
St. Albans City & Town Joint Study Committee

Six Month Status
Report

June 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Legal Process & Governance Subcommittee Report	3
Finance & Budget Subcommittee Report	5
Finance Asset & Operations (FAO) Subcommittee Report	7
Personnel & Operations Subcommittee Report	11
Schools Subcommittee Report	14
Resources & Outreach Subcommittee Report	21
Economic Development & Growth Subcommittee Report	22

Legal Process & Governance Subcommittee Report

Subcommittee Members:

Josh Cox
Trudy Cioffi
Dustin Degree
Ryan Doyle
Marilyn Grunewald
Jeff Handy
Tim Hawkins
Cheryl Teague
Steve Wechsler
Norm Zawisza

Subcommittee Responsibility:

Two sub-committees were initially established by the Joint Study Committee, Legal/Process and Governance. After two initial meetings of the subcommittees, it was decided that the subcommittees were discussing like issues. It was decided that the two subcommittees would work together.

Regarding the legal process for combining the City and Town into one municipality, the Subcommittees decided to study the two legal options under Vermont Statute. Two options fall under Vermont Statutes, Title 24. Municipal and County Government; Chapter 45. Voluntary Consolidation of Towns and Chapter 49. Merger of Municipalities.

Options for governance of a joined municipality also needed to be studied.

The subcommittee's established goals were to:

- Write a charter
- Determine governance structure
- Determine representation
- Determine special service districts
- Hold a public forum regarding governance
- Compare like municipalities
- Compare other charters

Summary of Activity to date:

The subcommittee conducted a thorough review of Title 24, Chapter 45 Voluntary Consolidation of Towns and Chapter 49 Merger of Municipalities.

The subcommittee had discussions on various options for governance. Options include representation by areas, wards or districts or representation at large. Preliminary discussions were held on size of districts and number of representatives.

Discussions were held regarding obtaining a formal legal opinion on procedures.

Summary of Findings to date:

- The subcommittee determined that Chapter 49 Merger of Municipalities was the proper procedure to follow for joining the City and Town into one municipality.
- The subcommittee felt that it would be prudent to secure professional legal assistance from someone experienced in municipal law before proceeding much further.
- The subcommittee also decided to reach out to the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) for education and guidance in the area of governance structure options and procedures.
- VLCT was contacted but was reluctant to work with the committee if the Town Selectboard was not willing to work or participate with the Joint Study Committee.
- The Joint Study Committee decided to hold off on obtaining any legal counsel at this point in time.
- The subcommittee decided that it would not be prudent to proceed with studies in these matters until such time as there is supportive and meaningful participation from the Town of St. Albans governing body.

Requests of the Town of Saint Albans to assist our Subcommittee:

- Supportive and meaningful participation from the Town of St. Albans governing body.
- While it is not critical that the Town of St. Albans Selectboard actively participate in this subcommittee's process, it is critical that they endorse the concept of the possibility of a merged community and are willing to be supportive of the process.

Finance & Budget Subcommittee Report

Subcommittee Members

Jeff Bean
Mike Blouin
Jack Brigham
Ryan Doyle
Tim Hawkins
Sam Smith

Subcommittee Responsibility

The subcommittee was asked to research the finances of both municipalities and establish if the value of services could be maintained or increased to all residents if unification occurred. Value being the quality or amount of service versus cost, with a special emphasis on preserving or reducing current expenditures by taxpayers while maintaining or increasing services.

Summary of Activity to Date

Staff has produced several versions of a proforma for our consideration. This is a very good starting point for discussion. The current grand list of the City is \$471,593,800 and the current tax rate is 0.7881. The current grand list of the Town is \$889,345,000 and the current tax rate is 0.3231*. The combined grand list of a merged municipality is estimated to be \$1,360,938,800 and one estimated tax rate would be 0.4236* using a simple combined budget. The desired tax rate for a merged municipality would be ~0.33 or to keep that approximate rate for Town taxpayers who would not see an increase in their level of services. (See Table 1) How do we close the gap? The subcommittee has had much discussion on this point.

