
Moretown awarded e-Vermont grant

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The town of Moretown was recently awarded an e-Vermont grant that will result in a new website for the town, among other technological upgrades. Moretown is among 12 rural communities to receive the e-Vermont Community Broadband Project grant. Town officials in Moretown approved the application that will provide technical consultants to create a new town website at their November 15 meeting.

According to the application, the primary goals of the Moretown Project Connects Broadband Steering Committee is to build community with enhanced community dialogue using Front Porch Forum, foster small business innovation and success using Front Porch Forum, promote civic engagement with public communication upgrade to municipal and school websites, widen community dialogue by expanding public access to online resources at Moretown Memorial Library, provide training to a variety of internet users, resurrect the <MI>Moretown Matters<D> community newsletter in digital form, and improve sharing of town and school library resources via automation.

The e-Vermont grant funding provides towns with consultants to address potential technological upgrades; websites can be document-based so town employees are able to update content while the site would be controlled and backed up by a third party.

The e-Vermont Community Broadband Project is supported by a \$2.5 million stimulus grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce with additional support from Vermont philanthropists, corporations and organizational partners (a full list can be found at www.e4vt.org).

Vermont and Minnesota were the only two states to receive the federal funding. The Vermont Council on Rural Development will guide steering committee members through understanding e-Vermont goals and local needs, then help the town identify priority projects for the year of service provided by e-Vermont.

Town Zoning Administrator Deborah Feldman has agreed to be trained and maintain the new website once it is up and running.

The 2011 e-Vermont communities are Bridgewater, Calais, Castleton, Dover, Fairfield, Hardwick, Jay/Westfield, Middletown Springs, Moretown, Morristown, Richford and Vergennes.

Project director Helen Labun Jordan said, "As we work with rural communities to support the best use of high speed internet tools in business, government, community and education, we are bringing Vermont one step closer to truly eliminating the digital divide."

"Rural regions can't be left behind in digital skills - we may be receiving high speed Internet later than more urban areas, but we're going to make up for lost time through programs like e-Vermont," she continued.

The e-Vermont program is one of the few national broadband adoption initiatives focused on rural needs and it is being viewed as a national model. These towns are among the first to explore how the Internet can be harnessed as a tool for community development.

Although the e-Vermont Community Broadband Project can only bring in-depth services to 24 communities, it will be offering tools and resources to all of Vermont through workshops, conferences, "webinars," online tools, and the continuing programs of its partner organizations. The e-Vermont program updates are posted at www.e4vt.org. Contact e-Vermont with any questions at (802) 225-6091 or helen@vtrural.org.