



## Summary of Meetings with Contributors/Advisors

Leading up to August 22, 2014 Planning Decisions, Inc. has carried out meetings with individuals and groups identified as key contributors and advisors in the planning process for the North Yarmouth village study. The following is a summary of the topics of discussion and important points that emerge related to the village area.

### *Interviews*

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## **Royal River Conservation Trust**

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PDI discussed the potential for a recreation-driven redevelopment plan for the village area, focusing on a well-connected, well-marked, and well-advertised trail network; better connections to the Royal River; and investments in infrastructure (mainly paved and marked shoulders along important roadways) for cyclists. Several important points emerged:

- There is limited potential for recreational activities to generate significant economic activity in the town. There is some commercial activity, for example the LL Bean paddle board training classes that take place on the Royal River in Yarmouth, that may relocate into North Yarmouth but the commercial activity and the incentive to relocate is limited.
- The Knight’s Pond conservation project would benefit from a trail connection into North Yarmouth village, however issues arise with safely accommodating various users of the trail system. For example, snowmobilers, equestrians, cyclists, and pedestrians will all have an interest in utilizing the trail but combining all these activities on one network is very difficult. Each of these activities tends to appeal to a different demographic group; some are fading, some are growing. This raises the question of who is the target community and who is meant to be served by the investments into recreational amenities? This is similar to the residential “product” question—the community will become more like whatever group it attempts to attract. Or it will evolve based on incremental and unguided changes that take place through the pattern of willing seller–willing buyer transactions in the market.
- There is interest in developing the power line corridors as trails, particularly for snowmobile, equestrian, and mountain bike use, but again the issue of safety is a concern.

- The town has shown considerable interest in building a bridge across Toddy Brook. This would connect the trail network in the village area. The plan was put on hold due to the loss of Wescustogo Hall and the need for a more comprehensive plan for the village.
- North Yarmouth mainly serves as a through-location between two highly attractive recreational areas: Pineland Farms in New Gloucester and Gray, and Bradbury Mountain in Pownal. Given the attraction and proximity of these locations, it will be difficult for North Yarmouth to generate a significant degree of recreational tourism, and any success will be tied to major investment in infrastructure and programming. The Town may be able to create more awareness of and interest in North Yarmouth among passersby with a more welcoming gateway.
- Recreational amenities, if adequately designed and maintained, are valued by area residents and would improve overall quality of life in town.
- The Royal River through North Yarmouth mainly serves local interests, in part because of the natural features of the river. There is little likelihood that this portion of the river can become a regional destination.
- Open space subdivisions have not resulted in a well-integrated network of conserved space. A large amount of land has been preserved but it is difficult to connect and program these conserved spaces together. A unifying plan is needed but that has not yet been implemented. This places further emphasis on the need to concentrate development activity in the village rather than in outlying areas.

## Yarmouth Water District

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- The YWD has significant water capacity, and with increasing water efficiency, its capacity has been growing rather than declining.
- Under current water district supply capacity, the density of residential development in North Yarmouth village can double (potentially even triple) without creating water demand issues on the district.
- The district recently initiated two programs to protect the aquifer in the village area. The first involves offering to pump effluent from residential septic systems overlaying the aquifer at no cost to the homeowner, and the second involves cleaning up buried fuel oil tanks to prevent leakage and contamination, also at no cost to the homeowner.
- After meeting with several North Yarmouth homeowners the impression that the water district has the impression those residents are mindful of the need to maintain septic systems and prevent contamination of the aquifer.
- The water district routinely monitors soil conditions around the aquifer and has found that there is no immediate threat of contamination with current development conditions.
- Building a public sewer system that serves the village area is possible but should proceed with considerable caution. The historic utilization of the Memorial School septic system has been at 15-30% of designed capacity. There is no precedent for increased utilization of the system and therefore little data to determine whether denser village development would increase effluent loading in the soils, which may eventually contaminate the aquifer.
- The Memorial School is located almost directly up-gradient from the aquifer. If there was a leak or excessive effluent loading in the soils around the school there is a high likelihood that the contamination would reach the aquifer. While the septic system is oversized for the demand that it once served, and has the capacity to manage a higher level of effluent, adequate monitoring of soil conditions is very important to prevent irreparable damage to water quality in the aquifer.
- If the septic system at the school was to be utilized close to designed capacity, investment should be made into a very diligent water quality monitoring program to prevent aquifer contamination. In the event that increased development shows early signs of water contamination, there are two options available:
  - Investing in pre-treatment technology to reduce effluent loading
  - Expanding the system's discharge capacity (i.e. extending the leech field area) to handle more effluent
- Due to the risk of contamination to the aquifer, the Town and future sewer utility (if one is created) should carefully consider measures to ensure resources are available for long term maintenance of the system. A dedicated contingency fund to help finance construction of a pre-treatment mechanism or an expanded leech field is advisable.
- Through much of the village area, ledge begins approximately 40ft below ground level. This would help keep the cost of constructing sewer distribution lines down and reduces contamination risk due to a thick soils layer that would serve as a natural effluent filter.
- Septic systems are designed to treat human, organic waste. There is the potential that a public sewer system may introduce inorganic wastes into the effluent stream. These contaminants cannot be processed by the existing system. These waste streams can potentially contaminate the aquifer.
- The Yarmouth Water District is interested in being an active and supportive partner to help with monitoring and maintaining the aquifer in the future, whether a centralized septic system or dispersed on-site septic systems are utilized.

