

**The Greensboro Association
Community Initiatives Committee Report
August 6, 2020**

The Community Initiatives Committee continues to conceive, advance, and support a wide variety of efforts and events in our Greensboro community. Overview of community initiatives included in this report are:

- Bend Revitalization Initiative
- Caspian Challenge Run
- Greater Greensboro Community Visit Program
 - Cell/Broadband Connectivity Task Force
 - Stewards of the Watershed Task Force
 - Wastewater Infrastructure Task Force
 - Walkability/Bikeability Task Force
- Greensboro and Stannard Emergency Response Team
- Sunday Evening Music

Bend Revitalization Initiative

(Update submitted by Nancy Hill)

This past spring, the BRI received a \$3,000 grant from the Vermont Community Foundation to assist with the "Front Lawn" project and to improve the gardens in the Bend Park. Homeowners were invited to choose a shrub or tree for their front yard and a committee from the BRI planted 25 on Main Street and "French Hill," which will help beautify the streets.

A devastating fire in the spring ruined the former Pope Store. Town officials are in weekly contact with the owner to get the debris from the Pope Store and the Lanphear Building cleaned up.

Due to COVID-19 the Annual Bend Block Party was canceled this year and other efforts have temporarily been put on hold.

This summer, the Greensboro Historical Society created a self-guided Historical Walk throughout the Bend, inviting everyone to look at placards placed in front of historic buildings with information and pictures from their past. Maps can be picked up at Smith's Store.

Initiative members currently include: Nancy Hill (chair), Ken and Janney Johnston, Alison Gardner, BJ and Hal Gray, Carol Fairbank, Mark Snyder, and Dan Predpall

Caspian Challenge

(Update submitted by Cathy Irwin)

The 9th Annual Caspian Challenge lake run/5K took off with a socially distanced 8:30am Sunday morning start, with 5K runners heading out Lake Shore Road and Lake Loopers starting towards town via Breezy Avenue. Forty-six athletes signed up online for the event, with 23 Lake Loopers, 16 5K runners, and 7 5K walkers. Because of COVID-19, there was no in-person registration, and runners and walkers were permitted to start anytime on Sunday. The event was self-timed this year, and participants sent in their times to race organizer Stew Arnold afterwards. Many thanks to sponsors Jasper Hill, Hill Farmstead, Willey's, and Skida. Prizes of Hill Farmstead gift certificates, Skida headbands and Darn Tough socks will be awarded by a random drawing of those who turn in their times, and proceeds from the event will go towards the Greensboro Association's Lake Fund.

Committee members currently include: Cathy Irwin, Stew Arnold, and Don Jenkins.

Greater Greensboro Community Visit

The Greater Greensboro Task Forces were established through the three-month long Community Visit process led by the Vermont Council on Rural Development in 2019. Throughout this process, community members identified four priority areas for future action: Improve Broadband and Cell Service; Address Water Quality and Lake Protection; Build Community Wastewater Infrastructure; and Improve Community Walkability and Bike-ability. The four priority areas were assigned to task forces. Over 175 community members participated in the process and many signed up to join task forces to implement action plans based on feedback from the community visits over the summer. Each task force is developing action plans and can access state human and financial resources to help move projects forward. To view the full Greater Greensboro Report and Action Plan, click [HERE](#). The Community Visit process was chaired by Victoria von Hessert. Updates from each task force are below.

Connected Greensboro Task Force

(Update submitted by John Stone)

The “Connected Greensboro” task force has been working on a mission to achieve maximum broadband and mobile/cellular coverage and connectivity at affordable prices for the residents of Greensboro. High-speed internet is defined by the FCC as 25 megabits per second download speed and three megabits per second upload speed. Clearly, many of our residents have limited or no access or are unhappy with their options for broadband. We conducted a survey of residents to share needs for broadband services in our community. The results confirmed the lack of adequate broadband service and further amplified priorities. A lack of financial incentives for providers to service areas like Greensboro and the NEK has made it difficult to make progress on securing vital services.

Our priority through the winter and spring was to facilitate efforts for Greensboro to join NEK Community Broadband, a newly formed CUD (Communications Union District). Following a successful vote at town meeting, Greensboro is now a member of the NEK Community Broadband and is positioned to work collectively with other member towns to take advantage of fundraising, feasibility studies, provider negotiations and ultimately implementation of services across the NEK. Carol Fairbank was selected as the representative from Greensboro to join the board of the CUD and Mary Metcalf was selected as alternate. While it will take some time to see these services deployed and servicing Greensboro residents, it is clear that Greensboro and Orleans County are positioned well for implementation given proximity of existing infrastructure, and multiple factors that increase our eligibility for prioritization. Covid-19 has expanded the urgency and actions are already actively underway to deploy broadband with CARES funding to those with acute needs (e.g. populations with high needs for education, telehealth, telework) in particular by extending existing infrastructure where feasible. To learn more about the CUD and the encouraging progress that's been made in a very short time, please visit the [NEK Broadband website](#), where you'll find information, an FAQ, and board meeting minutes to date.

