of town services.

Foster New and Diverse Farms

Dairy and sugaring are the foundations of Fairfield's agricultural economy and will continue to be in the future. But commodity pricing beyond the control of the community threatens the viability of many farms. A Fairfield agricultural development task force could plan for and implement steps to advance several key ideas suggested by residents and help would-be young farmers incubate new diversified farms connected to land that is no longer in pasture or active cultivation. It could also work to help establish a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) enterprise in town, one led by a local entrepreneur, or by a cooperative of local growers.

Build a Buy-Local Campaign

A task force could be developed to build a Local Business inventory and Local Foods inventory. With so many farms, crafts people, and home based businesses, a town business directory (or sourcebook) of goods and services could help families and businesses purchase internally in town and expand local agricultural offerings and market opportunities for beginning farmers—facilitating deals from the sale of a side of beef to strawberries, flowers, sawlogs, cedar posts and eggs. This inventory could be like a phone book, but also built into an interactive website, with potential leadership from a young entrepreneur.

Expand Energy Efficiency, Generation and Fuel Development

Residents propose efforts to expand energy efficiency and development that could make Fairfield more sustainable by reducing transportation of goods and services and trips out of town. They could also save folks money and be the foundation for new green jobs in town. A Fairfield task force could be developed to set and implement strategies to expand efficiency and energy development. This group could also look into collective fuel purchasing by Fairfield's farmers, and the potential to draw state and federal resources to the community for methane, solar, and other farm-based energy generation.

Farmers Market

Though Fairfield is at the heart of Vermont's agricultural economy, very little of the food produced by the town is consumed in town, and residents do not have extensive access to a diverse variety of local produce, meats, poultry and value-added products. A farmers market could be developed by a task force to expand local purchasing of local produce and give new farmers and entrepreneurs market opportunities close to home.

Food Incubation Center

A food incubator or community kitchen could be developed in town to advance local foods and value-added agriculture and give young or new entrepreneurs a place to start small or try out concepts for

the market place. The incubator could potentially be developed in the Community Center or another facility and could be connected to other agricultural development efforts like building a Fairfield brand, common marketing, and distribution.

Advance Economic Development in Village Centers

A task force could work to support and attract small-scale businesses to the two Fairfield village centers. Many residents think that it would be great if there were more overnight accommodations like a bed and breakfast in each village, and a doctor's office, a grocery store where you can buy vegetables, and other key services in town. Attracting an evening restaurant or pub could provide a wonderful addition to the social life of Fairfield.

School Enrichment Program

Many Fairfield residents see the school as the very heart of the community but worry that pressures to consolidate will increase, especially if decreasing enrollment trends continue, which could lead to the loss of the school in the town. Many express the idea that school vitality will depend on community vitality: attracting young families and promoting school programs so they can be as good or better as offerings in any neighboring community. A task force of community volunteers could help the Fairfield School establish or revitalize some key programs: a speakers program, intergenerational opportunities for youth to learn from elders (and maybe teach them internet applications), internships, and community service learning projects. Students could also lead an e-communications strategy that better connects school and community and lets kids take leadership in telling folks about exciting things they are doing in school. This task force could also explore potentials to enrich curricular offerings by working with neighboring schools on specialized shared courses or programs.

Develop a Cooperative Slaughterhouse Facility

A slaughterhouse business could provide needed infrastructure for dairies and spur the expansion of diversified meat production. A task force could organize to develop a cooperative structure and gain investment to build and manage a facility. It could explore opportunities for common packaging, distribution and development of a Fairfield Farms brand that would put Fairfield agriculture on the map and potentially attract other value added entrepreneurs. The facility would need to accommodate commodity dairy beef and specialty high end beef and potentially other diversified meats.

Build a Fairfield Agriculture Brand

A brand could be developed for sugar, meats, produce, cheese and other value added dairy and farm products. Farmers and entrepreneurs could organize a task force to develop the brand and consider steps to advance common marketing and distribution of some of the many products Fairfield produces today or could produce in the future. Partners in this effort could also develop an on-line coop or CSA to help in the distribution of the branded products.

Improve Public/Volunteer Transportation

Fairfield lacks systematic public transportation opportunities and relies on individual vehicle travel to meet resident needs. Are there ways to expand volunteer drivers, car pooling, and systematic ride sharing to increase transportation efficiencies and better meet the needs of all residents but especially elders and youth? A task force could publicize all the existing options and explore options to improve transportation.

Develop a Teen/Youth Center

The Community Center will soon lose an anchor tenant if the pre-school moves into the Fairfield School. Existing school and recreation programs offer relatively little to teen-aged residents who attend high school out of town. A safe and supervised place for youth to hang out and socialize in the Community Center or closer to the school could include TV and movies, food, a pool table, and other activities. A Fairfield Teen Group could also provide activities for youth ranging from drawing in a local hunter safety class to attracting a Dept of Labor Summer Youth Employment program, music, drama, skiing, and other recreational activities or community-wide, youth-driven public service projects. A task force working on youth engagement could poll young people on their interests and encourage youth leadership in all activities, and build a community application for an AmeriCorps Volunteer to help organize and supervise events.

Coordinate Fairfield Volunteerism

All the working committees in Fairfield get stressed; they may need new volunteers, and volunteer activity from different committees can overlap in disconnected ways. Several residents call for a volunteer coordinator to keep everyone working effectively. In some towns a person with this role also maintains the community calendar and supports recreation and events efforts in town—like an events or recreation director.



Residents enjoying local fare at the Community potluck dinner on Community Visit Day.

III. Fairfield Priorities

Determined by Fairfield residents at the VCRD Community Meeting, November 4 2010

Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, Fairfield residents whittled down a list of 16 issues through discussion, reasoned arguments and thoughtful reflection. In the end, voting with red and blue stickers, over 80 participants chose three issues that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and to strengthen the town through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the November 4 meeting by signing up for one of three Task Forces in the selected areas.

Fairfield residents selected three new priorities for future action:

✓ **Advance Agriculture Development in Fairfield to include:**

- **Buy-Local Campaign**
- **Farmers Market**
- **Fairfield Agriculture Brand, and**
- **Fostering New and Diverse Farms**

The task force will build a **Local Business inventory and Local Foods inventory**. With so many farms, crafts people, and home based businesses, a town business directory (or sourcebook) of goods and services could help families and businesses purchase internally in town and expand local agricultural offerings and market opportunities for beginning farmers—facilitating deals from the sale of a side of beef to strawberries, flowers, sawlogs, cedar posts and eggs. This inventory could be like a phone book, but also built into an interactive website, with potential leadership from a young entrepreneur.

Though Fairfield is at the heart of Vermont's agricultural economy, very little of the food produced by the town is consumed in town, and residents do not have extensive access to a diverse variety of local produce, meats, poultry and value-added products. A **farmers market** will be developed by the task force to expand local purchasing of local produce and give new farmers and entrepreneurs market opportunities close to home.

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✓ Advance Community Communications and Coordinate Fairfield Volunteerism

So many good things are going on in Fairfield, but the town government, school, community center, library, church, recreation committee sometimes operate as separate ‘cells’ of information; there is no central information source. Lots of services are underutilized and groups may not feel included in invitations to events in separate parts of town, or events are seen as for separate groups in town, not for everyone. A Fairfield task force will build community connectivity by systematically improving cross-town communications with a common community calendar, exploring web-based ways to expand communications including a web-based clearinghouse for the work of community groups, on line forums (like Front Porch Forum), establishing a public notice board to share information, and producing a regular (and well distributed) community newsletter. Such a newsletter could include stories about interesting residents and Fairfield history, connect the school to older residents, and expand the invitation to Community Dinners, Harvest Festival, sports activities and other community events.

All the working committees in Fairfield get stressed; they may not be inviting new folks too well, and volunteer activity from different committees can overlap in disconnected ways. Several residents call for a volunteer coordinator to keep everyone working effectively. In some towns a person with this role also maintains the community calendar and supports recreation and events efforts in town—like an events or recreation director.

✓ Implement a School Enrichment Program

Many Fairfield residents see the school as the very heart of the community but worry that pressures to consolidate will increase, especially if decreasing enrollment trends continue, which could lead to the loss of the school in the town. Many express the idea that school vitality will depend on community vitality: attracting young families and promoting school programs so they can be as good or better as offerings in any neighboring community. A task force of community volunteers can help the Fairfield School establish or revitalize some key programs: a speakers program, intergenerational opportunities for youth to learn from elders (and maybe teach them internet applications), internships, and community service learning projects. Students could also lead an e-communications strategy that better connects school and community and lets kids take leadership in telling folks about exciting things they are doing in school. This task force could also explore potentials to enrich curricular offerings by working with neighboring schools on specialized shared courses or programs.

IV. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, December 15, 2010

Fairfield Task Forces are comprised of community members and an appointed chairperson. On Resource Day committee members worked closely with a facilitator and small resource teams to develop step-by-step action plans and to devise a list of human and financial resources to help achieve their goals. This final phase of the program marks the time when residents truly take ownership of the work, and begin the exciting process of turning ideas into action.

Task Force: ✓ Advance Agriculture Development in Fairfield

Chairperson: **TBD**

Facilitator: **Bob Paquin**, *USDA Farm Service Agency*

Resource Leaders: **Tom Berry**, *US Senator Leahy's Office*

Cheryl Morse, *UVM Geography Department*

Tim Smith, *Franklin County Industrial Development Corp*

A. Buy-Local Campaign: The task force will build a **Local Business inventory and Local Foods inventory**. With so many farms, crafts people, and home based businesses, a town business directory (or sourcebook) of goods and services could help families and businesses purchase internally in town and expand local agricultural offerings and market opportunities for beginning farmers—facilitating deals from the sale of a side of beef to strawberries, flowers, sawlogs, cedar posts and eggs. This inventory could be a like a phone book, but also built into an interactive website, with potential leadership from a young entrepreneur.

B. Farmers Market: Though Fairfield is at the heart of Vermont's agricultural economy, very little of the food produced by the town is consumed in town, and residents do not have extensive access to a diverse variety of local produce, meats, poultry and value-added products. A **farmers market** will be developed by the task force to expand local purchasing of local produce and give new farmers and entrepreneurs market opportunities close to home.

C. Fairfield Agriculture Brand: A **brand** could be developed for sugar, meats, produce, cheese and other value-added dairy and farm products. Farmers and entrepreneurs could work with the task force to develop the brand and consider steps to advance common marketing and distribution of some of the many products Fairfield produces today or could produce in the future. Partners in this effort could also develop an on-line coop or CSA to help in the distribution of the branded products.

D. Fostering New and Diverse Farms: Dairy and sugaring are the foundations of Fairfield's agricultural economy and will continue to be in the future. But commodity pricing beyond the control of the community threatens the viability of many farms. A Fairfield agricultural development task force could plan for and implement steps to advance several key ideas suggested by residents to help would-be young farmers **incubate new diversified farms** connected to land that is no longer in pasture or active cultivation. It could also work to help establish a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) enterprise in town, one led by a local entrepreneur, or by a cooperative of local growers.

Action Steps

The group wanted to start with building a farm, forest and food products and services inventory and directory before beginning work on the other three (farmers market, brand and fostering new farms for the future).

1. **Identify a Chair:** Sara Kittell offered to co-chair the task force, but group needs someone to partner with her. All agreed this person would come forward as project momentum grew—Rowan offered to help. (Or Bridget would appoint a co-chair.)
2. **Set date of next task force meeting** to be held before February 15, 2011: Task Force meeting to weigh progress. Greta will email the group to determine the date and place of the next meeting.
3. **Create a survey:** Greta Brunswick from the regional planning commission agreed to be the hub/clearing house person for an inventory survey project which would be conducted by task force members by town “neighborhoods.” She will look at the available producer directories (NOFA, VT Agency of Agriculture, Grass Farmers Association, CRS Local growers Guide, and others), glean the Fairfield and nearby communities’ producer/grower data and then fill it out with the locally conducted survey.
 - a. Margaret will send Greta the e-mail list of task force members and resource people from 12/15 meeting. The e-list can be expanded as we go forward especially with those who signed up but could not come.
 - b. Week of 12/20: Greta would e-mail draft survey to the task force members and they would have two weeks to return their edits to her. Idea is to develop a paper form and an on-line form.
 - c. Early January, 2011: Greta would return final single form reflecting synthesis of the edits (May do survey monkey or some other streamlined method).
4. **Survey the community:** To burrow down to the neighborhood level the group broke itself into quadrant teams: NE—Flack, Gerosé, Gaudette; NW—Christie, Wolcott-McCausland, Linda (asst town clerk); SE—Toby (woodworker), Gromand?; SW—Bridget + need to get volunteers from list on those who signed up but did not attend 12/15 meeting.
 - a. In early January, the teams would begin to survey their neighborhoods and gather producer data which would be returned to Greta.
 - b. Also distribute the survey through available email lists: the community visit email list (VCRD has it), school “friendship book” list, town office list. This way the neighborhood teams could ask people if they’d seen the survey to reduce leg work and speed up process. This step would be coordinated with the communications task force.
 - c. Use town newsletter and Town Meeting Day as last wrap up of data collection.
5. **Compile the data into a directory** to have complete before spring planting.
 - a. Cheryl Morse from UVM/Ctr for Information on VT offered to help with data entry if there are a lot of paper surveys —can get intern to do data entry etc.
6. **Other discussion:** All agreed the inventory/survey/directory project was step one and had to be completed soon and before any meaningful progress could be made on the other goals. Once inventory/directory compiled, discussion of an e-farmers market or e-csa can

ensue. Challenges with traditional farmer’s market model: Producers often don’t have the time to spend at an FM; producers need to go where they can get the best price and sell the most product (Taylor Park, City Hall Park, etc.); can Fairfield sustain an FM? Enosburg’s is barely hanging on. Let’s look at new models such as: CSA, e-FM, co-op farm stand where growers share coverage (3000-4000 cars pass through Fairfield Center each day), Fairfield truck carrying product to markets (Burlington, Montreal?). Can food and farm education be part of this to get people interested? How about a farm tour?