One of the big discussion points has been the idea of the formation of special service districts. Areas which use services the most or have more services available would be in separate districts with assessed tax valuations and tax rates at varying levels. Although all residents of greater St. Albans benefit from the presence of police protection and water/wastewater in areas of development, the presence of districts would allow for keeping the tax rate at a lower rate for the rural areas of the Town.

Another thought was to maintain the current City area as a special assessment district for a prolonged period of time. The “City District” would reduce current City and Town debt, while realizing the benefit from the economies of scale savings of a merged municipality. The former Town area’s tax rate would remain steady with adjustments for additional services provided to the area over time.

A majority of this subcommittee’s work has been in conjunction with the Facilities & Assets Subcommittee including discussion on what assets would need renovating/redesigning/rebuilding to support a combined municipality and what assets would not be needed and may be subsequently sold. The valuation of assets has been a challenge and values have not yet been determined. There was also discussion that values for assets that will be maintained do not need

to be established as the joined municipality would own them all. Only those not needed need a value established.

Requests from St. Albans Town to Assist our Subcommittee

- Work cooperatively with municipal officials from the Town, either as members of the Joint Study Committee or as willing partners on all areas that need to be studied.
- Meet with department heads in a forum setting to discuss and determine the likely consolidation of resources and other economies of scale benefits from unification and any potential management constraints to department size increases.
- Establish future needs, associated costs, and rough estimates of future tax projections of the City and Town as separate municipalities for comparison to those of a merged municipality.
- Work cooperatively with municipal officials to determine the future effects of MS4 on current and future development for a merged municipality.
- Work cooperatively with municipal officials to determine ways to neutralize the tax for a merged municipality.
- Work cooperatively with municipal officials to explore options for economic growth and development in order to stabilize tax rates and provide opportunities for the citizens of both the City and Town or for a merged municipality.

Table 1: Preliminary Calculations for Tax Offsetting Development without Districting

Municipality	Grand List	Property Tax Stream	Tax Rate (cent/100\$)
City	4715938 x \$100 (dPf)	3716816	.7881
Town	8893450 x \$100 (dPf)	2873208	.3231*
Combined	13609388 x \$100*	5765299 (Pf)	.4236* (dPf)
Preferred Tax Rate	17816127 x \$100*	5765299 (Pf)	.3236
Difference with Preferred Rate	+4206739 x \$100*	0	-.10

* calculated figures.

(Pf) figures taken from proforma.

(dPf) figures different from those in proforma.

4206739x\$100 is 30.91% of current combined Grand List and a dime off the combined tax rate. Does not consider the costs or draw on services from the development and does not differentiate between types of development.

Finance Asset & Operations (FAO) Subcommittee Report

Subcommittee Members:

Jeff Bean
Mike Blouin
Jack Brigham
Bruce Cheeseman
Richard Cummings
Ryan Doyle
Jeff Handy
Sheri Moore
Jeff Morrill
Sam Smith
Cheryl Teague

Subcommittee Responsibility:

The FAO committee was established in March and is a combination of the Finance & Budget, Facilities & Assets and Personnel & Operations subcommittees. This status report is for the work of the FAO subcommittee since March.

We have collected a great deal of information regarding the assets/liabilities and operations of each municipality. We need to find some common method to combine the information received to date into a common format.

Goals of this committee:

- Prepare an updated pro forma budget
- Prepare asset balance sheet
- Establish comparable property valuations for tax calculations
- Establish debt obligations and how to deal with these obligations
- Establish future capital investment needed for a merged Municipality
- Establish future needs and associated costs if City & Town remain separate for comparison
- Determine future effects of MS4 on current and future development that might be on a joined municipality
- Determine savings on equalized water and waste water rates for Town Users
- Determine savings from a combined Public Works
- Find and appropriate value for the Water and Wastewater Plant
- Create an accurate accounting of assets of each municipality
- Look for causes of the Municipal Tax rate disparity and projections for tax rate if we stay separated or merged

The Sub Committee found invaluable information from discussions with Department Heads from the City. Further discussion is needed from Town Department heads to complete a detailed comparative.