The committee has also explored potential technologies including Fiber, Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), Cable Internet services, Fixed Wireless, Satellite and Cellular as well as discussed commercial plans with providers. These efforts dovetailed with onboarding our CUD participation to help identify service options for Greensboro.

The committee successfully deployed a local hotspot in Greensboro located at the United Church of Christ using a grant from the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD). The goal of the hotspot is to service the village, the public beach and the town and village greens with wifi internet access, wifi calling and improved safety and emergency response. Spark generously offered to host and enable the hotspot with their high-speed fiber network.

We also initiated activities to further evaluate area mobile/cellular coverage providers, issues and challenges. AT&T's agreement with VTel and other tower improvements has improved cellular access in the area for AT&T subscribers.

The committee is continuing to keep abreast of developments and the members are available to answer questions and address concerns.

Committee members currently include: Carol Fairbank, Pal Bickford, Fred Mann, Dave Stoner, Mary Metcalf, Joan Feffer, Ken Johnston, Stew Arnold, Michael Hoffman, Sam Young and John Stone (Chair).

Stewards of the Greensboro Watershed Task Force

(Update submitted by Jed Feffer)

The Stewards of the Greensboro Watersheds have been hard at work. First of all Emily Irwin, Orleans County Land Treatment and Nutrient Management Specialist, along with Amy Picotte, Lake Wise Coordinator and Manager from the Vermont Dept. of Environmental Conservation have guided us towards Lake Wise Certification for Caspian and Eligo landowners. The Lake Wise program supports lakeshore owners to make property improvements that result in less run off and sedimentation in the lake. Up to 6 properties on Caspian and 2 properties on Eligo can be initially evaluated. A few property owners have volunteered to have Lake Wise Assessments done on their property. Unfortunately, the money to do these assessments will probably not be available in 2020. It is expected that we can proceed in the summer of 2021. Hopefully every landowner will get on board to take care of the lake and understand the actions that hurt it. We are also interested in organizing a Watershed Assessment which would require a substantial grant funding. This money would fund an in depth analysis of all the sources of pollution flowing into the lake. Google Lake Wise Vermont for a detailed description of the program.

On August 24th at 7:00 p.m. five state scientists will present information on the condition of Greensboro's watershed. The inspiration for this program was an article co-authored by Kellie Merrell, environmental scientist, called Is Vermont Losing its Oligotrophic Lakes? Essentially, the authors call into question how increasing phosphorous levels in Vermont's cold water lakes are turning these lakes gradually into warmer lakes, and negatively effecting water quality. Kellie has gathered a group of four scientists to make their presentation. We planned for a presentation at the Highland Center in late June, but Covid 19 had other plans. We look forward to a Virtual presentation on the 24th of August. The presentation will be on the Teams

Platform. The real time link to the presentation should be available by August 10th. The link will be forwarded to the Greensboro Facebook pages, the Hardwick Gazette, Front Porch Forum and Vermont Digger. One of the presenters, Oliver Pierson, will generate a press release that will make the presentation available to a much wider audience. The program will be recorded for those who cannot attend in real time.

The agenda will be:

7:00—Intro. to Webinar to clarify the procedures of the presentation

7:10 Danielle Owczarski (Watershed Planner) –An Overview of Greensboro’s Water Quality

7:20 Staci Pomeroy (River Scientist)—Overview of Greensboro’s Streams and River Features

7:40 Jud Kratzer- (Fisheries Biologist) –Fish Populations in Long Pond, Caspian, Eligo and the streams in Greensboro.

7:55 Kellie Merrell- (Environmental Scientist) –Trends in Lake Water Quality and Unique Features of Caspian, Eligo, and Long Pond

8:25 Oliver Pierson (Program Mgr. Lakes and Ponds Mgmt. Protection Program) and Danielle Owczarski—Tools Available to Protect and Restore Greensboro’s Watershed

8:45—Questions and Answers

Please attend the presentation that will set the seeds to protect the watershed for your children and grandchildren.

The next program we have organized involves a Virtual Streamwalk with Staci Pomeroy and Danielle Owczarski, representatives from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources on Friday, August 7th at 10:00 am. We will be using the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Atlas to look at the streams in Greensboro.

