

Vernon Volunteers' Collaborative Meeting Notes - 3/09/20

Our meeting was held at the New England Civil War Museum.

Attending

The 12 member attendees representing 12 of our 13 organizations were:

- Laurie Bajorek - Vernon Education Foundation
- Don Bellingham - Vernon Greenways Volunteers
- Ginny Gingras - Tolland County Agricultural Center & Friends of Valley Falls
- Karl Hasel - Northern CT Land Trust
- Ann Letendre - Friends of HRLP
- Jean Luddy - Vernon Historical Society
- Jean Merz - Vernon Garden Club
- Mary Millican - Strong Family Farm
- Frank Niederwerfer - New England Civil War Museum
- Nancy Strong - Strong Family Farm
- Cindy Trenholm - The Vernon Chorale
- Phyllis Winkler- Arts Center East

Also participating:

- Jon Roe - The Tankerhoosen
- Mike Winkler
- Cynthia Zingler
- Cheryl Forbes

New England Civil War Museum

- Our host **Frank Niederwerfer** gave us an overview of the museum's history, resources, programs and future plans.

Vernon Communication

- We were joined today by **Cheryl Forbes**, our new Communication Specialist. She has only been on the job for a few weeks so is busy meeting people, learning about Vernon, our new website and our communication challenges.
- We introduced ourselves to give her a feel for what we do and are planning for Spring. We talked a bit about how we promote our events and our challenges. Cheryl has some teaching at community colleges. At some point we'll have a session with her to get pointers on how to improve our press releases and promotional communication.

- In a followup meeting with Cheryl and the Community Engagement Working Group it appears there will not be an immediate release of the new website and calendar. Not surprisingly the school and town have different systems that aren't working well together. I'm encouraging the town to include some of us in testing a Beta version of the website before rolling it out to the public. There are flaws and bugs in any new large computer system.
- It's likely the town's quarterly publication will go on a back burner for some time.

Town News

- **Student Volunteer Hours (Cynthia Zingler)** - We've had mixed results with November events at Rockville High School which offered opportunities for students to obtain their required volunteer hours. One problem may be that students feel in November they have plenty of time to do their service. Cynthia offered to set us up in the library in April when students may be panicking and are actively looking for opportunities. I'll poll you in a separate email. Required hours are being increased from 10 to 12.5 per year.
- There will be no **Hockanum Brewfest** or **Vernon Healthfest** this Spring. However the **Seniorhood Fair** at VCMS will be held on **Saturday, October 17**; the same day as the Strong Family Farm Harvest Festival. **Lt. Bill Meyers** is chairing the fair.
- **2020 POCD** - Now that our new Town Planner, **George McGregor**, is in place we are hiring a firm to produce the plan. The Administration expects to just update the 2012 POCD, but we'll want to carefully review the document to be sure our priorities are included. Updating the POCD every 10 year is a responsibility of the Planning & Zoning Commission.
- **Hartford Foundation Community Grant (Phyllis Winkler)** - The Hartford Foundation For Public Giving established a \$100,000 fund for each of its 29 towns. Ours kicked off on November 6 at MCC. A **Selection Committee** was formed whose sole task is to choose a diverse **Advisory Committee** that will develop groundrules, seek ideas and decide how to spend the fund. They are now seeking volunteers for the Advisory Committee and applications are available.
- **Performing Arts Space** - The Administration is working with UConn on a possible **Performing Arts Center** in the old **Senior Center building**. Public Forums were held during September and October to gather input. A report was recently made to the Town Council. It concluded there was a good chance of success. They hope to implement a creative district to include ACE. UConn is still to make recommendations and provide a timeline as part of their contract.
- The **Citizen's Block** is being updated to house West Main St. office departments - engineering, economic development, planning and zoning. When finished the Citizen's Block will include a Community Room for meetings like ours. A good deal of remediation of asbestos and lead paint remains, as well as replacing the roof so there is no date yet for completion.

- **Amerbelle Mill** - The town is in talks with a potential developer for Amerbelle Mill, which has been vacant since 2012. The mill would likely be converted into a mixed use property with residential and business space.
- **Dog Park** - The new dog park at the Saxony Mill Park will be open this Spring. Fences are up and they are securing running water for dog and human fountains.
- **Town Internet Hack** - As you know the town's Internet was hacked for over a week. Most of the functions have been restored and insurance will cover most of the cost. There has been no explanation of what happened as investigative work continues.
- **New signs** were installed near Vernon Center to help visitors find Strong Family Farm, Vernon Historical Society, Arts Center East and the New England Civil War Museum thanks to Rep. Mike Winkler.

Promotional Opportunities

- **CT Trails Weekend** - June 6 & 7.
 - The Hop River Bike & Walk in Bolton will hold multiple events on June 6.
 - Vernon Park & Rec and the Friends of the HRLP will formally open the Pleasantview Boardwalk on June 7.
- **CT Open House Day** - June 13.
 - So far Strong Farm, FOVF and NECWM will have events. ACE and VHS may also.
 - April 10 is the sign up deadline.
- **Tank Newsletter** - The first newsletter of the Spring season went out in late February. Currently plan to send others in Mid April and late May. Events will be selected for inclusion from our website Calendar. Some will also be promoted on our MeetUp and Facebook.

Fundraising

- **Hartford Library Nonprofit Workshop Series** - The Spring Series includes programs on Fundraising, Board Training, Nonprofit Fundamental and an Information Fair will be held on May 20. Several of our members have attended and find the events valuable.

Organization Updates & News

- **Arts Center East** will have their new kiln operating soon. Consider donating to their annual Tag Sale on April 24 & 25.
- **Friends of HRLP's** Pleasantview Drive boardwalk project will be dedicated on June 7, as part of CT Trails Weekend.

- **Friends of Valley Falls** expect their Heritage Center to open this fall. They will hold their 3 Walk Weekend in May and the Farm will be open for tours during the Summer.
- **New England Civil War Museum** is reorganizing its exhibit space. Their annual Civil War Day Camp is scheduled for May 2 at Strong Family Farm. They will host speakers in June and October as well as their annual Candlelight Tour on October 24.
- **Northern CT Land Trust** is updating its website. Their annual canoe paddle of Upper Bolton Lake takes place on May 9.
- **Strong Family Farm's** season begins with the Chicken Run on April 5. They have a full schedule of events planned with the Farm Stand opening June 17 and a new event - the pet friendly Dog Days of Summer on August 16.
- **The Vernon Chorale** has concerts coming up in early April and on June 6.
- **Vernon Education Foundation** is accepting applications for their teacher mini-grant program. They are also developing a Painted Rocks project for teachers.
- **Vernon Garden Club** monthly programs continue. Their annual plant sale is scheduled for May 9 at VCMS.
- **Vernon Greenways Volunteers** will hold the kickoff of their 16th season on April 29.
- **Vernon Historical Society** is working with Rockville High School with displays on this year's 150th anniversary. Jean will do a program on June 7. The annual Book Sale will take place the last weekend in April and first in May.
- **The Tankerhoosen** - Bolton is celebrating the **300th Anniversary** of their founding this year and I have been part of their Planning Committee to educate both communities about our common heritage. I did a talk on our first 90 years for VHS in March and will do others at the Bolton Senior Center in June and for FOVF in September. Events will culminate in Bolton with a parade and Revolutionary War Reenactment in early October.

Next Quarterly Meeting

- Our next quarterly meeting is scheduled for **Monday, May 11** at 9 a.m. It will likely be hosted by **Tom DiDio** of the **Rockville Community Alliance**. Please add it to your calendar.

Jon Roe
3/17/20