Assets were discussed. The following assets were grouped and discussion comments regarding their use/feasibility for a joined municipality were as follows:

City Hall

Town Hall

- Short Term – maintain both facilities, merging staff by department as space allows and moving records gradually.
- Long Term – a new municipal complex, properly sized for all departments and land records would be necessary. City Hall could be used for other purposes to serve community needs. However, Town Hall building needs extensive repairs/renovations and is not handicap accessible on upper levels.

Town Garage

City Garage

- Short Term - Both facilities are inadequate for a merged municipality and both are in bad locations. Operations would need to be centralized and equipment moved/stored based on use space.
- Long Term - Current locations could be sold. The Town owns land in a central location off Brigham Road, bordering the City school and is located in an industrial zone with railroad access.

City Fire Department

Town Fire Department

- Short Term – Maintain both stations, utilizing best practice staffing.
- Long Term – New complex centrally located with sub-stations as necessary to provide adequate service throughout the combined municipality.

Police Department

- Short Term – City complex is not sufficient for current needs. City currently looking at relocation. Combined municipality would need to provide adequate facility.
- Long term – Municipal complex to contain as many departments as possible.

Schools

- Short Term – BFA, City School and Town School will serve the current needs of a combined municipality.
- Long Term – Review school facilities and determine best practices regarding building utilization and renovation.

Parks & Recreation Facilities

- Taylor Park
- Houghton Park
- Barlow Street Park
- Cioffi Park

- Cohen Park
- St. Albans Bay Park
- St. Albans Town Forest
- City Pool
- Short Term – These parks and recreation facilities are adequate to suit the needs of a combined municipality.
- Long Term – There is much potential for growth, development and utilization of these assets for many years into the future.

Other Buildings

- Barlow Street School
- Short Term – Building is being utilized for the needs of the community.
- Long Term – Assess and retain to suit the needs of the community.

Other Land

- Fonda Property
- Brigham Road Land
- Short Term – Fonda Property may be sold or developed in the near future.
- Long Term– Brigham Road land has much potential for a combined municipality. Well suited for development. Potential good location for public works.

Equipment –

- Short Term – Both municipalities have lists of equipment that need to be evaluated. There may be potential to eliminate duplication and achieve savings in short term new purchases and replacements.
- Long Term – Develop a capital plan to suit the needs of a combined municipality. It is not anticipated that this would lead to any major acquisitions, rather maintain current equipment replacement and plan for additions based on future growth.

Water & Sewer

- Sewer Treatment Plant
- Pumping Stations
- Fairfax Reservoir
- Filter Plant
- Water Tower

In evaluating the assets, the key issue to be able to determine the true value of assets has been negatively affected by the fact that the Town's assets are reported but they have not been accounted for in the same GASB-34 compliant manner as the City's assets. Therefore, assets are not based on equal terms. The City reports the depreciated asset value whereas the Town reports the replacement cost value.

It was found that the nearest value of equal basis was reported through the Vermont League of Cities and Town 2012 Property Schedule Report which provided a value and basis for insurance purposes. The values reported are as follows:

<u>2012 PACIF Application</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Total Combined</u>
Buildings	\$23,222,659	\$3,075,868	\$26,298,527
Contents	\$2,350,773	\$533,650	\$2,884,423
Machinery & Equipment	\$3,321,253	\$1,156,154	\$4,477,407

There were City assets that were not contained in this report due to the fact that they had been fully depreciated and therefore there was no reason to insure. It is assumed at this point, without further clarification from the Town, the same holds true for their assets. The asset value of land owned by each municipality is not reported.

Requests of the Town of St. Albans to assist our Subcommittee:

Work together in a cooperative and meaningful manner in order to proceed with this study to provide the information needed in order to complete Charge 1 of the JSC:

To facilitate a thoughtful, deliberate and public process for evaluating the feasibility of this proposal.

Personnel & Operations Subcommittee Report

Subcommittee Members:

Bruce Cheeseman
Richard Cummings
Sheri Moore
Jeff Morrill
Cheryl Teague
Norm Zawisza

Subcommittee Responsibility:

The Subcommittee decided that they would identify and compare municipal operations and respective of the City and the Town in order to determine if there was an overlap of personnel and services. The goal was to determine the efficiencies and savings that might be realized if the two municipalities were to become one.

