



**CHELSEA COMMUNITY VISIT
REPORT AND ACTION PLAN**

**VERMONT COUNCIL ON RURAL
DEVELOPMENT**

JUNE 2005

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Introduction

Chelsea's tremendous assets in hill and valley, open and wooded land and working town center are matched by the great capacity and character of the residents of this unique Vermont community.

Sometimes our assets are also our challenges: How do we build an economy that conserves the working landscape that is the heritage and heart of the community? How do we unite the talents of all residents, native and newcomer, so that we are able to work as one community to address fundamental needs of the town at this stage in its history? How do we develop the vision—and the strategies and resources—that we need to supply an excellent education to the younger generation, and provide the facilities that are needed for the life of the community—not just for today, but also as our contribution of heritage to the future?

The Vermont Council on Rural Development and each member of the Community Visit Team have been deeply impressed by the dedication of Chelsea residents to evaluating challenges and moving forward with common action. We hope that through the process new ideas hit the table and old ideas were seen in a new light. In the end, the convictions of townspeople were consolidated into consensus projects for the new Chelsea Task Forces to address. We commend them for their willingness to put themselves on the line for the community as a whole, and will work to support their practical success.

The Community Visit had three major parts:

1. On the **Community Visit Day** on March 29, 2005, Visiting Team members heard testimony from Chelsea 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 V. Based on the testimony received, the Vermont Council on Rural Development identified an initial list of the Major Challenges before the community (Part II).
2. The second stage of the Community Visit occurred at the Chelsea **Community Meeting** on April 26, when VCRD presented the Major Challenges list and facilitated the review and prioritization of these issues by town residents. The resulting list of **Prioritized Challenges** (in Part I) were then the focus for the formation of four Task Forces established to build plans that would address them.
3. In the third phase of the Visit, the **Community Resource Day** on May 26, 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 Action Steps** are listed in Part IV.

Resource Team Members (listed in Part VI) signed on with a commitment to serve in an ongoing way as sounding boards and referral agents for the Chelsea 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 Chelsea's efforts in each challenge area. Their **Recommendations** (Part III) 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.

Local leadership is key to community development; Chelsea is fortunate to have a dynamic team of veteran and emerging leaders to move projects forward. Chelsea's Selectboard led the way in developing the visit process; their openness to full community dialogue, and their eagerness to engage additional community leadership in project development provided crucial momentum to the process. They have seeded success—now the Task Forces, led by their new chairs, will carry projects to fruition. VCRD is grateful to all participants in the process, especially those who served on the steering committee to make initial decisions and build public involvement. We especially appreciate the hosting role that Andy Pomerantz, Selectboard Chair, has played, and the work of Chelsea Community Visit Chair, David Bradshaw, whose job coordinating and supporting the committees has just begun.

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 appreciates the challenges Chelsea and the new task forces face, but also sees the tremendous capacity that residents have to achieve real results if they work together. We hope that the Community Visit process has provided a useful framework, and we are eager to support the progress of the Chelsea task forces in the work ahead!

I. Chelsea–Priorities

Identified by Chelsea Community Meeting–April 26, 2005

❖ **Chelsea School**

Chelsea School Mission and Strategic Plan: Chelsea needs to evaluate and directly confront issues connected to the scale and direction of the school system. A facilitated strategic planning process would set the community up to confront tough decisions around scale, viability, and partnerships with other communities. Depending on these decisions, the plan should outline ways improve academics, improve the regional perception of the school, “market” it, and attract youth from surrounding towns.

Chelsea School/Community Enhancement Program: To bridge divisions between the community and the school, and to systematically enhance learning opportunities in the school, Chelsea should build an enhancement program that brings the skills, stories, and experience of adults into the school on a weekly basis. The program could share the talents of community members in special small group classes in the arts, music, and adult vocations and special interest subjects. It could be a signature program that helps build an image and identity for the school and will attract students from the sending towns surrounding Chelsea.

Chelsea School Curriculum: The Chelsea School should systematically improve curricular offerings and work to overcome divisions and culture of bullying in the school. As a starting point, a K-12 curriculum map would allow an evaluation of strengths and point out weaknesses for remediation and improvement.

❖ **Economic Development**

Chelsea needs to work as a community to attract and support local businesses that will bring jobs into the town. There will be economic development and change in the future; Chelsea should plan so the community controls and guides its future rather than be a place it “just happens to.” A Chelsea Business Association or economic development committee could work with Green Mountain Regional Development Corporation to support and attract development in line with the vision of the community.

Telecommunications: Chelsea lacks ubiquitous broadband and cellular service. This will be an impediment to the development of jobs and the attraction of families to the community. Part of the work of the Economic Development Committee should be to work with providers to develop infrastructure to provide affordable broadband and cell phone services throughout the town.

❖ **“Open Lands”**

Chelsea has no plan in place to protect or sustainably develop the open areas of the community. A Conservation Commission, the Planning Commission, or a citizen’s group should develop

relationships with landowners and potential organizational supporters to build a strategy to protect priority open lands, particularly in the Route 110 corridor. Chelsea should evaluate open lands issues in the Town Plan and current zoning by-laws. The community should also work together to support active farms and the forest products industry in the town. This work should be in concert with the town's encouragement of the redevelopment of downtown properties.

❖ **Community Facilities**

Chelsea residents need to build a strategic plan to deal with municipal and community facilities in short order. There is a major frustration on all sides with the paralysis around finding solutions to facility needs for town offices, the library, town garage, public meeting space, and other municipal and community needs. A diverse team representing all parts of the community should be drawn together with a strong chair and, with facilitation, develop a plan that consolidates functions and produces a comprehensive design for facilities that answers functional needs and can leverage funding.

Swimming Pool/Community Center: Chelsea should think big about unified facilities and develop a signature project downtown. Everyone agrees the skating rink has been a really great project—it brings everyone together. The Town should look to a facilities project that would build a similar year-round excitement and provide activities for young and old alike. Youth are looking for things to do without traveling; a central recreation center or pool would be a huge boost for Chelsea's downtown.

Note on Priorities

Many Chelsea residents believe there are significant divisions in the community and it is time to overcome them. They believe the community should examine the sources of the divisions between school and community, youth and adults, natives and newcomers, and systematically work forward to resolve them—in action.

Chelsea community residents at the April 26 meeting dedicated themselves to improved communications across all community groups as a key element of this project to advance community priorities. They decided that each Task Force should work diligently to invite representatives from all parts of the community and to communicate goals and activities throughout the community, welcoming input and help from all parties. Chelsea residents decided that rather than setting a special committee up to Bridge Community Divisions in the abstract, all participants and Task Forces would dedicate themselves to building bridges and using the practical tasks ahead to build community unity and momentum.

II. Chelsea—Challenges & Opportunities Identified by Focus Groups – March 29, 2005

- ❖ **Public Safety:** Some Chelsea residents feel police coverage of the community is woefully inadequate and services are too far away to answer emergency calls. There are concerns about crime and the vulnerability of youth and elders. Chelsea should work with surrounding towns to build an adequate police presence.
- ❖ **Community Communications:** Many residents of Chelsea are concerned about community divisions. Different parts of the Chelsea Community do not interact. Activities involving one group tend to stay isolated from other groups and the full community may not feel invited. Chelsea should establish an integrated and regular community calendar that could be posted, published in the Herald, put on the web site, and sent home from school. The community needs an info hub, and community groups ought to make invitations to the full community.
- ❖ **Building a Chelsea Vision:** Chelsea has priceless assets that face significant challenges today. Chelsea residents should build a unifying vision of the economy, landscape and community that they want to preserve and build into the future—a vision that would include input from all parts of the community and would promote the Chelsea that residents would like to see 20 years from now.
- ❖ **Chelsea School Mission and Strategic Plan:** Chelsea needs to evaluate and directly confront issues connected to the scale and direction of the school system. A facilitated strategic planning process would set the community up to confront tough decisions around scale, viability, and partnerships with other communities. Depending on these decisions, the plan should outline ways to improve academics, improve the regional perception of the school, “market” it, and attract youth from surrounding towns.
- ❖ **Affordable Housing:** The housing market is tight and becoming less affordable. Chelsea residents should plan and implement a redevelopment, or a new building project, to produce perpetually affordable housing in the downtown.
- ❖ **Chelsea School/Community Enhancement Program:** To bridge divisions between the community and the school, and to systematically enhance learning opportunities in the school, Chelsea should build an enhancement program that brings the skills, stories, and experience of adults into the school on a weekly basis. The program could share the talents of community members in special small group classes in the arts, music, and adult vocations and special interest subjects. It could be a signature program that helps build an image and identity for the school that will attract students from the sending towns surrounding Chelsea.
- ❖ **Transportation:** Chelsea lacks an effective public transportation system or carpooling network to support the activities of residents. Elders are sometimes isolated and youth immobilized by the lack of transportation options. Many residents taxi youth but few

families carpool with others to coordinate and simplify transportation. Chelsea residents could work to expand carpooling through a communications system, or work to draw expanded public transportation through Stagecoach out of Randolph.

