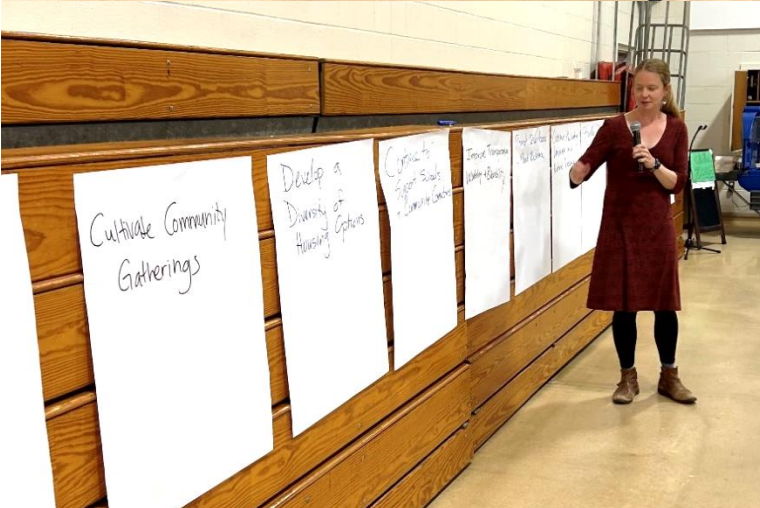


Sharon Connects

Report and Action Plan - June/July 2023



Vermont Council on Rural Development

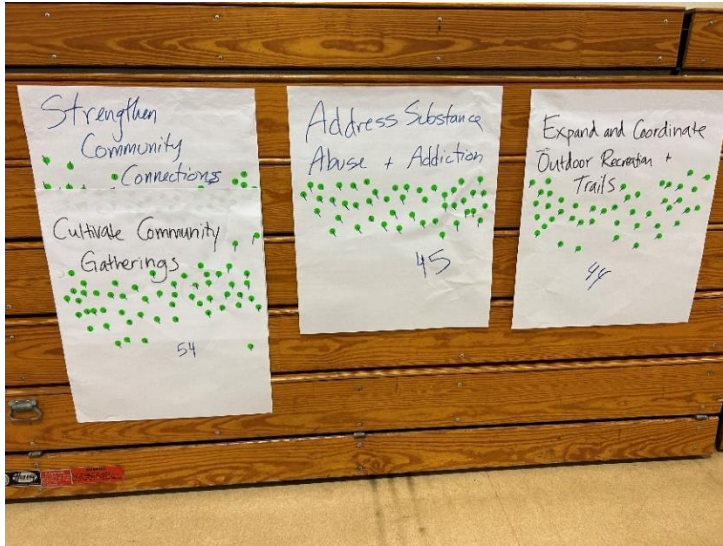


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Vermont Council on Rural Development

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I. Introduction

In the fall of 2023, the Sharon Energy Committee applied to the Vermont Council on Rural Development's Climate Economy Resilient Communities Program. The application identified the need to come together to reignite collaborative actions towards community resilience. Participation in the VCRD program would build upon many prior community conversations including the Emergency Preparedness, Energy Committee priorities, surveys, the [Our 4-Town Future](#) Community Visit by VCRD (July 2019), Community Resilience Organization (CRO) January 2019 assessment survey, and the 2023 draft town plan among others.

VCRD's Climate Economy Resilient Communities Program is designed to help communities build and implement priority actions that increase economic vitality and affordability in a time of climate change. Through this program VCRD supports three to five communities per year working on local climate action solutions by providing community engagement processes, strategic planning, and/or project implementation. The "Sharon Connects" process was designed to pull in all residents to discuss community needs to become more resilient and connected.

The three months of public engagement and outreach that launched Sharon Connects required multi-faceted support from many people in Sharon. The effort began with the convening of a core team responsible for naming the process, planning the kick-off, and broadcasting an invitation far and wide to maximize participation. This planning team formed a backbone for community outreach, spreading the word far-and-wide about the kick-off and using every means available to raise the visibility of the Sharon Connects process.

As this report is printed, area residents are stepping forward to lead the task forces focused on the Sharon Connects priorities. Conversations are underway with potential partner organizations about how best to coordinate efforts and avoid duplication. While area residents hold the keys to the success of this endeavor, VCRD will continue to provide ongoing support.

