

Ideas for the Forrest Farm

Kick Off Meeting

July 23, 2009

1. Baird Morgan of the Pittsford Community Corporation (PCC) welcomed everyone and provided background of when and why the organization had formed. He noted that in town meetings conducted in 1997, the citizens of Pittsford indicated a desire to enhance the feeling of "community" and spoke of the need for a village green, a community center and the preservation of its traditionally rural community. In an effort to assist the Pittsford Planning Commission achieve the objectives of the Town Plan and the aforementioned goals, several participants in the 1997 meetings formed the Pittsford Corporation, a non-profit organization. The Corporation's sole purpose is to act as a mechanism for funding projects to implement and support the objectives of the Town Plan. Whenever possible, actions of the Corporation shall be designed to create a positive impact on the health, welfare and economic environment of the Town.

Their mission statement includes the following: *“The Corporation shall help preserve and protect the natural and manmade assets of the Town of Pittsford including but not limited to water resources, farmland, forests and buildings of historic, economic or significant nature. Particular attention must be given to historic buildings within Pittsford’s two historic districts. The Corporation shall seek to develop and enhance a dynamic and distinct community which might be characterized by: village stores, library, community center, village green, post office, schools, town office, recreation area, pedestrian and bicycle paths and other yet-to-be-defined areas with the express purpose of promoting citizen interaction, recreation and community esteem”*

He shared the exciting news that the organization was in the process of purchasing the 14 acres of the Forrest Farm and they really wanted community input into what the people in Pittsford would like to see and had asked Smart Growth Vermont and Preservation Trust of Vermont to help seek public input. Baird then introduced Noelle and Ann.

2. Ann Cousins of Preservation Trust of Vermont and Noelle MacKay of Smart Growth Vermont introduced their organizations and their work in communities around the state. They both noted the exciting and unique opportunity this is for the Town of Pittsford. Noelle and Ann will be working to engage the community in a variety of different ways from focus groups to comment boxes to web questionnaires and community meetings. They encouraged people to tell others about the project and encourage involvement.
3. We opened up discussion for participants to share what they would like to see on the site. The answers have been grouped into various categories (Note each bullet is one individual’s comments):

Interesting Facts About the Property:

- Original house was built in 1795 and while the house now is in the Italianate style, the original gabled roof is still intact.
- The original barn was built around the same time noted Tom Keeke, an architect who specializes in historic buildings and who inspected both the house and the barn. He feels it is a wonderful example of the barn of that period. It was hand-hewn and pegged and Tom felt well worth preserving.
- The house is on the National Register as part of the Historic District.

What People Would Like to See on the Forrest Farm:

- Wild areas and areas landscaped for birds and butterflies
- The house and barn are part of the landscape of Pittsford, especially the house. It should be kept for its historic value and as it is also part of the Village Green historic district.
- Town green with a bandstand; a restaurant with a café; natural areas for bird watching; a place for horses
- Meadow full of greens, corn and hay.
- One person thought this was an opportunity to improve the village and we could look at opportunities for more parking for current businesses and make them more accessible, improve the traffic flow and look at timing of the traffic.
- Use the property to make Pittsford a destination
- Take existing house and historic buildings and restore to “glory days”. These could be used for senior housing.
- The ridge on the property could be leveled and put the house on this; build a green with a gazebo, move the church and you will have a historic village with authentic buildings; could have a couple of other buildings to meet the community need – the barn could be a community center, the post office; we could build some nice New England buildings style buildings so they fit in with the town.
- Could use examples of architecture around town!
- Bring the clerk downtown and could keep rest of town offices where they are.
- Parks for kids to go; doctor’s office;
- We will need another “old folks” home in town; the house may not work as it could be costly to put in elevators and it could be costly to renovate, but the site would be a good one to add senior housing.
- If senior housing were there, it would be great to also have events and cultural activities that they could walk to and others could be buses and residents in general could come to.
- Even if we need to “start over” due to costs or conditions of buildings, can still build in the same style.
- Community center with a coffee house and could be used for all ages; it could be a place that families, organizations and the community could hold events.
- Find a way to tie the Village center to the recreation areas by safe access with sidewalks and safe crossings of Route 7

- Now, people need to go elsewhere to work so should consider factories and places to work
- Doctors office
- Public restroom
- Information center where we could highlight what was happening in town, put trail maps, etc. Eton Hall, the headquarters of the Historical Society and museum, cannot currently be an info center as it is not open year round.
- Hardware store
- Pharmacy
- Community garden
- Composting Center
- Music gazebo
- Studio in the barn to offer piano and art lessons
- A place for local crafters to display wears
- Flat areas for tents to have events
- Jobs – only have one major employer and need several others
- It is fair to say that Pittsford is a bedroom community to Rutland and a large percentage of people leave to go to work. We need to think of things that will be useful to people that come in as a bedroom community. Cannot see the town being an employment center.
- Recreation
- Residents in Tinmouth got together and started brainstorming like we are tonight and they got a lot of dedicated stakeholders and they are bringing back their firehouse, fixing up the gym, etc and Pittsford has a great opportunity to come together to make a difference.
- Portable drive-ins could be a draw
- Several people mentioned they would like to see a community center.

What People Would Not Like to See on the Forrest Farm:

- Do not want to see “New Jersey style” housing on the site. Did not want to see 14 ranch homes surrounded by pavement. This is not something they could support.

Concerns:

- Whatever is decided, traffic should be a consideration. Perhaps a modified traffic circle to slow traffic.
- One participated was concerned that development on the site could present traffic problems. Another participated responded that this might present an opportunity to improve traffic flow, increase parking and provide better pedestrian accessibility
- Housing will ruin the view.
- Another concern was raised about traffic to make sure that there is a plan on how to handle any increase and to make sure that it does not wipe out the “little guys” that are already in town.

- Some years there is a really high mosquito flow, need to consider how to handle this and who will pay.
- There is already a problem with the snow and trying to cross the road. Do not want to make the situation worse.
- Route 7 is crowded enough, do not want to add to the traffic.
- Do not want to see property taxes increase. Someone noted that a project on this site might actually result in a decrease in taxes.
- Does not want anything that would hurt what is already in town (ie. Kamuda's or Keith's)
- Need to hear from the 18-25 year olds as they are the next generation [Note: we do plan on holding a focus group for this age]
- Many of the things on the list of what people would like to see have already been here (ie. Doctors office) so need to make sure that anything that happens "sticks"
- The town is split and there are only a few people from the other "factions" here and need to make sure that everyone's ideas and concerns are heard.
- Sewer could be the limiting factor.

Questions Raised:

- *What is the status of the Post Office?* According to those present – the 2005 and 2008 zoning ordinance is most likely void due to an unlawful adoption by the Select Board. The developer of the site, Frank von Turkovich, has decided to hold the application until these issues are resolved.
- *How much will "this" cost and who will pay?* Baird emphasized that PCC is conducting this community outreach to determine what the community would like to see on the site. It is only the beginning of the process and after it is determined what is possible on the site, then developing a financial plan and looking for partners will occur.
- *Are there wetlands on the site?* Those in the room did not believe that there were. The US Department of Agriculture had purchased and easement for 130 acres of the farm that is wetlands going down towards Creek Meadows.
- *Who owns the site?* PCC has a purchase and sales agreement for \$650,000.
- *Can the project be denied?* Since we do not know what "this" is yet, it is difficult to answer the question. However, anything that would be developed on the site would need to go through local review.
- *Can we ensure that existing businesses will not be impacted?* There are ways such as non-compete clauses and economic impact study requirements that could be put in place to safeguard this from happening.