- ❖ **Youth Activities:** Chelsea groups have developed an array of activities for youth; some people think there are too many activities and not enough focus on doing a few things really well. Residents would like to see theatre, or dance, art and music classes. Others would like activities that bring young and old together. Chelsea should develop a few excellent recreational activities by coordinating efforts, and give youth leadership in choosing what those activities should be.
- ❖ **Senior Housing:** Many older Chelsea residents live alone in the houses where they raised their families. They do not wish to leave town but have difficulties maintaining themselves in their homes. A downtown affordable housing development for seniors could provide safe and centrally-located homes for elder residents. Such a project would enliven the downtown and, by freeing up vacated properties, provide openings in the housing market for young families seeking to stay in or move to Chelsea.
- ❖ **Economic Development:** Chelsea needs to work as a community to attract and support local businesses that will bring jobs into the town. There will be economic development and change in the future; Chelsea should plan so the community controls and guides its future rather than be a place it “just happens to.” A Chelsea Business Association or economic development committee could work with Green Mountain Regional Development Corporation to support and attract development in line with the vision of the community.
- ❖ **“Open Lands”:** Chelsea has no plan in place to protect or sustainably develop the open areas of the community. A Conservation Commission, the Planning Commission, or a citizen’s group should develop relationships with landowners and potential organizational supporters to build a strategy to protect priority open lands, particularly in the Route 110 corridor. Chelsea should evaluate open lands issues in the Town Plan and current zoning by-laws. The community should also work together to support active farms and the forest products industry in the town. This work should be in concert with the town’s encouragement of the redevelopment of downtown properties.
- ❖ **Swimming Pool/Community Center:** Chelsea should think big and develop a signature project downtown. Everyone agrees the skating rink has been a really great project—it brings everyone together. The Town should look to a project that would build a similar year-round excitement and provide activities for young and old alike. Youth are looking for things to do without traveling; a central recreation center or pool would be a huge boost for Chelsea’s downtown.
- ❖ **Telecommunications:** Chelsea lacks ubiquitous broadband and cellular service. This will be an impediment to the development of jobs and the attraction of families to the community. A committee of Chelsea residents should work with providers to develop infrastructure to provide affordable broadband and cell phone services throughout the town.

- ❖ **Downtown Beautification and Streetscape Improvement:** Chelsea should build a plan for the expansion of downtown parking, and to improve sidewalks, plant trees and beautify the downtown with enhancements--from flowers to benches to a community kiosk. Chelsea can celebrate its heritage and pedestrian-friendly atmosphere and become a more inviting downtown to shop, dine, and visit for tourists and town resident alike.
- ❖ **Community Facilities:** Chelsea residents need to build a strategic plan to deal with municipal and community facilities in short order. There is a major frustration on all sides with the paralysis around finding solutions to facilities needs for town offices, the library, town garage, public meeting space, and other municipal and community needs. A diverse team representing all parts of the community should be drawn together with a strong chair and, with facilitation, develop a plan that consolidates functions and produces a comprehensive design for facilities that answers functional needs and can leverage funding.
- ❖ **Chelsea School Curriculum:** The Chelsea School should systematically improve curricular offerings and work to overcome divisions and culture of bullying in the school. As a starting point, a K-12 curriculum map would allow an evaluation of strengths and point out weaknesses for remediation and improvement.
- ❖ **Bridging Community Divisions:** Many Chelsea residents believe there are significant divisions in the community that it is time to overcome. They believe the community should examine the sources of the divisions between school and community, youth and adults, natives and newcomers, and systematically work forward to resolve them. One way to approach this effort would be for community groups to come together to build a series of **town-wide events** that unite Chelsea residents and put Chelsea on the map as a place where good things are happening.
- ❖ **Solid Waste:** Changes at the regional solid waste district threaten Chelsea's system of solid waste removal and recycling. The community has invested in an in-town system that works well for the majority of residents and is concerned that proposed changes will take the system out of town and will waste the energy and investment the town has made in the existing system.
- ❖ **Improving Social Services:** Chelsea is far away from larger centers of social services and needs better and more direct services in the community. There is a beginning of a services center at the Family Center, but many residents feel that its resources cannot meet the needs of the disadvantaged and those troubled by challenging situations throughout the community. Services should be strengthened, and potentially centralized, to better meet the needs of Chelsea families.

III. VISITING TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

In Response to the Four Chelsea Priority Challenges

General Recommendations

The Chelsea Task Forces should continue to invite individuals in the community on all sides of the issues they address to participate. They will need to communicate their ideas, direction and recommendations to the full community through the town web site and the community section of the Herald of Randolph. One underlying priority of the community is building bridges; this could be facilitated if there could be some communications vehicle for keeping Chelsea residents apprised of happenings - a bulletin board, a newsletter, a column in an existing newsletter, or new ways to communicate programs that exist, and to help in building these bridges.

As projects proceed, and when and if start up support is needed, the Vermont Community Foundation provides \$1,000 to \$10,000 grants to projects that address a clear community need in the areas of environment, public affairs, community development, social services, education or the arts. VCF, P. O. Box 30, Middlebury, VT 05753, 802-388-3355, www.vermontcf.org.

Chelsea School

The strategic planning process will be most effective if facilitated by a neutral outside party. The planning should include a SWOT analysis of some sort, and could define existing and future possible "niches" to build upon and market.

Perhaps Vermont Law School would provide an intern to support the strategic planning process, or have an interest in providing facilitative support.

It is important not to limit community participation in the school to those who are comfortable in a classroom setting. Consider having the school post a list of things they need help with in their newsletter. For example: a couple of carpenters to re-build the sports field bleachers; a computer person who could network or upgrade their computers or advise on hardware purchases; people could paint classrooms over the summer; a local gardener could do some landscape work and plant flowers (with student planning, leadership and help). Many community members have skills and time to contribute, but are not confident or comfortable in the classroom. Engage them in areas where they are the experts rather than in areas where the school staff is the expert.

Some schools in Vermont place ads to try to attract tuition students from their regions. While Chelsea may not choose to go this route, setting and implementing clear marketing strategies should be one of the goals of the strategic planning process.

There are several excellent programs for bringing school students and community members together. The Community Mapping Program (developed by Orton [Helen Whyte, 773-6336], and now available through VINS in Vermont) is one such program. Community Video (now offered through the Rural School and Community Trust) and Digital Storytelling are some others.

Fairfield School went through a process to build enhancements and bridges between school and community. After a major community forum a task force like the one in Chelsea set up a Community Service Program, a Speakers program, and an Apprenticeship Program—all designed to bring the community into the school and the school into the community. The program led to a rapid improvement in school atmosphere, involvement, performance, and public perception. Call Julie Wolcott from the Fairfield School Board for more information at 933-4592.

For advice and support on strategic planning, call Elaine Pinckney, Deputy Commissioner, VT Department of Education, 828-5101. For help developing the 21st Century Schools Grant to build after-school enhancements, contact Emmanuel Betts at the DOE at 828-3140.

Economic Development

Chelsea orients in many different directions for jobs, schooling, social services, and shopping; a Chelsea-centered organization would be a good place to advance the concept of "Chelsea as a center." The Chelsea Task Force can identify development opportunities (real estate, like the old creamery), and keep an "ear to the ground" to get a sense what the existing business community needs for continuing success. It can then take this to the relevant organization (RDC, SBDC, or the Town) for action and support. The committee can open channels to local home businesses - find out what they need, help find resources, help them expand, find larger spaces and so forth. Growing local home businesses can be a key development strategy for Chelsea!

A Chelsea-centered organization, such as a business association, is a great idea. Contact Neal Fox at Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation (295-3710) to discuss economic development opportunities to attract and support appropriate businesses that will bring jobs into the town. He is willing to work with the committee to form a Chelsea Business Association and could be a key facilitator. Chelsea could officially join GMEDC and look for representation on that board. Neal is willing to meet with the committee to help set goals and objectives, develop its mission, by-laws and strategies. The Task Force should contact all known businesses and ask their advice and help to predetermine Chelsea's economic future.

Access to a revolving loan fund for new and expanding businesses in Chelsea would be terrific. That appears to be already available from GMEDC. For more information, see their website at <http://www.gmedc.com/specific.html>. Chittenden Bank also has a "downtown" loan fund for downtown/town center projects, including façade, signage, historic preservation, expansion, and code improvements. There's also a lower and fixed interest rate, flexible amortization schedule, and small application fee. The fund also offers .5 percent lower rates if a town or regional RLF is involved.

More than just asking GMEDC to help the town with economic development issues such as recruitment and retention, the town really needs to review its assets and come to some determination on what they would like to focus on pro-actively. It seems that providing more small commercial/office space could spur more in-town development, balancing the current shift toward Chelsea becoming primarily a bedroom community. Both Peter Gregory of Two Rivers RPC (457-3188) and Neal Fox of GMEDC could be asked to assist in a planning process to answer these questions.

Ariana Monti (828-1176), Economic Development Specialist at the Department of Economic Development, is another key resource person to help draw businesses to or support them in town. She may also be available to help facilitate work with the task force.

The SBDC counselor for the region, Mark Blanchard (295-3710), is also located at Neal Fox's Hartford office and can provide advice and services to developing businesses.

A Community Development Block Grant planning grant from the Agency of Commerce might be one place for Chelsea to find support for the planning process. Peter Gregory at Two Rivers RPC would be a good place to start to explore this—his organization may be able to help put together grant applications for this or other Task Forces. Another contact for support is Molly Dugan with the VCDP in ACCD. She can be reached at 828-5218 or by email at molly.dugan@state.vt.us.

Chelsea can work to gain broadband telecom access. While Chelsea's geography makes this challenging, there are resources to help. The Vermont Council on Rural Development offers free planning assistance, demand assessment, aggregation, and help in negotiating with potential providers of a broadband solution. Chelsea should work with the Town of Tunbridge to assess demand and work with a provider to develop a solution. By joining the two towns there could be a sizable customer base for Wireless Broadband. Call Laura and Al Duey from VCRD (467-1266) to learn more or get started. Jack Hoffman at the VT Broadband Council can also offer good advice (241-2569).