At the center of all this work has been the Sharon Energy Committee members Ryan Haac and Dee Gish. Both are deeply committed to the health and resilience of their community. Thanks also go to the entire Sharon Connects Steering Committee for their advice and guidance along the way. Finally, the Sharon Select Board has been an active and supportive participant throughout the process.

The Climate Economy Resilient Communities Program is made possible thanks to the financial support of VLITE and Jane's Trust Foundation. Thank you to each of these funders for making this important work possible.



II. The Sharon Connects Process

The town of Sharon, VT has undertaken many key planning initiatives, emergency management plans, community surveys and other avenues for collecting action ideas that the town could take on. In June and July 2023, through the Sharon Connects process, community members identified and prioritized actions, fostered local leadership, connected to resources, and developed achievable action plans to move into implementation of those key ideas. **The Sharon Connects process consisted of two phases:**

Gathering 1: June 8th was an opportunity to hear from the greater Sharon community around ways to connect and invigorate the community. The evening's gathering signifies a unified common goal to connect residents, and build upon Sharon residents' desire for cohesion, connection, and collective action. Over 80 residents came together for action idea prioritization and a shared meal at the Sharon Elementary School to review actions, discuss what is most important, and vote on top priorities to move forward. The priorities they chose to move forward are:

- **Strengthen Community Connections and Cultivate Community Gathering**
- **Address Substance Abuse and Addiction**
- **Expand and Coordinate Outdoor Recreation and Trails.**

Gathering 2: Over 35 residents attended a community meeting on **July 24th** to kick off the work of each task force and build action plans to advance those priorities. Local leaders Jennifer Donahue, Deb Jones, Chelsea Bakos-Kallgren, Rebekah Bakos-Kallgren, and Suzanne Jones have stepped up to co-chair the new task forces.

Sharon selected solid priorities for action that they believe will lead to a stronger and more vibrant community for all Sharon residents. These initiatives set challenging but strategically achievable goals, and there is much work to do, but Sharon is a town that is ready to take action.

Context: There were sixteen ideas for action brought to the June 8th meeting, which were modified and adjusted based on the community conversation that evening. The list of action ideas was developed from conversations with residents of the Town of Sharon, reports, town documents, and community convenings. It is not endorsed as a platform by VCRD or by the community—instead, it was a set of ideas for review and prioritization for action at the Sharon Connects community gathering on June 8th.

Sources for the ideas on this list include the following:

- *Emergency Preparedness*
- *Improving connections*
- [2023 Sharon Town Plan draft](#), Chapter 10: Implementing the Plan
- *Language From Town Meeting Measures re: Climate*
 - 2018
 - 2020
- [Our 4-Town Future](#) Community Visit, July 2019
- *Community Resilience Organization (CRO) -January 2019 assessment survey*
- *Energy Committee Priorities*
- *2018 - Sharon Energy Survey*
- *2020 - Sharon Community Survey*

III. Sharon Connects Priorities

Determined by Sharon residents at the Sharon Connects Community Meeting

June 8th 2023.

Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, Sharon community members whittled down a list of 16 issues through discussion, reasoned arguments and thoughtful reflection. In the end, voting with dot stickers, over 80 participants chose 3 action ideas that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and to strengthen the town through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the June 8th meeting by signing up for Task Forces in the selected areas.

Sharon residents selected three priorities for future action:

✓ **Strengthen Community Connections and Cultivate Community Gathering**

A task force could form to build connections among all residents with a variety of knowledge, interests, ages, backgrounds and experiences. This task force could also inventory current community events and gathering places, identify what is missing, and develop a plan to fill the gaps. This task force could also create a space to tap into existing groups such as virtual and physical bulletin boards, and could establish a directory of residents with knowledge on diverse topic areas that community members can contribute to and search. Actions could be taken to connect long-term generational residents with new residents such as coordinating outreach and promotion of town events and services. This group could promote existing vibrant events and organizations, develop a town newsletter, or develop an area guide and directory. This task force will ensure all residents are empowered, valued, and essential parts to this community, and share and expand skills needed to survive and thrive. Additional action could be taken to highlight and utilize current spaces such as the schools, library, Seven Stars, Sharon Historical Society, Sharon Church and other locations while work could be done to develop new gathering places such as a café and pub or a recreation and community center in a central location. While also promoting regular community meals and multigenerational gathering and support current activities such as Old Home Day, the Horseshoe Club, Green Up Day, Community Garden, Ashley Forest invasives pull, Sharon Sprouty, seasonal ice rink, repair fair, Sharon Health Initiative, holiday lights in the village, etc.

