

BNML Engagement Meetings

Synthesis of Input 10/9/2019

SOURCES OF INPUT COLLECTED IN JULY & AUGUST, 2019

- Aspiration Exercise: 7 existing groups (BNML Trustees, Friends of BNML, Select Board, Recreation Committee, Community Center Board, FCS 3rd grade class and Planning & Zoning Committee) which included ~ 50 townspeople from 3rd grade to “seniors”
- Ask Exercise: conversations with ~ 50 townspeople
- BNML Survey: 114 responses (see separate summary titled *surveyreport2019.pdf*)

WANT TO LIVE IN A COMMUNITY WHERE:

- Welcoming, neighborly, inviting, friendly, accepting, caring/kind, “neighborly fellowship”
- Rural, agricultural, scenic, peaceful, safe/secure, “farming/rural lifestyle”, “ideal Vermont lifestyle”
- People are engaged across generations, interests, geography, Integrated, cohesive, diverse, “rooted in community”
- Affordable now & for the next generation; Good place to raise a family
- Respect for our history & heritage

BUT THERE ARE CHALLENGES

- Lots of uncoordinated/autonomous groups which makes interaction/collaboration difficult:
 - Geography of the town: East Fairfield, Fairfield, North end, West side, etc.
 - Those with school age children vs not
 - “Newcomers” vs multi-generational families
- Agricultural industry is challenged (low milk prices, regulation, public opinion) & threatens our rural lifestyle
- Sense of ‘isolation’ due to:
 - Lack of common communication vehicle of what is happening in town
 - Lack of public transportation; strained socio-economic issues
 - We don’t know our neighbors anymore
 - Decision-makers don’t communicate upcoming activities/solicit input (e.g., Town Green in Fairfield)
- People commute to jobs that are out of Fairfield which limits available time
- Too few community-wide events/activities (e.g., Fairfield 250th, Jig in the Valley, To Bid, Trunk or Treat, adult sports leagues, “not just school/sports”)
- Inconsistent/unreliable internet & cell service
- Development in Fairfield village limited due to lack of sewage/septic
- Not enough \$\$; burdensome state regulations

SO CHANGES NEED TO HAPPEN:

- Collaboration/cross pollination amongst/between existing groups (i.e., Fairfield/East Fairfield, Rec Committee & Library)
- Community-wide communications about what is happening at all levels: from culvert replacement/road closure to events
- Preserve/record our history & heritage; record stories before they are lost
- Get more/younger people more involved in decision-making/Town meeting/elected/appointed offices to broaden perspectives/representation
- Job opportunities for our young adults/community internships
- Good internet/cell service everywhere: “rural technification”

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IDEAS ON WHAT/HOW:

- Community-wide “newspaper” with calendar
- Annual or semi-annual community-wide event (i.e., Fairfield Community Day, corn roast, Community Celebration, Craftsbury Uniques & Antiques)
- Gathering place such as “Chester’s with beer”, a café, snack shack at the Pond/recreation areas or a pavilion w/restrooms on the green
- Welcoming “committee/package” for newcomers

IMPORTANT TO NOTE:

- Several felt that Fairfield is already the kind of town that they want and that we need to ‘protect’ it; always room for improvement
- Underlying sense of pride in Fairfield was very evident
- BNML & staff viewed as an asset for Fairfield