

Southern Vermont Economy Project

# COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT AND PROJECT PRIORITIZATION REPORT

**PREPARED FOR THE TOWN OF HALIFAX**

Revised report: May 12, 2023

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*Photo: John Phelan*



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## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction to the Southern VT Economy Project &amp; the Community Assessment and Priority Project (CAPP) Process</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The Halifax CAPP Process</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Background: A Needed Planning Process for Town ARPA Money</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Halifax Select Board Discussion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Community Engagement</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>What You'll Find in This Report</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Next Steps in the CAPP Process</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Top Community Goals for Halifax</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>List of Community Goals Collected 3/25/2023</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Priority Projects for Halifax</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Project Sheet: Improvements to Halifax Community Hall to Support More Community Programming</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Starting Action Step Matrix: Improvements to Halifax Community Hall</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Project Sheet: Pavilion in Halifax for Outdoor Community Events</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Starting Action Step Matrix: Pavilion in Halifax for Outdoor Community Events</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Project Sheet: Halifax Town Broadband Rollout: Access and Training</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Starting Action Step Matrix: Halifax Town Broadband Rollout: Access and Training</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Project Sheet: Warming Center</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Action Step Matrix: Warming Center</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Halifax Community Project Ideas by category: ideas in search of Champions!</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Additional Community Projects Submitted</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Halifax Fire Company Proposal (For use of ARPA Funding)</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Halifax Fiber Rollout &amp; Resiliency Project</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Sample Project Worksheet</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Sample Action Step Matrix</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Community Members in Attendance</b>	<b>30</b>

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## **Introduction to the Southern VT Economy Project & the Community Assessment and Priority Project (CAPP) Process**

The Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation's Southern Vermont Economy Project (SVEP) is a program that provides training and technical assistance to increase local capacity, skills, and resources in order to advance local projects in Southern Vermont. The program recognizes that local projects are critical to the ability of Southern Vermont to achieve its community, economic, and workforce development goals. SVEP is funded in part through the USDA Rural Community Development Initiative.

As part of SVEP, the CAPP process is designed to help communities define goals and projects that they would like to move forward, and to give them resources and tools that will help them advance those projects.

The goal of the program is also:

- To help identify shared priorities and potential areas for community/regional collaboration across Southern Vermont.
- Facilitate connections to funders, cultivate community-funder relationships, and match projects with regional, state, and/or federal funding sources.
- Create situational awareness among funders and planning partners in our region of each community's priorities and future plans.
- Develop alignment and linkage between community plans and priorities and the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs).
- Introduce BDCC as a resource to help advance community and regional projects.
- And, most importantly, support and accelerate the implementation of community projects that benefit the local economy and the southern Vermont economy.

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# The Halifax CAPP Process

## **Background: A Needed Planning Process for Town ARPA Money**

The Halifax Community Assessment and Project Prioritization (CAPP) visit arose from current conditions in which there is an unprecedented amount of funding (state and federal) that has been made available to Vermont's communities thanks to funding from several sources, including COVID-19 relief funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Rural communities across Vermont have also received their ARPA funding allocations directly, and are now sitting on sums of money that are paradoxically larger than what they usually have at their disposal, while also being inadequate for truly transformative projects unless they are combined with other sources of funding.

At the same time, there is a growing recognition that smaller, rural communities are at a disadvantage in deploying their ARPA funds and seeking additional funding due to a lack of staff capacity for grant research, application preparation, and project management. To remedy this situation, work is being done on a state level to [raise awareness of what funding programs](#) are available for communities, [and ultimately to channel additional funding for technical assistance into communities](#) like Halifax so that they can better access these programs.

However, rural communities — which have traditionally lacked the capacity to access grant funds — have also not been engaged in the kind of community planning process that is a necessary first step when undertaking transformative community projects. Before accessing technical assistance for help with obtaining grant funding, it's necessary to have a project proposal begun (if not already in hand). The project should be one that demonstrates a broad base of community support and fills a need that the community has determined for itself.

The CAPP process is a way to help communities, including Halifax, take this valuable first step: engaging community residents and stakeholders to identify shared community goals and start developing projects that can help the community meet those goals.

Since launching CAPP in September 2022, BDCC's SVEP program has worked to identify communities across the Southern VT Zone that can benefit from going through a CAPP process.