Resources

1. Tom Berry, Field Representative, US Senator Leahy's Office, Tom_Berry@leahy.senate.gov, 802-279-0569
2. Cheryl Morse, UVM Geography Department, cheryl.morse@uvm.edu, 656-2106; 343-4460
3. Robert Paquin, Executive Director, USDA Farm Services Agency, robert.paquin@vt.usda.gov, 802-658-2803
4. Jessica Hyman—UVM Center for Rural Studies
5. Tim Smith, Exec. Director, Franklin County Industrial Development Corp, tim@fcidc.com, 802-524-2194
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Participants at one of the Agriculture forums on Community Visit Day.



Participants discuss the Aging Population on Community Visit Day.

Task Force: ✓ Advance Community Communications and Coordinate Fairfield Volunteerism

Chairperson: **Bridget Howrigan Rivet**

Facilitator: **Ruth Wallman**, *Lake Champlain Islands Chamber of Commerce*

Resource Leaders: **Helen Labun Jordan**, *VCRD's e-Vermont Program*

Jessica Hyman, *UVM Center for Rural Studies*

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Action Steps

1. The task force will adopt town newsletter to relieve Recreation Committee; will work to enhance newsletter content, frequency, and use; will create an e-mail delivery system option to save costs; will improve newsletter website. Bridget will convene first meeting.
2. Establish a volunteer coordinator position. The coordinator will be based at community center, library or town office and will be responsible for managing community volunteers and local needs.
3. After establishing the job description, seek out funding for a paid volunteer coordinator – either in collaboration with the town grant writer, by adding a line item in the town budget, or other options.
4. Create an annual skills and resource directory for the town. The guide would be distributed in print and updated online. First step is to look at the Plainfield PACA example and possibly the Middlesex Town Meeting Solutions Committee example.

5. Use community events to disseminate information about communication tools, get newsletters sign ups, and recruit a volunteer corps – let people know where to find info. Jig in the Valley, Harvest Dinner, and Town Meeting were all listed as options.
6. Integrate town website into a greater community website.*
7. Add push technology (ie. RSS feed) to town website.*
8. Establish a Front Porch Forum.*

*Items 6-8 ranked very high on the priority list, and will be addressed through the e-Vermont program, along with a lower-ranked item: Outreach to let people know about WiFi access at library, town office and community center.

Resources

1. Members of various community groups to help provide content for the newsletter; potential afterschool news club; local newspaper editors (Ed Shamy at County Courier, Emerson Lynn at St. Albans Messenger)
2. Town grant writer
3. Hour Power of Franklin/Grand Isle (<http://www.hourpowerfgi.org/>); United Way volunteer listings
4. Plainfield and Middlesex town resource guides as model. Charon True offered to research them.
5. Jig in the Valley event in July; town meeting; potential open house for new library; potential series of volunteer community projects
6. E-Vermont Program
7. E-Vermont Program
8. E-Vermont Program

Task Force Signups

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Task Force: ✓ Implement a School Enrichment Program

Chairperson: **TBD**

Facilitator: **Catherine Dimitruk**, *Northwest Regional Planning Commission*

Resource Leaders: **Paul Costello**, *Vermont Council on Rural Development*

Rae Ann Knopf, *Vermont Department of Education*

Pam McCarthy, *Vermont Agency of Human Services*

Many Fairfield residents see the school as the very heart of the community but worry that pressures to consolidate will increase, especially if decreasing enrollment trends continue, which could lead to the loss of the school in the town. Many express the idea that school vitality will depend on community vitality: attracting young families and promoting school programs so they can be as good or better as offerings in any neighboring community. A task force of community volunteers can help the Fairfield School establish or revitalize some key programs: a speakers program, intergenerational opportunities for youth to learn from elders (and maybe teach them internet applications), internships, and community service learning projects. Students could also lead an e-communications strategy that better connects school and community and lets kids take leadership in telling folks about exciting things they are doing in school. This task force could also explore potentials to enrich curricular offerings by working with neighboring schools on specialized shared courses or programs.

Action Steps

1. Crystallize Capstone. Bring Andrew to the table and figure out who else we need at the table to discuss involving more volunteers. Can we provide subs to cover teachers to make these meetings more work-intensive/productive?
2. Reinventing the speakers program. We can connect this with our PBiS team idea of student-led assemblies each month.
3. Advance/improve connection to the larger community. Start with looking into the senior center lunches, and showing videos of school events at these. Distribute memos to
4. Current kitchen facility is inadequate. We need to expand it to support our food service program as well as to support our educational gardening project and expand our school community gardens.

Discussion:

Key programs currently in place:

- Outdoor Classroom program (School Gardens, Maple Sugarhouse)
- Four Winds Science program
- Capstone Project
- Young Writers Project
- Community Service learning projects
- Algebra for 8th graders

- Individual music lessons (grades 5-8)

- Fuel up to Play 60
- Hay Day

Concerns/Assets/Thoughts:

- Concern about losing the school
- How do we attract more families to this community?

- Excited that her son is currently being integrated into a multi-age classroom
- Should multi-age structures be something we consider as an attractive component?
- Could we expand our Outdoor Classroom program?
- Make sure we keep our school.
- When people are talking about consolidating small schools, these are really small schools. We have 225 kids here in Fairfield...we are not in imminent danger of losing this school.
- The new common core standards will allow more flexibility in moving kids at a rate that focuses on supporting kids at their pace.
- How can students support the action plans of the other 2 priority areas decided upon by Fairfield citizens? Fairfield Brand, Creating the Front Porch Forum, Advancing Agriculture in Fairfield.
- Having a school “farm” raising chickens and pigs.
- Teaching kids sustainability, history of agriculture.
- We need to expand our kitchen.
- Speakers Program: In past years, a different speaker came to speak to the middle school and would speak to the entire middle school every Friday afternoon. There were 3-4 broad
- topic areas that were curriculum-based, career-based, or community-based topics.
- How can we integrate the medium of technology into curricular offerings?
- How can students lead an e-communications strategy to connect the school and community? If the community is not connected via technology, how do you do that?
- Can we connect with Nance Shaw on how to show these videos at the community center at the senior meals on Tuesdays!
- Put the weekly school memos out in the community at the major traffic points (Chester’s, Stone’s, Post office, town clerk).

Capstone Project:

- Windham foundation grant
- 8th grade graduation requirement-kids linking themselves to a community organization or member...they choose and do community service.
- Service learning

Other ideas/resources:

- Linking Learning to Life (students getting involved in internships) led by Richard Tulekangas. Developing public-private partnership

Task Force Signups

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V. Resource Team Recommendations

Resource Team members represent a wide array of professionals from across the state, and agree to serve as partners and advisors to the Fairfield Task Forces. Their recommendations below encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs. It is hoped that community members will turn frequently to these pages for concrete ideas, resources and support. Resource Team members are eager to support the Task Forces as they begin their work.

✓ Advance Agriculture Development in Fairfield

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS

Members of the Community Visit Team were very impressed by the vision to support local businesses, and built a farm, foods and local services and products directory and potentially an online marketplace.

Clearly, the work of this committee will connect to the communications efforts done by the other committee, because this is a fundamental area where on-line and other communications tools can help organize the market and the effort.

It will be important to balance the diversified/new agriculture with the traditional dairy and maple. Fairfield needs them both. In planning, it's also important to balance the fact that local food producers go to the larger farmers markets to make money with the desire for a local farmers market. The directory linking local residents with available local food products is a good idea. Perhaps a cooperative farm stands open at regular times could complement the fact that local growers need to attend the larger communities' farmers markets. Meeting with people from the Intervale, Shelburne Farms, the farmers' market association and others might help figure this one out. Also, making sure farmers and landowners are aware of the many programs and services available from USDA, Extension, VHCB, NOFA, and so forth. The agencies and organizations could participate in local events with their display tables/booths and be available for one-on-one meetings and networking.

An inventory and assessment would have to precede farmers' market development. Are there enough farmers with diverse products in Fairfield to support a market? What is the goal of the farmer's market? If it is to provide Fairfield residents access to fresh, local foods, then the farmers need not be from the town, and the task force can cast a wider net for producers. There are farmers markets in Enosburg, Richford, St. Albans and Highgate. If the goal is to provide a market for local farmers, then the task force needs to know what the local farmers are growing and if they are looking for alternative markets.

Good organization and leadership are important for success and making sure everyone gets along and there is not too much competition.

The idea of building a farmer's market could be different than in other places: a paper and on-line local directory could help expand local purchasing as a network rather than a one-time market on the green each week. A local business and local foods inventory is a great way to assess the town's resources, celebrate its diversity, and identify gaps. Some tools already exist, such as the UVM Center for Rural Studies Growers Guide (www.vermontgrowersguide.com). The task force could add a special Fairfield or Franklin County section.

The Task Force could look what other communities have done. South Hero has a good model--contact Minner Hobbs at South Land did an excellent resource book for ag products a few years ago. Addison County has an online "farm market" – contacts Bay Hammond in Shoreham or Susan Smiley in New Haven.

The ideas of developing a Fairfield Brand is interesting, and the cooperative approach to selling different products under the same brand could be really productive. Marketing takes time and skills that not every farmer has, and often the producer is not the best person to market their product. VHCB's Ag Viability Program or VAAFM might be helpful with advice or the team could consult with the new Hardwick Ag Venture Center.

Several conversations connected to the idea of developing value-added processing of dairy or beef or for exploring a variety of local value-added processing—either at the community kitchen scale, or as a larger scale business. The community could seek funds to conduct feasibility study for local slaughter capacity, value-added production or dairy processing (yogurt, etc.) from USDA Rural Development or other sources to advance these ideas.

As Fairfielders think about how to connect new and young farmers to the land they could start with a land inventory to assess the amount and location of underutilized farmland. This could be done with a simple survey (in paper or online with SurveyMonkey) and could help match would-be farmers with land. The Center for Rural Studies at UVM has a new food systems mini-grant program, which could potentially fund a community assessment (assuming it had research and outreach components). <http://www.uvm.edu/crs/?Page=foodsystem/minigrant/minigrant.html>. Part of this effort could be to look at town zoning to see what agricultural and processing uses are allowed in each part of town and ensure that there are opportunities in the villages for value added development.

Another intriguing idea that came out in the forums would be for Fairfield to pull a team together to comprehensively evaluate opportunities for on farm energy efficiency and power generation along with the idea that came up of bulk purchasing fuel. The Vermont Energy Investment Corporation is now investigating establishing a non profit Energy Services Company. Gus Seelig (802-828-3251) from the Visit Team is their new board chair and would be happy to help that group get focused on a community effort like Fairfield's.

Depending on the scale of work that this grows in to, Fairfield might consider raising funds to hire an agricultural marketing consultant to examine existing agricultural markets and recommend new ways of promoting and marketing Fairfield's agricultural products – create new markets for local products

It might make sense for members of the Task Force to check out what has made Hardwick such a success in its amazing local food network. Contact Monty Fischer, Director of the Center for an Agricultural Economy, at 802-472-5840.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

The **UVM Center for Rural Studies** (<http://www.uvm.edu/crs/>) and the **Natural Resource Conservation District** (<http://www.vacd.org/conservation-districts>) might be able to help Fairfield develop the local food/buy local directory. The Center for Rural Studies would also be glad to review any assessment or survey tools, and possibly provide a team of UVM service learning students to assist with the assessments. Contact Jessica Hyman at 802-656-3021.

See www.farmstandcoop.com example in Charlotte as a start to online marketing of local food; you don't need to start from scratch as you look to develop local buying opportunities.

The **Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets** has some funding for local food directories (<http://www.vermontagriculture.com/buylocal/funding/fooddirectoryfunding.html>). 802-828-2430.

Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA-VT) has funding and technical assistance for farmers' market development (<http://nofavt.org/market-organic-food/farmers-markets/2010-mini-grants>). Sue Johnson is the Farmers' Market Advisor for NOFA Vermont, 802-482-2507, suejohnson@gmavt.net. Jean Hamilton, NOFA-VT, could also be of help. She is Community Food Security & Direct Markets Program Coordinator 802-434-4122 or jean@nofavt.org.

The Vermont **Farm to Plate Initiative at the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund** (<http://www.vsif.org/project-details/5/farm-to-plate-initiative>) is building an immense resource clearinghouse for the farm and food sector, which aims to have the capacity to respond to inquiries of all sorts, build capacity in communities for growing the food system.

If Fairfield gets into the idea of incubating diversified farms, it probably won't help to get new farmers "connected to land that is no longer in pasture or active cultivation." Most diversified farms need good soils. It is an uphill battle to get new farmers on the land that has been "let go." These farmers are looking for smaller parcels but good soils. Fairfield should talk to **Rutland Area Farm and Food Link (RAFFL)**: <http://rutlandfarmandfood.org/>. Tara Kelly (802-417-7331) and India Burnett Farmer are the contacts. Also **The Intervale** (<http://www.intervale.org/>) is a good source – the new Executive Director is Travis Marcotte: 802-660-0440 ext 107.

It might also be good to connect with **Vermont Farmland Access Network** at <http://www.uvm.edu/~susagctr/newfarmer.html> which has some resources to help new or young farmers seeking land or a corner of a farm to start up. The **Farmland Access Program at the Vermont Land Trust** is another place to start: www.vlt.org.

The State has **Farm to School grants** available through the **Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets**: <http://www.vermontagriculture.com/education/farmtoschool/index.html>.

VHCB/UVM Ag. Extension lead the **Farm Viability Program** which might be able to support CSA business plan development: <http://www.uvm.edu/extension/agriculture/?Page=farmviability.html>.

At the federal level, **USDA Rural Development** has RBEG grants potentially for CSA or Farmers Market startup: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/vt/>.

The **Vermont Land Trust** might be able to help coordinate marketing of agricultural land leases or sale to prospective farmers looking for a home: <http://vlt.org>.