## Town Staff and Committees (ongoing)

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### Town Office

- Commercial activity is not expected to generate a significant and unique demand on the administrative staff compared to residential development. If new businesses located in town it would generate work for several departments, including the CEO, assessor, and clerks, but would not create new tasks that aren't already being done by these employees.
- The Town Hall and offices were moved to the current site in 2000 after the staff outgrew its former space.
- The current Town Hall campus does not provide adequate meeting space for the staff, committees, elected officials, and other necessary Town functions.
- The vault containing legal and administrative documents will need to be expanded in the very near future.
- The Town does not have an assessing office. The contracted assessor and their local agent operate out of the Town Hall meeting space.
- With future growth, the Town will need to hire a part-time assessor to alleviate the workload on the Town Hall clerks, and to properly maintain the assessment database.
- The Memorial School has the potential to meet the needs of Town office staff and a municipal campus at the school should be considered.
- Representing the costs and feasibility of a municipal campus, versus a commercial campus, versus a housing project at the site of the school (with and without a community septic system that serves the village area) will be helpful. Residents will be interested in seeing the opportunities and impacts that result from these scenarios when they are asked to vote on the future of the school and village area.

### Fire and Rescue Comments

- The fire station currently houses the fire department, a sub-station of the county sheriff's office, and the historical society and its archives vault.
- North Yarmouth is a center for fire and rescue training workshops. The fire station hosts several workshops and training sessions throughout the week, year-round, and provides accommodation to approximately 3-4 students registered for various firefighter and rescue training. Workshops typically attract 20-30 people from surrounding areas and neighboring towns rely on North Yarmouth for the training. The sessions are paid for through a combination of grants and student payment.
- The Town's rental property—the "Sharp" house—was considered as a site for student housing to free up living quarters in the fire station for the department's use. However, the property is too far and not well connected to the station for students that do not own a reliable vehicle—especially in the winter months.
- The existing fire station facility will likely serve the Town's needs for the next 10 years or so, especially if the Historical Society and student living quarters are relocated. That said, the fire department does not have adequate space for hosting its training workshops. Right now the lessons are held in the garage bays. During the workshops all the vehicles must be relocated outdoors.
- The fire department is currently using the Memorial School as storage space, but this could be accommodated in the Historical Society portion of the building if the Society was relocated.
- The fire station is using part of the parking that belongs to the Wescustogo Hall land
- In the near future, the Town will need to reconsider the arrangement with the County sheriff and look more closely at contracting one or two officers.

### *The Historical Society*

- The Society is struggling to find adequate space for their offices and archives.
- Its location in the fire station creates major problems for public access and maintenance of the archives. Visitors must pass through student living quarters to reach the archives and access historical documents.
- The Society owns the Old Town Hall, which is in need of major repairs (upwards of \$200,000). The Historical Society is interested in seeing this building relocated to the old Wescustogo Hall site, and this recommendation was discussed by the Selectmen and Town in December 2013. Part of the rationale for the relocation was to concentrate Town-based functions in a central area.