This Streamwalk is in preparation to decide what streams we would like to focus on, and what data we would like to collect. We would have audience participation regarding what participants know about the streams. We would look at the opportunities these streams offer, and the improvements the streams need. The Virtual Stream Walk will be followed by a Field Walk in the fall. By Tuesday, the 4th the link should be available allowing people to join the Streamwalk on the 7th. The Streamwalks could lead to grant proposals to the Stream Wise Program for money to fund restoration projects. There are 3 documents Danielle sent us if anyone wants them forwarded to them. They are: Caspian Tributaries Walk- the Greensboro Land Trust and Jim Ryan from Vt. ANR (5/2/13); Caspian Lake Feeder Stream Study; and the 2019 Caspian Lake Tributary Water Quality Report. See Jed (jedtfaffer@aol.com) if interested in them.

Jared Nunnery, Orleans County Forester, will do an onsite visit with us at a later date. He would

help us understand the relationship between forest cover and water quality.

Community education events to promote understanding of lakeshore septic systems and how they work have been postponed due to the pandemic.

Committee members currently include: Emily Irwin-Finnegan (Orleans Co. Rep.), Jim Sawyer (Eligo Rep.), John Stone, Jed Feffer, Rick Lovette, Christine Armstrong (Greensboro Planning Commission Rep.), Nicole Mann, Fred Mann, Lucy Mitchell, JoAnn Hanowski (Co-chair), Stew Arnold, Lise Armstrong, June Bascom (Co-chair), Anna Kehler, Caroline Kehler, John Schweizer

Wastewater Infrastructure Task Force

(Update submitted by Tim Nisbet)

Greensboro participated in a Community Visit Program facilitated by the Vermont Council on Rural Development during the summer and early fall of 2019. The activity garnering the most votes was wastewater, an indication that there is a high level of interest in this issue. It was clear that the lack of wastewater infrastructure in Greensboro is a serious impediment to the long-term viability of our community. A Wastewater Team was formed in November. The ten-member team has met numerous times to develop an approach to bring wastewater treatment facilities to Greensboro. The three options for service area facilities discussed were: Greensboro Village, Greensboro Bend, and the homes adjacent to Caspian Lake.

The team began its work by agreeing that it had to collect a lot of information about this subject, including researching what other towns have done and communicating with Vermont agencies who work with wastewater issues. In addition, the team decided to invite two organizations to address the team: the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Section, and a representative of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP). Both of these organizations support small rural communities like Greensboro as they grapple with wastewater treatment needs.

After hearing presentations from the USDA and RCAP, it was clear that Greensboro should apply for a wastewater grant that would enable the town to engage an engineering consultant. The primary requirement for this grant/loan program would be to develop a Work Plan that describes the study needed by Greensboro. To this end, a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was prepared that asked engineering firms to provide information about their capabilities and experience to conduct a wastewater treatment feasibility study. The RFQ was sent to eleven firms of which six submitted proposals. The Team narrowed the choices down to two firms asking them each for a Request for Proposals (RFP), which would give us more detail on their individual approach to the project. The Wastewater Team evaluated the responses and selected Hoyle, Tanner Associates of Burlington to be the Town's engineering consultant and

develop a Work Plan to be submitted as part of the grant application. Along with this they are assisting the town in applying for financial assistance.

At this point we do not have the cost of the wastewater system but that will be projected in the feasibility study. Financing is interesting. If the system is not built, the town is under no obligation to pay for the feasibility study; that loan is forgiven. On the other hand, if the project is built, the cost of the study is rolled into the overall project cost. On top of that, it is likely that the overall project cost could be reduced by up to 70% due to Greensboro's location and demographics. This is because the town would likely qualify for USDA Rural Development funding grants for projects of this nature.

At this time, the project is still in the early planning stages. The next major undertaking will be the Feasibility Study conducted by Hoyle, Tanner. At the same time, the WW team is working on a survey and will hold a public information meeting to inform residents about the team's activities and progress. The town is extremely fortunate to have Dan Predpall involved as he is well versed in how to navigate through this process.

Committee members currently include: Peter Romans (chair), Kim Greaves (Town Clerk), MacNeil (Scribe), Dan Predpall, Mateo Kehler, Mike Metcalf, Devin Burgess, Stew Arnold, Ed Sunday-Winters, Tim Nisbet

Walkability and Bikeability Task Force

(Update submitted by Naomi Ranz-Schleifer)

The walkability and bikeability task force has chosen to focus on three areas: supporting the completion of the Greensboro section of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) in the Bend, developing an off-road recreation network, and improving pedestrian access and safety in the village centers.

