January 6, 2019

Plans for Rowland, Pa.

The Rowland Cooperative was formed by a group of citizens concerned about the economic plight of the hamlet of Rowland in 2012. Originally the group provided financial and technical assistance to Robert Tellefsen so that he could purchase and run the Rowland Café. After years of economic and personal problems, he lost the café building through foreclosure in 2017. The building has been vacant since then.

For the past three years the Rowland Cooperative has made donations to WJFF public radio in the area to continue as an active charitable organization.

On December 23, 2015, Kenny Christianson used a Prosper loan to purchase the Bait Shop, formerly the Toll House, and allowed Charlie Bright to continue to run the bait shop until he died in late 2016.

On October 10, 2018, Kenny used funds from an inheritance to purchase the Rowland Café building, also known as the Rowland Corners General Store.

Now that the Rowland Coop has control over the two commercial buildings in Rowland, we can help to determine the future of the area. The Toll House has been gutted and painted, and a new roof and solar panels are being put on the Rowland Corners General Store building. Initial plans for 2019 include working with the Township and County to obtain the necessary permits for the businesses. We would like to open the Rowland Café as a convenience store and restaurant in the front of the building, similar to its use in the 1970s and 1980s. We will start small by focusing on breakfast and pizza. In the meantime, we will renovate the Toll House so that it can be used as an ice cream parlor and gift shop, and the rear of the Rowland Café building so the business can expand.

Longer term plans for 2020 and beyond include putting decks around both buildings so that customers can enjoy their meals or ice cream outside with the river and mountain scenery. The Toll House building will be used as a gift shop, ice cream parlor, and small history museum. The Rowland Café building will have a general store in the front of the building, and a restaurant and small concert venue in the middle and rear of the building. The rear can be used as a meeting room for community groups in the area, and a “green room” for bands that perform there. There are currently no plans to use the building as residences. It is hoped the upstairs apartment currently at the Rowland Café building can be incorporated into part of the restaurant as the rear of the building (“the barn”) is renovated. We may be able to put several office rooms on the second floor along with the restaurant.

The Rowland Cooperative looks forward to working with Township officials and other necessary individuals to help to make our dreams a reality. We hope that they will be flexible and patient as we move forward into the future. The coop will do their best to assure compliance with all applicable rules and regulations.