



## Northwest Regional Planning Commission

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To: Fairfield Selectboard  
From: Greta Brunswick, on behalf of Common School Working Group  
Date: April 14, 2025  
Subject: Update on Efforts of the Common School Working Group

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**Where we were a year ago.** In February 2024, the Common School Working Group updated the Selectboard on their work to date and made the following recommendations:

*The working group recommends that the Selectboard allocate funds or support seeking grant funding to hire an architect to update the Gallup plans and cost estimates for the Common School that would fulfill Option 3. The working group also recommends that the Selectboard support the community in seeking grant funding that could contribute to the construction of the improvements, and to otherwise more broadly consider funding strategies. Option 3 is a building restoration that includes 1st floor ceiling work to improve the 2nd floor and an addition off the southside with an at-grade accessible entrance, bathroom and interior lift (see Gallup plans).*

The working group's recommendations were based on a comparative analysis of reuse and restoration options, consultation with a local developer with historic preservation experience, the working group's understanding of community needs and consideration of potential funding options.

**What's happened since last year?** Following the February 2024 update and a well-received March 2024 presentation at Town Meeting, the working group met again in April 2024. Next steps included applying to the Village Trust Initiative (VTI) and the Selectboard's intent to complete a wastewater investigation. VTI is a funding and technical assistance program run by the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) and Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV) that supports non-profit led restoration and reuse of community buildings. NRPC supported the working group in applying and completing the interview, but unfortunately in the summer of 2024 it was announced that the project was not funded in the competitive and very selective first round.

The working group did not convene any meetings in the busy summer and fall months and met again in January 2025 and again in March 2025 to review updates and next steps. The working group recommended applying for a Municipal Planning Grant to fund updated architectural schematics and cost estimates for restoring the building to be ADA accessible, energy efficient and suitable for use by Black Creek After School Program and other community supported uses. The application also included additional wastewater feasibility work. NRPC supported the town with the grant, which was submitted on March 31. Funding announcements will be at the beginning of May.

**What next?** Priorities for the rest of 2025 include the following:

- 1) Steer and coordinate the architectural design and wastewater feasibility, if funded by the MPG. Seek funding from another grant if not funded.
- 2) Coordinate a second application to the Village Trust Initiative in partnership with the Town and FCCA. Applications are expected to be announced in late June/early July 2025.
- 3) Investigate capital campaigning and recruit participation from community members that have experience/interest in leading or supporting.
- 4) Prepare a 1-page project statement to communicate and market the project to the community.