Summary of Activity to Date:

The subcommittee obtained a listing of all personnel in the City and Town. The list was compared by department. The City's list included salaries, overtime, benefits and contributions. The Town's list included only salaries. The additional information regarding overtime, benefits and contributions was requested but was not provided.

The subcommittee decided to request meetings with the City and Town department heads and discuss what their thoughts were regarding potential efficiencies and savings in a combined municipality. Meetings were scheduled with City department heads. Subsequently very informative meetings were held with the City Manager, City Police and Fire Chief and City Public Works Director. The Town Selectboard would not allow department heads or other Town employees to meet with the subcommittee.

The subcommittee looked at the operations and personnel of two municipalities of similar size and like services. Brattleboro and Bennington were selected for review.

Summary of Findings to Date:

- Currently the City and Town both have a manager. A combined municipality would only need one manager. City Manager base salary reported to the committee is \$87,550 and the Town Manager base salary was reported as \$68,000. The salary of the Manager of a combined municipality may be higher but savings would be in the \$60,000+ range plus benefits and contributions of one full position.
- Most likely combined services in Public Works, Police and Fire would see little savings as all staffing is lean and all positions would most likely be needed.
- The City administration staff has a CPA and assistant as well as a grant writer. The Town does not have these positions.
- The legal budget of the City is \$70,000 with about \$50,000 devoted to issues with the Town. The Town's legal budget is \$75,000. It is believed that a good chunk of that is

devoted to issues with the City. The average legal budget for a municipality of 15,000 in Vermont is \$75,000 to \$100,000. Potential savings for a merged community \$45,000 to \$70,000.

- Water & Sewer services are already serving both communities. There would be no change in personnel needed.
- Only one City/Town Clerk needed, position savings of approximately \$40,000.
- The total size of administrative support positions would be no greater for a combined municipality than the City staff as it now stands.
- Most likely no change in Assessor and Lister positions.
- Other benefits of a merged community are efficiencies of scale, improved economic development, capability of attracting a high caliber of staff, grant opportunities, and resolution of conflicts of government.
- As an alternative idea, it might be beneficial to join services without merging.

Requests of the Town of Saint Albans to assist our Subcommittee:

- Meeting with the Town Manager and Town Department Heads to discuss and hear their ideas regarding personnel and potential operational savings for a combined municipality.
- Financial information regarding Town personnel overtime, benefits and contributions.

Schools Subcommittee Report

Subcommittee Members:

- Trudy Cioffi
- Josh Cox
- Marilyn Grunewald
- Jeff Morrill
- Denise Smith

Responsibility:

The Schools subcommittee was asked to research what effects the possible reconstitution of the Town of Saint Albans would have on the various school districts currently in the City and Town.

The subcommittee decided that there were three main subjects that needed investigation.

1. Does a Town reunification have ANY effect on its associated school districts?
2. How would a Town reunification affect CLA (Common Level of Appraisal) and tax rates?
3. What benefits does the Superintendent of the FCSU (Franklin Central Supervisory Union) foresee in a single district, and what plans does the Supervisory Union have for the future?

Current School Status:

Currently, the City of Saint Albans has a K-8 elementary school, governed by a seven member City School Board. The City School budget is created by the City School Board, approved by City voters, and paid for from a combination of the State Education Fund and City education taxes. The budget for FY13 is \$11,476,209.00, with a City tax rate of \$1.3172 (includes BFA portion).