### *Public Works*

- The department does not have a lunch area
- Salt is currently stored in the sand shed if there is adequate space. There are times—for example, after initial salt delivery—when the salt is stored on open ground. This is an aquifer contamination liability as the salt may leech through the soil if it is not properly contained. The department requires a proper salt storage shed.
- The department is currently operating at maximum capacity. Any growth (in the number of roads to service, sidewalks, trails, and other maintenance commitments) would require new staff, equipment, facilities, or all three.
- Over the summer the department hires two part-time staff to mow public parks and greens. The employees cannot keep up with the current workload.
- The department does not own a spare plow and service truck. During storms, if a breakdown occurs that department has borrowed machinery from neighboring towns, but this is only an option if their trucks are available for use.
- One risk is the recent interest in private housing development with several residential units. In the past, these projects have created private roads that can be relatively easily converted to Town roads through referendum and strong representation of the subdivision occupants. Residential growth can be positive for the community, but the potential increase to the Public Works department workload will likely increase Town expenses or significantly impair service delivery at current funding levels.
- One initiative that the Town has undertaken is to organize and consolidate two existing committees into a parks and recreation committee. If this organization were very active and successful in their work they may create new demand for services on the part of Public Works department. Again, the work of the committee may create a number of valuable amenities for the community, but the cost to maintain these facilities must also be factored in.
- Walnut Hill cemetery will be expanding in the very near future (within a year) and this will increase the maintenance workload for public works staff.

### *Wescustogo Hall and the former Wescustogo Site Comments*

- The old Wescustogo Hall was inadequate for the activities and needs of the town due to a combination of limited meeting space, inappropriate facilities for the purposes of hosting elections, and insufficient parking for larger events.

### *Economic Development and Sustainability Committee (EDSC)*

- The EDSC initiated a master planning process for North Yarmouth center to evaluate the best possible uses of Town-owned land in the center area. The focus was to consider how Town land could be alternatively used to increase the local tax base and alleviate the tax burden for North Yarmouth residents.

- The Old Town Hall was relocated to the public open space behind the current Town Hall campus as a way to consolidate Town offices and activities into a central location.
- Phase one of the master plan looked solely at the village center between Route 115, Parsonage Road, and Route 9. Phase 2 would look at the Memorial School as a potential housing or commercial development parcel. The committee has stepped back from the phase 2 master planning effort in anticipation of the Planning Decisions report.
- The Town has not yet completed a thorough engineering and architectural study on the Memorial School to identify whether the facility is still functional and up to code. The MSAD has produced reports on the quality of the school but these reports reviewed the building as a school—it is not clear whether the evaluation criteria can be carried over to other non-educational uses. It may be the case that the cost to renovate and upgrade the building to non-school standards is lower than what the MSAD had projected for continued use of the site as a school.
- The EDSC viewed affordable housing, especially workforce or senior housing, was very important to the community. The committee has not researched whether there in fact is demand and market viability for senior or affordable housing in North Yarmouth. The committee recognizes that these may not be the best possible or the most viable uses of the memorial school.
- The committee and Town have also considered what the future may hold for the current Public Works site and Cassidy Pit. There is a possibility to repurpose the public works property for residential development. At one point North Yarmouth and Cumberland were also considering consolidating Public Works facilities on a shared location. The committee is not clear on the status of this proposal and whether or not this would make financial sense for North Yarmouth if the town continues to grow.

## North Yarmouth Business Association

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- There used to be considerable commercial rental activity in the village area but demand and interest in the existing commercial space has declined markedly since 2008.
- The Yarmouth Research and Technology tenancy, located 434 Walnut Hill Road generated considerable interest among business owners who saw the investment into commercial property as a positive sign for North Yarmouth village.
- The existing commercial space is in poor condition, and there is little incentive or interest among landlords to invest in the properties.
- Some of the services that business owners see as a valuable addition to North Yarmouth would be postal and delivery services, financial services (a local bank or credit union), clinical or other medical offices.
- There are between 120-150 businesses operating in town but they are mostly invisible. There is very little business-to-business marketing taking place and few pathways for it to occur.
- Business owners are not interested in moving from their home offices into a central location because the real estate is not an improvement to their current conditions. There is little marketability to the commercial space in town and few amenities available. Improvements such as lighting, signage, and better parking facilities would attract commercial tenants.
- Existing commercial spaces are not meeting business needs: 700ft<sup>2</sup> of office space is too large (and costly) for a sole proprietor business, but too small for a small business with three or four employees that may have outgrown a home office. There needs to be more diversity of commercial real estate.
- The majority of commercial tenants in the past (pre-2008) were North Yarmouth residents who operated businesses out of their homes.
- There are several contractor businesses in town that may benefit from a more organized commercial or industrial space that can accommodate their business activities.
- The Smith property—approximately 4 acres southeast of the village area—is currently for sale and several large parcels surrounding the village may be for sale in the near future. Land use policies should be adopted that preserve the most opportune areas for commercial development in order to create a mixed-use village environment.
  - The town has already received an inquiry regarding residential development on the 4-acre parcel. At least one business owner in town noted that such a development would be a lost opportunity for village commercial development. The 4-acre parcel is an ideal location for non-residential development.

