

Vernon Volunteers' Collaborative Meeting Notes - 3/13/17

As Mitchell's was closed for renovations we met at the Vernon Diner this month.

Attending

The 9 attendees represented 7 of our 13 organizations. They were:

- Cheri Arzt - Vernon Education Foundation
- Don Bellingham - Vernon Greenways Volunteers
- Carolyn Blouin - Vernon Historical Society
- Jean Luddy - Vernon Historical Society
- Jean Merz - Vernon Garden Club
- Tom Ouellette - Arts Center East
- Nancy Strong - Strong Family Farm
- Cindy Trenholm - The Vernon Chorale

Also participating was: Jon Roe - The Tankerhoosen Valley website

Organization Updates & News

- **Arts Center East** hosted a successful production of Hamlet. Their annual Public Schools Art Show will be held on March 27. On May 7 is a poetry reading by CT's Poet Laureate. They are using a downstairs room for smaller shows of local artists.
- **Strong Family Farm's** season begins with their annual Chicken Run on April 9. The first workday will be April 8. They plan to have work days every Saturday besides the twice a year clean ups. The Farm Store opens on June 14 and will offer free ice cream to students the last day of school.
- **The Vernon Chorale's** next concert is at the historic Methodist Church in Manchester. A June 3 concert will be held at the Talcottville Congregational Church. The Chorale is planning interviews for a Conducting Fellow and a Choral Fellow. RHS students will be eligible to apply.
- **Vernon Education Foundation** is gearing up for their annual mini-grant program.
- **Vernon Garden Club's** monthly programs are going well. This year they are meeting at the Vernon Congregational Church. Their annual plant sale will take place on May 13.
- **Vernon Greenways Volunteer's** kicks off their season on April 26 with a talk by Town Engineer Dave Smith on how they will create the suspended bridge over the Hockanum River this summer. Vernon was also selected as one of a dozen state towns to take part in a trails census to determine how our trails are used and how they could be improved to encourage more use.
- **Vernon Historical Society** had a successful program with Dick Symonds and will receive the proceeds from the sale of his book on the Mills of Vernon and Rockville. An unpublished 1935 WPA History of Rockville and Vernon is also being prepared for publication. The 2016 fall Craft Fair was very successful and preparations are underway for his spring's book fair.

Vernon Events Magazine

- The four articles for the Spring issue of *Vernon Events* are posted on our website for participants. The articles are: Upcoming Spring Events, Arts Center East School Exhibit, Vernon Historical Society's "Vernon - Our Town" update, Vernon Garden Club's Working With Kids.
- Articles for 2017 spotlight one project or accomplishment of an organization. The Summer issue covers late June, July, August and early September. Articles are likely due May 1.
 - Planned articles include Summer Events, Strong Family Farm's Farm Stand, Vernon Greenways Volunteers Suspended Bridge Project. There is room for one more article.
 - Fall issue - Fall Events, The Vernon Chorale's Conducting Fellow, Vernon Education Foundation and room for one more.
- Please continue to send news items to post on non event subjects such as Scholarships, Grants and Student Projects.

Town News

- The Vernon Farmers' Market moves to Henry Park this year and will be open from 3-6 p.m. on Thursdays. VHS will again have a presence at the Market.
- VHS at their March program on mills released Richard Symond Jr's book, "The Lost Mills of Rockville & Vernon." It can be purchased from the Society.
- The Manchester Land Conservation Trust was given a 16 acre parcel by Lee & Lamont above Amerbelle off Pleasant Street. It is open for hiking and was named the Stickney Hill Preserve.
- Post Note: The Eighth Greater Vernon Holistic Healthfest was held at VCMS on March 25 & 26 as a fundraiser for the Vernon Youth Services Bureau. The Tankerhoosen was a Silver Sponsor and had a table along with Strong Family Farm, NCLT and Vernon Greenways Volunteers. We also had materials available on VVC organizations and upcoming activities. The Tankerhoosen released a new brochure on 12 sites along the Tankerhoosen River for outdoor activities. Both Mayor Champagne and Town Administrator John Ward visited our booths.
- Referendum coming up on the bonding for a new senior center. Post Note: Bonding for the new Senior Center on Bolton Road was approved on March 28. At the public hearing on the center several people urged that it also be a community center. This will come up again so consider how your organization could make use of the Senior Center. Meeting rooms and displays are possibilities. What else?

Schools

- Superintendent Macary was not able to make this meeting but plans to return in the future.
- Recall he offered to distribute your pdf flyers with his regular emails to families. Take advantage of this opportunity.
- With Spring weather and the end of the school year in sight students may be looking for volunteer hours to meet requirements. Information on the program and contacts can be found on our website at VernonVolunteers.org/participants/rhs-volunteers.
- Jean Luddy continues to work with school staff on updating “Vernon, Our Town” for third graders.
- The schools received a \$377,000 one-year grant from the Hartford Foundation For Public Giving to help develop a system-wide plan geared toward school and community partnership. How can VVC organizations be part of this partnership?

Grant Information

Nancy has been very active researching grants for Strong Family Farm and shared some of her resources with us.

- GrantStation (GrantStation.com) offers nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and government agencies the opportunity to identify potential funding sources for their programs or projects as well as resources to mentor these organizations through the grant seeking process. They provide access to a searchable database of private grant makers that accept inquiries and proposals. Nancy has an account and is willing to share her account with others.
- TechSoup Global can provide you with free or discounted software and hardware. They are a nonprofit organization providing technology products and information to eligible nonprofit organizations through various donors. Their website (TechSoup.org) provides training webinars, community forums and other resources about the use of technology in nonprofit organizations.
- Nancy offered to sit one-on-one with any interested VVC organization to help you get started.

Potential Projects

At each meeting we discuss potential projects, primarily to increase our visibility. However, with member involvement in their own organizations no one seems to have time to contribute to a VVC project. Two that may still be viable are:

VVC Brochure - The Tankerhoosen brochure Jon just created with 12 sites on the river could be a model for listing our 13 organizations in a brochure. There are two questions to consider:

- How will people use it? Is there some action we expect to be taken or is awareness of our organizations enough to justify the cost?
- How will we pay for it? A sponsor would be nice, but if not each organization would have to contribute. Since collecting from 13 groups might be a challenge perhaps there could be two size listings - large for those who contribute and small for those who don't. For a color brochure we might need \$1,000.

Promotional Packet - Discussed at previous meetings this would be a simpler and low cost approach. Each organization contributes one piece of material - a brochure or flyer. We design a cover for the folder, an introductory letter and we're done. It's up to organizations to bring their material to meetings.

- The challenge is distribution. We can have available at events at VHS, Strong Farm or the Farmers' Market. But to make it a Welcome Packet we have to reach Realtors and Rental offices.
- We agreed to experiment with this by bringing about 25 pieces each to the May meeting.
- Cindy will see if with the Tolland Chamber does any kind of welcome package.

July Meeting - We set aside July 10 for a potential event - a grant workshop, special speaker, visiting our outdoor facilities or just a picnic for socializing. If we are to do something a decision has to be made at our May meeting.

Next

- Our next meeting is scheduled for **Monday, May 8** at 9 a.m. at Mitchell's Restaurant.
 - CVC's Melanie Merkle was contacted as a speaker for March. Just back from maternity leave the timing was too tight but she could do May. Strong Farm and VHS now utilize their services. There might be a benefit for others.
- Other quarterly meetings are scheduled for September 11 and November 13.

Jon Roe
4/02/17