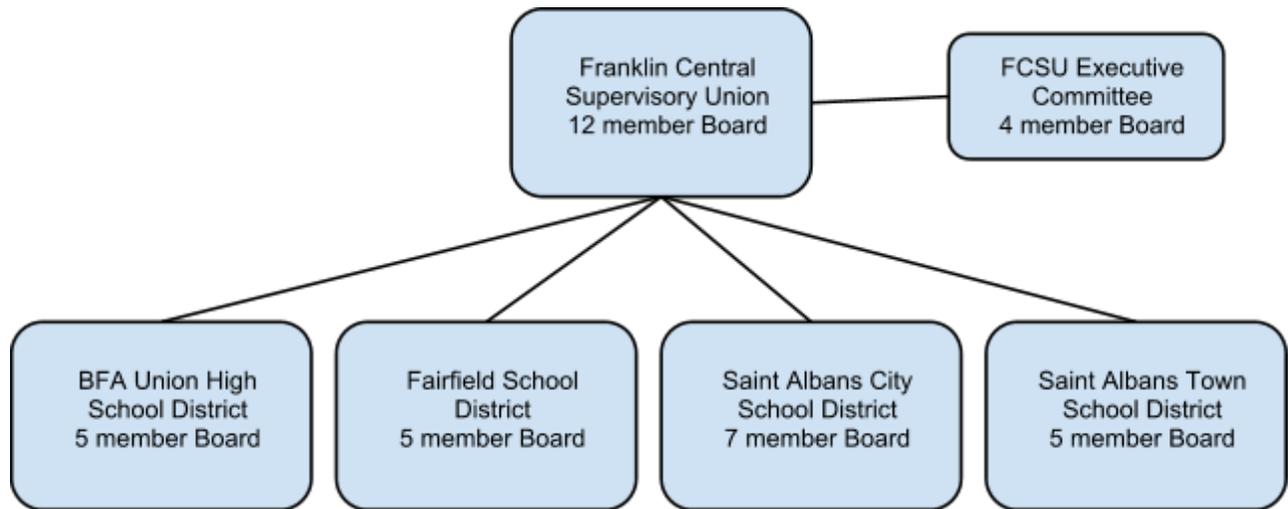
The Town of Saint Albans has a K-8 elementary school, governed by a five member Town School Board. The Town School budget is created by the Town School Board, approved by Town voters, and paid for from a combination of the State Education Fund and Town education taxes. The budget for FY13 is \$9,111,305.00, with a Town tax rate of \$1.1849 (includes BFA portion).

Both communities send their high school students to BFA Saint Albans, a public high school and Tech Center, governed by a five member board made up of members from both the City and Town. Current bylaws specify that three of the members shall be from the City and two members from the Town. The High School budget is created by the BFA School Board, approved by both City and Town voters in a combined vote (not as separate communities), and paid for from a combination of the State Education Fund and both City and Town education

taxes. Another significant revenue source to offset local taxes is the tuition paid by towns outside of the community sending students to BFA. The budget for FY13 is \$19,705,254.00.

For FY13, 35.01% of the students at BFA will be from the City, and 31.65% of the students at BFA will be from the Town.

All three School Districts are members of the Franklin Central Supervisory Union (FCSU), along with the Fairfield School District. Each member School District has three members on the FCSU District Board, and one member of the FCSU Executive Committee.



Findings:

1. Does a Town reunification have ANY effect on its associated school districts?

Yes, we believe that if the City of Saint Albans were to be dissolved, then the City School District and BFA Union High School District would be absorbed by the Town of Saint Albans School District.

At the end of this document is a link to the legal opinion provided by the FCSU lawyer. To summarize, the City School District cannot exist without the municipality that created it. So if the City is dissolved, then so will the City School District. BFA is a union district made up of two member districts, the City School District and the Town School District. If there is no longer a City School District, then the BFA union district would be left with only one member, the Town. Therefore, it could no longer exist, as a union district must be composed of at least two member districts.

It is possible that the City School District could survive dissolution of the City if it were converted into an Incorporated District. This would require legislative approval, which is not likely, as the State is trying to encourage school districts to merge. It wants less school districts, not more.

Conclusion:

If a reunification were to occur, the current three school districts would be reduced to one. It would need to be decided what the governance structure of the new Town of Saint Albans School District would look like. This subcommittee would recommend mirroring whatever method is used to determine the composition of the new municipality government.

2. How would a Town reunification affect Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) and education tax rates?

Talking about Education spending and Education taxes in Vermont is never easy. Basically, all residential property owners pay a State Education tax based on property values. That tax rate may be increased based on the decision of local voters to spend more for education in their community than the State base amount. That tax rate is also adjusted by the CLA, a method to equalize property tax values across the state. A separate (higher) rate is charged to non-residential property owners. In all calculations, we are using FY13 values.