## **Wescustogo Trustees**

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- The former Wescustogo Hall could not support the needs of the community as a meeting space, mainly because of the limited parking, lack of adequate facilities (for example restrooms, and kitchen equipment), and limited indoor space.
- The limitations of the Wescustogo Hall in part contributed to declining use of the hall as a central community meeting space.
- Old Town Hall was built in a geographically central location to unite residents in all corners of North Yarmouth but there is obvious logic in consolidating in the designated village area. Based on engineering and architectural review, the building requires over \$200,000 in repairs and upgrades in order to serve as a functional meeting space.
- The Wescustogo site provides an opportunity to relocate the Old Town Hall to the village center. If relocated (at a cost of approximately \$25,000 to \$30,000), the proceeds from the loss of Wescustogo Hall can be used, in conjunction with funds generated by the Historical Society to update the building and create a new community meeting space.
- The Town has already considered this option but has paused on any further in light of the transfer of Memorial School to the Town.
- The sidewalks and other walking facilities that were built in the village area have made a dramatic improvement to the community. The sidewalks are heavily used, but need more maintenance. One of the attractive features of the Wescustogo Hall site as a community gathering space is the central location and access to pedestrian facilities.
- An outdoor meeting space is also lacking in North Yarmouth. A safe park where families can recreate would be a welcome addition. Currently residents are driving to neighboring towns to give their children an opportunity to exercise and meet other children.
- Many people in town were involved in the construction of the original Grange. There is a lot of emotional attachment to the building and the history of how it was constructed. The importance of the hall as a community project—one that brought the community together and produced an important place of pride and purpose for the community—cannot be understated.

## **Veterans Memorial Park (ongoing)**

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- Management of the memorial park is currently being renegotiated. The new managers are focused on preserving the park as an open community gathering space and improving the area.
- The park requires a parking area for visitors and maintenance to the memorial monuments.
- There is an interest in improving Memorial Park to serve a bigger community function. There are no significant plans in place yet, but the use of the land as a memorial and community space will remain in perpetuity.



## Inventory of Meeting Spaces in North Yarmouth:

The Town currently coordinates meetings and functions across a number of different facilities based on the function and availability of meeting space. It is clear that there is not enough space available to comfortably accommodate all the needs of the town. The following is a table of facilities in town that are available for housing various functions. Town staff have been asked to complete this table.

Event or Meeting Space	Capacity	Size (ft <sup>2</sup> )	Notes on Use	Limitations
Church of the LDS			Venue for elections last 2 years	Heavily booked
1st Congregational Church			Limited Town use, mostly private use	
Town Hall Meeting Room			Space shared with assessor office	Limited capacity
Memorial School			Storage space	Requires renovations

## Events and Functions Held in North Yarmouth

The obligations of the Town with respect to Wescustogo Hall are outlined in an agreement signed by the Wescustogo trustees and the Town (*Appendix A*). One of the primary stipulations is that the hall will be available as a community space to host and accommodate community functions. However the Wescustogo Hall is replaced, the new facility must be able to serve the purposes outlined in the agreement. In so far as the Wescustogo Hall must be able to serve as gathering and meeting space for the community, it is important for North Yarmouth to take into consideration the kinds of gatherings and meetings that are held in town, and the kind of facility that is required to house these functions. Any decision to replace the Grange Hall should consider how the facility will accommodate these functions. The following is a table summarizing the functions that take place in town. Town staff have been asked to complete this list and the details for each function.