## **Halifax Select Board Discussion**

The Halifax Select Board expressed interest in getting assistance through CAPP when the SVEP manager, Meg Staloff, attended a Select Board meeting on [September 6, 2022](#). BDCC staff routinely attend one or more Select Board meetings a year in every town in the Windham region. The purpose of these visits is twofold: first, to deliver an annual request

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for funding that supports our affiliate organization (Southeastern VT Economic Development Strategies, or SeVEDS), but secondly, and more importantly, to review the economic development services that our organization provides and help answer community needs.

Following that meeting, a proposal to engage with the CAPP process, dated November 2, 2022, was sent to the Select Board for consideration at an upcoming meeting. The Board followed up with Staloff, who then attended a meeting on [December 20, 2020](#). At that meeting, it was determined that a community meeting should be held on March 25, 2023 — following the Town Meeting and giving time to create a flier and postcard to be sent to residents. Staloff also attended a meeting on [March 21, 2023](#) to review the agenda for the meeting.

### **Community Engagement**

Thirty-three Halifax residents attended the Community Meeting on 3/25 and engaged in conversations to develop some community goals. After an introduction to the goals and desired outcomes, the meeting used a 'rotating flip chart' method, breaking attendees into four groups. Each group was tasked with coming up with a list of goals. Groups then rotated and provided comments on the other groups' goals in order to develop a unified vision. As they worked, the groups also took notes on ideas for possible actions of projects that informed their goals list — all those ideas were collected, along with the goals.

A second meeting was held on May 6, 2023 to get additional input into community goals and define additional projects and project areas. With 12 just community members in attendance at this meeting (thanks to a beautiful spring day), there is still room for more community input into evolving additional projects that might have champions who were not able to attend.

### **What You'll Find in This Report**

This final report is a collection of many conversations that took place ahead of, around, and as part of the community meetings on March 25 and May 6.

First (on page 7) is the final list of Halifax Community Goals that were derived through the two community meetings. These are intended to guide the community in deciding, as projects are considered, how the project aligns with what Halifax wants for itself!

Following that, on page 8, is a compilation of the background conversations that took place around goals on March 23. We included all the ideas captured on flip charts, as well as the community comments (in pink) that helped guide further discussion.

Following that, on page 9, is a summary of some projects that were developed at the community meetings. Consider these 'Projects with Champions,' which are ready to move

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forward, or noted for further development. (**Note:** the ‘Halifax Town Fiber Rollout Project: Access and Training’ will need to be considered along with the ‘Halifax Fiber Rollout & Resiliency Project’ submitted by Edee Edwards on pp 26-27).

Following the summary page, find some projects that were developed at both community meetings: Halifax Community Hall Renovations (p. 11), Pavilion for Outdoor Events (p. 14), Halifax Town Fiber Rollout Project: Access and Training (p. 16), and Warming Shelter (p. 19). For each you’ll see a project sheet and some recommendations for starting action steps that can be further developed by project leads.

Following that, on pages 21-22, there is a full list of project ideas generated by community members. These are a compilation sourced from the following inputs:

- A Halifax Select Board meeting on May 24, 2022, in which the community was invited to submit recommendations and ideas for ways to use ARPA funding.
- A conversation that took place between the SVEP Manager and Select Board member Patrick McAllistair on December 16, 2022, to get a better understanding of additional projects and priorities, some of which include developing more streamlined municipal practices.
- Community members were invited to add to the list ahead of the March 25, 2023, meeting.
- Ideas generated at the March 25, 2023 meeting.

These larger lists can help generate more priority projects – consider them good ideas in search of champions!

Finally, at the end are two proposals that were sent by community members, and which are for the Select Board to consider for ARPA Funding allocation.

- The Halifax Fire Chief, Dennis Annear, forwarded a proposal for equipment upgrades for the Halifax Fire department. We have added some commentary and links to funding and other resources to his request (pp. 23-25).
- Select Board Vice Chair Edee Edwards forwarded a “Halifax Fiber Rollout and Resiliency” project ahead of the May 6 meeting. Since it contains a more time-sensitive request for ARPA funding allocation to DV Fiber to carry out the project, it is included separately from the possibility of a locally funded broadband rollout project, which was discussed at the May 6 meeting (pp. 26-27).

### **Next Steps in the CAPP Process**

This report is being handed back to the community as a whole, and in particular to groups who have been identified as Project Leads for identified projects.

The information contained in this report is intended to be used as an initial guide in developing the identified priority projects, as well as serving as a repository for good ideas for future development.

