

Vernon Volunteers' Collaborative Meeting Notes - 9/10/18

Our meeting was held at the Vernon Senior Center.

Attending

The 8 attendees representing 9 of our 13 organizations were:

- Don Bellingham - Vernon Greenways Volunteers, Friends of Hockanum River Linear Park
- Ginny Gingras - Vernon Garden Club & Tolland County Agricultural Center
- Karl Hasel - Northern CT Land Trust
- Karin James - Friends of Valley Falls
- Jen Kowal - Arts Center East
- Nancy Strong - Strong Family Farm
- Cindy Trenholm - The Vernon Chorale
- Seana Weaver - Strong Family Farm

Also participating:

- Jon Roe - The Tankerhoosen
- Maureen Gabriele - Vernon Senior Center Executive Director

VVC Updates

● Much has happened since our last quarterly meeting in May held in the Town Council Chambers. Here's a brief recap:

- **June 1 - VCN Annual Meeting.** I attended at the Cornerstone Community Center. They would like to talk with us about working together. We might have one of our meetings at the Center to explore opportunities with them.
- **June 9 - CT Open House Day** with **Strong Farm, VHS** at **Strong Farm** and **FOVF** participating. There was modest participation and attendance as every town was promoting their own sites. I'd like to see us consider a **Vernon Open House Day** on a different date. We would trade state wide promotion, but be more likely to pull from surrounding towns.
- **July 9 - VVC Summer Special Events** - We toured the Water Treatment Plant followed by a picnic at Driggs Hill Farm. Representative Mike Winkler explained how things really work at the legislature in Hartford.

Organization Updates & News

- **Arts Center East's** new Executive Director Jen Kowal introduced herself to the group and reviewed recent and upcoming programs. The Gene Pitney show was successful and the Dionysus Players 'God of Carnage' play will end its run this weekend. The new kiln should be in operation by June.
- **Friends of HRLP** completed the Suspended Bridge video with a June 3 ribbon cutting. The Pleasantview Drive. Boardwalk official opening will wait until Spring.
- **Friends of Valley Falls** was open for tours 4 weekends this summer. The bathroom in the Red Barn is finished. Their Annual Meeting is Sep. 30 with speaker Amy Paterson. The Heritage Center should be open in the Spring.
- **Northern CT Land Trust** will have its annual meeting in Somers on Sept. 30 with a program on Birds of Prey. Fall hikes in Vernon at Talcott Ravine on Sept. 29 and Webster Preserve Oct. 14.
- **Strong Family Farm** introduced new Executive Director Seana Weaver. The farm stand has been open and includes Sunday craft pop-ups. Their Harvest Festival will be Oct. 20. They have a matching grant for the next year of \$100,000.
- **The Vernon Chorale's** first concert of the season is Dec. 8 at St. Bernard's Church in Rockville. A change of personnel at RHS is slowing school projects. They are seeking grants.
- **Tolland County Ag Center** - The 4-H Fair was held again this Summer.
- **Vernon Garden Club** has begun its 2018-19 3rd Monday programs.
- **Vernon Greenways Volunteers** is winding down its season.
- **Vernon Historical Society** will hold its Fall program on Sep. 23 on the Tolland County Children's Home. ACE will host a preliminary talk on the school. The third edition of 'Vernon, Our Town' is at the printer. A crack in the Grange building foundation was repaired this summer. Jean will work with RHS on their 150th anniversary.

Hartford Foundation For Public Giving

As a result of Hartford Foundation (HF) meetings the town, under Town Administrator Mike Purcaro, is planning to review and recreate its communication systems, internal and external, print and online. I am part of the team representing VVC. Since my report to you at our last meeting on May 14 the following has taken place:

- On May 16 we met with Mike Purcaro to review our ideas in preparation for a follow up meeting with Hartford Foundation. He agreed it was important to have the community involved.
- On May 24 we again met with HF. Nancy represented VVC. HF was pleased at our progress and commitment challenging us to be inclusive and collaborative. A grant was discussed.
- On June 1 HF President Jay Williams and others from HF attended the Vernon Community Network's annual meeting where they gave a short talk on HF and their work in Vernon. The also were able to experience the diversity of VCN.

- On June 6 we met again with Purcaro to review the HF meeting. It was decided to seek a grant, and to ensure it is structured correctly we'll hire an HF recommended consultant. HF will meet again with us when we have a plan.
- On June 28 a small group met with HF at their office to discuss next steps. HF provided a list of consultants.
- A subcommittee interviewed and selected a consultant to help us plan next steps.

School News

- The 3rd edition of "Vernon, Our Town" has gone to press.
- There are plans for a 2nd Volunteer Day at Rockville High School this fall. Changes will be made to get more student involvement based on last year's experience. No date yet.
- Kim McTighe, a prevention specialist from the Youth Services Bureau is now at RHS.
- 'Red, White & Blue' Schools - This is a program to engage students with their towns. Enfield and South Windsor were recognized for their work in 2018-19. Macary may submit 'Vernon, Our Town.' VVC could offer other ideas if they decide to do more with the program.