For FY13:

	Per pupil	Tax Rate	CLA	Tax Rate After CLA
Base Education Spending	8,723	0.89		
Saint Albans City	12,025	0.7974	98.38%	0.8105
Saint Albans Town	11,096	0.7738	103.34%	0.7488

Here we can see that the residential tax rates for the two communities are within 2 cents of each other, but after applying CLA, the difference is more than 6 cents. The CLA values mean that the state says that property in the City is slightly undervalued and property in the town is slightly overvalued.

We have no information from the State about how the CLA is calculated or what it would be for a combined City and Town grand list. We do believe that the new CLA would be somewhere between the City's CLA of 98.38% and the Town's CLA of 103.34%. Using a weighted average, we would guess that the new CLA for a combined grand list would be approximately 102%. To calculate this we used Grand List numbers provide by the State (see Grand List link at end of document).

Using FY13 budget numbers for the three school districts and a combined CLA of 102%, we can recalculate what the education tax rate would be for a single Town of Saint Albans.

Combined (BFA, City, Town)	FY13
Budget	\$40,292,768
Local Revenues	\$13,177,134
Education Spending	\$27,115,634
Equalized Pupils	2,192.22
Education Spending per Equalized Pupil	\$12,369
Homestead tax rate	\$1.2620
CLA	102.00%
Adjusted Tax Rate	\$1.2373

Comparing to current tax rates:

FY13 City Education Tax Rate (including BFA)	\$1.3172
New tax rate for single district	\$1.2373
Difference	\$0.0799 -
FY13 Town Education Tax Rate (including BFA)	\$1.1849
New tax rate for single district	\$1.2373
Difference	\$0.0524 +

3. What benefits does the Superintendent of the FCSU (Franklin Central Supervisory Union) foresee in a single district, and what plans does the Supervisory Union have for the future?

In conversations with Bob Rosane, FCSU Superintendent, the Supervisory Union is already operating as a single School District in many ways. When possible, contracts are negotiated with vendors as a single entity. Many administrative/common functions have been centralized in the Supervisory Union and shared across all member districts. Even union contracts are negotiated as a single unit. He does feel that the Supervisory Union would be more efficient and effective with just a single governing body.

The State of Vermont and the Department of Education are encouraging school districts and Supervisory Unions to merge, and providing incentives to do so. The FCSU hired consultants to perform a preliminary investigation into whether or not forming a combined school district (or Regional Education District) would make sense for the BFA, City, and Town school districts.

The study report, released in December 2011, indicated the following:

- Although curriculum is centralized, it is difficult with three boards overseeing the process. Reduction to one board might streamline the process and make changes easier to make.
- Some sort of school choice could be available if there was just a single school district.
- A single school district would allow for a more efficient use of personnel, in both teaching and non-teaching positions.
- A single school district governed by one board would be more likely to ensure coordination in the transition from Elementary to High School.

In the end, the FCSU Board decided that there were not enough advantages or incentives to proceed further with the study at this time.

Conclusion:

This subcommittee believes that it has gathered all of the preliminary information that it can.

If it is decided that it would be in the best interests of our two communities to create a plan of merger, then we would make two suggestions:

- 1) The plan of merger should specify how the membership of the new School Board will be determined.
- 2) If possible, the plan of merger should specify that any changes to the way the schools currently function should be taken slowly, after lots of community input and involvement.

Attachments:

[Legal Opinion - Effect of Reunification on School Districts](#)

[State of Vermont Grand Lists for Education](#)

Resources & Outreach Subcommittee Report

Subcommittee Members:

Marilyn Grunewald
Denise Smith
Sam Smith
Frank Cioffi

Subcommittee Responsibility:

The Subcommittee was charged with developing stream of resources and community outreach strategies to support the study process for the Joint Study Committee.

Summary of Activity to date:

The committee met, developed a letter and a process to secure funds to support the work of the reconstitution committee. Donations were received from the People's Trust, St. Albans Rotary and Northwest Medical Center. An account was opened at City hall and managed by Peg Strait, and Marilyn Grunewald, Reconstitution Committee Treasurer. The donated funds still sit in this account.