At Town Meeting on March 3rd, the task force encouraged the Town of Greensboro to support a resolution to encourage Vermont and the Governor to include funding allocations in the state budget (\$2.8million) in order to receive Federal matching funds (\$11.3 million) to complete the LVRT. Vermont approved the funds in the State Budget and VTrans has been tasked with spearheading the efforts to finalize the LVRT, a section of which will go through Greensboro Bend. As progress continues to develop with the Rail Trail the task force, in collaboration with the Bend Revitalization Initiative, will likely seek additional funds to connect the LVRT to other recreation network efforts.

The off-road recreation trails crew is developing a uniform system for recording and mapping existing trail and class IV road networks, and once refined, will be seeking community participation to crowd source data collection. The crew is testing GPX tracking apps and mapping programs to visualize existing trails and low-traffic road routes to document the recreation resources in our community. This visualization will also aid in identifying areas where new trail connections could be made. One such area is the link between the Porter Brook Trails

and the Barr Hill Trails. This spring, the Greensboro Land Trust, in collaboration with the Highland Lodge, applied for and received a grant from the Northern Forest Destination Development Initiative to connect the two trail networks and make improvements to the existing trails and signage. The task force is also exploring the feasibility of an off-road Caspian lake loop trail or trail segments in high traffic areas, including from the village center extending both toward the ball field and toward Craftsbury. To further expand recreation networks in the Greater Greensboro region, the committee is also connecting with the Nature Conservancy and Vermont Land Trust.

The pedestrian access and safety crew is examining sidewalk conditions, traffic flow, and parking arrangements in the village centers in an effort to improve safe walking routes in these higher traffic areas. To start with, the crew is currently working with LocalMotion and VTrans to develop a recommended plan (that will consider crosswalks, side walks, parking spaces, and traffic cues) for the intersection of Breezy Avenue, Wilson Street, and East Street (Willey's Store, Millers Thumb, and Greensboro Green). Once developed, this plan will be shared with the Selectboard for review and discussion. Simultaneously, the Greensboro Nursing Home is seeking to do a feasibility study to develop a walking path on the Nursing Home's property with the hope of developing a safe walking route to the village center and connecting to other task force efforts.

The task force continues to review funding opportunities and engage with local and state partners to integrate the various efforts to improve the overall walkability and bikeability of our community.

Committee members currently include: Becky Arnold, Devin Burgess, Ollie Burruss, Lynette Courtney, Jim Fredericks, Adam Froehlig, Sister Gail, Clive Gray, Harold Gray, Nancy Hill, Erika Karp, Anna Kehler, Peggy Lipscomb, Roy MacNeil, Bobbie Nisbet, Ezra Ranz-Schleifer, Naomi Ranz-Schleifer (chair), Sara Slater, Wilhelmina Smith, Emily Stone, Jerilyn Virden

Greensboro and Stannard Emergency Response Team

(Update submitted by Tim Nisbet)

In early March of 2020, a group of residents got together to revitalize the town's Emergency Planning Committee in light of the increasing power outages due to major storms. Early on, we were struggling with getting all the players together for a meeting. It was suggested we try Zoom, a concept not known to many. It became evident very quickly that the emphasis was shifting away from storms to the New Corona Virus affecting other countries. It was only a matter of time before it would be making its appearance in the NEK. Those initial meetings were held daily. As we got established and roles were defined, we found we could stretch out

the time between those meetings to avoid burnout of members. Now, in August, we meet every two weeks unless a need arises that requires committee action.

Initially the committee set about setting goals and defining what the needs of our community may become. A master list of residents and homes was established with contact information. A list of folks who may be needing special attention was formed and those people contacted. Available resources were researched and cataloged. A list of volunteers was established; for instance, those who would be available to do home deliveries or make phone calls to shut-ins.

Communications was a major consideration. A local phone number (802-441-5225) was established as the one place to call anytime for information or assistance. Volunteers answered those calls and made the proper referrals. We set up a phone tree to be able to get information to those without internet and email capabilities. The first Community Letter went out mid-March informing the community what the Greensboro Emergency Response Team (GERT) had prepared so far. Included were appropriate contact resources folks may need. A mutual aid survey was sent out seeking volunteers, needs, and contact information. Posters were produced giving concise information and posted in the appropriate locations in town. Wi-Fi hotspots were established. Four more community letters have gone out since keeping people informed of safe practices and especially the latest recommendations/mandates from the State Health Department. The Spark organization contributed much needed technical services in producing the newsletters and postcards. All new information obtained by the committee has been posted on the town's website. The Greensboro Walking Ladies along with other volunteers distributed information packets to most all unoccupied homes in town to assure returning seasonal residents would be informed of the situation.