Tom Murray, the new Deputy Commissioner of Economic Development, may also have support to lend. He leads telecom development in the Agency of Commerce and can be quite useful in looking at ways to achieve telecom goals. Tom will manage a new round of telecom grants this year that will be available to subsidize solutions in towns that are organized and have providers with a business plan. These grants have often worked in partnership with VCRD planning. Tom can be reached at 828-5208 or by email at tom@thinkvermont.com.

USDA Rural Development would be pleased to work with Chelsea in developing an application for a Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) (must be from the Town or GMEDC) to provide assistance to existing or potential small businesses in town. Eligible projects can include facilities the town would own that would benefit small businesses (such as parking areas or facilities for a farmer's market) or technical assistance to one or a group of businesses (marketing, building assessment, training). Chelsea's Task Force might canvas existing businesses to determine what they see as strengths and weaknesses to doing business in Chelsea and then identify needs for RBEG assistance. More information on eligible activities for an RBEG grant can be found at: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/rbeg.htm>. Applications can be filed at any time; however, applications are especially invited to compete for annual allocation in January. Call Sherry Paige at 828-6034.

Chelsea's economic development is the obverse side of the coin of land use in the valley, and closely related to issues of the forest products and agricultural economy. This task force should build strong communications with the 'Open Lands' committee and potentially work with them on common goals as time goes on.

Although housing was not specifically established as a priority during the Chelsea Community Visit, as economic activity increases, good quality affordable housing will be needed. Housing Vermont, (863-8424) is the leading developer of affordable housing in VT and could provide leadership assistance. USDA Rural Development can help community members through several programs. Through Direct and Guaranteed Housing programs, mortgages can be offered to families from low to moderate incomes. RD's direct subsidized mortgage can offer a homeowner a mortgage with an effective interest rate payment as low as one percent. RD's mortgage guarantees offer the moderate-income homebuyer a 100 percent financed home mortgage with no private mortgage insurance (PMI). The lack of PMI will expand a homebuyer's purchasing power. For Home Rehab and Repair, Rural Development can offer lower-income existing homeowners loans of up to \$20,000 at a fixed interest rate of 1 percent for up to 20 years and grants (for individuals 62 and older) of up to \$7,500. The loans and grants finance needed repairs and improvements to their homes.

Housing Preservation Grants (HPG), also from USDA, can help towns establish low interest revolving loan funds to aid residents with home repair. Both the Home Rehab and Repair, and the HPG programs assist residents to improve homes that may be negatively affecting neighborhood property values. The Neighborworks Homeownership Center at the Central Vermont Community Land Trust can assist potential homebuyers through on-going homebuyer education workshops.

USDA RD can also assist area investors--non-profit or private sector developers--to develop low-income family or senior rental housing. The 515 Multi Family program provides below-market rate financing to create additional apartments for low-income renters. The 538 Rural Rental Housing Guarantee program guarantees the loans of commercial lenders for construction or substantial renovation of mixed income housing projects. Both programs finance packages that involve multiple partners and/or the use of housing and historic tax credits to create affordable rental opportunities. Contact USDA Rural Development's Housing Division at 828-6068 to discuss any of these opportunities.

“Open Lands”

Chelsea needs to identify priority open lands for protection. The Vermont Land Trust could be invited to participate in a process of evaluating priorities for conservation in the future. The Task Force should conduct a LESA or similar planning effort to ID key properties.

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission has key resources and expertise. The Task Force should call upon them for assistance, both in the technical aspects of planning and in consideration of potential resources in future. An initial step may be a confidential survey of all the landowners on Route 110 especially since all the undeveloped lands are privately owned. Get demographic information, statistics about the parcel and any future plans they are willing to share. This will form a baseline.

The Trust for Public Lands has a "greenprinting" program in which it helps plan for open spaces that might be useful to Chelsea. See www.tpl.org and http://www.tpl.org/tier3_cdl.cfm?content_item_id=1351&folder_id=830

The Vermont Forum on Sprawl recently published a useful resource on farm/forest work in Vermont.... “Communities and the Land...Strengthening the State we Love.” See <http://www.vtsprawl.org/Resources/publications/publicationsmain.htm>. Also there’s an interesting site on local harvests at: <http://www.localharvest.org/search.jsp?scale> This site helps link farmers with folks who want to get into farming: <http://www.vlt.org/landlink.html>

Once the Task Force has clear priorities, it should review the Chelsea Town Plan and bylaws to see if they are consistent with open lands goals. The Task Force should also consider ways to support existing and encourage new natural resource-based businesses in town. It might want to form a local land trust so that an institution is in place if/when real estate is available.

Community Facilities

The charge of this Task Force call for “a diverse team representing all parts of the community be drawn together with a strong chair and, with facilitation, develop a plan that considers consolidated functions and produces a comprehensive design for facilities that answers functional needs and can leverage funding.” As the Task Force moves forward, desired space requirements and building elements need to be identified in the short term so that facilities can be thought of in combination and the size of needed structures determined. A listing of possible sites and structures should be done. It is critically important at this early stage for the task force to “think outside the box” and not focus on existing buildings. The Task Force should not focus on why a certain building would not work or that some possible project to meet functional needs would be too expensive. The new Task Force needs to dream and hope first—look at the big picture—then evaluate existing resources and opportunities.

Building a strong strategic plan for facilities will be critical; Peter Gregory and his staff from TROPC can be invaluable in drawing discussions to actionable conclusions.

The community could consider applying for a Planning Grant for a community facilities plan--one avenue could be through the VT Community Development Program—Peter and his staff could advise and maybe help produce such a grant. See <http://www.dhca.state.vt.us/VCDP/GrantTypes.htm>. Another possibility could be to apply for funding through the Municipal Planning Grant Program. See <http://www.dhca.state.vt.us/Planning/MPG.htm>.

The inventory of historic resources in Chelsea is remarkable in several respects. The village is laid out around two greens, a very unusual feature. A large inventory of early-nineteenth century buildings survive at the center of the village and surrounding area, several constructed of brick. Many of these buildings still possess a high level of historic integrity. Nearly all of the surviving historic buildings in the central part of the village are listed on the National Register for Historic Places as contributing to the Chelsea Historic District. Surviving historic resources play an important role in determining the character of the village, and should be protected and preserved.

An important early project would complete stabilization and exterior repairs on the library. This will allow the facilities committee to undertake and complete a project without delay. Repairs will

not be particularly expensive, there is the possibility of securing grant funding, and the project does not entail a commitment to a particular use.

In one scenario for Chelsea's facilities development, the town could secure the old store property on the north green, immediately behind the library. This building could be redeveloped to consolidate all town business under one roof near the center of the village. This would allow the library to grow into the current space on Main Street. The community could continue to use the auditorium in the library building for town meeting and other public gatherings.

Chelsea could obtain an option on the Creamery property; this nine-acre parcel adjacent to the school may play a pivotal role in the growth of the community. The option might be obtained by an LLC formed for the purpose and consisting of a group of community-minded "charitable investors." This approach to redevelopment of blighted and/or underutilized downtown properties has been used to good effect in communities like Bristol and Vergennes. The period of the option can be used for developing plans for reuse, at the end of which the option can pass to the town if need be. This site might be redeveloped as a central recreation area, connected by footpaths to the ballpark south of the village. Parking on this site may help to relieve congestion on Main Street and the two greens.

To improve local cell service, the town could consider the placement of a cell antenna in a church/courthouse tower.

Recently, Chelsea became a designated village center. Eventually, the community may want to consider downtown designation. Downtown designation is more difficult to achieve but comes with increased tax credit and grant opportunities.

The community may want to consider developing a phased rehabilitation plan for all community facilities. This will probably require working with a design team and should result in a schedule, based on priority, for making repairs to municipally owned buildings.

One step in this process could be to meet with Court House Administrator regarding space needs of the Court. Discuss prospects of new location of Court House, and the possible transfer of ownership of the current Court House to town of Chelsea. The Task Force might include State Senators and Representatives in this discussion, and an administrative representative, as appropriate.

Another step would be to begin to build a capital budget.

The Task Force could also consider working with Regional Planning Commission to seek Transportation planning grant to consider traffic flow/parking system for downtown.

The Task Force could engage the "Creamery" estate in discussions with an eye toward securing the Creamery site for public use. Include Health Services in this discussion, as possible site for expanded Health Care facility. The Task Force should bring an open mind to possibilities: For example, consider a potential for 'swapping' public spaces: Health Center to Creamery; Court to Health Center; Library to Court; Town Garage?? To Health Center??

The Task Force should stay in touch with the Congressional delegation, and seek their support.

The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation maintains a survey of historic resources in the state. Survey information for properties listed on the National and State Registers, as well as properties included in the State Survey of Historic Sites and Structures is available from the Division. Contact Sue Jamele at 828-3046. The Division also sponsors grant programs that provide funds for repairing historic buildings and barns. For more information, visit the Division website at www.historicvermont.org or contact Eric Gilbertson at 828-3043. That website publishes a list of funding sources for historic preservation projects in Vermont: Select the "Financial Assistance" tab, and choose "Other Sources."

Most of the historic buildings in the center of the village are listed on the National Register; NR-listed commercial properties may be eligible for Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credits. To learn more, contact Chris Cochran of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (828-3047). The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board also has a grant program for historic preservation projects. Participating properties must be eligible for listing on the National Register of outstanding historic significance, and be owned by a municipality or non-profit. For more information, contact Karen Freeman at 828-5067.

The Vermont Arts Council has a small grant program for making access and systems improvements in cultural facilities (libraries, theatres, museums). For more information, visit their website at www.vermontartscouncil.org or call Janet Ressler at 828-3778.