Organization Promotion

- **Public Works Community Day - Saturday, September 15, 9-12.**
 - At a Spring Meeting we told Mike Purcaro we were looking for opportunities to meet the public. He had Public Works invite us to participate in their Community Day, originally scheduled for May, but postponed to this month due to rain.
 - The weather was perfect and VVC had a tent with information on our organization, upcoming events and your brochures if you provided them to me.
 - Public Works estimated total visitors over the 3 hours at about 500. Visitors fell into 2 groups - those bringing documents to be shredded and families with small children who wanted to climb on trucks. We were located where families passed. Those shredding documents were older and might have been interested, but drove to a different area and didn't have to exit their cars. I had a few interesting conversations with other exhibitors, but families were not that interested.
- **Strong Family Farm Autumn Harvest Festival - Saturday, October 20, 10-2.**
 - Nancy has invited members of VVC to exhibit at her festival. This event attracts a wide variety of the community and marks the end of our outdoor season.
 - I will have a tent but will focus the exhibit on The Tankerhoosen as it seems to be a better draw. VVC material will be available for when I can expand the conversation with people.

- **Vernon Seniorhood Fair - Saturday, October 20, 10-2.**

- Held roughly every other year this event is patterned after the Vernon Healthfest and will be held VCMS. Organized by the **Vernon Multidisciplinary Team** it targets seniors, adults, caregivers and disabled adults. Unfortunately, it is the same day and time as the Strong Farm Autumn Festival.
- VVC is not taking a table as we plan to be at Strong Farm.
- They understand the conflict and have invited us to put our information and brochures on a community table. I will put something there from VVC.

- **Tankerhoosen Newsletter** - As *Vernon Events* has not been replaced and we have no other way to reach people I sent out a September email newsletter (675 on list) with selected upcoming Fall events as I did in April and May.

- **Social Media** - I continue to put many of your events on our MeetUp site (290 members) and Facebook Page (550 following). They are also listed on our website. As always let me know of upcoming events and please check the online Calendar.

Ideas For Working With Seniors

When Maureen Gabriele joined us we introduced ourselves and our organizations. We then exchanged ideas about how our organizations might support the Senior Center and its mission.

It was a good conversation and you are encouraged to follow up with Maureen. Bring members of your boards for a visit and a more detailed discussion with Maureen. It is a wonderful facility.

Following are some of the ideas that were offered as a starting place:

Exhibits - A number of our organizations have collections that can offer temporary displays - some on walls and others in cases. Groups that might participate are the Vernon Historical Society, Arts Center East, and the New England Civil War Museum. The Senior Center is interested and is considering where to put display cases.

Programs - Many of us have speakers regularly or do talks ourselves and could do slide show or Powerpoint presentations in the large Program Room. With the raised dais and wall monitors its an ideal setup. Groups that could provide speakers and programs include Friends of Valley Falls, Northern CT Land Trust, Strong Family Farm, The Tankerhoosen, Vernon Garden Club, Vernon Greenways Volunteers and the Vernon Historical Society.

Other possible projects

Arts Center East - Arrange private tours of art shows.

Friends of Hockanum River Linear Park - Lead shorter walks for Seniors on Vernon trails.

Friends of Valley Falls - Arrange small private tours at the Heritage Center or Valley Falls Park tailored to Seniors.

NCLT - Special walks tailored to Seniors.

The Vernon Chorale - Do a music program at the Senior Center.

Vernon Garden Club - Help with garden projects or teach techniques.

Vernon Historical Society - Collect oral histories at Senior Center, make the Senior Center a pick up spot for local history bus trips, scan historical items and photos that seniors have.

Note: Active Seniors currently join us on many of our hikes. Those proposed here would be for seniors who find rough trails, distances or hills challenging.

Ideas From Elsewhere

I keep a running list of ideas for promotion of our organizations or the town that other towns in the area are doing. New ones are presented to you at our quarterly meetings. I will post the full list on our website. Here are a few new ones:

- **Ellington Farmers' Market** did their '**Meet Your Community Organizations**' again this summer.
- **Ellington Trails Committee** does a '**Trail of Treats**' for Halloween. A one mile loop for kids with hidden treats and activities along the way.
- **Windsor Historical Society** also did a July **Tour Windsor Rocks!** with rock painting and getting people out.
- **Windsor Historical Society** is again doing their **Great Windsor History Hunt** in October. Clues take families to sites all over town who then take photos and post them online.

Next

- Our next quarterly meeting is on **Monday, November 12**. Location to be determined.
- Future guests - We welcome your ideas.

Jon Roe
9/24/18