

What's Happening at Town Hall

A PUBLICATION OF THE DANVILLE SELECTBOARD

Town of Danville

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TOWN PURSUES GRANTS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Ten years ago, with the help of a VTrans Bicycle Pedestrian Grant, the town undertook a study to determine the best means for bikers and walkers to access Danville's busy village center. The resulting scoping study outlined preferred alternatives and preliminary design and construction costs for both a shared pathway extending from the town athletic fields to the Danville green, as well as a sidewalk extending from Highland Avenue to the village core along Hill Street.

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AD HOC COMMITTEE TO STUDY TOWN MEETING

At the 2023 Town Meeting an article allowing election of town officers and other public questions by Australian Ballot was soundly defeated. Many who opposed the measure feared that passage would mark the end of Town Meeting. The reasoning behind the article was that during the pandemic, more residents participated in all ballot measures than ever before. The selectboard hoped that with passage of the article, this trend would continue, and more voters would have a say in who represents them in town offices.

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TRAIN STATION RESTORATION AND REPURPOSING PROJECT

In 2020, the Planning Commission organized a train station sub-committee that was tasked with obtaining funding for the Conditions Assessment and Feasibility Study and moving the restoration and reimagining of the Train Station and associated property forward. The committee, chaired by Michael Hogue, has worked diligently to move the project forward and can see the light at the end of the tunnel. They hope to "break ground" on the project this fall.

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TOWN PURSUES GRANTS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

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At the time the hope was to apply for an additional Bicycle Pedestrian Grant for the final designs and construction phase, however, the required 20% local match proved to be an obstacle to project completion. Ten years later, by using town ARPA funds as revenue replacement, thereby creating a general fund surplus, the town is now able to afford a grant match without raising tax revenue. This spring the selectboard, on behalf of the town, applied for two grants in hopes of securing funding. In June an application was submitted to Northern Borders Regional Commission for “Destination Downtown Danville”, a large infrastructure project. If awarded, this grant would provide funding for the shared pathway and sidewalk project and would also include funding for a municipal parking lot with a solar canopy and EV charging stations adjacent to the Town Hall. The town also pursued funding through the VTrans Bicycle Pedestrian Grant to construct the shared pathway and Hill Street sidewalks, however, was not awarded a grant this year. NBRC Grant awards will be announced by the end of August.

In addition to these two grant opportunities, the board submitted a request through Senator Sander’s office for Congressionally Directed Spending, (formerly earmarks), for construction of the shared pathway and Hill Street Sidewalk. CDS is a long process, and the town of Danville has made it through the first two steps. Senator Sanders selected the project from the many requests, and it has been included in the Senate budget request.

Future grant applications will include a State of Vermont Municipal Park and Ride Grant, which could be used as grant match should the town be awarded the NBRC grant. The board is also pursuing other funding sources for the solar canopy and EV charging stations.

TRAIN STATION RESTORATION AND REPURPOSING PROJECT

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Sally Fishburn, Building Committee co-chair and her team are making a final review of architect Ryan Edwards’ construction documents. After the review is complete, the documents will be put out to bid by construction manager David Pratt. Once a contractor is selected, the construction will begin with raising the existing structure to pour a foundation and add appropriate drainage. The full project will include a new roof, reconstruction of the passenger platform and canopy, and construction of a new entrance at the area of the old recycling entrance. Also planned for are restrooms, historically reproduced new windows, new doors and raising the freight room door back to its original height with French doors to accommodate business in this part of the station. Finally, the building will be repainted. Drawings and schematics for the project can be viewed at: <https://danvillevt.gov/planning-commission/>

Once the reconstruction and repurposing are finished the focus will move to construction of a user oriented “Pause Place” in the grassed area. This area will feature a kiosk, bike racks, picnic table, trash receptacles, bike repair station and many sitting stones. This area will be ADA compliant.

The newly reconstructed and repurposed train station will serve the community and visitors well as a rest stop, transportation hub, and gateway to the village center businesses.