The Preservation Trust of Vermont (www.ptvermont.org) has a field service program intended to provide onsite assistance to community-supported historic preservation projects at critical junctures in their process. Field service representatives routinely help with planning, technical building issues, fundraising, and organizational development. For more information, contact Doug Porter at 644-2815. For more information about their funding, go to the website, select the "Funding" tab, and click on "Sincerbeaux Fund." Since 1994, the Preservation Trust has had a partnership with the Freeman Foundation to support local historic preservation efforts. The Preservation Grant Program makes funds available to non-profits and municipalities for making repairs to historic buildings. They also offer the Community Store Initiative, a four-part program designed to provide technical and financial assistance to community storeowners. For more information, go to the website, select "PTV Activities," and click on "Community Store Initiative."

USDA RD offers a Community Facility Loan and Grant Program to assist rural communities develop or improve essential public community facilities. Chelsea, with a population of 1,250 and a MHI \$32,024.00, is 35 percent Community Facility (CF) grant eligible and 45 percent Water/Wastewater Program eligible. To date, Chelsea has received USDA RD funds for a fire truck in 2001 and the water system in 2004. Are there needs for planning dollars for school facilities? The USDA RD Economic Initiative Impact (EII) Administrative Grant (engineering; architectural design/feasibility study/environmental reviews) could be a fit. The project needs to be for a defined "construction" project in order to be eligible.

For Other Community Facilities, (i.e. Town Hall, Library, Community Center), USDA RD has a couple of possible options. Chelsea may be EII Administrative Grant eligible but needs to be

ready to have a defined "construction" project in order to be eligible. Then there are possible Community Facility Loans, Loan Guarantees or Grants also available. Recreation projects are only eligible through the CF Guaranteed Program, (i.e. ice rink, swimming pool): however, a multi-use center could be eligible for a combination of loan and grant funds. Teen centers are eligible for CF guaranteed loan and direct loan/grant. Contact USDA Rural Development's Community Programs Division at 802-828-6032 for additional information.

IV. Task Force Workplans

Developed in response to the Four Chelsea Priorities on May 26, 2005

Chelsea School Task Force

- ❖ **Chelsea School Mission and Strategic Plan:** Chelsea needs to evaluate and directly confront issues connected to the scale and direction of the school system. A facilitated strategic planning process would set the community up to confront tough decisions around scale, viability, and partnerships with other communities. Depending on these decisions, the plan should outline ways improve academics, improve the regional perception of the school, “market” it, and attract youth from surrounding towns.

Chelsea School/Community Enhancement Program: To bridge divisions between the community and the school, and to systematically enhance learning opportunities in the school, Chelsea should build an enhancement program that brings the skills, stories, and experience of adults into the school on a weekly basis. The program could share the talents of community members in special small group classes in the arts, music, and adult vocations and special interest subjects. It could be a signature program that helps build an image and identity for the school and will attract students from the sending towns surrounding Chelsea.

Chelsea School Curriculum: The Chelsea School should systematically improve curricular offerings and work to overcome divisions and culture of bullying in the school. As a starting point, a K-12 curriculum map would allow an evaluation of strengths and point out weaknesses for remediation and improvement.

Chairperson: Emily Marshia

Committee Members:

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Action Steps:

1. Build a Vision Statement for the School
2. Begin a Strategic Plan that Identifies Options and Includes Research
3. Build an Enhancement Program that Includes Mentoring and Community Service
4. Define Short Term Projects to Improve the Look of and Celebrate the Success of the School

Resources:

1. Department of Education—Areas of Expertise in Facilitation, State Requirements, Action Planning, Consultants, Licensure
2. VSAC—Research
3. Peter Gregory—TROQ Planning Commission
4. Emmanuel Betts Could Help with Writing the 21st Century Schools Grant
5. Vt. Chamber of Commerce Mentoring Program
6. Upper Valley Business and Education Partnership and Vt. Business Roundtable

Economic Development/Telecommunications Task Force

- ❖ **Economic Development:** Chelsea needs to work as a community to attract and support local businesses that will bring jobs into the town. There will be economic development and change in the future; Chelsea should plan so the community controls and guides its future rather than be a place it “just happens to.” A Chelsea Business Association or economic development committee could work with Green Mountain Regional Development Corporation to support and attract development in line with the vision of the community.

Telecommunications: Chelsea lacks ubiquitous broadband and cellular service. This will be an impediment to the development of jobs and the attraction of families to the community. Part of the work of the Economic Development Committee should be to work with providers to develop infrastructure to provide affordable broadband and cell phone services throughout the town.

Chairperson: Jim Veneziano

Committee Members:

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Action Steps:

1. Create and Run Business Association
2. Contact and Organize Key Business Leaders
3. Create Link with Selectboard—Liaison with TRORC and GMEDC
4. Create Vision Statement with Business Leaders
5. Create Project List:
 - a. Business Directory
 - b. Event Promotion
 - c. Broadband Internet
 - d. Encourage New Business Opportunities
 - e. Business Incubator
 - f. Town Marketing
 - g. Fostering School/Business Connections

Resources:

1. GMEDC for Formation of Business Association
2. Paul Costello to get an Internet Survey Started
3. Local Business Leaders
4. Department of Housing and Community Affairs
5. Community Development Program
6. Vt. Downtown Program
7. USDA (VT)
8. GMAC (Government Bid Program)
9. VTC—Small Business Development Council
10. Vt. Manufacturing Extension Center
11. VEDA

Open Lands Task Force

- ❖ **Open Lands Challenges:** Chelsea has no plan in place to protect or sustainably develop the open areas of the community. A Conservation Commission, the Planning Commission, or a citizen's group should develop relationships with landowners and potential organizational supporters to build a strategy to protect priority open lands, particularly in the Route 110 corridor. Chelsea should evaluate open lands issues in the Town Plan and current zoning by-laws. The community should also work together to support active farms and the forest products industry in the town. This work should be in concert with the town's encouragement of the redevelopment of downtown properties.

Chairperson: Craig Byrne

Committee Members:

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Action Steps:

1. Circulate Town Plan and Zoning By-Laws (Craig)
2. Review Land Resources Section Of Plan (All)
3. Confirm Priorities Of Group (All)
4. Adopt New Name (All)
5. Investigate Past Efforts (CMB to Ask Carl Pepperman)
6. Explore Engagement with Other Community Members (Who, How) (All)
7. Determine the Information Required to do Our Work (All)
8. Link Up With Other Committees (CMB)
9. Prioritize Lands to Focus on (All)
10. Investigate Current Productive Uses of Land (All)
11. Interview Significant Land Owners in Chelsea (TBD)

12. Consider Why 110 is Special? (CMB)
13. Explore Formation Of Conservation Commission (All)

Resources:

1. Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission (mapping, facilitation, town plan review, grant writing)
2. Association of Vt. Conservation Commissions
3. Orange County Headwaters (talking to land owners)
4. Vt. and Upper Valley Land Trust (how to conserve)
5. Vt. Housing Conservation Board (conservation grants)
6. New England Grassroots Environmental Fund (project help)
7. Department of Agriculture—Louise Waterman—Farm Transition
8. Dept. of Ag.—Sylvia Jensens—Water/Sell development rights
9. Dept. of Ag—Reenie DeGeuss—General Help
10. Dept. of Ag—Marian White
11. Peter Gregory—Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission
12. Mark McEathron—Vermont Land Trust

Community Facilities Task Force

- ❖ **Community Facilities:** Chelsea residents need to build a strategic plan to deal with municipal and community facilities in short order. There is a major frustration on all sides with the paralysis around finding solutions to facility needs for town offices, the library, town garage, public meeting space, and other municipal and community needs. A diverse team representing all parts of the community should be drawn together with a strong chair and, with facilitation, develop a plan that consolidates functions and produces a comprehensive design for facilities that answers functional needs and can leverage funding.

Swimming Pool/Community Center: Chelsea should think big about unified facilities and develop a signature project downtown. Everyone agrees the skating rink has been a really great project—it brings everyone together. The Town should look to a facilities project that would build a similar year-round excitement and provide activities for young and old alike. Youth are looking for things to do without traveling; a central recreation center or pool would be a huge boost for Chelsea’s downtown.