✓ **Address Substance Abuse and Addiction**

A task force could form to identify and implement community-based strategies for addiction prevention and recovery such as organizing educational events, promoting wellness and prevention activities such as exercise or recreation programs, and identifying ways to make sure those affected by addiction, including technology addiction, have access to the services they need in a safe and judgment-free environment.

✓ **Expand and Coordinate Outdoor Recreation and Trails**

A task force could form to build connections between existing community trails and expand trails and outdoor recreation including the White River and the work of the White River Partnership. The group could produce outdoor events and educational opportunities to promote existing recreational opportunities, build access and parking, and improve signage as appropriate. This group could make a deliberate effort to engage youth and students as volunteers and partners.

Other Key Opportunities identified by the community:

Along with the three chosen priorities, the key opportunities listed below reflect other potential ideas for action. Though these opportunities weren't chosen as priority projects through this process, community members may find the list useful as they look to expand on current projects or take on new ones.

Collaborate for Community Wellbeing

Expand the Sharon Health Initiative

A task force could form to expand and reintegrate the community health and wellness initiative, coordinate nutrition and exercise programming, and organize volunteers to help other community members navigate support services, resources and programs. The group could also work with area emergency services and health care providers to improve access to health clinics and other programs to ensure area residents get the care they need.

Develop “Neighborhood” Networks

A task force could form to promote regional neighborhood groups and generate connection points for everyday communication and during disturbances for easy dissemination of emergency information. This task force could also create regular communication channels for residents to interconnect such as a phone tree or neighborhood level events to network and connect such as concerts, arts events, and recreation and outdoor activities.

Expand and Revitalize Emergency Management Infrastructure

A task force could form to support the existing emergency management coordinators to develop a chain of communication during emergencies, identify vulnerable properties such as the Fire Station, and identify possible locations for an emergency shelter. Working with (or run by) the Road Crew, Fire Station and Emergency Management Coordinators, this task force could also work to inform and engage the public in preparations and preparedness.

Promote Conservation and Connection to the Land

Conserve the Working Landscape and Natural Resources

Many residents would like to plan for the future by protecting valuable working lands and natural resources, addressing climate change, and improving resilience through local conservation efforts. A task force could form to identify priorities for conservation and reforestation, build funding for conservation efforts, and look into opportunities around carbon sequestration markets, land adoption programs, and partnerships with foresters and farmers in the area to protect land while supporting the working landscape, building healthy soil, and increasing land based carbon storage.

Coordinate a Regional Food Access Initiative

A task force could form to improve local food access especially for lower income community members and seniors. The group could foster coordination between the food shelf, local farms, and producers in the area. Activities such as re-starting the Sharon Farmers Market could help promote more growers in the region. The group could host meals and events to improve connection and food access. The group should explore existing opportunities for collaboration with the Sharon Food Justice Garden and other local ecology-based organizations.

Start a Community Garage and Repair Program

Volunteers could start and maintain a community garage where residents can work on their cars and have access to shared tools and local experts that can provide help and support. The garage could also host community “repair

cafés” where anyone could work with skilled volunteers on a range of repairs from small engines to cars, farm and yard equipment, and more.

Promote River Access and Flood Resilience

A task force could form to identify, address, and lessen flood risk with outreach and education around flood hazard areas and possible improvements including riparian buffer planting. This task force could also inventory and expand safe river access for boats, eliminate toxic plants, and promote activities and work parties connected to the White River corridor in collaboration with the White River Partnership.

Improve Infrastructure, Utilities and Facilities

Improve Transportation Options

A Transportation Task Force could form to improve options in Sharon and better connect communities to each other and to other regional hubs. The group could work to expand Stagecoach offerings and develop other options such as ride sharing and shuttles. The group could also explore ways to improve affordability and access to driver’s education for youth in the area.

