

**May 10, 2024**

Front Porch Forum No. 5582

## **New Direction for The Vestry Community Center Project**

Geoff Gevalt • Hinsdale Rd, Hinesburg

Hinesburg residents,

Over the past few years, our small group of volunteers has been striving to find funding from several historic preservation organizations to restore the old Vestry building on Rte. 116 and transform it into a community center. Having received some initial seed grants, our hopes were high that our deteriorating little wood frame structure would be eligible for significant historic structures grants.

Unfortunately, in the highly competitive world of historic grants, we don't quite fit the bill. And we have been politely informed that the vestry building, while it comprises elements of several early 19<sup>th</sup> century structures, doesn't meet the criteria needed to win these grants.

So, back to the drawing board.

As we knew, and as many of you folks pointed out, it will be much less expensive to remove the existing structure and build anew than to do a full historic restoration. So our plan is to remove the building -- while saving the few significant original elements (notably the beautiful round top tracery window (1825) which will once again face Main Street when the new building is completed. The exterior form will remain largely the same and thus retain and enhance the structure's important presence on the street.

Our goal remains: Provide the community new, non-denominational space -- a big need -- at a significantly lower cost than anticipated for restoration. We are applying for a demolition permit from the Development Review Board (May 21 hearing) and anticipate that our first phase will be to remove the compromised present structure, storing and organizing reusable elements, and provide a new, insulated foundation and underground utilities on the existing footprint, all to be completed with presently (almost) available pledged funds and some volunteer labor, to be completed this year.

We anticipate that work on constructing the new building would begin in late spring 2025 and be completed by the fall of 2026.

As always, our group's core intent is to achieve all of this at no cost to taxpayers. We will still be applying for appropriate grants as available, and we will be reaching out to the community for financial support and help.

Please be sure to visit [vestrycommunitycenter.org](http://vestrycommunitycenter.org) for more information.

Signed,

Len Duffy, Rolf Kielman (chair), Maggie Gordon, George Dameron, Penrose Jackson, Geoffrey Gevalt, Paul Amsbary, Jim Goldsmith.