The **Vermont Ag. Innovation Center** (in the VT Agency of Agriculture) might be able to provide grant support for a local branding study or other innovative ideas from Fairfield: <http://www.vermontagriculture.com/news/2010/rfpsAug30.html>

Sen. Kittell and Chuck Ross, the Secretary of Agriculture, should be assets in moving this work along. Tim Smith of **Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation** will be a tremendous resource: <http://www.fcidc.com/>, 802-524-2194.

The **VT Community Foundation (VCF)** (<http://www.vermontcf.org/>) or the **Permanent Fund** (<http://www.permanentfund.org/>) could be approached to support this work in a number of ways. VCF visited the county earlier this year, and heard echoes of these needs in the region – perhaps they'd support something in Fairfield as an incubator?

To get all of this going there may need to be a part time Fairfield Farm Food Coordinator—could funding be found through the **VT Community Foundation** or the **Vermont Food Funders Network**? Call Ryan Torres at the VCF at 802-388-3355. Or could Fairfield apply for a State Planning grant through the **Regional Planning Commission**?

The **Northern VT Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council** could help with actions step, resources and assistance on all these ideas and may have grant funds that could cover the costs of the inventory or other specific pieces of work. Contact Beth Ann Finlay, Coordinator 802-828-4595 or beth_ann.finlay@vt.usda.gov.

✓ Advance Community Communications and Coordinate Fairfield Volunteerism

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS

Some things are “nuts and bolts” and can be done rather simply to expand community communications. The fact that Fairfield is an e-Vermont community (<http://e4vt.org>) will really help!

Getting **Front Porch Forum** set up in town and getting lots of folks in that communications net will be a terrific boost. Contact Michael Wood Lewis at Front Porch Forum (802-540-0069 or contact@frontporchforum.com).

The Task Force could set up a simple **Google calendar** for community events and give access to churches, youth, municipal and community groups. Each group would be responsible for adding their events to the calendar. This calendar can be inserted on the town webpage (replacing the list calendar) and other online locations. <http://www.google.com/support/calendar>. Although a “web clearinghouse” seems like a good idea, Fairfield runs the risk of setting up a system that isn't sustainable. There has to be the capacity to update and troubleshoot. It's better to start small with a solid calendar of events and expanded newsletter.

Revamping the town website with some simple formatting tweaks would do wonders.

Expand the recreation newsletter and display it in a more user-friendly way on the website (i.e. html or list article headings with links). Expansion could happen with the help of students and community members. For example, an after-school media club with a staff and/or community advisor. The students could learn about the importance of journalism, get some basic media literacy training and write stories for the newsletter. This would be an opportunity to incorporate audio and video, and social media in a way that would engage the youth and provide useful and timely content for the community.

The committee could work with the Selectboard to assess whether the town budget could support a part time volunteer/events director; and the Grants committee could evaluate potential support for

such a position from philanthropy. The Task Force could also reach out to explore AmeriCorps or Vista programs to see if there is the possibility of that position being filled by a volunteer.

It would be great to have a VISTA volunteer connecting the younger and older community members in developing “what works” for Fairfield. It might make sense to have a chat w/ Mary Ellen Mendl of **Vermont 211** (<http://www.vermont211.org>, 866-652-4636) for ideas about advancing community connection. This priority area is important to the other two Task Force groups, obviously, and should be a first focus. The power of stories should be harnessed for the work ahead. Hal Colston runs the volunteer office coordinating community programs, the **Vermont Commission on National and Community Service Americorps/VISTA** for the State, and can be reached at the Agency of Human Services at 802.241.4244 or <http://vtcnscs.vermont.gov/>.

One way to start some of the communications effort and volunteer coordination could be to convene a group of representatives from each local organization to define a job description and collaborative support for a potential volunteer coordinator to include: RPC, churches, community center, school administrators/PTO, police/fire, NRCD/NRCS, library, town administrators, state representatives, dairy cooperatives, local businesses. Outcome: Job description and sources of funding for the position.

The **Fairfield Community Center** and its staff (<http://fairfieldcommunitycenter.blogspot.com/>, 827-3130) is a resource and communication hub for the town and could be an obvious base for any type of integrated community coordination. The Town Library could also serve this sort of function. It would be useful to choose a hub for the communications efforts. The school is another community hub with an even stronger network of supporters. What is the potential for collaboration between the school and the community center?

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE COMMUNICATIONS AND VOLUNTEERISM TASK FORCE

Contact Hal Colston, Executive Director of the **Vermont Commission on National and Community Services** at 802-241-4244 or Hal.Colston@ahs.state.vt.us, to discuss an AmeriCorp or Vista volunteer.

The Task Force should do some homework with e-Vermont support to look for model systems of town communications and volunteerism in rural communities in Vermont, New England and the US. These should help shape the communication platforms and processes that may be best implemented in Fairfield. Sean Sheehan is the **e-Vermont Community Program Director for Fairfield**: 802-225-6156 or sean@vtrural.org.

The **Northwest Regional Planning Commission** (<http://www.vapda.org/northwest.html>) does great work to support local community and economic development efforts and may be able to lend advice on this work and other elements of the Community Visit Task Forces.

A **Vermont Community Foundation's** Successful Communities grant could fund a calendar or news project (<http://www.vermontcf.org/2010-fall>). The next application deadline likely in September 2011.

The local newspaper (**County Courier**) may be able to offer some guidance to the newsletter team, especially if the team were also providing some content to the newspaper (Publisher/Editor Ed Shamy, couriereditor@gmail.com, 802-933-4375).

✓ Implement a School Enrichment Program

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS

This priority is closely related to the previous one and will receive a tremendous boost through the e-Vermont program that brings Digital Wish and netbook computers for student use. There is a tremendous opportunity to get the students involved with the community information system, further increasing their connection to the town and integrating the school and non-school communities.

It will be important to keep in mind continuity. There will need to be a strong leader at the school who can keep the students engaged and ensure the projects continue seamlessly as students cycle in and out. (Making any initiative multi-grade would help.)

The Task Force could work to revitalize the speakers program. Establish a committee of youth and adults to set the agenda.

The Task Force needs to consider what types of programs to offer and to whom; they should begin with a survey of community members and of the students to begin to identify which programs are most desired and start to focus there.

The group could consider what the school can host or offer beyond educational programs for students to truly meet the needs of the community at large; when it is not acting as an educational institution, what benefits do the larger community get from that space and their tax dollars? Identify community groups that might need space and begin to craft partnerships that will link students to the community and vice versa.

Re-invigorating, enriching, sparking new vitality in a school is a challenging endeavor....especially since many aspects of public education and school support are potential flash points for controversy – taxes, class size, teacher salaries, number of administrators, extracurricular activities, test scores, teacher evaluation, school facilities, curriculum, special education, transportation, consolidation, sports, student behavior, technology, per pupil costs and enrollments are examples. Once again, researching similar rural communities that have transformed their schools is an obvious action step. The **Vermont Department of Education** should be able to assist (<http://education.vermont.gov/>).

Consider participation in the **Vermont Young Writers' Project**—it's a tremendous way to engage students in self directed writing projects and an on-line community of young writers. Contact their director Geoff Gevalt (<http://www.youngwritersproject.org/>, 802.324.9537).

The Task Force could explore eligibility for school improvement grants on the state and federal levels.

It's important to connect the students in a meaningful way at the front end--- what do THEY see as important, and how can THEY help develop and implement it? The e-communications and web-connected learning opportunities are especially exciting. Once things are decided, the Chamber of Commerce and other marketing voices that can encourage folks to live and thrive in Fairfield should be invited to see the exciting things that are happening. Perhaps print media and online viral media opportunities like "You Tube" could be used to talk about why Fairfield is such a great place to live and learn for young families.

VI. Town Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with Fairfield residents and the VCRD Visiting Team on October 6, 2010

Although the prioritization work of the Community Visit Program requires a town to decide what is most important as it moves forward with Task Forces, nothing is lost in the process from the long list of concerns and ideas expressed in early community focus sessions. Many interesting and diverse thoughts are represented here, and are presented as a reminder of issues explored, and a possible foundation for future projects.

Communications

Resource Team: Molly Lambert (facilitator), Christian Meyer (scribe), Bob Ackland, Tom Berry, Beth Ann Finlay, Phil Petty, Fred Schmidt, Joanna Cummings, Brian Shupe.

What are the Assets and Challenges in this Area?

Assets

- A population of mixed professionals (a retired population, entrepreneurs, public office holders)
- In some neighborhoods (East Fairfield) the town has high-speed internet through Verizon(?).
- A town-wide newsletter contains community information. There is a hard copy and a copy is posted on the town web site.
- A librarian who sends out lots of emails.
- A town identity that promotes universal involvement. This sense of community stretches across all tiers of community.
- Large and active municipal building is a gathering spot and attracts residents as potential workers (employees).
- Stone's shell and Chester's are two hubs of the community. Where day-to-day information is transferred.
- This is a close-knit community. Local entrepreneurs have not needed to advertise beyond the school and word of mouth.
- Active community (Kristin the librarian).
- *Surfglobal.net* is a local internet provider if you are in range of the tower.
- School community is efficient for dissemination of information (if you have kids).
- High-speed internet in the library. The resource is presently shared between town and school (the library will move out soon).
- Town meetings are well attended. "Remarkable" and "strong."
- Strong sub-communities in the town (hamlets such as Pumpkin Village and other geographic concentrations). These hamlets often follow the patterns of the ancient districts.
- Town events: Harvest Dinner; Jig in the valley; town meeting. These are good "get-to-know-people" events.
- Good roads that are well maintained.

- 200 households on librarian mailing list.
- The Messenger (St Albans, Vermont's oldest evening newspaper).
- The farming community is important for helping those in need (particularly other farmers). This seems to be "unique to Fairfield."
- Two volunteer fire departments (Another good outlet for communication).
- PTO does a friendship book for school (phone # optional, name, birthdays, ads, school board info, high school info, etc).
- Website is good. Even if you don't participate, website lets you be connected (aware).

School

- Letters from school from principal.
- Principal's blog (for the moment just a posting of her letters from the newsletter).
- The goal of the principal is as much communication as possible.
- PTO meetings.
- Harvest dinner.
- Parents working as partners.
- Parent generated programs that are then parents facilitated.
- But how can we get other folks to contribute?
- Strong student government.
- Difficulty with split households (letters go home with the youngest and always get lost).

Challenges

- Lack of high speed internet access and cell coverage for some.
- 5 zip codes and 7 exchanges: This results in complications for permits (housing, flood permits, etc...)

- Internet is not the end all solution.
- There is no central physical point for communication distribution.
- If they don't go to Stone's, eat at Chester's, have kids in the school or even if they live on the other side of town, people don't know where to go for information.
- A physical location is difficult because there is not a central village (the pieces are all there but not linked together...an archipelago...there is neither a town green nor a gathering place with a village feel...it feels like a "village with no people living in it")
- Country store can become a home but the two stores here do not quite function in this manner (this could be a physical problem – walking distances).
- If you don't pass by and see a sign you don't know what's going on.
- Small communities can be isolating.
- Lived in the same place for thirty years and address has changed 4 times.
- Television switched to digital and she became cut off...needed to get a dish (not a particularly appealing idea to start with). The price to have a dish is significant. Could even be harder for those in a tighter financial spot leading to greater isolation.
- Desire for a weekly newsletter to become the funnel of info.
- Before he had a child in the school he was out of the loop (Not one to go to Stone's or Chester's).
- Can school newsletter be extended to town?
- Internet would be important for people who work at home and promotion, beyond just word of mouth.
- What were the old methods of communication?
- Neighborhoods, grandkids shared with grandparents.
- The more we communicate by new methods the more the old techniques fall apart.
- Dairy coops, groups for organic farmers and other outside organizations have newsletters that are helpful outlets of communication.
- Folks work outside the community so it is hard to chat regularly.
- As someone who moved back, needed certain technical access to work from home. (*surfglobal* was necessary for home work). A certain threshold of infrastructure is necessary before some opportunities can be considered.
- Bandwidth is necessary for the transmission of large files and software updates.
- INS (or perhaps VHS?) has work from home requirements. Employees can't buy a house without internet access. "That is our major employer"...
- Q. Is communication better or worse with the internet?
- No regular library emails 11 years ago (but this relies on the librarian).
- Opens up the world but shuts down the community.
- With the internet we got to the library less and therefore get less community interaction.
- *The Messenger* gets information called in by any one.
- Q. Church?
- A bulletin, annual bizarre, but only a catholic church.
- Protestants no longer present (moved to Bakersfield).
- No high school

Opportunities: What Should Be Done

- A frequently published newsletter with perhaps some quirky aspects like "a person of the month" to help folks get to know the town.
- More communication.
- More sharing of the common history.
- More electronic communication.
- Physical connectivity (bike lanes, side walks, etc) between villages could be an opportunity.
- LIBRARY!!!
- The community needs to define how it envisions itself in the future.
- What is this Self-image?
- School is center of town.
- Unite two sides of towns, but how?
- East Fairfield has a green but it feels like it is on Mars if you are standing in Fairfield center.
- Fairfield Center is on Mars for east-siders.
- Opportunity to bring the centers together.
- High speed rail (haha)
- If you are in Fairfield center people fly through the intersection with the blinking yellow at sixty (we could slow folks down).
- Anchoring institutions. Although, there is a question of how this would be accessible to everyone.
- Expand town newsletter (people want paper copy) (content would be community news).
- Years ago we did a newsletter for a dime with interesting tid-bits from around town.
- Bring together cells of folks through communication.
- There are strong stereotypes between villages.
- The party line for the telephone used to be a good instant communication device.
- Today 14 year olds with cell phones and text messaging.
- Quarterlies, weeklies, and club newsletters are able to split hard and digital copies to be less expensive. Only those without a connection get the hard copy.
- "A small amount of advertising can go along way" to pay for a newsletter.
- East Fairfield lost the doctor (because of billing issues), lost convenience store, lost town green, but the

community center has re-emerged and is a great place for kids.