Develop a Diversity of Housing Options

A task force could form to assess Sharon’s current housing needs and explore options to identify housing solutions that meet the needs of all community members. Possible ideas could be to increase new or renovated affordable housing for renters and homeowners including co-housing, accessory dwelling units (ADU), duplexes and apartments, and other multi-family units for mixed ages and incomes. This task force could also connect buyers and sellers or property owners and renters and offer support and resource connection to area residents looking to purchase, rent, or repair a home. There may be opportunities to collaborate with regional, state, and federal partners to develop housing.

Improve Walkability and Bike-ability of the Region

A group could work with municipal leaders and regional, state, and federal partners to improve roads, paths, and the village center to make the area accessible and safe for bikers and pedestrians. By improving signage for walkers and bikers, promoting safety and awareness for bikers, walkers, and drivers, and welcoming and promoting e-bikes with accessible charging points in town for public use.

Expand Alternative Energy

A group could form to expand the existing energy committee to focus on expanding alternative energy, including community solar projects, and solar on available town and school locations. This group could also look into regional biomass projects and small-scale hydro and electric car charging stations.

Weatherization Initiatives

A group could form to focus on weatherization of Sharon homes, businesses and municipal buildings. Through home and business efficiency campaigns and other actions this group can educate on the benefits to weatherization and promote existing resources to support a regional weatherization campaign. This group could coordinate (or be part of) the Sharon Energy Committee and support efforts to engage with the state Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) to get energy audits and potential implementation grants for Baxter Library or the town offices.

IV. Task Force Action Plans

Action Planning Meeting, July 24th, 2023

Sharon Task Forces are comprised of community members and appointed co-chairs. At the July 24th action planning meeting committee members worked closely with a facilitator and a visiting resource team to develop step-by-step action plans and a list of human and financial resources to help achieve their goals. Next, residents will take ownership of the work, and begin the exciting process of turning ideas into action.

For updated information on Sharon Connects and the three task forces, or to sign up for a task force, please contact Ryan Haac: thaacr@gmail.com / (802) 281-8916 or Dee Gish: deegish@gmail.com

✓ Strengthen Community Connections and Cultivate Community Gathering

Community co-chairs: **Paula Duprat and Nic Antal**

Facilitator: **Laura Cavin Bailey**, *Climate Economy Program Manager*, VCRD

Resource Team Members: **Bronwyn Cooke**, Planning and Policy Manager, Department of Housing and Community Development

Jason Van Driesche, Chief of Staff, Front Porch Forum

Rebecca Stone, Senior Planner & Engagement Specialist, Community Workshop LLC

Task Force Signups: Fallon Abel, Nicole Antal, Mary Ayer, Denis B Backus, Steve Basham, Tom Bissell, Cat Buxton, Laura DeCapua, Jeff Demers, Jennifer Donahue, Paula Duprat, Greg Elder, Lynn Ferguson, Kevin Gish, Ryan Haac, Scott Henkels, Donna Isaacs, Jack Jones, John Lanza, Michael Livingston, Elizabeth Loughran, Hillary Miner, Dick Ruben, Carol Sheldon, Leon Sheldon, Oli Shipman, Elisabeth Sowerwine, Art Stacy, Mary Stoddard, Jill Wilcox, and Ken Wright

A task force could form to build connections among all residents with a variety of knowledge, interests, ages, backgrounds and experiences. This task force could also inventory current community events and gathering places, identify what is missing, and develop a plan to fill the gaps. This task force could also create a space to tap into existing groups such as virtual and physical bulletin boards, and could establish a directory of residents with knowledge on diverse topic areas that community members can contribute to and search. Actions could be taken to connect long-term generational residents with new residents such as coordinating outreach and promotion of town events and services. This group could promote existing vibrant events and organizations, develop a town newsletter, or develop an area guide and directory. This task force will ensure all residents are empowered, valued, and essential parts to this community, and share and expand skills needed to survive and thrive. Additional action could be taken to highlight and utilize current spaces such as the schools, library, Seven Stars, Sharon Historical Society, Sharon Church and other locations while work could be done to develop new gathering places such as a café and pub or a recreation and community center in a central location. While also promoting regular community meals and multigenerational gathering and support current activities such as Old Home Day, the Horseshoe Club, Green Up Day, Community Garden, Ashley Forest invasives pull, Sharon Sprouty, seasonal ice rink, repair fair, Sharon Health Initiative, holiday lights in the village, etc.

