

## SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PROJECTS

### Development of Town and Private Properties

The Westford Planning Commission is in the process of investigating potential development options for public and privately owned property around the Town Common. In 2019 the Planning Commission established a subcommittee to investigate how the Town might become involved with the redevelopment of the 1705 VT Route 128 property (also known as the 'Pigeon property' or 'bus garage') with the goal of creating opportunity for economic revitalization of the Town Center.

This property is key to revitalization of the Town Center due to its location, size, access to the Brown's River and ability to help jumpstart the Town's other community redevelopment project: a community wastewater system. The Town also must address the reality that after 50 years of service the Town office has run out of space. The Town needs more effective workspace for staff, larger meeting space, expanded vault space and adequate parking that is not located on top of the leach field that serves the municipal buildings.

As a result of the subcommittee's work, a dialoged developed between the Town and the owners of the Pigeon property. The owners agreed to cooperate with the Town's efforts. Since that time, Phase I and Phase II environmental site assessments have been completed. The Town and the property owners have begun working with several potential development partners to find a way to address environmental issues and building site limitations, obtain a commercial appraisal, develop a site plan, and find sufficient funding sources such that the owners will receive fair market value for the property but will not result in an undue financial burden for taxpayers. The goal is to find funding sources to pay for any costs the Town may incur such that taxpayers are not asked to contribute to the development of the property. This would include partnering with public and/or private entities to construct improvements on the property.

Currently, the property owners are in discussions with the Vermont River Conservancy (VRC) with the goal that VRC will purchase the property, establish permanent river access for the public at large, and then deed the property to the Town for \$1.00.

In September 2020, the Town applied for a \$60,000.00 planning grant from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. In early November 2020, the Town was awarded the planning grant. The grant money will be used to pay for further investigation of the property and help develop a preliminary site plan, which is necessary to determine what can be developed on the property and to attract funding sources and potential development partners. Once completed, the preliminary site plan will put the Town in a better position to determine if it is advantageous to continue to work with the property owners and development partners, including the VRC. The site plan and the results of further investigations will not be available until sometime in the spring 2021.

The preliminary site plan will identify and address many site-specific issues, including:

- provide river access for recreational purposes;
- provide the Town with an option for a new Town Office.
- create and implement a plan for remediation of the contaminated soils;
- delineate wetlands and limits of construction/development;

- provide for adequate water supply and wastewater disposal;
- identify setbacks and streetscape requirements.

The Town has had conversations with several potential development partners who have all expressed an interest in exploring a possible partnership with the Town, including:

Vermont Housing Conservation Board;  
Vermont River Conservancy;  
Champlain Housing Trust;  
Habitat for Humanity;  
Northern Borders Regional Commission.

The Planning Commission has also had preliminary discussions with several local private developers who have expressed an interest in becoming a development partner with the Town on this project. Public and private developers can take advantage of the fact that development in and around the Town Common does not need Act-250 approval due to Westford having received Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) designation. Additionally, Westford's form-based code provides more predictability and certainty with regard to zoning approval within the village.

The goal of this project is to utilize the benefits of the Pigeon property to the maximum extent possible in order to not only solve the Town office problem, but to also incorporate community valued features into the final project, such as housing, sidewalks, river access and parking. The development of this property will be vital to help stimulate economic growth in the Village while also enhancing the Town Common.

The Town's revitalization vision for this property would include a mix of 4-6 residential units, retail and office space and the opportunity to build a new Town Office.

### Community Wastewater Solution

The Town's vision for revitalization of public and private property around the Town Common cannot occur without first finding a solution to the lack of wastewater capacity in the Village. At the present time, the development or revitalization of properties around the Common is severely limited due to the lack of any meaningful wastewater capacity.

A community wastewater solution will clear away the one major impediment to further development around the Town Common---the lack of wastewater capacity. At an absolute minimum, the Town must address the severely compromised wastewater systems currently serving the Town Office, Library, Westford Common Hall and Brick Meeting House. Even the new Westford Country Store & Café is currently limited in its seating capacity and apartment use due to the lack of wastewater capacity. If we can find a solution that benefits other properties, it will lessen the financial burden to the Town and the ultimate users of the system.

The Planning Commission has been working for over 10 years to find a solution to the lack of wastewater capacity in the Village. The Town owns the land on which a conventional in-ground system can be constructed, which is located on Brookside Road adjacent to the Maple Shade Town Forest. We have a preliminary design for the system and we have an estimate of the construction costs. We are now working to find funding sources to pay for construction and reduce (or eliminate) any additional amount that the Town would be required to contribute. Towards that end, we are in the process of preparing a Preliminary Engineering Report, which is

necessary to apply for State and Federal funding for this type of project. That report is almost completed. A draft was presented and discussed at the Selectboard meeting on December 10, 2020. We likely will not know any more about potential funding sources for this project until early 2021.

The ability to find adequate funding for a community wastewater system is key to its development. The Town cannot and will not move forward if it places an undue financial burden on the Town taxpayers. The Planning Commission is investigating all potential options for funding. We are currently eligible for at least 50% grant funding from the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund. The Town will continue to investigate other funding sources in order to further reduce any financial burden to the Town.

Once it is operational, a community wastewater system would immediately enable the grand list to grow through new residences, new commercial and retail space, apartments and additions to existing structures.