- Transport for kids between East Fairfield and Fairfield center.
- Dispersed communities create problems for kids.
- Could we bike or walk?
- Transfer station? Recycling center? None. They are over in Highgate, or Bakersfield.
- Community Center is being discussed as place for kids.
- Wednesday and Friday are public days and other random hours at the library.
- Invite other towns to use local library.
- Let's not stand alone. Let's work with neighbors.

- Let's engage the youth.
- Hockey.
- Embrace larger community (Bakersfield (already mixed soccer team): Enosburg, Fletcher, lets work together with other municipalities).
- Mix different kinds of communities.
- Redistricting?
- Intra/inter community work.
- How can we help each other?
- Library for more than just Fairfield.
- 4 supervisory unions.
- There is a desire for local control

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Brian: A glass half full. They have a lot to work with. They have a library; they have networks and newsletters. Opportunities that are not all local but enough of them are to make some big steps forward. Community Center for starters. Coordinate what you have. I see a lack of lack of physical connections. You could try to tie things together through physical assets.
- Joanna: I would like to see where internet access is good? I see a lot of uncertainty about how to share information.
- Tom: Glass half full. Great turnout. Clear desire for positive action. Demographics show inter-town commutes disrupts local community. How do you create a weekend community? Weekend activities could be useful to re-center the community after the week. Opportunity for hubs beyond school (older folks). Internet is obviously useful but it doesn't mean things aren't already here (hubs) to improve communication. What could be done for external communication? Can Fairfield join with other communities? It has an out sized impact in Vermont already. Pursue relationship with *The Messenger*
- Philip: Diverse life, organizations and institutions. The Town has a strong identity but what is the glue that built that great sense of community and common identity (not

identified). Yet a separation clearly exists between geographic locations. How does that exist with a town that has such a strong identity?

- Bob: Glass half full. What was life like before the internet? As the town becomes a bedroom community this creates new communication problems. There is a great spirit and lots of opportunity here.
- Bridget: Assets and opportunities at all levels. How to link these things?
- Beth Ann: I love this town. It is a wonderful place. No transfer station (not expensive). The town is close knit. The question of how to move beyond the problem of isolation for certain individuals will certainly be important. These are problems that are universal beyond Vermont and even US borders. Personal communication is tough.
- Molly: The assets here are the opportunities. The School, the library (and such community hubs)... All should be very important. Electronic short fallings clearly exist and fixing these problems could help economic and housing growth. Some good ideas that were mentioned were more communications, anchor institutions, bike paths, walking paths. Really very impressive turnout. We thank you.

Water, Wastewater, and Infrastructure

Resource Team: Bob Ackland (facilitator), Christian Meyer (scribe), Tom Berry, Michael Dupee, Beth Ann Finlay, Molly Lambert, Phil Petty, Fred Schmidt, Joanna Cummings, Brian Shupe.

What are the Assets and Challenges in this Area?

Assets

- Two village systems for water.
- East Fairfield is spring based. There are few water pumps and a reservoir (probably located in Bakersfield now) there are no capacity problems.
- Fairfield probably is only using 20% of capacity.
- Two fire districts (uncertainty about dimensions).
- 48 households in Fairfield.
- 78 households in East Fairfield.
- The system was extended about ten years ago.
- Fire capacity was extended as well.
- East Fairfield, they can hook up and at creek.
- New construction must be by drilled well.
- Old possibilities were taken away by state regulation.
- What are the natural bodies of water: Fairfield pond, Black creek, Fairfield stream.

- Water not withdrawn for drinking from these bodies of water (Besides by a couple cows of course).
- Waste water treatment plants: 0
- Efforts have been made to build a Waste water treatment plant but there are some concerns regarding the costs.
- Has town done investigations on soil to support for infrastructure for large developments (schools, old person homes)?
- Process in the pipes to look at water system assets.
- Select board manages assets.
- Town hall is an asset.
- The Library.
- New town garage.
- 80 miles of dirt roads.
- 106 miles of road.
- Awarded a grant for study on feasibility study on sidewalks for East Fairfield and Fairfield.
- School.
- Community center (has no insulation in roof) energy and weatherization grants attained.
- Two rec fields. Multi-sport (but only one sport at a time).
- Nice playground.
- The town owns the community center. The town has qualified for a grant for a new roof? Maybe?
- Natural infrastructure.
- It is gorgeous.
- The pond is good for folks on the pond.
- There is access with varied use by some (kayaks) non-lake residents.
- Black Creek was wonderful (30 years ago) but has become a gully. The millrace was pulled. But concern is perhaps limited to East Fairfield. The gate disappeared.
- Black Creek is unique because it is a slow flowing river. Good for canoeing and kayaking. Rail trail (improved by VAST).
- School.
- Old Town office owned by town (it is for rent).
- Power supply is good. CVT and Vermont Electric Co-op.
- A couple EMTs, the rest come from St Albans.
- Even if there were more EMTs/First responders it probably wouldn't make a difference because the town is big.
- Fire dept. has a First responder (limited or non-existent by some perspectives).
- Does Fairfield Fire Dept have adequate fire coverage?...Well, the pool of volunteers is shrinking and getting older. It can get pretty slim.
- Huge domestic mound systems become necessary due to soil.
- What will happen to the two town water systems in the future?
- Wells must be very deep.
- The water used to be a good supply from the "well" but no longer permitted.
- Rec fields are hurting (28 yrs ago East Fairfield fields were rebuilt).
- Internet is bad.
- East Fairfield playground is hurting.
- No fire pump in Fairfield.
- Fairpoint has no cell coverage.
- Bad waste water (East Fairfield) not technically impaired, but some branches are.
- We need more money for roads.
- Poor soil for wells and sewage.
- No side walks.
- Water challenges exist outside of the two villages (the two villages are hooked up to a municipal water network). The Water is hard to come by; the wells need to be deep. Some farms do not have enough water. They need 4 or 5 wells and have had to even truck water in.
- East Fairfield water works is old and raises some concern (rust in water during cleanings).
- Is capacity there for a subdivision? No study has been done.
- Should it be done?
- Municipal water does not extend beyond fire districts.
- No fire ponds.
- What if a commercial kitchen (food processor) were to come along...could water be facilitated?
- In the villages there would be adequate water but no sewer.
- Some places the water is great others it is not good.
- Flooding (storm water) affects roads and farms (fields on flood plains).
- Floodplains.
- No interference by state as of yet.
- Need to highlight areas where water/waste water system violates regulation to get state money.
- The state will interject at some point so the town is trying to stay ahead.
- Two multi family units.
- Elevator for town hall (but not required, so no grant money).
- Roads are all dead (can't be scraped any more).
- Paved roads are not bad even decent.
- 150k for paved roads in annual budget (but insufficient).
- Farms are hauling heavy loads (sap, manure).
- Speed of drivers is concerning.
- Milk trucks can still get through.
- Spring sap and mud season gives folks a problem but still better than in the past.

Challenges

- Over the last couple decades the town has watched estimates for a treatment plant elevate: 50,000 → 100,000 → 1million → 5 million dollars over recent history. There is fear that if it is not done soon it will be even more expensive.

- Rec fields need some updating ...more capacity...clay ... sand...surfacing for Basketball courts.
- Gym and cafeteria are one and the same and rather small.
- School is k-8.
- New fire station is desired. But the old one was refurbished 5 yrs ago meet needs.
- Fire equipment: new truck (tanker.), a pumper is 3yrs, an '84 truck and a '60 International (that still works good). "We're pretty good." But the building not so good.
- Two chiefs. Two budgets.
- The houses don't always have a water hook up in case of fire.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Use water in Fairfield Center for new development.
- Bring in senior housing...(but now there is neither a shuttle nor a drugstore nor a down town to bring all these things together (again the archipelago problem).
- Some needs based transport from St Albans for seniors.
- Land trust holds some prime real estate bordering for future development. They might make a trade though.
- There is a town comprehensive plan to address these concerns for the future.
- Villages identified for centers as growth. → There is support for development.
- Growth is definitely limited (10 permits/yr) this number changes relative to Fairfield's presence in Franklin county.
- Excess of permits for the last two years.
- Wastewater needs to be addressed. Water quality issues are being pushed on farmers and the town should do its part too. (\$5 million for a new plant for some 200 households).
- There might be some non-traditional treatments that we could experiment with.
- Small pop to carry this big weight.
- It is unknown who would bare cost of a new plant...but town wants users to pay. (Of course it is hard to convince folks who just put in new single household system themselves that they should have to pay).
- What about future users. Do they get a freebie?
- It is for a very small group of people (200 households) and of course the school that benefits.
- VAST trail means snowmobile traffic. An infrastructure to provide potential business to local businesses.
- The VAST trail is a mixed use trail (though this point was uncertain).
- Old town hall has been for rent for some time now and a couple lookers but no interest.
- Two town forests (logged and managed but no trails) (7+30=37 acres).
- Town owns Chester's building.
- Commons school.
- Traffic counts on Route 36 (very busy) will be held this fall by regional planning commission. Probably no need for a traffic signal. But there is a strong desire to slow traffic down.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- You've done a lot and that is very encouraging.
- There are a lot of village assets. There is a need to connect these assets for future development. Wastewater for example. Engineers have their solutions but there can be different approaches (Warren/Waitsfield have gone other direction with water treatment to save). Look at advantages of the community as a whole. In short, what is the future of the town? Communication is important to define these goals. It is a great spot and there is reason for others to look on with envy.
- Wastewater is a concern. The town should check out non-centralized systems. But funding options might make a centralized system more interesting. Coordinate your statewide leadership. Be careful moving out of people's comfort zone. How could Black Creek be improved? This could be an opportunity. Water systems are clearly an asset but might need a little help. How should we look at traffic on 36, perhaps this could be an asset.
- What about recreation opportunities? Is there a recreation committee? What opportunities might exist for the VAST trail? Can we access the swamps with canoes? What about a hiking network? What infrastructure could help promote recreation in town?
- It all starts with water and sewer. Community development is what they do so don't shy away from wastewater work. There are grants (USDA). Or issue a bond out to reduce immediate costs. Work to slow cars down. Moving kids with walking and biking could be promoted. Exploit a corner like the one outside municipal building.
- Infrastructure is expensive so find the money. Weigh the local interests and the town's ability to pay. But of course there are government regulations that can force your hand. How to do this analysis is the tricky part.

Economic Development

Resource Team: Molly Lambert (facilitator), Christian Meyer (scribe), Bob Ackland, Tom Berry, Beth Ann Finlay, Phil Petty, Fred Schmidt, Joanna Cummings, Brian Shupe.

What are the Assets and Challenges in this Area?

Assets

- A real working landscape. This has been overtly preserved.
- Chester's Bakery.
- A population with a diverse skill set.
- Easy access to highway network, hospitals, sports.
- Good local work ethic.
- Food production.
- Great place for the kids to grow up.
- Safe school.
- Parents who get involved at the school and adult role models.
- Folks that go on to great colleges.
- People stay here, or often come back.
- It is beautiful.
- Deliberately beautiful.
- But we are not a theme park not just for other people.
- Agriculture and sugar operations are strong so how do we try to focus development on food and keep it here...so that people come here.
- Hard working folks with a vision...we need to utilize this.
- People are an asset. They have a "can-do" attitude. The town garage was put up for half a million because of community help. A recent culvert operation was estimated at \$140k, the town finished it for somewhere between \$60/70k.
- Stone's shell. Mechanics who can work on local cars.
- The key asset is potential.
- There is a "support local" attitude.
- "This is the friendliest town I have ever been to" (and that applies to East Fairfield and Fairfield Center).
- The community library is important for the organization of the community. This is where you find information for events and you can go there for tech support.
- Community center.
- Rail line.