AD HOC COMMITTEE TO STUDY TOWN MEETING

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This summer, Alice Kitchel suggested to the board that interested parties should discuss town meeting format and consider whether changes should be made considering changes in our culture. The ensuing discussion resulted in a decision to create a committee to study this issue and to develop strategies to increase participatory democracy in Danville.

Board member Glen Herrin has taken the lead on the initiative and has developed a charter for an ad hoc committee. The committee will be composed of 5-9 members appointed by the select board through an application process. The mission of the Town Meeting Committee, as stated in the charter, is as follows:

1. The Town Meeting Committee identifies options for enhancing local participatory democracy in traditional Town Meeting by conducting research, soliciting and considering public input, and making recommendations to the Selectboard and School Board by January 2025.
2. The output of this committee should not be a single course of action, but a set of feasible, acceptable, and suitable options that the Selectboard and School Board can choose from to begin to implement with the 2025 Town Meeting, subject to ultimate approval by the voters of the Town.
3. The committee should make an interim report at the 2024 Town Meeting and preceding information meetings.

The full charter can be found on the Town of Danville website at <https://danvillevt.gov>. The Town Meeting Committee will begin their work after all members have been appointed to the committee in August.

DANVILLE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT NEWS

Please join us in welcoming two new employees to the highway department. In June, the board hired Christopher Harrod, a Danville resident, to fill the newly created position on the crew. Christopher, originally from Massachusetts, loves the Northeast Kingdom. He has experience in mechanized logging, landscaping, and Christmas tree work.

In July, the board hired Shane Drinkwater, who grew up here in the Northeast Kingdom and currently lives in Groton. Shane has been self-employed and has experience in tree work and replaces Matt Montgomery who had served on the highway crew since July 2022.

Christopher and Shane join current highway crew members Bill Bailey, Brian Pal, Dennis Tillotson, Tom Gould, and Foreman Keith Gadapee in providing excellent service to our town.

In other highway department news, thanks to preventative work done by Keith Gadapee and his crew, Danville roads sustained some damage during July's rain, but nowhere near the catastrophic damage to roads in nearby towns. The eight sites deemed to be FEMA eligible sites, were on the list for preventative maintenance, according to Keith Gadapee. Town Clerk, Wendy Somers, and Keith have been working with FEMA representatives to ensure that the town receives funding to repair the eligible sites. The board is grateful to Keith and the crew for all their hard work in maintaining our roads. Please take the time to let them know how much you appreciate their service!

DANVILLE DOG PARK



Earlier this year a group of residents, led by Alison Low, Chelsea Hewitt, and Barbara Huibregtse came together to discuss the possibility of bringing a dog park to Danville. One of the first orders of business was to conduct a survey of area residents to determine the level of interest and to gather comments and concerns regarding the proposed dog park.

The survey, yielding 142 responses, indicated a strong desire for a dog park in town, with the primary purpose being an area for exercise and socialization for our furry companions, with the added benefit of socialization with other dog owners. Must have features, indicated by survey respondents, are a double-gated entry to a fenced in area, enough space for dogs to run, a source of water, waste bags and receptacle, as well as clearly posted rules. Some concerns expressed through the survey were about noise, smell, and proximity to residential areas, as well as concerns about aggressive dogs.

The group, encouraged by survey results, moved forward with field trips to other dog parks to gain information about funding sources, maintenance, and dog park etiquette. A handful of sites in town were selected to visit and assess for suitability. The optimal site was determined to be the 6-acre parcel which includes the Danville Sewer Treatment Facility. The group that visited, including members of the selectboard, agreed that there would be ample room for a fenced in dog park, but that extra safety measures would need to be taken considering the presence of the two lagoons that are part of the sewage treatment process. Constructive dialogue with the Agency of Natural Resources will be necessary to create the park and ensure that the dog park does not interfere with the primary function of the property.

To solidify the organizational structure of the group and work more efficiently with the town, the Danville Dog Park Committee will be organized as a subcommittee of the selectboard. A charter will be drawn up to define the mission and working parameters of the committee.