Chairperson: Beth Ann Finlay

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Facilities: Library; Town Offices, Community Center, Town Garage, Parking, Courthouse, Health Center, School

Action Steps:

1. Inventory of Available Space(s)
 - a. Buildings
 - b. Land
2. Assessment of Facility Needs
 - a. Square Footage
3. Identify Resources
 - a. In General
 - b. By Facility
4. Involve Representatives of Each Facility
5. Prioritize/Organize
6. Reference to Town Plan
7. Seek Info on Comparable Municipal Efforts
8. Clarify Courthouse Ownership/Management

Resources:

1. University Programs
 - a. Norwich Design Programs
 - b. VTC
2. Regional Partnerships
3. USDA Rural Development
4. Lenders/Banks
5. Vt. Department of Housing and Community Affairs
6. RPC
 - a. Municipal Planning Grants
 - b. Transportation Planning Grants
 - c. Federal Emergency Grants
7. VTrans
 - a. Kevin Marshia
8. Federal
9. Preservation Trust of Vermont
10. Senator McDonald and Other State Representatives
11. Local and Private Contributors

FOCUS GROUP NOTES ON MAJOR ISSUES

Compiled From Focus Groups of Chelsea Residents Reporting to Community Visitors on March 29, 2005

Resource Team A

Brian Byrnes, President & CEO, Vt. Community Foundation

Jeff Francis, Executive Director, Vt. Superintendents Association

Sara Kobylenski, Field Director, Agency of Human Services

James Morse, Commissioner, Vt. Dept. of Social and Rehabilitative Services

Jenny Nelson, Agriculture Policy Advisor, Congressman Sanders' Office

Fred Schmidt, Director, UVM Center for Rural Studies

Hal Cohen, Executive Director, Central Vermont Community Action Council (sessions 2 & 3)

Paul Costello, Executive Director, VCRD (Facilitator)

Tracey Pearson, Executive Assistant, VCRD (Scribe)

I. Community Safety

Linda Kuban

Carol Olsen

Felicity Swayze

Emily B. Newman

Bonnie Pomerantz

Bob Eddy

Barbara Presch

Mary Mascoveta

Judy Szeg

Lt. Tracy Simon

Sandy Cooch

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- Safety is a real issue.
- There is no law in our town; there is no one to call for help, no full-time staff at the Sheriff's office, which leaves many residents feeling helpless and vulnerable; 911 call responses are dispatched from Rockingham.
- Orange County Sheriff's office and/or the Vermont State Police will not or cannot respond. Chelsea pays an annual fee of \$5,000 to the Orange County Sheriff's Department for services, which buys them approximately two hours per month.
- Some of the problems occurring are sexual violence, stalking, incest, ATV's on the public roads, deer jacking, preying on the elderly.
- It is becoming increasingly difficult to staff the ambulance and fire services. Fewer and fewer people are volunteering, as more people tend to work outside of town and are no longer available to respond to emergencies. Everyone is wondering when the town will have to go to contracted services.

- There is a need to educate parents in re safety for their children. Young children are out on the streets late at night without supervision; alcohol and substance abuse and domestic violence are areas of concern, and these behaviors are being modeled at home for some kids.
- There is no way of enforcing restraining orders.
- We can try to address problems through prevention and education, but some things will require money.
- Boredom is a problem for the youth of the community, who are unable to travel elsewhere for entertainment and social activities. There is nothing for them to do in Chelsea.
- Transportation is a big problem. Parents and kids have to drive for services, classes, music, dance and theater. One resident expressed frustration with the inability to bring services to Chelsea.
- It is difficult for parents outside the village to provide transportation for athletic practices and events.
- Boredom in young people often leads to mischief. There is nothing to look forward to, so they often create their own excitement.
- Transportation to work is a problem for older kids. Unfortunately, some of the most highly-at-risk kids are essential breadwinners in low-income families, and sometimes hitchhike, drive with suspended licenses, and drive drunk to get to and from work.
- One resident feels the murder of the Zantops is one of the biggest issues in Chelsea and that it's had a huge negative impact on the community.
- The comfort level has gone way down since the murders. One long-time resident is afraid to leave her elderly mother alone now. Many people never locked their doors or cars before the Zantop murders, but do now.
- For the first time in their lives, people are afraid to be alone. Elderly people who used to feel it was intrusive for others to check in on them now welcome it.
- The tragedy awoke a fear of parenting teens in one resident. Parents can feel very isolated and don't know where to go for help.
- Hindsight is 20-20 . . . it's not always easy—even for a professional—to recognize who is going to hurt you.
- One resident wondered if there are lowered parental expectations because of the tragedy.
- Other issues mentioned include the recent serial arsonist and finding marijuana plants growing in town.
- There is a huge split in the community between natives and people who came from away, and there is also denial this is happening.
- There is also a division between youth and adults.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- The 21st Century Grant has helped to provide after school activities, although more could happen.
- Chelsea residents need to give themselves permission to talk about the Zantop murders. Kids especially were told for so long to not discuss it, that they still don't feel they should. Some residents think that the community will not be able to fully heal until they discuss the tragedy.

- Parents and community members need to model acceptable behavior. Acknowledge the existence of others—older people need to nod to kids instead of crossing the street to avoid them.
- Prevention is about dialogue and communication skills. One of Robert’s parents knew in advance he was having trouble and talked about his computer obsession, but didn’t know what to do about it.
- Since more parents are working outside of the home, the community needs to help through the schools. The community should take back the right to be parents. Kids learn physics but not how to talk with each other. Chelsea school tried to build bridges via study circles, which is a step in the right direction, but not seen as being effective.
- Parents need education in prevention.
- Community needs to create bridges into schools as well as the other way around. Find out how to bring older people (as well as people who don’t have kids or kids in the system any longer) together with fifth graders.
- People need to start participating in events that are offered in town. Community events are not well attended and church attendance is dropping. There used to be July 4th celebrations, Christmas gatherings, flea market, events in the park, etc. There has been a community shift from doing things together to being isolated.
- Why do we publicize things we don’t want? Community should start publicizing the positive instead of the negative, e.g., “this community gets together for events.”
- Safety doesn’t have to be a huge thing; it can be in the small things, such as knowing where to go and who can help.
- Residents all have to take part and intervene in poor behavior.
- Interconnectedness is what makes you feel safe. Isolation breeds fear.
- Chelsea needs a YMCA or similar facility that will draw the entire community together. A place with a pool, something to do in the winter, a reason to turn off the television.
- Model behavior in everything you do—talk to people—talk to kids. Call them out when what they’re doing is not okay, and praise them when they are doing positive things. It’s too easy to overlook the kids who are doing right and focus on the negative. Pick up litter when you cross the common.
- Women’s issues have caused a paradigm shift and we need to know how to deal with it.
- A resident of Tunbridge, who has ties to Chelsea, mentions there is no split between natives and non-natives and believes it is because the community leaders in Tunbridge model different behaviors and do not support such a split. People are never excluded because they come from away.
- Streetlights in town would make people feel safer.
- Is Chelsea just being too quiet in terms of working with police to improve response time? Other towns have held community forums on this issue.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- This is life in a rural community, where the resource requirements are in conflict with the available resources.
- Emergency services are experiencing a lack of volunteers and will continue to see challenges.

- The underlying issues of security and safety in small communities are front and center—there is no disguising them. These issues are exacerbated here by the tragedy.
- People are struggling with the issues of how to be better parents.
- The traditions of communities are no longer there and no longer help. There is a need for communities to reinvent social opportunities bridging between older and younger residents as well as older and newer residents.
- Chelsea needs to work to develop a community sense of pride rather than one of despair.
- Take ownership of the issues and use them as an opportunity to be involved.
- Use the great tragedy this town has experienced as an opportunity; turn it around and build strength from it.
- Start working with children before they're even in Kindergarten; don't wait until they're teens.
- Monitor, model and mentor.
- Bring the generations together.

II. Youth Engagement

*Grace L. Amber
Felicity Swayze
Emily Marshia
Kate Willard
Kelli Descoteaux
Tracy Simon
Cora Brooks
Hayden Dodge
Mary Mascoveta
Cornelia Cesari
Todd Hoffman*

*Peter D. Amber
Tom Dowlin
Henry Cesari
Jennie Martin
Joseph L. Spinella
Miriam Rubin-Crump
Andy Pomerantz
Linda Kuban
Judy Szeg
Marty Gratz*

*Bonnie Pomerantz
Anne Carroll
Amedea Cesari
Jan Field
Karl Stein
Betsy Button
Helen Heslop
Dan Breslaw
Jil Pomerantz
Kathryn Parlin*

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- There is no public transportation system, and no carpooling system.
- There is nothing happening in Chelsea for the kids—you have to travel to do anything. Lots of kids who want to play sports can't because they have no way to get to practices and events.
- Social, economic, even nutritional needs of the youth are not being met.
- People say, "yes, we want it," but then no one participates in events.
- People don't want and can't accept change.
- It is important for kids to identify their needs and what's important to them, rather than letting parents decide for them.
- People don't know what is available to them.

- How do we make kids feel something is being invested in them? This is not just about strengthening kids so they can improve this community, but want them to be strong where they go.
- Transportation is an issue for youth and elderly alike.
- Sometimes things get started, then slide downhill; e.g., there was a theater group in Chelsea in 1999, now kids have to travel to Montpelier to participate in theater.
- Lack of communication ties in with transportation issues in that there are many small groups doing different things and they don't always realize what everyone else is doing.
- There is a community website that could be utilized, but many people don't know it is there.
- There is no community newspaper, no information hub, and limited connectivity.
- Some say the school and community are not connected.
- In general, there is a disconnect between youth and adults.
- There is no place for youths to go, be safe, but feel they're not being watched over.
- When your own children get older and out of school, you become disconnected from the school community.
- There is a sense of "us and them" between public school kids and kids who attend Waldorf.
- There is a split between flatlanders vs. Vermonters and the haves and the have-nots.
- There are divisions in young people as well (hippies, jocks, etc.), but it's not seen as a bad thing except when people get pushed away.
- The Zantop murders changed the perception of trust in the community, although many feel adults were more impacted than young people, and the elderly were particularly affected.
- It takes a lot of involvement to get kids to participate, a lot of one-on-one activity.
- The "if you build it, they will come" approach is not always true.
- Need to guard against taking the shotgun approach—putting too much out there. Too many programs often dilute the quality of what is being offered.
- There is not much of a bridge between the elementary and high school.
- Twenty years ago there was one community; five years ago we realized there were two communities—the community and the school community.
- Many residents lamented the discontinuation of Spring Fest, which was always a huge success, but a lot of work.
- One resident stated when there is a divide between residents, it is often generational; i.e., "my dad doesn't talk to your dad, so I don't talk to you."
- There is a socio-economic divide that creates a bias—we don't associate with different groups. This is not necessarily about conflict, but about engagement.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- People need to focus on what they have in common instead of our differences. It is tiring to talk about our differences; energizing to talk about where we're the same.
- Foster mentoring, not just adult to child, but high school age to younger kids.
- Need to identify strengths in kids and expose them to things that may be of interest to them, but they might not otherwise be exposed to.