Challenges

- Permitting process is extremely expensive.
- Expansion of industrial park slowed by resistance.
- Development is hindered.
- To build a tax base we can't close the door to development St Albans hill.
- You can't live here and do the job you want.
- 105k to go through the permitting process [despite the fact that the project (14 house development in Bakersville) received no complaints].
- The extension of the golf course received no complaints and created 6 local jobs.
- This is not a theme park so lets allow business to develop
- This will help attract people.
- You go where the money is so how do we get the money to be here.
- Fairfield has focused development on agriculture (not bad or good). The town has been uninterested in other forms of development in the past.
- The town is internet challenged.
- There are cell coverage problems.
- People want the opportunity to have home a business but need services first.
- Basic infrastructure is over the hill. Sewer and municipal water could support only minor growth.
- What development do we want (uncertainty about how to grow).
- How do we pass on the life we had here in Fairfield to our kids?
- No one really knows what the local businesses are. There is no inventory.
- Uncertainty about what the farms are growing.
- Huge number of folks on the road heading to Burlington everyday. EVERYDAY. What about the environment. Spending energy to go to Burlington is bad for the environment but there is no local alternative.
- Get sewer thing solved.
- The water is here, fire protection is here, but there is no one to pass between offices to coordinate.
- It is hard to get housing here because the infrastructure is weak and there are hoops to jump through, the courts are a hindrance maybe regional commissions could do the same job.
- There is no bus service.
- Roads need work.
- No jobs for kids.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Help big dairy or agriculture with local processing plants.
- Fairfield has the “guts” (that is the internal mechanisms rather than the audacity) to grow food.
- Food processing. Local food.
- An inventory of local businesses.
- Get regional planning involved.
- Let’s see the town get into public energy production. Get people involved.
- Grow wealth of town as a whole.
- Lets get away from the “blaze your own trail mentality.”
- Reduce old rivalries (flatlander → farmer)
- Solar power options, for example cooped solar installation.
- Bring development into villages. Answer water and waste treatment questions.
- Community Center, old town hall → there is space. Unused space...so really do we need more space? Or do we need someone to sell the space?
- Permit limits are perhaps a problem and schools are losing students. People need to come here to fill space.
- There are certain places that could be developed. This does not mean that all places should be developed.
- A town center.
- For Route 36 in front of municipal building: A traffic island, or round-a-bout. A neighborhood of green houses (eco-community) walking neighborhoods. Build a population to support stores around a green. Build a community center at the four corners outside of municipal building.
- A grocery store would be nice (supporting local production) and a pub (bar). Imagine a place to meet folks socially.
- There was great resistance to streetlights imagine the resistance for a pub.
- There WAS a dance hall.
- The transportation challenge speaks to the geographic situation.
- What about poverty. Folks can’t afford a car.
- The friends of Chester Arthur. A historical attraction.
- There is a lot of backyard farming: chickens and fowl: so slaughter house (not mega big but a couple beef cow a day).
- Honestly, we are not going to build an industrial park, little businesses with a couple employees are needed. 2 employees here, 3 there, 6 there.
- Inventory of active businesses in town (likely more than 80 from initial estimates.)
- The comprehensive plan will be drafted in a year. Time for all this to make it in.
- Where will our kids work? We are not St Albans and the jobs will be there.
- So lets inventory. I hire a bunch of kids at my place every year. Jobs for kids.
- People need kid labor. Build a job board for kids.
- Let’s get the kids some experience to put ideas into practice. Apprenticeships.
- Sugar is a great market and a huge asset here. Keep supporting it.
- School, work, religious activity to resist drug use (meth), among kids. Hire the youths to help give kids a vision. Opportunities to get kids to travel domestically. The trip to DC gives kids vision. Kids who run into troubles later on in life will cost us more than if we work to give them a vision today.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- What is the existing economic base: agriculture? So what is the future of farming? This has not come up. Imagine Fairfield without farms. We need to reflect further on existing economic base.
- 1) This discussion has reinforced the sense that you want to stay the same and grow. There is a desire to be agrarian but with more jobs. 2) Asset mapping. It has done well in other towns (Chelsea), why not create a phone book. The shape this could take might vary. These projects change nothing physically, but the process puts things and people in contact.
- Look first at the packet of demographics put together for the traveling team. Farming is important but it creates a miniscule proportion of relative income in the community (even though this is the farming epicenter of the state). It would be interesting to see numbers on other types of farming. Create a Fairfield alum network. Fairfielders are everywhere. I see them everywhere. This is a town that generates talent. What is the prospect for hydro in East Fairfield? What should the comprehensive plan reflect? What future for the town: Residential? Tourist? Manufacturing? Defining this vision will require a great amount of participation between different interests.
- This was a difficult conversation. There is a lot of overlap. But there is a good opportunity to better coordinate it. The village should be the center for economic development and cohesion. But build on local strengths. I was surprised by limited place of agriculture in the discussion. Dairy is king here but maybe a little diversification could be useful. Farmers sometimes fly below radar. Think reasonably... you are right you are not St Albans but you could profit from you location. VCRD could be a huge asset.

- Classic challenges. From the youngest pre-schoolers through oldest senior citizens there would be 1000 visions of what the town should aspire to be. So, what is the common vision? This common vision is needed to appeal to the greatest number of residents possible.
- Internet access is coming. By applying to the e-VT project you are moving forward towards these communications goals. There is also an opportunity to prepare people for this project. Folks need to think about how the internet will change business, school and households in this town. e-VT will help with training and out reach.
- You have to prepare folks to utilize internet not just provide it. People need to buy it.
- This a great challenge and this conversation has underlined that reality.

The Aging Population:

Resource Team: Patricia Coates (facilitator), Erin Buckwalter (scribe), Chip Evans, Monica Hutt, Jessica Hyman, Pam McCarthy, Greg Voorheis.

What are the Assets and Challenges in this Area?

Assets

- Senior Meals Site at Community Center 1x/week – well attended (~30 seniors/week but open to anybody, sometimes younger people come too), seniors want fresh/well-prepared food.
- Seniors know the history of the town.
- Green Mountain Transit – help with transportation for appointments, to the meal site, etc.
- Senior housing site (8 units).
- Visiting Nurses (Franklin Co. Home Health) and regular home help (help with grocery shopping, housecleaning, etc.).
- Foot clinics at the Community Center.
- Housing market in Fairfield has not suffered like the rest of the country – houses don't last long on the market.
- Community events: Bingo, card parties, Sunday brunches, Community dinners/dance (some at Community Center, some at School), Jig in the Valley (day of music and food on the Green).
- Volunteers that help make these programs happen.
- Grandparent Program.
- Food shelf.
- 'Care Partners' program that takes Seniors to St. Albans to socialize.
- Get some information about local events through - The Messenger, Free Press, County Courier.
- Community Newsletter – goes out 4 times per year.
- Seniors offer childcare for their families.

Challenges

- Hard to get out to travel – need to have a car to get anywhere because of the rural nature of our town.
- Lost many local services and jobs in the community (creamery, farm supply feed stores, general stores, hardware, railroad station, slaughterhouse, barbershop, 3 churches). There were very few people who worked outside of the community and now most people have to. When I was young almost everyone in the village was in walking distance of all these services/jobs.
- Lack of pharmacy – when there was a local clinic, people still had to go to St. Albans to get scripts filled.
- Seniors can't afford their taxes (higher percentage seniors with delinquent taxes) and because it's an agricultural community where people had large families – the houses are big and being taxed at a high rate, even when only 1 or 2 seniors are living in these big houses.
- Median income in town is high (land rich but people are poor) so it makes the town ineligible for grants.
- Not a lot of job opportunities but farms, sugar makers, & dairy.
- Slow, spotty internet but recently improved a bit.
- When Federal Gov. stops mailing tax forms, Seniors are going to have a hard time filling them out on the internet.
- Need more emphasis on feeling of community.
- Communication.
- Not being able to attend events because of providing childcare.

Opportunities: What Should be Done?

- Written/oral history project possibility.
- Help with transportation:
 - Connect with Green Mountain Transit Authority as they're doing strategic planning to communicate Fairfield's needs.
 - Create more of a volunteer driver network.
- Have a Time Bank (like Franklin/Grand Isle Time Bank "Hour Power") available for the Fairfield area.
- Keeping older folks connected with the school to encourage a feeling of community.
- Kids helping elders learn about the internet.

- New library in town – was inside of the school but now own building – will be a great resource for seniors...librarian is awesome and will offer senior specific events.
- VT Associates for Training and Development.
- Greater advertisement of transportation options (bus that goes down to St. Albans).
- Housing for elders that is affordable and help maintaining the houses.
- Organize some sort of 'handyman' help.
- Getting all the info out to everyone.
- Get community garden going.
- Idea like Neighbor Keepers for Fairfield.
- Front Porch Forum for Fairfield.
- Share information at the Community Dinners, Harvest Dinner, Community Pizza Dinners.
- Utilize the community bulletin board at the Town's Clerks Office, Post Office, Sandwich board outside of Town Clerks, Board at the school – need letters for it, at library when it's built.
- Information about Health Care Reform – how is it going to affect people?
- Programs like Senior Yoga.
- Homeshare program.

Reflections of the Visiting Team

- Communication is a major issue
 - Regarding the problem of finding people to help do fix-it projects, the town newsletter could sell advertising to local contractors and handy-people so seniors know who they can call.
- Shocked that there isn't a local community organization/local government that is taking initiative.
- Issue of transportation for seniors & communication:
 - Something needs to be done to help people get around.
 - Use something like front porch forum/Hour Power.
- Potential for connecting elders and the younger population and again transportation and communication main issues:
 - Utilize some of the options that you already have – how to enhance those?
- Erosion of sense of community is a danger:
 - How do you rebuild the really powerful, vibrant community with a new population of people who aren't here as much as they need to be?
 - Could be a fun (but hard) thing to work on.
- Community events and efforts are starting and being sustained at the Community Center:
 - Build capacity here to help build events, and encourage networking.
 - Utilize the new library for these things too.
- Welcome wagon – Homeshare concept is not a bad idea – Hour Power idea is superb idea – encourage to push intergenerational button.
- Have something like Front Porch Forum (to ask for rides, get recommendations on handy work, etc.) – work with the school and have student volunteer hours go to helping seniors fill these handyperson needs.
- Ask for help in very specific ways – there are lots of volunteers that are very willing to help so figure out how to ask.
- Other closing ideas: Utilize 8th grade students doing capstone projects

Engaging Youth

Resource Team: Chip Evans (facilitator), Erin Buckwalter (scribe), Patricia Coates, Monica Hutt, Jessica Hyman, Pam McCarthy, Greg Voorheis.

What are the Assets and Challenges in this Area?

Assets

- The community is very close knit
- Bright, polite youth
- Student government actively engaging their peers
- Book clubs
- PTO – brings youth and families going together (ie. Community dinner later this month)
- School of choice
- 6-week cooking class for age 5-12 (K-8)
- 4-H
- Fairfield Teen Group (1/week) – doesn't happen currently
- Recreation Committee – soccer, winter basketball (school sports connect with the Recreation Committee starting in 5th grade)
- Playground Committee
- Boy Scouts Group
- Girl Scouts (looking for somebody to take it on)
- 5-week summer camp, April Vacation Camp
- Outdoor basketball court (not lighted)
- Lots of kids are working on their family farms
- Ski program

Challenges

- Need for addressing teenage group (8th grade and up) that are no longer going to school in the community
- Transportation for youth
- ‘Nothing’ for kids to do, especially an issue for kids who don’t do sports, music, etc.
 - On a Friday night, they’re either at their house, with friends, always looking for something to do
- Good activities for 8th grade and under, not as much for older youth
- Cyber-bullying
- Off-road vehicles (4-wheeling), lack of safety
- Youth looking to find work
- Finding a way to retain youth after they’re out of school – give them something to do so they’ll want to stay
- Need town or community commitment to engage youth – need people that aren’t just the same volunteers that are already burned out

Opportunities: What Should be Done?

- Teen/Youth Center – a safe, supervised place for youth to go to hang out/socialize (possibly in Fairfield because it’s a crossroads), a common place (with pool table, music, TV/movies, food, etc.) – possibly could be close to the school so that teens could walk there and then parents would not have to drive them there, only pick them up
- Start-up Fairfield Teen Group
- Dept. of Labor Summer Youth Employment Programs
- Healthy after-school program for youth
- What would 12-18 year olds be interested in
- Hunter Safety class locally
- Have some sort of project that youth are interested in working on (possibly something good for the community – ie. Building a canoe or building a garden) – possibly find grants to pay for them
- Choral group/Musicals/Drama
- Doing some sort of survey to figure out what youth want? (survey monkey, facebook)
- Get the ski program going again
- Work with existing programs and facilitation access to them
- Morning and afternoon events
- Have sliding scales for events
- Engage youth on municipal boards, rec. committee etc. to make them feel like they have a voice
- Skatepark, ice rink
- Jr. Volunteer Fire Dept.
- Intergenerational activities – community service opportunities (Capstone Project for 8th grade), knitting club, tea-time, story circle, build-it days
- Connecting youth with seniors who need help (either for volunteer or pay)
- Have a good communication board – figure out how to connect with the already existing communication options out there, get volunteer opportunities out there
- COORDINATION
- Churches often have underutilized facilities – possibly put them to a use in the hours they’re not being used
- While there are good activities for youth K-8, there needs to be more reliable activities – need consistent, safe, supervised activities for youth (Afterschool Clubs and Programs)
- Afterschool homework club (½ time doing homework, ½ time playing)
- AmeriCorps Volunteer to help organize these events
- Community service awards – “celebrate youth”

Reflections of the Visiting Team

- Seems like there’s some activities for youth up through grade 8 but not as much for high school age students that are going outside of the community for school – how do they stay connected to the community and engaged?
 - Trick with bringing in new volunteers is being really definitive about a limited activity that they’re to be involved with and not making them feel like they’re going to have to volunteer forever
- Technology is going to provide community with a lot of connections around what’s happening in town
 - Help involve youth with their community – through service is a good option
 - Youth like responsibility so turn over some of the volunteer stuff that burns out the adults
 - Engage youth in a variety of interests, how do you capitalize on issues such as safety (ie. 4-wheelers) and turn it into something that will interest them. Also understand which group you want to work with and engage them in problem solving
 - Need for making and engaging youth a town and community commitment – actually have a statement that says ‘we as a town really want to do this’ could go a long way towards actually making it happen and have youth involvement
 - Really try and separate out what you want to do – 1. Really work on the after school issue. 2. Social life for youth through elementary school. 3. Teenagers. If you can segment it out and target one thing at a time, you won’t get so overwhelmed.

- How can you mobilize the youth voice, what are the leadership opportunities, etc.? Really listen to what youth want. Work on sustainability – not just of the humans working on this but also the fiscal piece – set appropriate prices that include sliding fee scale (can't only rely on grants).
- Involve youth in making the youth programs.
- You really have a wonderful school but you didn't put everything into the school because you're realizing there are limits to what schools can do and are looking outside of it. Use skills available in the community & link generations. Really need an inventory of organizations and how they can all partner.

Fairfield School

Resource Team: Patricia Coates (facilitator), Erin Buckwalter (scribe), Chip Evans, Monica Hutt, Jessica Hyman, Pam McCarthy, Greg Voorheis.

What are the Assets and Challenges in this Area?

Assets

- Small school size, small class size, multi-age classrooms
- Incredibly dedicated and talented staff, para-educators in each class
- Resources of the school: Sugaring facility, Garden/greenhouse
- Community interactions at the school: community members come in to volunteer, community volunteers feel welcome at the school, and if you want to be actively involved, you can be
- Pilot projects (ELF – Environmental Learning for the Future)
- Students go to school in the community they live in
- Amazing kids (polite, kind, caring, respectful)
- Community turns out to support the school – school means SO much to the community
 - A lot of parents WANT to be involved
- School IS the center of the community
- Website for the school, quarterly newsletter for the town
- Outdoor classroom helps to pair up assets in the community with the school

Challenges

- Mandates in education aren't necessarily matched to the size of the school, mandates want one size to fit all
- The mandated exams take away teaching time (3 weeks)
- Budget constraints, having to teach the same curriculum with less money (can we maintain the standard of teaching with a smaller budget)
- How do all the folks in town that don't have kids connect?
- Want to keep the school the way it is – economic challenges, can we keep all our teachers?
- Passing the budget and COMMUNICATING to the broader community about financial challenges
- Ongoing communication and education to the community about the school budget
- Need a computer teacher
- Need advocacy at the state and federal level
- Outdoor classroom struggles to find parents that are willing to volunteer
- People who only occasionally live in the community – may not be invested in the same way
- Declining enrollment
- The minutes for the School Board are limited – hard to know enough background to be able to participate in the meetings

Opportunities: What Should be Done?