Food was the other major consideration. Willey's was quite proactive in setting up safe shopping protocols establishing curbside pickup and volunteer deliveries. A voucher program was coordinated with the Greensboro United Church of Christ. The Church also set up a mini "food bank". You will recall that nationwide folks were going berserk hoarding toilet paper and hand sanitizer; we checked in with local stores to see how their supplies of essential items were holding up. Rob and crew at Willey's have done a stellar job of serving the community with safe practices.

Soon GERT partnered with the town of Stannard to form the Greensboro Stannard Emergency Response Team (GSERT). We also coordinated our actions with neighboring towns in the NEK and statewide through various initiatives. These efforts were presented via Zoom meetings. As this pandemic was new to all of us; we shared ideas and reduced the need to recreate the wheel.

PPE shortage was a problem. Locally, several volunteers produced masks which were given out free of charge. A large number of masks went to the Nursing Home, Craftsbury Community Care Center, Hardwick Health Center, and the Rescue Squad. Mask usage was highly recommended in all our communications. Mask wearing was not mandatory at the time. At first usage was spotty but by now most folks have joined in by wearing them.

Yet another major challenge has been interpreting the information sent out by the Vermont Department of Health (DOH) and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD). Often information was a bit murky and sometimes conflicting among the two agencies.

Our Health Officers, Karl Stein and Christine Armstrong, were able to wade through the verbiage and reduce it to an understandable format which they communicated through the Community Letters. They also answered countless phone calls and emails from residents both local and afar about proper procedures. These communications from the state were constantly changing as the pandemic evolved. As folks prepared to return to town, Karl and Christine were able to give them accurate and timely guidance. Major kudos to both Karl and Christine for their efforts!

Our health officers coordinated with Circus Smirkus and the appropriate state agencies to figure out how the summer camp could operate safely. This appears to be working out fine.

Working with Ken Johnson, the recycling coordinator, new protocols were set up including social distancing, organized parking, and strongly recommended mask wearing. This venue also became a good place to distribute current COVID information.

The public beach has been a challenge. It is difficult to enforce social distancing and mask wearing. Education and positive reinforcement seem to be the best practice. Another challenge has been the quarantine protocols which have evolved over time and have been subject to interpretation. Again, our health officers have been proactive in getting the correct information and presenting us all with clear guidelines.

In April we conducted a “Tabletalk Discussion” which was basically a modified Incident Command System based exercise. This challenged the participants to think of the “what ifs” that could present themselves in case of a major COVID outbreak in town. From this exercise, we came away recognizing our strengths: a strong community, good networks and communication methods, and the fact that we started early, before the virus was termed a pandemic; Greensboro was ahead of the curve!

The state reported between one and five cases in Greensboro in June. Yes, this is vague but that is the way the numbers are reported. Rumor has it the actual number was two. No names are given out. To date there have been no spikes in COVID cases or big problems arising in town. Congratulations to the Greensboro community and to our visitors. Throughout this entire process, it has been our goal to keep all members of the community, no matter where they live, informed of accurate information. We have attempted to nurture a welcoming attitude to all. This is not about “stay home, don’t come here”. It is about “let’s all support one another and be safe”.

In conclusion, the efforts of the GSERT committee have been quite successful. Thank you all for your patience and cooperation. The GSERT committee is very appreciative of the overwhelming generosity of the Greensboro Association in the establishment of the Community Relief Fund. Several essential local grassroots organizations have been able to obtain PPE and cover expenses outside their normal budgets brought on by the virus.

Committee members currently include: Anne Stevens (convener), Bethany Warner, Brian Labelle, Carol Fairbank, Christine Armstrong (deputy health officer), Cilla Bonnie-Smith, Devin Burgess, Ed Sunday-Winters, Jennifer McGrath, John Moffatt, Jon Ramsay, Judy Dales (secretary), Karl Stein (health officer), Kim Greaves (town clerk), Landon Thompson, Melissa

Moffatt, Naomi Ranz-Schleifer, Peter Romans (chair), Robbie Hurst, Shaun Fielder, Tim Nisbet, Tom Gilbert

Sunday Evening Music

(Update submitted by John Hewett)

The Sunday Evening Lake Concerts have continued but with a reduced schedule. The concert on July 19th was particularly memorable because there were thirteen boats attending. Thanks to Gary Matteson and family for making the concerts happen!

If you have questions or would like to join of any of these efforts, please contact the respective committee members or chairs.

Respectfully Submitted,
Naomi Ranz-Schleifer, chair

Committee Members: Stew Arnold, John Hewett, Cathy Irwin, Don Jenkins, Tim Nisbet, John Stone, and Mary White