- Chelsea needs to establish a communication network—something that reaches everyone in the community using a variety of tools—including bulletin boards, website, newsletter, community calendar, newspaper.
- Although there may be different values throughout the community, residents need to identify the values they hold as a community.
- Resident states the feeling there is not enough time for kids to be in community with their friends outside of the classroom, but during the school day. Is it possible to build in time for socializing?
- Need a paid community coordinator to connect everything together.
- Adults need to hang out with kids—play basketball, be accepting of down time, get together to watch March Madness one night. Say “wow, nice trick!” to skateboarders instead of glaring at them scraping up the sidewalk.
- There is a need to develop a sense of community and spend more time downtown. One idea put forward is to start a hot summer night film series.
- Take advantage of activities outside the community and bring them back.
- The ice rink was mentioned as a place that is a wonderful model as a place that cuts across the community.
- Developing and keeping traditions going is very important.
- Find a way to reach every single kid in Chelsea. Engaging youth does not require money.
- One resident mentioned a “birthday club” wherein each teacher in school has assigned kids with whom they interact and have fun, one-on-one time—just for 45 minutes with each kid during their birthday month.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Creating traditions and a sense of pride in the community is very important.
- Perhaps residents and/or students should look into developing a local radio station.
- In the 1970’s, Chelsea was known as being a very youth-oriented town. It is suggested residents find out what was going on at that time to foster that perception.
- Need to make the school the hub of the community, since kids spend most of their time there.
- There are a lot of small sparks present. Find what it takes to ignite them into big flames.
- Empower the youth of the town to develop their own activities.
- Develop a community calendar. Take small bites—lay out events for next year.
- Heard really good ideas on how to approach the issue. The problem will be in which ideas to pursue.
- There are a lot of resources here, but a need for coordination.
- Need to find solutions to the transportation problem.

III. The Future of Our K-12 School

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Dave Rochat
Steve Gould*

*Lynn Amber
Joseph L. Spinella
Heidi Chapman*

*Betty Rogers
Caleb Rick
Roy Allen*

*Miriam Rubin-Crump
Stan Brinkman
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Ian Field
Mary-Beth Descoteaux
Al Bartsch
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Joan Parker
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*Sherry Baer
Hayden Dodge
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Cindy Masterman
Terry Libby
Charlie Crocker
Erik Anderson
Cornelia J. Cesari
Josh Pomerantz*

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- How can Chelsea maintain a quality program that's affordable?
- Chelsea School is experiencing a declining enrollment—the school has gone from 350 to 240 students in about 15 years.
- There has been a migration of students from surrounding towns to Sharon Academy.
- Bullying is a problem. One resident stated her son was frightened in school and transferred to Sharon.
- There is state-mandated attention to low achievers but none to high achievers.
- There is a sense that kids have to be in school and don't necessarily want to be.
- One resident stated the feeling that microcosms in school mirror their parents' division of groups.
- The school needs to be able to attract students from sending communities.
- There is a perception that private schools are better schools.
- Seems like teachers are teaching down because they don't feel kids can keep up. Innovative teachers are losing their drive.
- The community has never discussed the viability of maintaining the high school, going to just K-8, or closing the school entirely and is not educated on the issues. There needs to be a discussion on what needs to happen to keep the school open.
- Chelsea School does not have the reputation of being an academically strong school. One parent stated academically strong students stopped attending Chelsea High School about four years ago.
- Sports-oriented students don't feel they would have the same opportunities they may have at other schools in terms of future opportunities, strong athletic programs and scholarship possibilities.
- Small schools such as Chelsea don't have the ability to offer the breadth of classes larger schools can provide and you also end up with a wider spectrum of abilities in one classroom.
- The school is perceived to be a vital part of the community, but is in kind of a death spiral.
- Several sending towns are looking at giving up school choice and designating a school for their communities.

- Wellspring School draws people because it provides what people want. One parent doesn't see what Chelsea offers that would draw her.
- Number of special needs kids seems to be growing exponentially. This raises costs tremendously.
- The Zantop tragedy has created a negative impact and nothing has been done to address the issue.
- One resident states he is not aware that people are sending kids elsewhere because of the murders, while another says he's not sure people would admit that's the reason.
- Kids are coming to school when they aren't ready to learn.
- Need to look at not only the school's viability as an educational institution, but examine whether or not the building itself is sustainable.
- Distrust at root of inability to have open dialog.
- There is a high level of distrust in administration and need for skilled facilitators as this is an emotionally charged issue.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Redefine the mission of Chelsea School and communicate it clearly.
- Develop strategic plan that helps drive our choices.
- Have a community dialogue as to how to meet the goals of the community.
- Parents shouldn't abdicate their role completely to teachers.
- Provide a published, clearly defined, curriculum and keep parents better informed of that curriculum. Offer the ability to tailor the educational experience via core curriculum and electives.
- Provide social services to develop students so they are prepared to learn.
- Involve entire community and school in two to three programs to develop positive public relations.
- Be consistent in these projects, develop at least one that happens every year and becomes institutionalized.
- Develop relationships between residents and school. There are many artisans and professionals in the community who could provide opportunities for internships and mentoring. Volunteers don't cost anything.
- Parents and community members need to become more involved and interact more with the school—go have lunch there often.
- Look at the elementary and high schools separately—they have different problems that require different solutions.
- There is a need in the elementary school to learn a better way of dealing with the high number of high needs students.
- Develop an enrichment vision. Identify kids' strong interests and offer a series of enrichment opportunities tailored to their interests.
- Find out what parents are looking for and finding in other schools that they are not finding here.
- Residents should open their minds to the possibility of creating a school district, e.g., sending all elementary students to Tunbridge, all high school kids to Chelsea.

- Look at what we really feel about the education of our children. Why does every town budget pass easily, but every line item in the school budget is questioned at town meeting?
- A student suggests that money spent on a high ropes course would be better spent on field trips.
- Ask students what they want included in curriculum.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There is the need to develop a strategic plan.
- Parental involvement is key and that seems to be understood intuitively here.
- School needs to embrace parental involvement concept.
- Cautions against being paralyzed by too many choices. Establish clear goals and plan, going out only five years.
- Give students freedom and independence.
- There is a tendency to drop issues on administration at school—caution community against doing that.
- Having a K-12 school is a wonderful experience for kids—don't lose it.
- Chelsea does not have the barriers many communities have between the school and the community.
- Start thinking about Pre-K education and care to prepare kids for education; teach kids to be better socialized before Kindergarten.
- A community can have a tremendous impact on the direction of its school. It takes real courage to put the hard issues on the table.

Resource Team B

Chuck Ross, State Director, US Senator Patrick Leahy, (Team Facilitator)

Bob Ackland, President, Sugarbush Resort

Corey Beach, UVM Center for Rural Studies (Session 3)

Hal Cohen, Executive Director, Central Vermont Community Action Council (Session 1)

Elizabeth Courtney, Executive Director, Vermont Natural Resources Council

Wayne Fawbush, Executive Director, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

Neal Fox, Executive Director, Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation

Steve Kerr, Secretary, Vermont Agency of Agriculture

Rich Smith, Deputy Commissioner, Vermont Department of Economic Development

Helen Whyte, Director of Development, The Orton Family Foundation

Jonathan Wood, Commissioner, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation

Candy Koenemann, Executive Assistant, Vermont Council on Rural Development (Scribe)

I. Retaining and Attracting Families to the Community

Al Bartsch

Dave Bradshaw

Ginny Campbell

Haydon Dodge

Richard Dybrig

Don Faulkner

Christine Lilyquist

Phillip Mulligan

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- There is much concern that there are not enough opportunities to attract youth and that the high school will not remain viable. Many of the academically motivated students go to Sharon Academy and other private schools.
- Students from nearby towns who have a choice of schools, elect to go elsewhere. The high school may not offer enough to attract those students or keep Chelsea students in town.
- Chelsea is a community with an aging population; young adults need to be drawn to the area. Population in the 30-45 age group is particularly missing. Those who would like to return often can't afford to live in Chelsea..
- Farming is no longer a dominant career base and young people leave to seek careers elsewhere.
- The few available homes are high in cost and there are no employment opportunities to retain the youth who grow up in Chelsea. The nearest jobs are in White River or Barre-Montpelier, a forty-five minute commute.
- Chelsea is a "black hole" for services. Hartford is the service center for the area and is a long distance away with no available transportation to get there.
- Cable service is available within the village, Internet access is both within and outside the village, but there is no cell phone signal in Chelsea.
- There are only 12 units in the community that are considered affordable housing for low-income families.

