

Real Time Summary of Key Points - Recap of Frost info thus far
April 26, 2025 3-5 pm Thetford Center Community Association

Didi Pershouse - Moderator

3rd gathering - Sharing the various perspectives

Cynthia Shelton - Notetaker. Launch of 2026 town-wide party to celebrate birth of the nation as well as the historical events and locations in Thetford. Through a year-long process of cooperative organizing a large event an organic community cohesion has the opportunity to grow, and a vision for Thetford may emerge.

First meeting happening soon. Anyone interested encouraged to contact Cynthia Shelton (thetfordvtwelcome@gmail.com) or Helen Carter (thetford.helen@gmail.com).

Collaboration with other similar efforts much desired.

Frost Bldg 3-minute video -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4G-oSe7LmH0>

Helen Carter - SideNote history of Frost Bldg. with Li Shen

<https://www.sidenote.news/?ref=sidenote-newsletter>

Curtis Richardson - Treasurer of United Church of Thetford. 2007 Thetford Ctr and North Thetford merged. Spent ¼ mill. between 2007 - 2014 on buildings. Became an all-consuming task to maintain buildings. 2018 voted to give up both church buildings. Congregation continues to worship in North Thetford. Frost built with same bricks as town hall. It would make a good "companion building" to the Town. Congregation has no desire to dictate what the buildings would be used for later. Transferred property to the town of Thetford.

Sharon Harkay - SB put together committee for Frost - Shari Gouwens Chaired. Survey developed to ask community what to do with the building. 417 people responded. Cafe initial idea - septic, water and financial status of clientele concerns. Music favored due to the fabulous acoustics in the bldg. Maintain historic facade at least, complete with stained glass windows. Weddings, funerals, memorials, meetings, lectures wanted. Not wanted: town offices, demolition, storage. Preservation of VT advised against selling historic organ, seating, etc.

Shari Gouwens - Engineer on committee said that the current meeting room in the town hall could be offices and the Frost bldg could serve as meeting space. Organ can be repaired. (Organist Dr. Mark Andersen repairs organs). Nick Clark of SB attended meetings about Frost bldg. Committee was charged to get input from the public.

Li Shen - First survey was aspirational. Didn't know what we were looking for and "practical and useful" were at the bottom of the list. Done in the absence of any financial idea.

Didi - What do we do with the survey at this point?

Helen - Data and marketing experience with Hewlett Packard. Market research is "finding out what people want." Went through all of the surveys and people clearly care deeply about this community. Idea summary available: Pub, theatre, work center, music and 40+ more. Much work done but no focus. Where's our passion? What question do we want to answer? Start filtering things down to get to concrete idea. No consensus yet about what the priority is.

Curtis Richardson - A constraint for childcare as a use: Need 75 sq. ft. outdoor space per child to be a child care center and Frost does not have that.

Sharon - Priority of drawing widest variety of people eliminates many suggestions right off the bat. For 5 ½ years, have been asking why can't it be a multi-purpose use building? 501c3 group could schedule the use of it.

Didi - Need a drop-in unscheduled place for connections.

Li - Something that brings people in every day. "Dead village center" needs action.

Didi - Starting to identify the "elephant" by blindly grasping at pieces of the puzzle. 113 Thetford Center is an interesting corridor to develop.

Missy Krzal - What does the town want to do with the building? Concern about financial cost of developing the building on strapped taxpayers. Cart before the horse.

Didi - No one will decide what to do without a town vote. Bldg might need to be sold or leased. Fundraising is also a possibility. Tapping into former residents or children of former residents. Ideas limited by money? What comes first?

Curtis Richardson - Leaving any building un-lived in for too long creates too much deferred maintenance.

Cathy Newell - Can we address the constraints first? Parking, liquor license, toilets (VT Law School example of Compost toilet or incinerator toilet like at Peabody). Example of Barrett Hall in Strafford as a non-profit. Worth researching.

Shari - Where do we go outside the town for money? Grants etc.

Karen Brown - Licensed architect, 6 years renovating old bldgs., knows the pitfalls. Bldg Codes classify bldg occupancy type - determines restrictions. Assembly, business, educational, factory, high hazard, storage, mercantile... Were able to classify a classroom as a business at Dartmouth as an example.

671K from John Van Sandt (general conditions - getting site ready is usually only 10% and it seems high). In drawings: remediations to existing foundation. New foundation doesn't seem necessary.

Septic system doesn't exist, sump pump is shot. HVAC has a placeholder number but it is vague. Parking is not itemized. Putting a french drain around bldg. would help. Land survey. Need to pay architect and engineers and environmental engineers (asbestos?) Building permit. Utility and taxes. Internal furnishings. No firm figure for demolishing. \$500/sq.ft cost to rebuild at this point. 1.2 million to rebuild one story structure. Request to sit down with both budgets and redefine the scope of the studies.

What scope of HVAC did they carry? Trumbull Nelson report. Caution about going with a low bidder. VT has tight energy code. Requirements for new construction more stringent than for existing buildings.

Sharon - Energy report does not mention asbestos. Oldest report 2008 plaster repair of ceiling. Master folder information is online at the town website at the Community / Frost landing page
Bob Walker asked about what volunteers could do to help.

Didi - What about getting more bids for the work?

Cathy - Possible to put in a rubric for green energy? Law school Students do projects and Efficiency VT offer.

Li - Highest possible energy standards required by Town Plan.

Brian Story - Constraints are flexible with willingness to pay for it. Funding is going to have to be a multi-prong approach. Taxes / Grants / Donations all needed. Incremental build up as money is there. We need a compelling purpose. Essential for a grant. There is an ongoing cost associated with that building. Workload associated with it. Might incur new expenses (and receive possible income).

Helen - Would a non-profit combined with town add personnel costs? Is leasing a possibility?

Curt Sherrer - Living in Post Mills last five years, MD before that. For finance, what are the specific costs going to be for each of the constraints. Creating a Check list for each use idea can help identify total costs. Which of the uses builds community? Consider personnel and their costs.

Re: ownership and management. Selling it, you lose control of the building and what happens to it. Expand community center 501c3 to the Frost building.

Sump pump can be replaced. Gutters need to be removed. Shutters are starting to fail. They could be fixed up before they fall down. Town hall built the same time. The crawl space is sealed. Why was the Frost basement opened up on the sides? Potentially updating furnace.

New VT grant for \$1 mil. for rural communities. Re-stabilization and more. Jump on that now. Lawrence and Mary Shwank Fund.

Cidery idea as an example of what could be done - sales of cider, and other beverages. Don't need septic, don't need water. Requires piggy-backing onto the community center infrastructure. In an old gristmill bldg. in MD did this multipurpose use to great effect. You name it, we did it. Envision it as a leasing situation. Limited to 50 people. Not a restaurant.

Sharon - Encourage discussion with four-person board of Thetford Ctr. community center. Their fear is that what happens at Frost would impact their ability to take care of the community building adequately.

Missy - Rte 113 is too dangerous to be crossing.

Curtis R. - Furnace was running in 2019. Installed in 2010.

Sharon - Propane furnace was tested and is still working. Designated Village offers some funding options.

Alicia Houk - Since the Fall discussing non profit idea seeking a place. A Rewild Coffeehouse - Re-wilding center. A third place. Where anyone can go and feel welcome. Combine with biodiversity information center. Awareness raising to think of nature as all around us, not "out there." Human community meets the natural world. Combatting the loneliness epidemic. Country Village Center - non profit trying to bring together young children and their children - Rachel Cook efforts and collaboration.