Existing Initiatives:

- Sharon Health Initiative
- Sharon Food Shelf
- Ashley Community Forest – well represented by Strafford residents and Sharon residents are encouraged to participate.
- Sprouty 5k/10k fund raising event
- Sharon Old Home Days – not just celebrating today but our past. Town reunion in August.
- Historical Society – events throughout the year with invited speakers.
- Fall Flea Market (Sept 9) at the school
- WFVR (available to announce events/info), Royalton Radio Show
- Seven Starts – concerts, music lessons, Seven Stars Community Band weaves through many of the events
- Baxter Library –many events
- Ice Rink – at the school in the winter
- Repair Fair
- Sharon Church – decided unanimously to remove pews from the church and consider how it can help the community. Also has potential as a performance space, café, or other gathering place.
- Kiosk – on town property currently being constructed
- Cemetery Committee
- Sharon Recreation Department
- Sharon schools
- Fire department
- Horseshoe Wednesday evenings
- Sidewalk study underway with selectboard
- Community phone book
- Royalton Senior Center (has transportation available from Sharon on days with community meals)

Priority Action Steps:

1. Coordinate and inventory existing community spaces, for example the school, Seven Stars, library, Church, historical society.
2. Communication/Outreach plan that spans generations and identify existing channels and consider new ways such as a printed newsletter. Existing channels include Front Porch Forum, Facebook, Sharon Listserv (hosted by Vital Communities), Herald, WFVR radio station, the Church Bulletin board, library newsletter
3. Determine recurring events that bring the community together cross generations and cross tenure in town. Some ideas included making the kick off event unique and unexpected, cater to the whole family needs, food, music, timing for workers, families, etc. Some ideas include an outdoor movie night, trail around Sharon, historical understanding of what town used to be like, “First Fridays”, community dinners, etc.
4. Determine new Kiosk in town use and management.
5. Organize a Sharon correspondent for the Herald. Galen used to do it and Valerie Boles was going to do it, there may be a small stipend available.

Other Potential Actions:

- Create a universal calendar of community events including Town/County/State events.
- Volunteer opportunity management system to coordinate and alert people to opportunities.
- Get to know your neighbor event and neighborhood networks formed– part of the Resiliency Map where neighborhoods are defined and contact information distributed, possibly based on old farmstead areas.
- Develop a Veterans in Sharon contact or database or network to share what resources exist. The Town lists have a public record of homeowners who are veterans (those that own property).
- Community café weekday mornings in the Steele Chapel – serving coffee and having volunteers bring in food for retired folks to socialize.
- Share information and awareness to build attendance at the Royalton and Strafford Area Senior Center community meals including more awareness that there is a bus available to bring people and/or possibly expand that service. Royalton Tuesdays at noon, Thursdays lunch, Strafford on Wednesdays. Meals on Wheels will deliver from there.

- Identify what is in the current sidewalk study with the selectboard and what is missing to take on as a group. For example, the Town Green needs to be connected to a crosswalk and downtown walkability is key.
- Ask/survey the community to see what people need or want to see/do. – what will bring you to the library (for example)? Know your audience/end users to develop events.
- Recreation District expansion to include other sectors of the community, seniors, middle age, etc.
- Prioritize and consider connecting events that already exist to bridge connections between new and old residents.
- Sharon Academy has a Thursday night café that could be expanded at the church which seats up to 300. It would be an excellent place to hold these events.
- How do we make more people feel welcome at existing events? Cater to the whole family to allow people to spend time. For example this group could explore how to make the green more comfortable that people want to just be there – “activate public spaces”? Social connections will come when people spend time in places and build on what we already have.
- Layering spaces. Community spaces that have proximity to each other but do not necessarily communicate. The front of our spaces (Library/Seven Stars/School) front on State highways. Backs abut each other and even have parking problems but do not share potential for sharing solutions for outdoor shared space or shared parking or things like Town common but it’s surrounded by state roads. Unused open space that could be shared.
- “Sharon Compass”
- Inventory events and social infrastructure. Who are events serving now and who do we want them to serve? What do we want out of the programs? Specific types of people attending the events.
- Take down the fence – trail around Sharon. “There will someday be a sidewalk here” with a sign.
- Longshot idea for the Historical Society. Old postcard from Fairlee showed that there were sidewalks.
- Some of the ideas we are talking about around public space are not necessarily new (maybe they were done 100 years ago).