The committee also generated a list of steps that perhaps it could address in the future.

Support Municipal Planning

1. Generate a list of potential donors and grant opportunities
2. Develop a budget once needs are identified and approved by the full JSC committee
3. Supports for municipal planning
 - Attorney
 - Group facilitator
 - Mediator
 - Report and grant writer
 - League of Cities and Towns
 - Regional Planning
 - Vermont Economic Development Council
 - Franklin County Industrial development

The Subcommittee determined that it would not be beneficial to meet again until we learn to what extent the Town of Saint Albans Select Board will participate. We also felt, as did Economic Development and Growth Subcommittee that we needed to know "if the Town Select board would join with the City Council to apply for grants to conduct necessary planning, build out analyses and infrastructure analyses."

Economic Development & Growth Subcommittee Report

Subcommittee Members:

Mike Blouin
Bruce Cheeseman
Frank Cioffi
Sheri Moore
Denise Smith

Subcommittee Responsibility:

The Subcommittee was asked to research the economic development potential and growth potential of the Town and City of Saint Albans.

Summary of Activity to Date:

The Economic Development and Growth Subcommittee have met several times since our creation. Our initial focus was to learn about the zoning areas of the Town and the City and to learn about existing permitted and undeveloped, job creating enterprise development potential.

Our primary concentration was the value adding, goods and services exporting and dollar importing enterprise industry sectors, as these employers tend to provide jobs that pay a higher wage/salary and provide greater benefits to employees and pay higher property taxes to the municipalities.

We had also planned on assessing the future development and economic growth potential of commercial, professional office and residential lands/areas as well.

We had also planned on assessing the benefits and impacts of population growth to our community.

Build-out Analysis and Cost of Community Service Study

We met with Catherine Dimitruk, Executive Director of Northwest Regional Planning Commission, to discuss the process and potential of conducting a Build-out Analysis of both the City and the Town. NWRPC has done a preliminary Build-out Analysis of the City that detailed potential areas for additional development that includes commercial, industrial, professional office and residential uses.

We learned that there is significant development and redevelopment potential in the City that could result in an expanded tax base, new jobs and new residential housing for residents of our region.

Highlights of the NWRPC City Build-out Analysis:

- The City has a “Vermont Downtown Designation
- Commercial Development is the top priority for downtown
- Downtown offer limited opportunities for industrial development
- Several key redevelopment sites outside of downtown
- The City provides 48 % of the jobs in Franklin County
- It is projected that the City will add at least 1,800 new jobs by 2030 which would require 60,000 sq ft of industrial, 307,000 sq ft of office, and 168,000 sq ft of other

- Goal is to continue to provide 48% of the County's jobs which would mean adding 4,716 jobs by 2030
- Greatest growth is expected in Information Technologies, Federal Government and Education and Health Services Job's Sectors
- The City provides 39% of the rental housing available in Franklin County
- It is projected that the City will add 220 new housing units by 2030
- In order to continue to provide 18% of the County's housing the City would need to add 1,340 new housing units by 2030
- The goal is to offer a diversity of housing options including housing that will meet the needs of the workforce and aging populations
- Overall 54% of the residential area in the City is built-out
- There is potential to create 952 new housing units
- Targeted analysis of the commercial/mixed use areas found on ten sites that it was possible to create 950,000 sq ft of commercial/mixed use space; 115 housing units and 225,000 sq ft of industrial space

We asked Catherine if NWRPC could conceivably undertake a project of updating the build out analysis of the City and also conduct a Build-out Analysis of the Town.

Catherine indicated that would be possible but it would also be wise to engage with an economic consulting firm like Economics and Policy Resources, a Vermont firm.

The cost of such a project could run as much as \$100,000. to produce a meaningful build-out analysis.