- Shared opportunities with other school districts in the area (ie. Sheldon/Bakersfield) – examples would be to share a foreign language teacher to limit expenses, share sports teams (already happening a little)
 - Create a list of needs that could be fulfilled by consolidating with other local school systems (foreign language, food, etc.)
- On-going advocacy to the state and federal delegations
- COMMUNICATION
 - Be creative about how to get the information out
 - Have a pullout in the town budget that comes out just before town meeting about the school (There are the challenges we're facing at the school, this is what the budget is about, this is what it means if we don't pass the budget, etc.)
 - Reach the population that is outside of the school through the quarterly Recreation committee newsletter (which should actually become the town newsletter)
 - Follow-up to questions that are asked by community members
- Getting people outside of the school community to connect with the school
- Focus group of parent and community volunteers – collaborate to come up with ideas, specifically invite people with specialties to come help
- Intergenerational programming

- Library Program: seniors reading with seniors, children reading with children, and children reading with seniors
- Bring back The Speakers Program: middle-school ran it and invited different speakers – students ran the meeting and took care of all of the details (including the thank you notes at the end) – good experience for the youth and it broadened the students horizons
- Multi-age classrooms (grades 2/3 and 4/5) – make sure to communicate with the parents/community to avoid drama
- Make sure that parents know what’s happening
- When there are big decisions at the school, inform the community
- Lunch-time/day-time meetings for parents or seniors so that people who can’t make the evenings could come
- Template of today’s VCRD meeting with multiple subjects at staggered times so that the community members can pick their different areas of interest
- Get the kids into the community - honor and thank the community
- Share with the community when the school board meetings are and what the agenda is
- Look for money to help school’s with declining enrollment
- Make sure that the money that is available is being used the most efficiently (ex. Offering Family Consumer Science to youth with VCAT money)
- Provide background so that community members who want to come and participate in School Board Meetings can participate in a more informed manner
- Student presentations at the School Board Meetings
- Place on website for parents/community members who aren’t able to participate as much as they would like to be able to bounce ideas (facebook, blog, etc.)

Reflections of the Visiting Team

- 1. There’s clearly concern about including parents AND people who aren’t parents but are paying taxes – how often is the school used for community events that aren’t school events (try to get all the community to see a value to the school building)
- 2. Budget challenges coming down – looking at ways to creatively partner (offer solutions before they get imposed on you).
- 3. Challenges for Change – looking for creative ways to collaborate and leverage what we’ve got right now.
- There is a lot of passion in this room and people are really willing to work hard together. Issue of COMMUNICATION – lots of opportunities to use the existing communication tools and combine them/build off them
- ‘Don’t fix it if it isn’t broke’ – there are things that are working very well and continue to build on them. Continue to engage with the community with different strategies – bring back the Speaker’s Bureau – Capstone Program seems like a great idea. Affiliation looks like a great option. In the messages you convey, do multi-media approaches because the aging community (for example) may need other methods of communication
- Strong support for the school in this community. Need to engage the broader community – strategies to inform and communicate – strategies to engage community volunteers (engage them in their area of expertise). Don’t overlook the ability for community members to influence the state delegation
- Educating the whole community for how to use the internet and use it to the benefit of the community to share and communicate, good to keep the agenda focused on K-8 but start to look at the larger community issues too
- Make sure that people do have accurate and timely information. This school is the heart of the community – where the future really belongs. You really do need to begin telling your story outside of Fairfield – what you’re doing would really inspire people outside of the community. Inform decision makers and policy makers about what you think will work best – what works for Fairfield might be replicable to the rest of the state.

Community Integration, Recreation, and Events

Resource Team: Paul Costello (facilitator), Faye Conte (scribe), Roger Allbee, Monty Fischer, Jenny Nelson, Bob Paquin, Kit Perkins, Gus Seelig, Ryan Torres, Alex Wylie.

What are the Assets and Challenges in this Area?

Assets

- We have under-utilized assets, like the baseball fields & gym.
- There are a lot of facilities.
- Our town has a great recreation committee. They just finished a 6-week soccer program, and will do a similar basketball clinic in January for youth. There are also swim lessons. The committee also organizes yoga and Zumba classes for adults.

- Things happen in Fairfield and in East Fairfield at the Community Center. There's a "vacation" school – almost like an after-school program, but in the summer. We'd like to have an after-school program, but need some more community support to start it. However, we don't know if there is actually a need for an after-school program.
- The Community Center holds senior lunches and bingo once a week for the general public in the evening. There is a food shelf open for members of the community & surrounding communities. A pre-school program is housed there. In the past there was a medical center/clinic, but it was closed down.
- The vacation school, held during the summer and spring breaks, has been very successful.
- A new public library is being built.
- Fairfield Pond is an asset that is under-utilized, as are other natural resources.
- There are traditional recreation activities that are often overlooked, like youth hunting & fishing. A lot of girls are involved in these activities as well; our town has one of the highest percentages of girls hunting in the state of Vermont.
- Fairfield and East Fairfield mix together well, but the geography of the town is very spread out and parents don't want to travel to the other town to pick up their kids. People don't want to travel further than they have to. This dynamic has changed as the demographics in the high school have changed. In the past kids from East Fairfield went to one high school and kids from Fairfield Center went to a different one. Now most kids go to the same high school so the communities' activities blend more.
- The kids aren't as segregated in high school because most go to Bellows Free Academy (BFA) now.
- A lot of our assets are under-utilized.
- There is a new playground behind the school that was built last year.
- The Recreation Committee is a volunteer committee that builds all of the facilities (like the new playground) and maintains them. The Committee has sub-committees, like the Playground Committee, to do this work.
- There were many years when the Recreation Committee was not active, but it's been rejuvenated recently, especially through the new playground.
- When asked how the committees bring in new volunteers, community members said that they just show up; there is no outreach.
- The Community Center has a very hands-on Board of Directors. They have term limits because people would work themselves to death and would feel like they couldn't give it up. Being on the Board is a good way to stay in touch and give back to the community.
- The parks, school, Community Center, Recreation Committee, hunting and fishing opportunities, fields, and facilities are all assets. Some of them may be under-utilized.
- The people in the community are an asset. There are a lot of potential volunteers that haven't been tapped and skills that haven't been utilized.
- Our town has a lot of farms and open land. I like to cross country ski on them.
- We have the Rail Trail, which is overseen by the snowmobile club. It's mainly a winter trail and comes through Fairfield. Eventually it could be used in all four seasons for bicycling, walking, and winter sports. But, they just got into trouble with Act 250 and now the trail has to go through the Act 250 review process. There are lots of bridges; it's a very huge project.
- Abandoned town roads could be an asset used as recreational trails for skiers, snowmobilers, and others. It would be good to keep those alive in some form. The roads are out of service but the town still has access to them.
- There are also lots of Ancient Roads. But, it's hard to find documentation on those. Some cases have gone to court but getting designation is not as simple as it sounds.
- We have the Jig of the Valley, which has been happening for 20 years. It's a fundraiser for the Community Center, an outdoor concert with volunteer musicians and volunteers running the staging & PA system, food and concessions. The event includes Farmers Market vendors. It's held on the last Sunday in July, and is a huge undertaking for Community Center to pull off.
- We have the Success-by-Six program for younger kids held in the school and library. There are great activities like dances, movies, and family game nights. The school supplies the location even though they don't have to.
- There is a part-time director at the Community Center, and the school has the Athletic Director.
- The Community Center uses rental income, senior lunches, and grants to support itself.
- There is a quarterly town newsletter that's physically mailed. The Recreation Committee started it. There are lots of event emails sent out as well.
- We have a Town of Fairfield website, but I don't know how updated it is. It could be better utilized.
- The Community garden at the Community Center could be better utilized. There's also an outdoor classroom program with a garden at school, but it's not well maintained in the summer. It's run by the PTO.
- The schools do use a lot of local produce for the cafeterias.
- We have a great monthly lecture series put on by library that could have a lot more potential to expand and serve as a place and opportunity to let the community share what they're doing. There have been lectures on travel, gardening, local heritage, and authors. The full-time librarian who is supported by an endowment does it. She is a huge resource, and a full time librarian is not common in a town of under 2,000 people. There hasn't been a large crowd at the events; maybe we need more communication? There are probably more people in town

doing interesting things – it could be a platform to share ideas and knowledge

- Our biggest asset is our kids. We need to always ask how something can help and support the kids.
- When school is closed for weather there's an automatic phone message that goes out to all families with school kids. This could be expanded to use that phone service to get meetings, etc. publicized.
- A lot of people who are involved are new. A lot of the older generation left in the last few years and more young people are coming in.
- Doug Flack holds an annual Raw Milk Theatre. People sign up to perform anything they want in his yard and a barn. It's just for fun with no fundraising.
- There are still lots of kids being brought up on farms doing hard outside work. It may be seasonal, but it's there. They aren't even doing athletics because they're actually doing work on the farms.
- Education is very strong. All of the Fairfield and East Fairfield kids are getting really good grades at BFA. They're also good athletes. In our towns there is a good connection between home and school, people are engaged, and expectations are high. Students are well prepared for high school.
- The fields are right next to the school. The town owns both the playground and the athletic fields. There's been a significant public investment to get what we've got, both financial and "sweat" investment. There is also a baseball field and basketball courts in East Fairfield.
- The PTO has a harvest dinner that brings together multi-generations; a lot of people show up for it. The Food Shelf does contra dances to raise money. There are more seasonal events like that to bring the town together. Each group seems to have its own event.
- Sports are big in the school, we have more students playing sports per capita than in most other schools. Sports teach them how to work together.
- People put editorials in the St. Albans Messenger to thank people after an event.

Challenges

- A lot of people go to Saint Albans for youth activities.
- There are either nine or eleven people on the Recreation Committee. Maybe they need more volunteers?
- Not having enough volunteers is a problem with a lot of the volunteering committees' activities.
- The town is focused on people volunteering their time with different organizations that offer different programs to the community. It's hard to coordinate and make sure that events aren't being duplicated and everything is getting done.
- When my kid left school for college, I felt very out of touch with the community because I'm not getting school newsletters or information from the school anymore.

School is the center of community and recreational life, so without a kid in the school you can get very disconnected.

- The problem is that we use the same volunteers over and over again; it would be great to have the pool expanded to draw in new blood.
- There aren't a lot of events in town.
- There isn't a farmers market in Fairfield, but we would like to do one. However, a lot of farmers in the area go to the one in St. Albans on Saturdays.
- The preschool pays rent to the community center, but it's probably going to move to the school when the library opens. When the Community Center loses that source of income it may have to close. We can't depend on grants year after year.
- The Recreation Committee and Community Center try to communicate with each other but there hasn't been that much coordination. Because everyone's a volunteer it's hard to get volunteers to go to other meetings. There is a disconnection between all the factions. If all the groups could pull together money to pay one person to do the collaboration and bring it all together, that would be great.
- Having kids in school is the only way people get involved in the community.
- People from Fairfield drive out to Burlington to go to the farmers market. It should be the other way around.
- There have been scheduling issues because there's no common schedule for the town. For example, we ended up with three different yoga classes because the three different organizers didn't know that there were other events scheduled.
- It all goes back to coordination. We need someone to handle the communication.
- There's no town manager, town staff, etc. to look at economic or community development. There's a town clerk and an assistant town clerk, but they're separate from the select board, which also has a coordinator.
- There's an elephant in the room of why things aren't working: people are way too comfortable with the technological distractions that are around. The challenge is to fight against the habit of sitting in front of a screen instead of out doing something with the Community. So what do you do about it? How do you engage a child that has been brought up in front of the TV or video games – how do you get them to play soccer?
- We need more fields. There are three soccer teams for one field and timing is hard for coordination. The Recreation Committee has left an extra net up to help but there's also a big mud pit on one end because of bad drainage.
- Everybody has a fundraiser. But there's no way for every group to post its schedule. We don't hear about it until after the fact.
- The Community Center is in trouble. Once the preschool leaves it's going to be really difficult to keep the Community Center going. The town is going to have to

step up and pay some of the bills to keep it open, like heating and insurance.

- Would it matter if it closed? It matters to students in the summer program, parents, and seniors. What could

happen there to raise the economic viability? They could get someone in there who wants to rent the space.

Opportunities: What Should be Done?