Resources

1. Better Connections (more walkable and easier to get around).
2. Better Places – making public spaces – physical spaces. Provide physical infrastructure.
3. An operator’s manual for new community members. Bethel and Middlesex have examples of these.
4. Community actions – walk audit (AARP has a toolkit/form that can be printed). What does it feel like walking downtown? Mark various routes. Prioritize routes – which sections of core roads. Impactful for different groups to do it. Collect data to make the case.
5. Jason – Front Porch Forum – connects into many of the themes brought up. Online community forums around the state. Every community has one (Sharon/Royalton). Email digest each day. Frontporchforum.com FPF has a community calendar and a business directory.
6. Rebecca – prioritizing actions. Start with the things you are already doing – how can we expand on them and do them better before you start adding things. What’s the longevity plan for new ideas? It’s an easier lift if you start with something small or something you already have.

✓ Address Substance Abuse and Addiction

Community co-chairs: **Deb Jones and Chelsea Bakos-Kallgren**

Facilitator: **Alanna Ojibway**, *Assistant Director*, Center for Justice Reform and National Center on Restorative Justice, Vermont Law and Graduate School

Resource Team Members: **Ken Hammond**, *Field Services Director Barre/Hartford Districts*, VT Agency of Human Services

Karl Coleman, *Peer specialist*, Upper Valley Turning Point

Gail Egner, *Community Health Coordinator & Recovery Coach*, Better Life Partners

Task Force Signups: Fallon Abel, Chelsea Bakos-Kallgren, Kevin Blakeman, Dee Gish, Patrick Gobeille, Mary Etna Haac, Deb Jones, Eileen Lanza, Sarah Pfeiffer, Kelly Sczomak, and Carol Sheldon

A task force could form to identify and implement community-based strategies for addiction prevention and recovery such as organizing educational events, promoting wellness and prevention activities such as exercise or recreation programs, and identifying ways to make sure those affected by addiction, including technology addiction, have access to the services they need in a safe and judgment-free environment.

The Issue Today

- Kids – go home to families that are battling addiction. Parents are skipping out on rehab, or don't show up, kids don't know where parents are. DCF is overwhelmed, so support is hard to find. Kids need space to be able to talk about it. Friends are affected too. Kids are struggling with substance use. Connection piece is a big part of the solution. Kids see parents using as a way to escape, so kids see that model and use substances as well.
- Model called Phoenix where they hold events for sobriety with activities like skateboarding or rock climbing. Build community spaces and community events. Can create conditions so people don't feel the need to use.
- Stigma is important to overcome.
- Safety – be able to provide somebody a safe place to be.
- Fear – people who want and need support, but are afraid of the stigma. Label of being an addict and how it affects medical care. Creates a sense of isolation.
- Haven volunteer someone to talk to is needed.
- Need some education in this area. If there were an emergency, would like some resources to respond in important.
- Community and neighbor connection important. There have been Sharon residents lost to addiction, so they are present. Need to build trust and connections.
- What are unseen impacts of substance abuse? At town office, homelessness.
- Lack of knowledge and skill, then police are involved. Could be mental health issues as well. We could be better partners with police if we had a plan.
- Mental health issues are co-occurring. Hartford is developing a task force team that has a mental health counselor with policing.
- Mental health first responders are helpful. Can make people more willing to call for help, instead of calling the police.
- Isolation - Kids are trying to compensate and dealing with their family's substance use and dealing with more isolation. Can't see their friends or sign up for club activities. England has full-service community schools where high schools are open until 10:00 pm that becomes a multi-generational space. Ex: knitting

circles with grandmas and weightlifting in another corner. Spaces for talking, but also need other social spaces. Do you have a place that is safe and be around others.