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The project sheets and Next Step Matrix worksheets included here are intended to be living documents. They should be updated and added to as projects evolve. And it is to be expected that projects will evolve, morph, or branch into sub-projects along the way!

As projects take shape, the Southern VT Economy Project staff is here to serve as a resource to help local projects advance. Our programming is responsive to community needs by design. If you need help with something, chances are you are not the only one. We are happy to answer specific questions, convene group skill trainings, or organize local gatherings for groups working on similar projects.

### **Community Communications Goal / Project**

There was also some discussion around ways to accomplish the second community goal: “Support community connection in Halifax through improved communications systems that are accessible to all residents.” This is undoubtedly a complex topic, but as more Halifax residents gain access to high-speed internet, it is a pivotal moment and an opportunity! We encourage the Select Board and town residents to continue to work on this goal by identifying either one larger or several smaller projects that can improve how information is communicated throughout the community.

One idea is to consider surveying the community about the ways in which they prefer to communicate, as well as what kind of information they would like to see collected, and where they are currently finding information about local and regional events. The Select Board may want to see if there is a community member willing to coordinate this effort. Costs associated could include the cost of a town-wide mailing and other marketing costs associated with making sure as many townspeople as possible had the chance to complete the survey.

### **Additional Projects**

Additionally, there are many projects that are included in the list on pages 21-22 which have yet to find champions, including many opportunities for outdoor recreation! We encourage Halifax residents who are interested in further developing any of these ideas to contact us for help with further describing your project, and identifying partners, resources, and starting steps.

And of course this priority projects list created by people in attendance at the meeting does not preclude other local groups from continuing to carry out their impactful work on existing projects! Project leaders are encouraged to use the Project Overview and Next Step Matrix Worksheets as a planning template for their projects. Blank copies are included at the end of the report for community use.

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## Top Community Goals for Halifax

**Community Goal #1:** Preserve and enhance a sense of community in Halifax through the development of actively used indoor and outdoor community spaces that will accommodate programming for multiple generations.

**Community Goal #2:** Support community connection in Halifax through improved communications systems that are accessible to all residents. *This includes:*

- *Communication by and with local government*
- *Emergency communications*
- *Communication about community resources and gatherings*

**Community Goal #3:** Protect and enhance Halifax's natural environment:

- *By encouraging energy efficiency and sustainability in the built environment;*  
*and*
- *Through conservation and stewardship of the community's natural resources, including air, water, land resources, and plants and wildlife and their habitat.*

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## List of Community Goals Collected 3/25/2023

*Similar items have been combined into one bullet point, with sub-goals in some cases added under a larger one. In cases where items were more of a smaller scale 'idea' or project than a goal, they have been moved to the Ideas sheet. Community members' comments are listed in pink.*

- Routine community connection; Actively used indoor/Outdoor community gathering spaces with multi-generational activities, classes, services.
  - pavilion, trails, square dancing, gardens
  - Seniors: more networking and communication and social events: Senior Center
    - Note: we have Sr. Meals but not a Sr. Center
  - School/community Connection: create multigenerational links
    - Note: what does this mean?
- Communication hub for activities, events, emergency info phone trees, internet for improved emergency resilience;
  - Include FD
  - Better communication/marketing of town;
  - improve town website, facebook
  - Community engagement via improved Broadband/Cell Service
  - Promoting participation in town governance
    - This had a red x but no comments
- Transit – bus or volunteer drivers to Wilmington, Brattleboro, Jacksonville – *This maybe should move to the 'ideas' sheet or could be restated under a larger Goal*
  - Note: this seems like a sub-goal
  - Note: Yes but elaborate as to who/how? Carbon footprint
  - Moover: what is role here esp for non-seniors: add route to Halifax
- Balance Maintaining and Improving Quality of Life for residents with respect to the environment, Town Center, and those who work for home <BDCC note: I think I captured this but there are a lot of concepts here >
- Environmental Preservation, Environmental Sustainability
  - Note: Tell me more/yes, but we need to understand what we mean
- Greater role/presence in Windham County
  - Note: Tell me more
- Long term sustainability of Town and inhabitants
  - Had a question mark and note: Although more info is needed

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## Priority Projects for Halifax

The following list of priority projects were developed through the two community meetings on March 25 and May 6. Additional projects can be added by community members as desired. For more ideas, see the full list of potential projects that were collected (pages 21-22).