Event or Function	Estimated Attendance or Space Needed	Frequency
<b>Events</b>		
Town Committee and Board Meetings		Weekly
Community Workshops and Consultation Sessions	200-300	Annual
Bean Suppers – Attract 200-300 attendees	200-300	
Election (3-day event)	Unlimited	Annual
Contra Dances		
Bingo Nights		
Recreation Programs		Weekly
Boy Scouts		
Girl Scouts		
Bridal/Baby Showers		Variable
Birthday Parties		Variable
Wedding Receptions		Variable
School Dances		Quarterly?
North Yarmouth Business Association Annual Business Forum	200-250	Monthly
<b>Functions</b>		
Trophy Case/Museum		ft <sup>2</sup>

## **Appendix A: Agreement Regarding the Transfer of Wescustogo Grange Hall to the Town**

Agreement between the Town of North Yarmouth and the Wescustogo Grange Hall Association regarding the transfer of the Wescustogo Grange Hall to the Town of North Yarmouth

The following represents an agreement in principal that will be taken to a legally called Town Meeting in North Yarmouth for acceptance by the Town's Legislative Body:

Whereas: it has been the wishes for many years for the Wescustogo Grange Hall to continue to be a meeting and gathering place for the people of the Town of North Yarmouth, the Wescustogo Grange Hall Association hereby agrees to transfer, and the Town of North Yarmouth hereby agrees to accept, the property consisting of approximately 2 acres of land along with the buildings and facilities located thereon, more commonly known as the Wescustogo Grange Hall, located at 132 Walnut Hill Road, North Yarmouth, Maine.

The following conditions shall be imposed upon the acceptance of the property by the Town of North Yarmouth:

1. The Hall shall be permanently known as Wescustogo Hall.
2. The Hall shall continue to provide dining room and kitchen facilities.
3. The Hall shall continue to be available as in the past for use by local groups including but not limited to nonprofit organizations and churches. Local includes organizations that citizens of the town belong to which may be outside the borders of the Town but fit the character of the intended use. It shall be available to these groups at a reasonable cost. Ability to pay shall be a factor in determining if there will be a charge and what that charge shall be.
4. The main floor of the hall shall continue to be maintained as a large open hall for the purposes of show, concerts, weddings, dances, and large meetings. It shall not be subdivided into smaller rooms or offices.
5. At least 65% of the square foot surface of the entire property must be kept open as "green space". This limitation shall apply to any additional buildings, roads, driveways, and parking areas. No more than 35% of the surface of the land area shall become other than "green space". This provision shall insure that land will always be available for gatherings such as Fun Day, celebrations, concerts, etc.
6. The Board of Selectmen shall establish a 5 member committee for the purpose of overseeing the use, maintenance, and rules pertaining to the property as well as keeping the intent of this agreement. It shall consist initially of 3 members chosen from the current membership of the Wescustogo Grange Hall Association who shall serve for staggered 3 years terms, and 2 from the Board of Selectmen.
7. Income from the rental or use of the property shall be dedicated to the maintenance and operation of the Wescustogo Hall.



8. A permanent marker or display shall be allowed on the property for the purposes of conveying a history of the Grange and the Hall and the efforts of the Townspeople in erecting the building. It shall be allowed to have pictures, plaques, a showcase or any other needed items to provide a permanent record for the Town of the Hall's significance to the town.
9. The Town shall agree to maintain in perpetuity the records of the Wescustogo Grange #27 and the Wescustogo Grange Hall Association. These are to be kept available for research as are other town documents.
10. The use of this building shall remain the same as conveyed by the agreement. Should the building become damaged or destroyed, or outdated and need replacement, the Town shall replace it with another which will serve the same function of a meeting hall with a large open room, kitchen and dining facilities. The condition of the 65% open space shall remain the same as well. After the year 2025, the Townspeople, through an annual town meeting or public referendum, may by a majority vote change the use of the property if it is determined to be no longer necessary for the use for which it is being conveyed to the Town.
11. The Town of North Yarmouth shall pay all expenses related to the transfer of the property including but not limited to legal, deed, and filing fees.
12. The Wescustogo Grange Association shall provide warranty deed to the property to the Town of North Yarmouth. The Wescustogo Grange shall also transfer to the Town of North Yarmouth any rights or privileges it holds that are provided for in an Easement Deed to New England Telephone and Telegraph Company dated April 13th, 1989.

Signed on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 199\_\_\_\_\_

Witness:

Wescustogo Grange Hall Association

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By: Lincoln J. Merrill, President  
Wescustogo Grange Hall Association

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By: Carl Tiedemann, Chairman  
North Yarmouth Board of Selectmen