- What is being abused?
 - Methamphetamines, fentanyl, zylozine. Overdoses because you don't know what dose they are receiving. Targeted campaign to bribe doctors to give addictive treatment prescription. Pumped heroine in cheap replacement. Meth in trucking and logging to keep being productive. Some started with injuries, then got addicted to pain killers.
- VT has the lowest vacancy rate in country, so people using because they can't find a place to live. Even if you have a job, can't find a place to live. Shortage of housing, mental health issues because you're not sleeping well.
- Finland eradicated homelessness. New model, everyone is entitled to housing, even if you were using drugs. Found that providing housing helped ease the addiction problem. Finland doesn't have a concept of taking children from parents.
- VT also has one of the highest children in custody – due to poverty and substance use. Lack of opportunity and lack of housing.
- Meeting someone's basic needs before starting to work on recovery. Shelter first – low barrier shelter. Then move to housing – with supportive treatment.
- Challenges for people to connect in town.

Priority Action Steps:

1. Finding several host sites to partner/run several training and education events involving harm reduction kits (how to use them, why they're important, etc.)
 - Training – Karl Coleman can do trainings.
 - Marketing
 - Distribution
2. Find facilitator for Smart Recovery or DBT group in Sharon–
 - Designated Agency (Clara Martin)
 - Find funding.
3. Drop box for used medications, inquire about what is needed to start in town.
4. Peer to peer
 - Can be combined with the Sharon Health Initiative structure.
 - Generating list of volunteers for peer support
5. Outreach to partner with community events
 - Phoenix to learn more about what it would entail to partner with them to host an event in Sharon.
 - Hartford – Hartford Community Coalition to learn more about their newly formed task force to implement new ideas around community policing/safety models. Can we use Hartford's mental health police officer?
6. Research H.222 funding and how to apply, specifically look into section 9, which may involve possible funding for residential recovery services.

Other Potential Actions:

- H.222 –Funding for education, reversal kits, and getting resources to the person. Research how funding can be used/when/how for the new legislation (potentially H.222?) to better understand a local contact for grant distribution and eligibility.
- Full-service community school – which could be used as a space for community events (including recovery events) & education on substance abuse and recovery with open extended hours. It could also act as hub for community resources for example: food closet that people can grab something.

- Start organized regular recovery meetings, Smart recovery – DBT (dialectical behavioral therapy) skills group.
- Trained community mental health responders/providers to be called with mental health crisis (either as a new job or developing training for those in existing lines of work) to equip for community policing models for public safety rather than relying on police.
- Having a number that's available by text or email to reach out for help rather than only a number to call.
- Creating handouts for resource information in the area.
- Fentanyl test kits and Narcan available at all schools with community training on how to use and harm reduction kits.
- More education and training on xylazine "Tranq" (what it is, how it's being used, what are the effects/impacts of it and that you can't test for it). Gabapentin education also.
- Creating a drop box for medications in town.
- Having meeting groups available that are easily accessible (just after school) for family members impacted by addiction (specifically one for children) to get support.
- The Phoenix organization that put on free events to promote recovery/sobriety open to families focused on physical exercise that can build family events. Look into contacting them to discuss the possibility of an event in Sharon.
- Trainings or certifications
- Access and education made within the community for people to know which resources are available and which organizations/partners individuals can go to for help rather than just police.
- Street outreach for homelessness and mental health services, follow up outreach.
- Develop a way to facilitate outreach of mental health agencies. Generate marketing presence based on needs for people to know what is available and seeing these materials posted in public places so that it becomes common knowledge.
- Navigation for resources, create social supports for navigating treatment/recovery services
- Sharon Health Initiative – goes into home.
- Creating a peer to peer mentoring program that is more accessible, recovery coaching academy, Turning Point Recovery - insurance not involved.
- Create an email list of people willing to be peer supporters.
- Facebook groups.
- Expand volunteer involvement/engagement for mental health and substance abuse through Sharon Health Initiative & ask for more town funding for a mental health coordinator. Expand the volunteer network with Sharon Health Initiative which already has process and outreach lists in place for home-visit work.
- Sharon church is available for community uses both ongoing program and community events and has plans to make the Steele Chapel flexible seating for different uses and configurations.
- Youth-led initiatives through a High school course on mental health and substance use issues –youth could lead and implement a community program/s. (one in particular from existing new class that will be running at Sharon Academy on social justice projects)