- We could hold more outreach events.
- We need a volunteer coordinator who gets paid a stipend so the committees can avoid volunteer burnout. This would allow the committees to have a pool of volunteers to go to, and the ability to bring in new people constantly. The committees have all gotten so involved that they need more than a volunteer chair person, they need a paid person to make sure everything is being done (like opening up buildings for events).
- We could develop trails throughout the area. They would be for kids, families, and adults to enjoy. We would have a system of trails. It has happened in other places Vermont.
- We're interested in drawing in tourists so they can pay for the recreation. Last year the Grant Committee looked into getting a grant to improve a trail around the school and to look sidewalk feasibility. There is interest and financial support to design and implement a system of trails and the Committee found the right key people who would allow the trail to go on their land. WE could start with the ones that begin behind the school. There's the Chester A. Arthur trail that the 5th grade class built and maintains. It could be expanded.
- We could recruit more volunteers.
- We could set up a position for a coordinator for all of the committees combined.
- I like the idea of having person who is a coordinator. The Milton recreation department has a person on staff and they email activity calendars with programs for adults and children. It definitely takes a person who has that as a job. But can Fairfield afford to hire someone?
- There shouldn't be a piece of money from each group going into a pot to pay a coordinator. Instead, there needs to be a volunteer with stipend in place. It could be a town coordinator or recreation director.
- The St. Albans farmers market has a lot of craft vendors, but not a lot of food. We could start one here that is more focused on food.
- Farmers markets are a community integration event, and it could benefit the Community Center.
- We need to bring people from outside of Fairfield into the town. We have a lot going on and it would be nice to draw people in. We could look at other rural areas in Vermont doing cool things. Why aren't they being done here?
- We could create a community blog or website that is interactive. But, everyone would need web service, which is the issue in Fairfield. Internet access is an issue, but internet isn't being utilized either.
- The Grant Committee is looking to use the green in front of the church in East Fairfield. The church will be offering it up to the town to be used for anything, but it's in disrepair and there's no bathroom.
- Even a decent community board that people can go look at would be good. There's one in the library and one in the school, but both don't work well; one is falling apart and one is in a windy area.
- We could make a once-a-month calendar of all events.
- It would be nice to get people from East Fairfield and Fairfield to come together more often. It should just be one community, not two separate communities. The Community Center gets East Fairfield residents, and the Recreation Committee has Fairfield residents. The Grants Committee seems to get people from both communities.
- Farming is central to Fairfield, and there are a lot of migrant farmers. We could have a group dealing with agriculture.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There was a progression during the conversation of "oh and we have that." There are a lot of things going on, but there needs to be a coordination of it all. The town has good pride in their children and school.
- It's all about coordination & communication. There is lots of pride in volunteer work. The Grants Committee is great and lets you focus on where to make movement in town. You should have more than one harvest dinner.
- Again, it's the "two Cs": coordination & communication. This community is special with its agriculture; this could be capitalized more to get people to come in to pay for things (bicyclists, tourists, etc.). I am amazed that no one talked about 4-H because I've heard it's big here.
- You need coordination. The town's pride in children and youth is clear and it's where a lot of the programming has gone. Is there a need for more programming for adults? No matter what, there is a ton that is going on; it just needs to be coordinated and trying to figure out where to house it all is key. It's important to bring together all the different groups to develop a calendar.
- There was an observation at the beginning: there are a lot of under-utilized facilities. But, as conversation continued it's apparent that there's a huge amount of involvement

and things going on, and it's reflected in how well kids do. Why did medical center pull out? Are there regional services that could use the under-utilized facilities? Are there partners that serve the whole county? Could they be part of the solution?

- I remember the East Fairfield 4th of July celebration, which has turned into the Jig. You need coordination and communication. The agriculture piece could be good. Tourism is good if you can bring people in for a specific event and then make them go home, so you don't turn it into an environmental issue. If there isn't enough money in Fairfield and East Fairfield for a coordinator maybe there could be a full time job using Sheldon and Bakersfield too.
- The pride here is wonderful. Look to vision and agriculture. The rural character of the community is unique. Nobody mentioned Chester A. Arthur. You have a President from here; create events about him.

- A lot has been said about the pride. What does the outside world see as Fairfield? It's maple, dairy, and Chester A. Arthur; get a presidential library!
- There was discussion of under-utilized assets. You need to share the weight and invite people in. There is great leadership in the library, town government, Community Center, Recreation Committee, etc. Making a calendar is a small very feasible step that could make a lot of difference. There are a lot of threats to Fairfield that weren't talked about in this room. What's the economic vision of the town and how does that connect with work around recreation and event opportunities? Is there a vision of a grounding economic center? Start from the top assets and ask how you add value and capture more of the buck. How do you incubate and attract businesses. How do you attract the next generation?

Vision for Fairfield's Future

Resource Team: Paul Costello (facilitator), Faye Conte (scribe), Roger Allbee, Monty Fischer, Jenny Nelson, Bob Paquin, Kit Perkins, Gus Seelig, Ryan Torres, Alex Wylie.

What are the Assets and Challenges in this Area?

Assets

- There's a great community library and a new building being built for it.
- We have a lot of working farms, which gives us a lot of open land and a lot of people who work in town.
- It's a beautiful place, geographically.
- We have the birthplace of Chester A. Arthur. There's a recreation path that 6th graders maintain. The birthplace is only open on weekends because state wanted to save money; it's under-utilized.
- We have a great school with community involvement. Kids come out and do well when they go to high school.
- We have a restaurant.
- Our town has a strong town meeting day. We have a good democratic process and open communication with neighbors and friends.
- We have family farms, and the major aspect of family farms besides brain and labor is the ability of farmland and forests to take sunlight and turn it into products that can run the town. Farmland, cropland, and forestland are huge assets. Energy from the sun is a key to the future and vision. It should be high up on our agenda because of solar opportunities.
- There's a good sense of community and volunteerism.
- The Community Center is great asset.
- We have a bakery, floral shop, beef raisers, vegetable farmers, etc. There is a lot of bartering that goes on.
- There's a local food system that's not organized. There are opportunities and a lot of assets here to advance it.
- Alternative energy is good asset to have and we should invest money in it.
- Our farms are such big assets.
- About 7600 acres are conserved in the VT Land Trust, and it's mostly agricultural land. That's about 1/6th of the town.
- The transportation corridor to allow access to markets in Burlington is an asset.
- We have two volunteer fire departments – one in East Fairfield and one in Fairfield.
- We have a lot of natural resources. Fairfield Pond is an under-utilized asset.
- Children are good assets, but do they want to stay here and can they stay here? Are there any jobs? We need to find a way to allow our kids to stay if they choose and to live here without destroying what we already have. We don't want more jobs in Fairfield, though.
- It's unique that the town has voted each year to restrict the # of new developments. We have restricted uncoordinated development more than other towns in VT.
- There is a Community Center in East Fairfield. Wastewater is a difficult issue in the town, but it's still an underutilized asset.
- Value-added agriculture is necessary for the future, but there should still be room for dairy farming, too.

- High speed Internet allows people to work from their homes. There are small craftsmen who live in the area and use the Internet. We have small islands of individual entrepreneurship. It's a growing industry and much is dependent on Internet access.
- A lot of people would like a lot of Fairfield to still be the same.
- There are two vital intern programs where the interns come and work for free. Expanding that is a way to add a vital piece to the community. The more farms that are open to that, and who are doing something interesting creates a career ladder.

Challenges

- There is no town center; you drive through the town but there's no Main St. or local place to park and walk around. There's no commercial center, or any center. There are just two crossroads and we just drive through.
- There's no central information source. There are a number of newsletter-like pieces, but no central news source.
- There are lots of people who commute out of town so they drive through without that central point to stop in.
- There's no place for anyone to come here and stay overnight. There are no motels or hotels, just a B&B. There are lots for people come and enjoy, but without the amenities they just drive through town and don't contribute economically.
- VTrans is against biking on highways.
- Once our kids are done in school, our connection is gone in the community. There is no other way to connect besides through their neighbors and post office. We no longer get phone calls to volunteer.
- Traffic and speed is issue, especially by farms.
- There will be big changes in town in the next five years. We'll have more organic dairy farms and just a few conventional ones left. The farms that get larger to compete will knock out small farms. How do we manage this?
- We can easily end up losing large blocks of town as farms go out of business. How do you keep that from happening? We need a plan that allows and encourages small landowners to lend or rent land to bigger farmers. Once the land goes from agricultural production, it doesn't come back. How do you organize small blocks?
- As a Farmer who sells in the Burlington Farmer's Market, a challenge is that there aren't any markets in this area where I can make as much money.
- There needs to be a give and take. If we want to create jobs, then we have to give up some land.
- We may not be able to keep our elementary school because of consolidation. If we don't have jobs to attract young families, we have no school. There has to be some building here.
- We don't have any supporting industry for property taxes.
- At one time Fairfield had the largest slaughterhouse in area, now farmers have to send cattle to PA or further, and we have to make the appointment way in advance.
- Most people don't eat a lot of what's grown here.
- It's really expensive to live in this town.
- Having working open land is a value, as is having kids going to school and having young people around. There's also a growing movement toward local food and diversified farming and young people want to get into the business. But, land is expensive, and young people can't afford it.
- Sugaring is huge and growing and is taking up lots of acreage. It's shutting down a lot of land because of the pipelines, most of it is owned by a half a dozen sugar makers. It's working against the individual small family farm and the small farms.
- Seven or eight years ago in the village of East Fairfield there was a Community Center, doctor's office, and general store – all is gone now. We want it back. We don't want a convenience store, but a general store with vegetables. We have to travel one hour to a grocery store if we need a vegetable. We need a co-op, a local food store with fresh food. The doctor's office should be in town. We shouldn't need to go outside of town. Town needs vital services that people don't have to travel to. It keeps money in town as well.
- The school system should be getting all its food from Fairfield. What stands in the way is very complex; there are lots of big barriers that don't make any sense. We could have 100% local food in the schools though.
- It seems like everyone wants a city up here. Why aren't we satisfied with what we have? If we have all the amenities, people will still find a reason to go to the city of St. Albans or Burlington. I moved here for the country. The doctor office and the stores are gone, because people went elsewhere. Some kids do come back. It would be perfect if Fairfield is the same in 30 years as it is today.
- Visions have to accept and confront the contradictions – what is the vision that helps you survive as a community with these contradictions?
- Some families have farmed here for over 100 years. Then someone comes along and offers to "protect land" vs. selling it to developers. Happening to neighbors and families. It's tempting to convert to developers.
- There's a contrast about sugaring. We want family farms to survive, but we don't want the tap lines. There needs to be a compromise. We would love Fairfield to stay the same, but if we don't do anything, it won't be the same in 30 years. I don't think state is pressuring us to conserve land, and we don't give in to pressure. But there will always be compromise. We need to balance maple, farms, and development.
- We need human services to take care of each other.
- The school needs to still be here. We don't want consolidation. We need to sustain the elementary school.

- How many people stay here who are educated here? Our system supports going off and finding a fortune, it doesn't support staying and creating a good quality of life.
- I'm hearing that we want to be isolated but we also want the services of a city. If you want a kitchen, you need a big enough population that can use it. The one in Fairfax didn't survive. With the school, we've always supported kids, and always will. It's off the wall to have the school close. If it were closed, where would they go? Would we transport them another 10 miles?
- I worry that Fairfield alone can't take an approach by itself. It needs to include neighbors and regional partners, etc. We can't be so isolationist about it.
- Regionally we have a strong agriculture base, but there's no career ladder at the high school level. There was an agriculture course in Hyde Park but it petered out because we're not being creative enough in farm work to create a vision and reality.
- The number of people in their 20s, 30s, and 40s going back to agriculture is huge. There's lots of interest in revisiting and relearning. So how do you attract those people here? Or when they come, how do they have help getting started? You need to have a lot of vital farms and famers that are making it and doing well.

Opportunities: What Should be Done?

- We could add a new slaughterhouse for about \$10,000. (Roger Albee commented that they should contact Randy at VAAFM.)
- The Community Center looked into a community kitchen a few years ago; we could do that.
- We need alternate transportation, like bike paths. It's good for tourism. The Future Lamoille Valley Trail to Swanton was started but now it's stalled. There is federal money available, but it needs to be taken advantage of.
- Take advantage of this local food movement and diversify some of the dairy farms.
- Let's have a farmers market.
- We could build a community kitchen, like what they used to have in Fairfax and have now in Hardwick. The local one has moved out of reach. If we can get the septic in East Fairfield fixed we can turn part of the Community Center into a place where you can process value-added, FDA inspected products. We don't have to do a lot to have that.
- We don't have to reinvent the wheel. A lot of places around the state are making it work in their communities with a mixture of different agriculture operations. We have lots of land; we have to get land into people's hands.
- Agriculture is strong and can be enriched by value-added processes in the town center. We can create "export" products.
- We could have a lifelong lease system, or some system to make land more available and accessible to young people.
- One asset is our system of old town roads. We could create a pathway for people to walk, with a hostel for people to stay at. We can get foreigners to come – stay in the hostel and visit, like the trail system in Burke.
- Ensuring that we have the resources and strength within the community to serve our own community, to make sure the children have places to go after school, that there are daycares, and places for seniors to go, giving support for young families and young mothers, should all be the priority to people don't have to leave town for St. Albans and Burlington for basic services.
- We could model the system that Canadians have for agritourism. You go to someone's home that they added a room to for one person to stay, not a restaurant, or B&B. They pay us to come stay, and help on farm.
- It would be wonderful if there were a place to socialize in the evening in town. We need a restaurant or bar, a place to hear some music. I would rather spend money here than in Montpelier or Burlington. There's no place to meet people and socialize.
- The transportation system is at heart of many issues. We could envision a means of public transportation, community transportation. It's inseparable to bringing back local stores and sources of good food. Every family is a two, three, four car family because we're scattered all over with work, play, food, etc.
- Town could be generating energy from sunlight. We need to remember that our vision can't include a cheap petroleum landscape – localism is part of a transportation solution.
- Instead of everyone driving everywhere to get everything, what if there are a few trucks driving around selling produce? That's how lots of small towns used to do it.
- The school should have an identity unique to Fairfield. It's not part of St. Albans; it's part of Fairfield with our values, and our thoughts. What is it about the identity that makes it Fairfield?
- Our schools seem to be dictated by a much larger level that knows nothing about Fairfield. We should be integrating education to keep children here – train students in agriculture in the school. If our vision is to keep people here, we need to train kids in things that will keep them here.
- We ought to look at both end of the scale. Educate in agriculture if they're interested, and if they're going to go on to computers, we also need a computer teacher to train at all levels.
- Technology is the future of our country. People will be able to work from home more with computers, so people in Fairfield can do whatever they want by still living here.
- We can take advantage of community colleges and have them add internships on farms in Fairfield.
- We could have a common slaughterhouse along with a kitchen. We need places to process the raw products. It's

not viable to raise the beef and then truck them to slaughter. We need a place to process it, but infrastructure is needed.