<b>1. Improvements to Halifax Community Hall to Support more community programming</b>
<b>2. Pavilion in Halifax for Outdoor Community events</b>
<b>3. Halifax Town Fiber Rollout Project: Access and Training</b>
<b>4. Halifax Warming Center: Coordination and Communication</b>
<b>5. Select Board: Develop a list of projects that fall within Municipal Jurisdiction: TBD</b>
<b>Additional projects TBD</b>

As previously mentioned, the following documents are intended to serve as a starting point for project leads. As the projects continue, it is anticipated that additional steps and information will be added. Please treat these as living documents!

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## **Project Sheet: *Improvements to Halifax Community Hall to Support More Community Programming***

**Community Goal it helps to accomplish:** Community Goal #1: Preserve and enhance a sense of community in Halifax through the development of actively used indoor and outdoor community spaces that will accommodate programming for multiple generations.

**Local Project Lead:** Community Club (owner of Hall) + TBD (see below). It might be worthwhile to form a project task force, including several groups to help spread the work.

**Description of Project:** Evaluate feasibility of renovations to the Community Hall so it can be utilized for more community needs. Drawn from community ideas, these uses could include playgroups or other gatherings for local parents and childcare providers, more regular senior events, other community events (such as “window-dressers,” craft circles, regular dances, etc.)

Foreseen capital needs are a new well; weatherization; installation of solar panels/heat pump system; installation and maintenance of internet service and phone service; possibly ADA upgrades (TBD). Other costs could include part-time staff to manage increased usage and maintenance; funding for ongoing maintenance TBD (possibly through user fees or ongoing municipal funds).

**Project Partners:** Childcare: Beaver Brook/Winston Prouty; Senior activities: Senior Solutions, SASH; Building: Historic Preservation/Historical Society.

Also local groups like FD for programming events; partnerships with libraries in neighboring towns, other grassroots activity groups TBD (home school groups, parent/child play groups, etc).

### **Timeline:**

Feasibility and planning: 1 year

Project refinement, staging, and funding: 1 year

Construction can be staged out from 2-3 years or more, depending on interest and funding

**Barriers:** Cost; cooperation of multiple partners; multiple funding sources

Current known cost estimates:     \$15,000: Well

   \$25,000 Solar panels

   \$25,000 Solar battery storage

TBD costs: installation and maintenance of phone and internet service, weatherization needs, heating system upgrades (heat pumps?)

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**Resources:**

Preservation Trust of VT is a terrific resource for information, training, and grants for preserving buildings in Vermont. <https://ptvermont.org/>

ACCD/Historic preservation: <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation>

AARP Grant programs including [Community Challenge](#) for multi-generational facilities.

Windham Foundation <https://www.windham-foundation.org/grants> Could help support a community fundraising effort

[USDA Community Facilities TA program \(via BDCC\)](#): evaluations and design – current available funding needs to be spent prior to September 2023

[USDA Community Facilities Grant](#) program: This is a complex application, but with the proper pre-development work in place it can fund up to 35% of total project cost, with a cap of \$50,000

[Community Development Block Grants](#): Again, these are complex, but the municipality can apply for this funding on behalf of the organization to support. Contacting program staff directly to discuss this as an option, once you have a project scope in hand, is advised.

**Additional note:**

*In looking at creating a central location for many town events, there were some suggestions at the March 25 meeting, and additional input sent to the SVEP manager ahead of the May 6 meeting by a community member, about using the school as a location for community based programs. However, at the May 6 meeting it was noted that this is not feasible as the school is only available when school is not in session. So while it is available on weekends, it would be of benefit to the community to have the Community Hall improved so it could be available for more regular events during the day (for example, home school groups, senior events, and so on). Also noted was that if there was one principal location for community based events it would be easier to find out about them as residents would expect to see signage or to consult a single newsletter for that information.*

**Starting Action Step Matrix: Improvements to Halifax Community Hall**

Action step	Funding needed?	Resources/Partners + Details	Timeline
Connect with community groups who might use the space to assess their needs in addition to known renovations.	no	Some ideas: Senior Solutions/SASH; Winston Prouty Center can potentially connect to home daycare centers in Halifax; resources like "Windham County Bookmobile;" Home School groups, any interest in young child/baby playgroup	Summer 2023
Develop a full scope of potential renovations, working from existing documents and adding items based on input from community groups who currently use the space (senior lunch, etc.). In applying for any federal grant funding, an architectural feasibility report is required.	TBD (there will be a cost for professional plans)	<p><a href="https://ptvermont.org/our-work/rsf/">https://ptvermont.org/our-work/rsf/</a> Robert Sincerbeaux fund grants are a good source of funding for building assessments if needed</p> <p>USDA Community Facilities program requirements are here: <a href="https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/preliminary-architectural-feasibility-report-fy22.pdf">https://www.rd.usda.gov/media/file/download/preliminary-architectural-feasibility-report-fy22.pdf</a> this is the 'gold standard' for federal funding but may be beyond what is necessary!</p> <p><a href="#">Efficiency VT</a> for rebates and weatherization (also consider programs like <a href="#">'Window Dressers'</a> - inserts can work well in historic buildings with non-standard windows!</p>	By late 2023; present full scope of work and potential funding sources to SB for consideration of ARPA funds