Catherine also said that another alternative to a Build-out Analysis would be to conduct a "Cost of Community Service Study" looking at the current data of the City and the Town, and then applying the same analysis to a scenario with a merged government. A "Cost of Community Service Study" provides information the financial impact of existing land uses in a municipality. It is a snapshot in time of current revenues and expenditures on a land use basis. The study analyzes the financial demands of public services and shows how much it costs to provide these services to working lands and open space, residential and commercial/industrial land uses. With a Build-out Analysis, the assumptions are tied to market conditions; in a "Cost of Community Service Study" the assumptions would be the size and scale of the merged government. NWRPC and FCIDC would be very helpful in formulating an RFP (request for proposal) for either study. *We strongly believe that a Build-out Analysis and a "Cost of Community Service Study" would provide meaningful projections that the Selectboard and the City Council and the respective Planning Commissions would be able to utilize for future planning purposes and for assessing capital and infrastructure investments.*

In addition, NWRPC is participating in the Vermont Western Corridor Transportation Management Plan that is looking at long-term transportation (and rail) issues along the western portion of the state (essentially the Route 7 corridor). Part of the study includes identifying the limitations and opportunities for industry and businesses to utilize rail.

The Subcommittee believes that there are opportunities for state and federal grants and community foundation and private foundation grants to help support the costs of studies and research.

We also met with Tim Smith, Executive Director of Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation to learn from Tim more about industrial parks and the economic condition of the economy of the City and the Town and overall economic conditions of the county.

We met with Saint Albans City Director of Planning Chip Sawyer who helped us understand form based zoning and also gain a better understanding of the infill and other development and redevelopment potential of the City.

We also communicated with the Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board in order to assess the agricultural lands (farms/acreage) in both municipalities that have been preserved for perpetual agricultural activities.

Highlights of Summary of Conserved Lands in the City and Town:

- The total acreage of the Town is 23,933 acres
- There are 4,364 acres conserved in the Town that represents 18.24 % of the land in the Town.
- The City has significant parks and recreation areas and together with the Town has the Aldis Hill Playground natural and recreation area.
- The Town and State have 3 parks on Lake Champlain

We had hoped to gain a better understanding of the present infrastructure capabilities of the Town and the City; specifically water, wastewater, storm water treatment and utilities and also the future planned or potential areas that could be served by public infrastructure and utilities.

We also had hoped to gain a better understanding of transportation infrastructure of the City and the Town roads, highways, streets, rail, transit, public transit, pedestrian accesses and bike and recreation paths.

The Subcommittee determined that it would not be really valuable to meet again until we learn if the Town of Saint Albans was going to provide information and allow its Town Manager and Planning/Zoning and Highway management to meet with the Reconstitution Committee and with management of the City.

We also needed to know if the Town Selectboard would join with the City Council to apply for grants to conduct necessary planning, build out analyses and infrastructure analyses.

Requests of the Town of Saint Albans to assist our Subcommittee and the Reconstitution Committee in our research and evaluation process:

- Meeting(s) with the Town Manager
 - Meeting w/ the Reconstitution Committee and Subcommittees
 - Meeting w/ the City Manager to evaluate budgets, capital plan, personnel, facilities and infrastructure of the Town
 - Providing the Committee with all documents and information that would enable a meaningful comparison of operations and assets of the Town and the City
- Meeting(s) with the Town Planner/Zoning Administrator
 - Help in understanding the Town Land Use Plan and Zoning
 - Help in understanding the vision for the Growth Centers in the Town
 - Help in developing a document to prepare an RFP for a Build out Analysis for the Town
- Meeting(s) with the Town Highway Manager
 - Help in understanding the public works and transportation operations in the Town (miles-network of Town highways, personnel, equipment and transportation plan of the Town)
- Active participation by Selectboard Members
 - ACTIVE and meaningful participation by the Selectboard in the Reconstitution research and evaluation process.
 - A vision for the growth centers of the Town and the City
 - A discussion with the Selectboard to determine their vision for pedestrian and bike paths from the City to the Town's Growth Centers (north and south) and to the Town Industrial Park(s).
 - Agreement and authorization by the Selectboard to seek and apply for grant funding together with the City for:
 - A Build out analysis of the Town and the City
 - A Cost of Community Service Study of the Town and the City
 - An infrastructure analysis of the Town and the City
 - Active and real participation by the Selectboard in the process of researching, evaluating and determining if there is value and potential for a merger of the City and the Town.
 - Having 2 Selectboard members formally join the Reconstitution Committee.