

Common School Working Group Meeting

Wednesday June 24, 2026 4:30PM – 6:00PM

Fairfield Town Office, Chester Arthur Room

Minutes

1. **Additions/Changes to Agenda. None.**
2. **Septic Feasibility Update.** Area 2 (current garden area) has best potential for a new system; capacity approximately 360–390 GPD. Area 1 has some capacity; combining Areas 1 & 2 with a longer mound is possible but requires additional wetlands investigation. Area 3 (above basketball courts): not suited — bedrock present. Area 4: shallow groundwater — not viable. Septic capacity is tight for combined assembly use + housing; potential museum use category still needs to be confirmed against wastewater rules. No permit on file for existing system.
3. **Survey Results Review and Discussion.** ~75% of respondents indicated the proposed use fulfills a community need (green/thumbs up). ~70% said it would benefit the community. ~10% were unsure (yellow); remainder thumbs down. Community comments favored housing over office space; office space drew cost-benefit skepticism. School/gym proposals were not well-received; gym space deemed insufficient and financially unviable.
4. **Continued Discussion on Vision for Multi-Purpose Community Space (first floor).**
First floor: Idea to have the first floor serve as a Working Lands Museum — historical exhibits paired with displays/possible small-scale sales of current local products (maple, dairy, farm goods). Characterized the museum with an integrated "gift shop" element featuring local producers.
Second floor: Renovated as one open space — no partitioning; flexible for after-school programming, fitness classes, or event rentals.
Consideration of deferring housing for now: Upper-floor housing set aside due to property management infrastructure requirements, septic capacity limits, and potential need for separate stairwell entrances. Confirm with Chi whether sprinklers eliminate the need for separate exterior stairwells for housing.
Basement: Minimal investment in Phase 1 — stabilization, cleaning, paint, and drainage improvements only; available for Rec program and team use.
Discussion of after-school programming: discussed retaining as a potential use but not the primary driver of the building's reuse case, given low current attendance (under 10 students). Upper/second floor could be used for afterschool.

Additional discussion on concept of a working lands museum:

- Potential name - "Fairfield Working Lands Museum" (maple highlighted for promotional draw but dairy, vegetables, and other agriculture included).
- History of local agriculture + living showcase of current producers; tie-in with school curriculum (e.g., student projects as rotating exhibits).
- Revenue ideas - Case/display area rentals by local businesses, pop-up sales, possible small café/coffee stand if kitchen area retained.
- Seen as highly fundable with strong grant potential and broad stakeholder excitement.
- Rail trail visitors identified as a natural audience.
- Idea to create focus group for brainstorm session on the Museum Idea. Is it viable? Would you participate? What are your ideas on how to shape it? Could it be a coop? Plan for September.
- Potential focus group members: Charlie Machia – President of HS, Cristal Driscoll, Cathy Branon, Jane Berry, Terry Lesperance, Melissa Manson, Torrey Crossman, Producers - Cecile Branon, Julie Matranga/Zach Brandau, Martha Manning, Cathy Branon, Julie Wolcott
- Questions
 - o Need to confirm wastewater permitting category for museum/assembly use and exact GPD requirements.
 - o Management structure for the building overall remains a concern and needs continued focus — no entity currently exists; needed regardless of final use.

5. Other Business. None.

6. Next Meeting, Next Steps

Next meeting = Tuesday August 18, 2026 5:00pm

Summary of action items:

- **Greta:** Confirm stairwell/entrance requirements with architect (Chi) re: housing vs. other uses.
- **Greta:** Draft a short concept paragraph for the Working Lands Museum to circulate before the brainstorm session.
- **All** - Plan for brainstorm session with focus group.
- **Jean:** Contact raffle winners and distribute prizes (West End, Heart and Soil gift certificates).