Resources

- Gail has a resource guide for recovery that she will email. Better Life Partners.
- South Royalton had an event – like touch a truck

✓ Expand and Coordinate Outdoor Recreation and Trails

Community Co-Chairs: **Rebekah Bakos-Kallgren and Suzanne Jones**

Facilitator: **Jessica Savage**, *Director of Community Collaboration*, VCRD

Resource Team Members: **Christian Pelletier**, *Program Coordinator*, White River Partnership
Zac Freeman, *Owner/Operator Apex Trailworks*, and Ridgeline Outdoor Collective

Task Force Signups: Emma Basham, Tom Bissell, Doug Cummings, Dan Deneen, Steve Gagliardone, Carol Harry, Suzanne Jones, Rebekah Bakos-Kallgren, Patty Ko, Elizabeth Loughran, Christian Pelletier, Joel Senger, Erik Skarsten, Jonathan Stoeckle, and Mike Zwickelmaier

A task force could form to build connections between existing community trails and expand trails and outdoor recreation including the White River and the work of the White River Partnership. The group could produce outdoor events and educational opportunities to promote existing recreational opportunities, build access and parking, and improve signage as appropriate. This group could make a deliberate effort to engage youth and students as volunteers and partners.

The Issue Today

- Need more workdays and volunteers, specifically young volunteers and maintenance
- Ice Rink is working well – growing body of young folks and families who use/steward the rink
- Sharon Elementary school program – S6 and xc skiing (does this still happen at Downer Forest, is it groomed??), does school have an outdoor outing club
- Are there active groups/clubs that steward/maintain trails: not really, some individuals
- Rec Dept – how active are they in maintenance
- School is a hub for activity but not everyone is attached to the school
- Barnard/Pomfret – map of gravel roads for folks to ride – would be great for Sharon to have
- River – huge outdoor recreation asset
- What is the relationship between town and TSA – appears to be an active community but not all kids in Sharon go

Priority Action Steps:

1. Taskforce creates a list of what is currently in existence (ice skating, river, trails, events) so there is one place with outdoor assets. Public and private assets.
2. Publish List that is widely available to community (Facebook, post at town hall and library, other social media that is currently in existence)
3. Survey community after they review list to understand needs, resources, assets and what has been missed. Also survey on how they can get involved (volunteer, communication, etc)
4. Create a public map of trails and promote these resources.
5. Event –Create a whole community winter event that combines 4 x 4 hockey event, winter carnival. Event can also serve as the launch event for this task force. Event in partnership with key partners and contacts.

Other Potential Action:

- Create a list of what is currently in existence (ice skating, river, trails) so there is one place with outdoor assets. Public and private assets.
- Connect trails physically with Strafford and Norwich (Gile Mtn). Connect trails and resources.
- Build mountain bike trails in town (legal trails)

- Downer Forest – develop (State and Foresters) and understand the process to develop Downer Forest
- Events – Create a whole community winter event that combines 4 x 4 hockey event, winter carnival. Some summer/spring events exist (Sprouty – explore more options for outdoor events)
- Create a public map of trails and promote these resources
- Inventory on outdoor rec. programming and events (ultimate frisbee)
- Events along the river – determine what river access exists
- Communicate the need for volunteers to build/maintain trail assets – create a good database with list of potential volunteers (Sharon FB page)
- Create position/capacity for communication
- Survey community needs, resources, assets
- Assessment of current resources
- Name for the task force/group but also create an identity and buzz around the group (a mission for the group)
- Identify key partners and contacts
- Definition of outdoor resources

Resources

- Publish – be careful on publishing trails on private land. Landowner permission
- Mapping – can be expensive
- ANR Natural Resource Atlas
- Liability – Landowner Liability Law
- WRP – fundraising (RTP, VOREC), permits, survey, mapping, signage
- VMBA Chapters – insurance policy
- Trailforks.com



V. Sharon Connects Participants

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and more...

VI. Resource Team Members

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**for ideas involving state land*



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Sharon Connects is part of the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) Climate Economy Resilient Communities Program – a community-driven process with local leaders, VCRD, and other regional partners to provide assistance with community engagement processes, strategic planning and/or project implementation.