- Land for constructing homes is scarce so the lack of additional and affordable homes drives people away.
- Chelsea’s geographic location is great for those who value the country atmosphere, but is too challenging to those who cannot access transportation.
- Taxes are high and too costly for the low and middle-income residents of Chelsea.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Chelsea residents are friendly, welcoming and look after each other. The community is safe and has a number of small businesses that help create a village center.
- The schools have a great faculty and are important and well supported by Chelsea residents. Seek to overcome negative “perception” that the school system is lacking. Add diversity to attract students.
- Educate residents and students on how to build entrepreneurial/niche businesses so they can actually work in Chelsea.
- Most residents expressed the need to find ways to develop employment opportunities. There are small high tech companies in neighboring towns; Chelsea could have the same type of businesses. Obtain information from Green Mountain Economic Development to research possibilities.
- Zoning is simplified and restrictive; develop ways to produce affordable housing that comply with regulations.
- Sewer/Water system can support growth for more housing.
- Review existing town plan and develop proactive ways to address imminent changes that are destined to occur. Many residents want Chelsea to remain as it has been, however the reality is change is coming and most felt it is better to do it on Chelsea’s terms rather than just let it “happen”.
- There are funds for helping low income community members. An after school program has scholarship funding they “can’t give away” and other support funds are often underutilized. Some felt it was due to low income “pride” but others stated administration of the funds is not widely known and possibly residents who might benefit are unaware of fund availability.
- Maybe Chelsea needs a newcomers club—or some way of welcoming people into the community.
- A renaissance of Chelsea could start with the renaissance of the school
- The childcare program is not accessed by some who will not trust “people they don’t know” and prefer to leave children with “person next door”. Some of those caregivers are aging and soon will not be available.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- It is difficult to find consensus about what Chelsea residents want for the future. Some residents appear to be hesitant to take the necessary steps forward. People need to plan for change and then embrace changes they want to see happen.

- Capitalize on local pride in schools and use it as a catalyst for linking to economic development. Create diversity to attract and retain students.
- Low and middle-income housing is badly needed.
- Community needs to become aware of funding sources and how to access them.
- Local jobs and businesses need to be developed to enable residents to work in town and not be a bedroom community.
- Chelsea should address conflicting messages from neighbors; most are friendly and welcoming, but some newcomers “gate” their driveways; that initially isolates them and delays forming relationships that would help them move forward as a united community.
- Find ways to connect residents with available human services.

II. Economic Vitality and Land Use

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Allan E. Baer
John Berthelsen
Michael Binder
Bob Brown
Chris Byrne
Craig Byrne
Ginny Campbell*

*Marilyn C. Childs
Bryan Dodge
Richard Dybrig
Don Faulkner
Bill Field
Beth Ann Finlay
Christine Lilyquist
Kevin Marshia
Caleb Rick*

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- Few people are employed in town; so most must commute to work. Residents estimate 70 percent of community are employed out of town.
- Farming and logging have declined so few “work off the land.” There are some small employment opportunities at the wire bending plant, crushed rock quarry, Court House, sawmill, schools and one-person operations (roofing, auto repair, trades) but few large businesses.
- “Open Land” is at risk as landowners sell off property to sustain living or fund retirement.
- The community can see the changes coming and are concerned that there is no plan in place to control the way it will happen and the negative impact on their current way of life. Most recognize it is inevitable and a reality, although some continue to resist and try to keep it like it has “always been.”
- Taxes are high and residents are frustrated that there are no additional funds to cover the costs of addressing planning and development.
- Roads and bridges are in terrible condition.
- Chelsea lacks a capital plan.
- Zoning regulations inhibit incentive to build. Sewer system is at 70 percent capacity and good for a while, but is aging and will need upgrading at some point.

- There are few paid municipal administrative jobs; more help is needed to meet the community's needs, whether paid or volunteer. There is a need to identify the human resource needs for Chelsea.
- Many of the community retirees are happy with things as they are. Some residents see growth as static and needing improvement. There is no common view of strategic growth.
- The town garage sits over the well for drinking water; this is a problem that must be addressed.
- There is no adequate office space available for business tenants.
- Internet access is not ubiquitous.
- Economic development has to fit in with what is occurring in the rest of the area.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Opinions differ more between the older and younger residents than the old timers and new comers. Residents express a need to work on improving communication between all groups and building consensus for Chelsea's future. Planning for Chelsea should concentrate on strategies that don't violate scenery but work to develop economic growth.
- Examine what is needed to start small businesses to help keep younger population in community. Identify what kinds of business the community wants.
- Form a plan to market and brand what is unique to Chelsea.
- Form a Visioning Committee and follow through. A committee was formed to do this about eight years ago and fell flat. It needs to be done again with commitment to move forward.
- Chelsea has residents and resources with lots of substance; they need to get organized.
- Find ways to provide affordable housing for young families.
- Revolving loan funds are underutilized. Communicate process and opportunities. Form a Chelsea Business Association to help small businesses get started.
- Accept that there will be economic development and growth change in the future. Attack it by making a plan and not having it "just happen."

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The community needs to come to consensus and discuss a plan for Chelsea before the inevitable change arrives on its own.
- There are great human resources in the community with enthusiasm and vision. Find leadership and get organized.
- Don't be discouraged by the stalling in the visioning process; it can happen.
- Town planning and zoning need to get in synchronization.
- Work on developing better communication by use of local newspapers, web site, local farmers' markets to avoid fragmented information and misunderstanding.
- Explore possibilities with organizations like VCRD and Green Mountain Economic Development Association.

III. Wealth and Poverty

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Marilyn C. Childs
William B. Field*

*Beth Ann Finlay
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Dr. Brewster Martin
Mary Mascoveta
Judy Szeg*

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- Median income in Chelsea is less than Orange County median income and both are less than the statewide median income.
- No public transportation is available so individuals must have reliable personal transportation to access work.
- Available services for low income are not accessible due to lack of transportation.
- Low-income representation is not present at planning and community meetings, which results in their not having a voice. There needs to be recognition that all different voices make up the community.
- Native youth cannot afford to stay in Chelsea and buy a home.
- Low-income families have few options; housing in nearby areas is not affordable either. Second/vacation homes drive up prices and prohibit locals from purchasing.
- Some seniors have income that is just above the limit to qualify for services. They must make hard choices (food, medication etc.) to live within their income.
- Low income and particularly seniors don't want to accept service that they perceive as charity. Elders won't apply for prebate.
- Low-income students lack basic necessities that cause a division among peers at school. It creates a situation with unequal learning opportunities. Residents with little or no connection to the school system perceive that things are better than they are; "World with a Difference" program is helping but much more is needed.
- Community pays heavily when poverty issues are ignored.
- Wealth is a problem when it isolates residents from the real issues of poverty.
- Domestic violence, sex abuse, and alcohol/drug abuse can happen to the wealthy and poor alike.
- Town governance struggles to strategize when Act 60 and the like impacts the community.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- There needs to be a partnership with the whole community and families. Build relationships with projects such as the Community Garden. Educate unaware residents of needs of school and students to enlist their support and get them involved.

- Use schools as a safe place for recruiting people of means to “pass over the threshold” and help.
- Optimize use of Robert Poor Fund, which is underutilized. Define process and management; Town Report lists account balance.
- Explore transportation options for subsidizing buses.
- Find ways to provide affordable housing to attract and retain young families to Chelsea.
- Create local jobs so Chelsea does not become only a bedroom community.
- Recognize that the presence of wealthy residents creates jobs like plowing and maintenance for other working residents.
- Seek to improve quality of existing food shelf to accommodate needy recipients.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Match up Chelsea’s many resources and opportunities. There is compassionate concern among residents for all populations in community; coordinate efforts to make improvements.
- Many of these issues (transportation, affordable housing) are common throughout Vermont; seek out agencies that can help Chelsea overcome the problems.
- Chelsea needs to come together as a community in deciding what it wants to be; once done, the human resources among the residents will make a real difference.
- Create jobs and affordable housing to keep a young population as part of the community.

Resource Team C

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Peter Gregory, Executive Director, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission

Brian Keefe, Community Liaison, U.S. Senator James Jeffords

Jolinda LaClair, State Director, USDA-Rural Development

Ariana Monti, VT Dept of Economic Development

Doug Porter, Preservation Trust of Vermont

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I. Downtown Development and Preservation

Jennie Martin

Rufus Royce

Diane Mattoon

Charlie Crocker

Betsy Button

Andy Pomerantz

Dick Rogers

Jean Peterson

Walt Rockwood

Emily Marshia

Emily Betts

Russ Hotchkiss

Alan Baer

Jim Richmond

Belle Richmond

Bryan Dodge

Lynn Amber

Elaine Braman

Caleb Rick

Larry Allen

Beth Ann Finlay

Russ Martin

Blake Thomsen

Craig Byrne

Dan Breslaw

George Mowen

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- *The lack of available parking downtown is a major issue.
- *There is a feeling of frustration with planning efforts not going forward, and an inability to develop consensus.
- *No forum exists to make decisions: need community decision-making process.
- *Downtown could be more walkable and pedestrian friendly.
- *Chelsea has no high-speed communications infrastructure.
- *Several municipal facilities (courthouse, town office, library) are outgrowing their spaces; town office is split in two locations.
- *It is a challenge to maintain a downtown core, density, and its functions (town office, school, post office, church, etc.).
- *There is a lack of open land downtown for development. It's all side hill or swamp.
- It is difficult to get people who live further out to be invested in downtown—there is a weak connection between village and rural area.
- People working outside the community have minimal connection to the village/downtown.
- Some commons issues are drainage and maintaining footprint of commons (don't want to lose space to parking or buildings).
- Making upgrades while maintaining rural character is difficult.
- Affordable housing is a challenge.
- There are key properties for sale in town, but the town currently has no control over what happens to those properties
- Chelsea needs to find a way to meet recreation needs to attract youth and commerce to downtown.
- Need attractions to draw people downtown: hard to attract enough business to stay open.
- What is the downtown capacity? What can stay/fit downtown and what won't?
- Not everyone fully appreciates the downtown, its unchanged architecture. There is a need to understand what we have in order to keep and maintain it.
- There is a lack of resources.
- The commercial viability of businesses downtown is a challenge.
- Do people want more businesses downtown?
- The workforce leaves town for employment.
- There are factions/divisions in town. The Town Garage is an example.
- Access is a challenge, particularly for youth and elderly. Some can't get downtown, others can't get out for work, etc.
- We don't know who our neighbors are.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- *Real Estate is available downtown.
- *The town can play a role in determining where properties go by pooling resources.
- A common vision may help community move forward in terms of planning for community as a whole.