- Can we do what Hardwick did? How difficult was it to set up in Hardwick? Is Fairfield a good option.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Continue your volunteer involvement, and go back to other visioning processes that the community has done in the past. How have past sessions yielded positive, negative, or neutral results? Look at other communities; there are other communities in similar positions. Each community is unique, but there are the same basic ideas. Look at regional options with other communities having the same conversation. There is a tension in the room surrounding the question of: Is Fairfield going to be a destination place or is it a place with central commerce?
- The greatest assets you have are agriculture and scenic beauty. If status quo isn't option, how do we keep these assets as strong as we can as long as we can? How do you balance being an economic center and an agricultural community? Looking to towns next-door and working together is critical.
- I love what there is today with a lot of pride in volunteers, the school, and your kids. There are trends coming at you that threaten the balance. How do you maintain what's special about Fairfield? The challenge is how to strengthen agriculture and how to have a village store. You don't need to be a city to have that.
- How do you grow while maintaining the assets that you love? Land is a big piece as is agriculture here. There are lots of other models, especially with agriculture, to look to. Lots of nonprofits around state working on this. Look to them; don't reinvent. It might not be just about Fairfield, you need to be part of a regional discussion. There can't be a food hub in every single town; towns need to coordinate
- Historically, Franklin county and Fairfield were a center of agricultural economy, especially with dairy. You need to celebrate and identify with that while moving forward. There's a need for a lot more milk in the North East. How do we meet the need with the contradiction of the payment system?
- There is an incredible opportunity here, even in dairy. Demand for milk is high and there is unprecedented work being done on stabilizing milk prices for the future. Getting higher prices for farm products will be critical to developing an agricultural economy. We need to protect the valuable VT brand, but also work with New England and southern Quebec. Access to the interstate is really important too. Different price points mean we need to have some products leaving town, the county, and the state. We need to be balanced with food staying in towns and balance the price point. Land access is also key. We need smaller parcels at affordable rates and long-term leases because it's a huge barrier to new farms. Mentorships and internships are also key to starting new farms.
- Mentorship is key, as are school gardens, Grow Fairfield while bringing in people, be self-sufficient and care for your own. You really need a doctor and grocery store in town, but if you want those things you need to make commitment to shop at those local places.
- You love community and love rural character. Agriculture is changing and looking at that the skill set in this town is huge. You have people who can fix machinery, perform husbandry, vets, etc. Use them and don't let them die off. Look at new opportunities.
- VCRD has said that working landscapes are the core of its public policy work for the next few years. They're threatened by the dairy industry situation and the parceling of forests by the timber industry. Fairfield is in heart of VT and heart of the agriculture industry – the community is really unified. Keep the unity to make it in future.

The Future of Agriculture in Fairfield

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What are the Assets and Challenges in this Area?

Assets

- In the vision for the future and in the talk of our assets agriculture just keeps coming up again and again.
- The tremendous knowledge and experience of farmers is an asset, as is their land.
- We're blessed to have diversification through sugaring. The county has more production of maple syrup than other counties. Fairfield makes most maple syrup per capita in the United States.

- We produce specialty foods, and people are coming up with more ideas like goat cheese. People are trying to find ways to diversify their incomes
- The school lunch program uses a tremendous amount of locally grown vegetables. It takes a lot of work, but there is progress in the school lunch program.
- A lot people have their own gardens.
- We have a strong maple and dairy industry in town and that will continue on for quite some time.
- Syrup is strong counterpart to dairy. Dairy will be here for the long term, but it's hurting.
- Some people are diversifying and doing value-added production.
- Fairfield has been a diversified farm community for a long time, since before it was politically correct to say so.
- Maple is growing on dairy farms; they're doing both to cover dairy costs.
- Fairfield epitomizes the working landscape in Vermont.
- Farmers pay their laborers well.
- There's no CSA in Fairfield, but people do prepay for some meat farmers. There is a CSA in Bakersfield.
- There's a 4-H dairy club that had dwindled down, but now it's increasing again to 10-12 young kids. If the involvement was more regular and involved, instead of it being a novelty thing, it could be stronger.
- The New England dairy partnership that created Fuel Up! to promote exercise and healthy eating is going really well.

Challenges

- We have lots of parcels, and we don't know how we're going to keep them in production.
- Prices are too low for milk.
- There is less agricultural land as the community grows.
- There's pressure on agricultural land because the farmers can't make a living on farming, so they have to sell their land, and then it's all land trust land and they can't make money off it.
- The thing we love about Fairfield is that it's all green hills and cows, but the farms are struggling, so we need to support them.
- The long haul looks really bad. The price of grain is up 30%, fuel efficiency for tractors is going down, etc. It is all a challenge.
- We're dependent on milk checks. Many dairy farmers are continuing to grow sugaring to subsidize their farm. If maple production continues to grow, will maple prices drop like milk prices?
- We don't have very many veggie farmers in town.
- We've lost a huge amount of the infrastructure, like tractor businesses, milking machine support businesses, etc. that were all over Franklin County.
- The current dairy world isn't supporting the tractor business anymore – so the local business dies out. The structure of the two sides doesn't support each other.

What kind of local businesses can you have as infrastructure with today's dairy?

- The idea that dairy will be here is debatable, and needs to be debated. We need to be supportive of what's here, but also understand what's been lost.
- Some of us don't want a vision that includes dairy.
- The tractor business doesn't carry parts anymore so you have to go to NY to buy parts.
- It's not sustainable to base our economy on two industries if they don't work. Diversification may save us in the long run. Don't throw out dairy, but add in another crop. It'll help through lean times, especially if dairy and maple prices collapse at the same time.
- When the dairy farms go under, some of the land is going to houses, some land is absorbed by other farms, and some is protected.
- When constitution was written, 9 out of 10 people were farmers; now it's about 1 out of 100.
- Ethanol prices have made grain prices go up by 30%, and made tractors 20% less efficient than they were with the old diesel.
- A lot of the dairy farmers and sugarers are getting older, and it's almost impossible for a young person to start in on the industry,
- It's hard for fathers to want their kids to also farm and say it's a good future when the dairy industry is collapsing.
- Farms have been passed down through generations, and now the grandkids that actually want to do it, don't know how and don't have the money to start. Their parents and grandparents haven't been working the land so barns are falling down and the pastures have grown out.
- We don't have anything for visitors to buy but maple syrup. We don't have the opportunity to spend money in our own town. Even most of the syrup and dairy is going out of town.
- We're losing parcels.
- There are lots of young people who want to farm because it's cool again, but they don't know how to start and don't have money to invest on the land.
- The long-term trend is that land is being developed in Vermont and we're losing working land and we're losing mills; the working landscape is deeply threatened.
- Foreign labor comes in and takes all the money back to Mexico and then it ruins the economy. Fairfield has a lack of available labor from native people so we only have foreign labor. Farmers aren't able to pay people well, so most of the labor is foreigners.
- People have moved off farms, and there are fewer farms, and mostly it's just family help and a few employees who make up the labor. As the industry dies, not enough labor is needed.
- Dairy is so bad that we're sugaring to pay for the farm. We've heard that state is going to let people tap state land. In NY they're only tapping 50% of their maples, if they jump into state land, it'll ruin the crop prices. 90% of

the farmers will hurt. The hunters going on the land is just bad, as is using state land to sugar.

- The trends that have been going on are going to change dramatically soon because we're at a point where costs (like fuel) are going to go through the roof. We can't really project thoughtfully about the future without really thinking deeply about the big changes coming. The cost of fuel can really put the farming community in deep trouble, deeper than it is now, but in a big way.
- There needs to be a leader to make it happen. Someone to pull it together with the money. We can't just rely on grants.
- We need leaders and more volunteers, but now everyone is working.
- One of the things that is wrong between the agricultural families in the community and the rest of the community in the county is that the county doesn't understand how

financially dependent everyone is on agriculture. They don't understand that "when we do well, they do well".

- There are so many outside forces that inhibit, affect, or depress agriculture. In a community forum we're trying to solve the problems in the community, but we need to recognize that there are big social, cultural, and environmental things going against us. What can we do as a small community against that?
- The one-size-fits-all approach from the state doesn't work. The agriculture and food economy is big and centralized but in Fairfield we want to create something that is decentralized and more face-to face. Laws and regulations aren't geared toward small producers and aren't even appropriate.

Opportunities: What Should be Done?

- We could invest in specialty beef.
- We want to try to get a slaughterhouse in the area for commercial slaughter so we don't have to send the cattle to PA, and so people who have just a few animals can get them processed without sending them to northern VT and have the really long waiting lines. A slaughterhouse would need to be set up to take both commodity dairy beef, and specialty high-end beef. It needs to be a community endeavor, like a co-op or something that has packaging and labels for everyone. People in Bakersfield, and everywhere else are also having the same problems.
- We can add another source of diversification. Get methane digesters on farms. They make small ones for small farms. We can turn some profit off the land base.
- We should create a Fairfield brand where a variety of farmers supply a variety of products that come from Fairfield. We have incredibly respected farmers in the area, especially with maple. If we can create the brand and supply different products under that brand name – from beef, to cheese, to maple, to vegetables. Then everyone doesn't need to market and distribute they're products individually.
- We could create a CSA in Fairfield. Little steps like this don't take the place of milk checks, but it's a place to start.
- The librarian wrote e-commerce grants for the stimulus package to do a CSA or Fairfield Co-op on the Internet to sell it all online. It could be jam, cheese, maple, etc. and have it all in one brand.
- We are going to continue to have dairy farms and they are the mainstay of the land, they take up the land, they are who the agricultural community is here. But, around the edges we need people doing other things to compliment the dairy.
- If there is a community kitchen and a slaughterhouse - if there is the infrastructure - people will create businesses

to use it. We must also make an outlet to then sell the product too.

- We could create a co-op to co-op liaison. In Franklin County the co-op is the dairy farmers. In the SW corner of the New Zealand the people in the dairy co-op can't get syrup. Use the dairy co-ops to increase interaction with other dairy co-ops in the world and sell syrup through them. We could add the syrup onto the distribution route in N Zealand with their dairy.
- As the community has grown and the community has diversified, do we know who is making what? We should make some kind of sourcebook so that you know who's selling what in town so we can buy locally.
- Farms could create a fuel co-op for common purchasing. We did it with some people and we dropped a few cents per gallon of diesel or gas. We could save up to five cents.
- We need a career ladder for agriculture education. There are no agriculture courses at the technical center. Then VTC should emphasize agriculture. The tech centers need to break it into something that is digestible for young people. They don't want to farm 24/7 like previous generations.
- Fairfield could be self-sufficient with its own processing, cold storage, and investment in infrastructure.
- We could create incentives for landowners (taxes) to take land they're not using and have farmers farm on it.
- You can't make a living by feeding people in just Fairfield or VT. There needs to be an investment into selling value-added products to the 60 million people around us. We've connected food and health and know that it's safer to eat close to home, and we have a quality brand that is trusted.
- VT has more CSAs and farmers markets per capita than anywhere else. We have it here, we just need to harness it. Value-added processing is a foundation to keep the money here so that kids can stay here and run businesses.
- The maple co-op here in Fairfield has been successful over its 40 years at keeping maple prices up. Can we start a

- similar co-op to help with prices? A group of leaders stepped up and created a co-op to manage, distribute, and market syrup together. They were doing it because it was the smart thing and the packers gave them a price and they had to take it.
- Start with kindergarteners and re-educate ourselves about food so we're not a cheap food nation.
 - People drive past the local store because the price is a little higher and they don't think about quality. We should have food education.
 - We should add agriculture to education. We have the sugar shack in school; add animal husbandry, gardening, etc so it's part of daily education.

- Use 4-H more.
- The town has appropriated money for a grant writer – can the town appropriate a co-op too?
- We should send kids to internships at different businesses to teach them skills.
- The problem with a slaughterhouse is labor. People don't want to work in one. Lots of people are being educated and want to grow their own meat or have access to buy it from where they know about how it's raised. We could have a mobile slaughterhouse that only needs one or two people to work in it.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The slaughterhouse is a great idea. Fairfield is a good place to grow grass and animals; it makes a lot of sense here. The Fairfield brand caught my interest, as did the international co-op marketing idea.
- I like the idea about the co-op; a diversified agriculture co-op can start modestly with a local source directory. The agriculture innovation center might be a good concept for Fairfield. We talked about the things that are sort of beyond us. Regulations have the opposite effect and make more people run under the radar, like with the raw milk industry. You need to be careful about the line where farming stops and a rural business starts (like a slaughterhouse).
- It's a good idea to return to the basics of this community: dairy and sugaring. No matter what else is added, it's tough to change old habits, which may be good. Leadership and volunteerism is in question – people are tired and hard to find new energy.
- The strengths of Fairfield are in agriculture and in its children. It's a bummer that kids aren't getting an agriculture education and it's time to take action through FFA, 4-H, etc. There needs to be communication back and forth between the agriculture community and everyone else. You need to talk and work, and you need leaders.
- There are intriguing ideas in the room. Check out the livestock report from the Farm to Plate Initiative. Use the VT Dairy Task Force. It's more than just a milk money brochure; it quantifies the value of dairy to the VT economy per cow to break through lack of understanding.
- You need a directory in town of what people are producing. To get through the dairy crisis it takes a combination in ingenuity, know-how, and stubbornness. Apply for a community development block grant program to help figure out feasibility of ideas like the coop and slaughterhouse to take the next step in business planning – if there is leadership.
- Discussions around infrastructure, education, diversified agriculture, etc, are happening in other places around the state too. It starts with a small group of businesses and community members who get together to recognize an opportunity and jump on it. You can get funding from philanthropic organizations but the action needs to be bottom up. At VCF, Franklin County comes up a lot, and despite all that's happening, there hasn't been a ton of community driven work. If you organize there are resources.
- This is not unique, what's going on. What's happening in Hardwick is wonderful, but Fairfield is the center the agriculture economy. In 1880 St. Albans was the butter capital of the world, but then it collapsed and people decided what to do next. They decided that they couldn't be commodity producers so they had to do value-added products because they can't compete with the west. Now we're back in the commodity market again and we need to change again. It's going to take capital, research and development, marketing savvy and leadership but it can happen.
- You can't just rely on history and can't rely on milk prices that are set far away from here, so what can you do as a community to bring yourselves into the future?



VII. Fairfield Community Visit Participants

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