

Ferrisburgh Town Center Committee (FTCC)
April 17, 2023 Approved Meeting Minutes
In Person/Virtual Meeting via ZOOM

Members Present: Bonnie Barnes, Chair, Rick Kerschner, Paul Hoffman, Annie Cohn, Christine Gingras

Additional Participants: Ashley Laflam, Rich Morin

Bonnie called the meeting to order at 6:35.

Rick moved to accept the March 20 meeting minutes and Paul Seconded. During Discussion, Bonnie requested a change adding Rick's name to the last sentence of paragraph four to read "Rick and Bonnie will follow up on this." The amended minutes were approved.

Rick Morin's Proposal for Installation of Temporary Art Assemblage on the Town Center Green

Rich Morin, a Ferrisburgh designer and artist, was introduced by Ashley Laflam. Rich had approached Ashley with a proposal to enliven the area around the Union Meeting Hall with an art installation. Ashley invited Rich to a Building Maintenance Committee (BMC) meeting to present his proposal to create and install a "Cloud" assemblage on the town green. The BMC was impressed with his proposal and referred him to the FTCC.

Rich is interested in activating public spaces using assemblages made of found or discarded objects to catch people's attention, to "make people stop and look." Rich stated that he has watched the Ferrisburgh Center area devolve and evolve over time and he sees this as a time that is ripe for using art to bring folks together and improve the town. He has recently worked with Birdseye to enliven two of their unoccupied buildings on Rt 7 by installing two abstract prints in black frames on the facing exterior walls of the two buildings. When he saw the pile of metal roofing material Birdseye had created during the recent deconstruction of the out-buildings on their property at the SW corner of RT 7 and Little Chicago Road, he was inspired to repurpose it as art. Birdseye fully supports his projects.

Rich is also interested in engaging other local artists to join the effort to create art to enliven public and private spaces, trails, and buildings where people can gather throughout Ferrisburgh. He envisions this work as just a beginning, "a drop in a pond that will create a ripple." During discussion, excited attendees expressed support for his proposal to enliven the town center. Bonnie invited Rich to present his proposal to the Select Board for discussion and, hopefully, approval.

Ashley expressed interest in having the assemblage in place by the first UMH event on May 19. She is planning to engage FCS students in such art-related projects and Rich expressed interest in working with students to create their own art from found objects. Rick Kerschner mentioned the artist residencies that are popular at FCS and commented that Rich's "art to enliven" concept would be an interesting focus for such a residency.

Brown Church Survey

Rick presented the results of the Brown Church Repurposing Survey. There were 491 responses, a 21% response rate from the 2,360 registered Ferrisburgh voters. He presented Survey Monkey graphs that showed a significant majority of participants support using the building for a child care center, followed by support for a senior center, with an art center and business incubator garnering significantly less support. There were 218 comments from one word in length to several sentences. Many of the comments suggested using the building for more than one activity and a combination child care and senior center was a popular suggestion. Fifty-one responders expressed interest in assisting with the project in some way and provided their names and contact information. Rick provided Bonnie with a list of volunteers with their contact information listed alphabetically by last name.

Let's Grow Kids

Bonnie reported that she, Annie Cohn, Paul Hoffman and Rick Kerschner met at the Brown Church with two representatives from Let's Grow Kids. Didi Harris, Senior Programs Manager for Northern Vermont, will work to inform possible day care providers of this opportunity in Ferrisburgh. Jen Severance, Community and Program Support Specialist, can provide information on possible funding sources to build-out and support child care facilities in our area. Both were impressed with the general condition of the building and advised that the lower area would be the best space to improve and retrofit for child care. The 1000+ square foot space could support child care for 20 children. Bonnie is following up with both Didi and Jen.

Grants and Grant Management

Ashley reported that she is in the process of establishing another 501c3 non-profit organization, *Friends of Ferrisburgh*, to support initiatives beyond the Union Meeting Hall. We are all aware of the numerous grants that are available to support Vermont's towns. Bonnie commented on the importance of employing a Grants Manager to prioritize which grants to apply for, coordinate the writing of the grants, and manage the implementation of grants that are received. All agreed that the lack of an experienced grant manager could be the "bottleneck" to receiving grants and successfully completing grant-funded projects. Although administrative costs to support a grants manager can be built into the grant projects, Rick recommended that the FTCC advise the Town to establish a reimbursable fund to hire a grants manager in the near future, as there is often a lag between being awarded a grant and receiving grant funds to support grant administration and management.

Village Center Designation

Bonnie reported that Ferrisburgh Center was awarded Village Center Designation by the State of Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. Designated Village Centers are eligible for benefits including tax credits and priority consideration from other state programs and agencies.

Pedestrian Safety Scoping Study Proposal for Route 7 Crosswalk

Bonnie Barnes, Annie Cohn, and Jean Richardson met with Mike Winslow, Transportation Planner for the Addison County Regional Planning Commission and [Steve Huphinger](#) to discuss next steps in advancing the 5-month study being conducted by DuBois & King Inc.

to plan a crosswalk and associated sidewalks on both sides of Route 7 between the Little Chicago Road traffic light and the Town Hall.

RAISE Grant (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equality)

Bonnie reported that Ferrisburgh will likely be included in a 2022 RAISE grant project funded through the U.S. Department of Transportation as authorized in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. In Northwest Vermont, \$2.250,000 will be used to advance Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Planning. In Addison County, a TOD plan will focus on the Route 7 highway and rail corridor, in particular the towns of Ferrisburgh, Vergennes, and Middlebury. As part of this project, Ferrisburgh could see up to \$100,000 for projects that meet the following criteria:

The TOD project for the Northwest region of Vermont will develop a comprehensive plan for transit-oriented development of 12 communities across a five-county region in Northwest Vermont...The project envisions that developing transit-oriented developments with accessible and convenient public transportation services, will provide a viable alternative to automobile-dependent living for Vermonters, reduce household transportation costs, and provide rural residents with job opportunities. Furthermore, it will support the development of walkable centers in village areas while also providing new transit connections for rural, mobility-challenged Vermonters.

<https://www.ccrpcvt.org/our-work/transportation/2022-raise-grant/>

Ferrisburgh Trails

The Ferrisburgh Trails Committee announced that the Town has received a \$25,000 grant from the State to create a planning document, a master plan, to develop and maintain trails and other transportation resources in Ferrisburgh. Annie Cohn is a member of the Trail Committee and will keep the FTCC up-to-date on trails planning.

New FTCC Member

Guest Rich Morin informed us that one of his areas of expertise as a designer is helping clients visualize systems. He offered to work with the FTCC to produce some drawings/maps to visually indicate how the various projects discussed at this meeting might interact to improve the quality of life in Ferrisburgh. All agreed that such tools would help Ferrisburgh residents understand the benefits of the many projects being planned and implemented. Rick Kerschner invited Rich Morin to join the FTCC and he accepted.

The next meeting of the FTCC will be on Monday, May 15, at 6:30 PM. The meeting will be held in the Town Hall's ground floor meeting room and will be conducted in person and on line via Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 PM.

Respectfully Submitted
Rick Kerschner