- There is an opportunity for broader exploration of available resources: federal, state, private (financing sources other than taxes).
- There is opportunity to gain clearer understanding of process.
- *It's time to find the source of division and work forward to resolve it.
- *It's time to find common ground and use it to our advantage.
- Chelsea needs to develop a community identity that sticks.
- Discussion may result in the emergence of a decision-making process.
- Discussion may lead to action, follow through on visionary plans and documents.
- Chelsea can prioritize based on funding opportunities and target projects it knows it can find funding for to get the ball rolling.
- Route 110 is beautiful: maintaining and capitalizing on that is an opportunity.
- *Incorporate transportation as a component of downtown development.
- *There could be a "park and walk" or shuttle to town and satellite parking (or underground parking) of some sort.
- *Enhancing the things that are pleasing to the eye has positive impacts in many areas.
- Establishing a planning department or revise the planning commission to assist in development.
- Use the river as an opportunity for recreational and economic development.
- Capitalize on the two town greens.
- *Capitalize on the aesthetic beauty and architecture for economy and preservation.
- Build a sense of place.
- Chelsea should determine how to capitalize on leaf-peepers/photographers when they are in town.
- Should we redefine downtown? What are its physical limits? How do we conceive of it? Should we define it as something bigger?
- Small changes can have a significant impact: be discrete and precise; plant trees; install sidewalks.
- This is an opportunity to beautify town.
- We should take advantage of collective knowledge of community members.
- Provide courses in school that help students understand and appreciate Chelsea.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The planning process is either incomplete or very deliberate.
- There is a lack of consensus as to town priorities.
- The community should complete an inventory of what downtown resources are and what they should be.
- The nexus of problems has a strong institutional base (courthouse, library, roads/bridges) and so has potential for drawing resources.
- Issues of public transport, access to jobs, recreation, and services are paramount.
- Assets, participation, and town pride are community strengths.
- There is a need for action: "who is going to do the doing?"
- Chelsea is working towards village designation through the Vermont Downtown Program.
- Many good role models exist in other communities.

- Community members are frustrated that there is no articulation of vision/action.
- Visions...priorities.....implementation....Community members have visions, but need to connect the dots.
- Downtown is a functional core.
- Downtown is an asset.
- People are an asset.
- Chelsea needs to move from planning to action.
- Do you have leadership to get to action?

II. Housing

*Phillip Mulligan
Marilyn Shertzer
Carol Olsen
Dave Bradshaw*

*George Mowen
Ione Battles
Jim Battles
Elaine Brama*

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- *There is a strong demand for affordable housing, both rental units and starter homes.
- Low-income and senior options are filled to capacity and there are waiting lists.
- Quality of housing available is inconsistent. Some are in bad repair.
- *Many homes and rental units are unsafe. Residents expressed concerns for fire safety, energy efficiency, and general maintenance.
- There is a low turnover: aging community members hold on to homes, don't move to new ones and people add on to existing home rather than buying new ones.
- Million dollar homes going up next to old homes: new homes are expensive.
- *Most new residents don't work in town (no jobs to support buying a home).
- *We have space limitations in terms of where to build new housing, particularly in downtown.
- *There are limited job opportunities in town.
- Property is passed down through families; people often need that connection to acquire land/home.
- What will happen to land and rural character with imminent sale and subdivision of farms?
- There are no public services—water and sewer—to farm properties.
- How does Chelsea preserve its rural character while growing?
- The town has no zoning administrator; it's hard to even get people to complete permits.
- Landowners drive town planning.
- There is an added burden when providing services to housing development outside of downtown: plowing, school buses, etc., but it is not really felt or identified yet by town.
- *People move away for other school options; housing, jobs, and school are tightly connected.

- *Dilapidated houses are held by owners and are not for sale. How do you encourage people to sell or rehab?
- State/Federal rehab programs are limited in their effect; property owners may undo what has been done.
- How can town direct where development happens vs. piecemeal?
- Preserving assets may mean slightly more expensive housing.
- Building new may attract new residents rather than providing for people who are already there.
- Transportation: housing needs to have access to town, especially for youth and elderly.
- There is local opposition to zoning.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- People underestimate what they can do with space.
- Incentives for building in a designated growth area may attract more investment.
- Opportunities exist to up-zone to increase densities and enhance downtown.
- *Existing buildings are available and could be rehabilitated to supply a variety of housing and/or development options.
- There is a sewage treatment plant upgrade happening in the near future.
- There could be density bonuses, zoning revisions to encourage use of downtown for development.
- Housing and preservation can be accomplished simultaneously.
- Chelsea's downtown is identified as an historic district.
- Existing housing units can be expanded and improved.
- Planning can help influence where housing development happens.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There is no community consensus on what the issue is: Does Chelsea need to fix things up or provide more affordable houses? No clear idea of what the problem is.
- There is a lack of understanding of current town plan and zoning in regards to housing. Need to analyze need and suggest planning and/or zoning changes to facilitate housing development through private and public sector.
- Doing research on potential sites for housing as well as market study to determine demand will also support other community development goals.
- A suggestion is made that the town can charge an impact tax on buildings that are lowering surrounding property values or are public safety or health hazards.
- Need to create reasonable alternatives so people may be willing to leave the homestead and have a good place to go.
- There is an opportunity to identify housing needs in a way that meets other goals: what are housing goals and what other public investment can come with housing to support downtown, bring families, and lead to historic preservation?

- Ranking community priorities after these meetings will allow residents to see where this one falls and determine a course of action.
- Growth is good for the school population.

III. Facilities and Communication

Carol Olsen
 Merlin Doyle
 Russ Hotchkiss
 Neil Kennedy
 Dick Rogers
 Barbara Rochat
 Rhonda Ackerman
 Betsy Button
 Marilyn Shertzer

Laura Craft
 Jennie Martin
 Theresa Gilman
 Helen Heslop
 Dan Breslaw
 John Parker
 Richard Dybvig
 George Mowen

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- *Municipal buildings are facing space constraints; the town offices are split, and the library, courthouse, and town garage all need more space. Most of these facilities can't grow easily in their current locations.
- *The Town Garage is in need of repair and is a point of contention in the community.
- *A new garage could be built at the current recreation field, but would displace the field.
- The current town well is located adjacent to/behind the town garage. There is a potential for contamination issues. There is a new well that failed initial testing, but has been remedied and should pass now.
- *Parking is an issue downtown for the school, courthouse, post office, and tourists.
- *Sidewalks and walk-ability need to be improved.
- *High-speed communications are a challenge. There is no DSL or cell service. Broadband is in select locations and topography limits viability of satellite service.
- *The lack of high-speed communication infrastructure limits economic development.
- *The old Creamery building, currently unused and dilapidated, is a prime downtown property. It may be a brownfield (*note to those unfamiliar with the term: a "brownfield" is defined as an abandoned, idle, or underused industrial or commercial site where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by known or suspected contamination problems*).
- Limited demand makes it hard to attract communication services to the area, although two meeting members volunteered their silos for cell towers.
- The South Common Community Center is in a rental space that is insufficient in size.
- The school is not big enough.
- The sewer plant will be upgraded.

- The health center doesn't have room to grow and decisions regarding the health center are made by Gifford/Dartmouth, not Chelsea.
- Negotiating with private property owners can be challenging.
- One community member expressed concern over the proximity of the town hall to the schoolhouse. A disruption at the town hall could be unsafe for school children.
- There is a lack of meeting space
- There is a shortage of facilities for youth activities, such as a teen center or skate park.
- Recreation fields could be expanded.
- There is a threat of losing the recycling center and transfer station to a regional facility.
- There is a potential need for childcare.
- Opinions range widely regarding building on land the town already owns vs. purchasing new land to open up more options.
- Some good news is that the Transfer Station is coming out even after operating at a deficit for several years.
- The ice rink provides a successful intergenerational focal point for the community.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- *Real estate for sale in town presents opportunities for facilities development.
- *Acquiring the Creamery building could open up many options including parking and/or redevelopment of the building.
- *An adjacent property (ten acres) may be donated to the town, creating a link along the river from the Creamery to the recreation field.
- *People would like town offices and services to remain downtown
- The area along the brook near the creamery could be a nice park.
- Grange Hall is being renovated and is available for community use
- Movement of one municipal office opens space and starts domino effect.
- There is an opportunity to plan for parking, pedestrians, and facility needs in relation to each other.
- Property for sale near Town Hall is historically significant and should be preserved. It was longest running general store in the state.
- Chelsea is a designated historic district.
- Are there other uses for the school and gym outside of school hours?
- Could wi-fi be an answer to some communications issues?
- A Tunbridge resident provided that town's experience as an example of mapping and planning for the future. Tunbridge held a series of meetings, laid out options, discussed with consultants, voted, and eventually came to consensus. He stated that funding comes when you have a well-defined project.

Reflections of Community Visitors

- Public facilities in town need more space.

- Recognizing various needs at one time presents the opportunity to plan and reshuffle to meet community needs.
- Synergies may exist between problems that represent funding opportunities.
- The Town Plan update should include summary of community facility needs.
- Chelsea can use historic buildings to house facilities as they expand incrementally within the town center.
- The Creamery property is key and could provide parking, new building space, and pedestrian brook access.
- The community has desire, vision, and inertia.
- The community needs to decide on what to do and then work forward.

Chelsea Community Visit Resource Team

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