Determine grant funding partners for project.	no	See notes under 'Resources' in project description.	Concurrent with above (mid to late 2023)
Prioritize elements of project for completion – what are the most needed element or elements.	no		
Create a full project budget, including any matching funds on hand; including possibly ARPA funds from SB and expected community fundraising.			
Apply for funding.	TBD	Consult with Mariah Noth about the <a href="#">REDI</a> program, which is helpful for assistance with funding (grant writing and TA) – with a scope of work and budget in hand, you'd be REDI-ready!	
Undertake community fundraising for part of match.	TBD	Appeal letter mailing, other community events, dances, etc. to spark interest in increased use	TBD once scope is determined

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## **Project Sheet: Pavilion in Halifax for Outdoor Community Events**

**Community Goal it helps to accomplish:** Community Goal #1: Preserve and enhance a sense of community in Halifax through the development of actively used indoor and outdoor community spaces that will accommodate programming for multiple generations.

**Local Project Lead:** Fire Department, possibly in conjunction with Town/other groups

**Description of Project:** Determine location for an outdoor pavilion to be used for community events, including Fire Dept annual clambake and others TBD. Build budget for project, seek funding.

Explore how it can be connected to other community wants and needs for outdoor recreation – funding is more likely for projects that include recreational uses beyond community events!

**Project Partners:** Other Town groups (Celebration Committee, Old Home Week Committee, possibly landowner depending on location; explore connection to other outdoor recreation project suggestions. Conservation Commission should be consulted (?).

**Timeline:** TBD

**Barriers:** Finding land/location, easement use of land/location if not purchasing, cost of land if purchased. Also: getting involvement from multiple community groups.

Consider ongoing expenses for things like sanitary facilities (seasonally available?)

**Resources:**

Guilford Park Committee just constructed a pavilion in Guilford. Website will be up soon and they are a good contact!

Vermont Timber Works (built the Guilford pavilion)

<https://www.vermonttimberworks.com/our-work/heavytimber-construction/post-and-beam-parks/>

**Starting Action Step Matrix: Pavilion in Halifax for Outdoor Community Events**

Action step	Funding needed	Resources/Partners + Details	Timeline
Research potential locations for pavilion in Halifax		Local connections, Grand List	Can begin immediately
Assess additional partners, including potential recreational uses for the location outside of community events (trails, skating rink, etc.)		School, other community members who expressed interest in outdoor recreation	Can begin immediately
Develop budget for pavilion (excluding land costs)		<a href="https://www.vermonttimberworks.com/our-work/heavytimber-construction/post-and-beam-parks/">https://www.vermonttimberworks.com/our-work/heavytimber-construction/post-and-beam-parks/</a> as well as other communities who have constructed similar buildings – see Guilford Park	Can begin immediately
Submit budget from above to SB for consideration of feasibility and determine availability of ARPA funds for partial match		Select Board	
Survey community for location preferences should more than one appropriate location exist	<b>TBD</b>	<i>This could be done through a mailing with a survey link; notices at public locations, email, community newsletter, town website, etc.</i>	
<i>Additional steps to be added: examples, community fundraising campaign, grant programs to support project, etc.</i>			



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## **Project Sheet: Halifax Town Broadband Rollout: Access and Training**

**Community Goal it helps to accomplish:** Community Goal #2: Support community connection in Halifax through improved communications systems that are accessible to all residents.

**Local Project Lead:** Halifax Broadband Committee

**Description of Project:** Help coordinate uptake of high-speed fiber to homes in Halifax, including assessing and overcoming reluctance to take up the service, potential subsidies for equipment and home conduit installation, and providing training on internet/email use for residents as needed.

**NOTE: as written, this plan is adjacent to and could be combined with elements of the project submitted by Edee Edwards (“Halifax Fiber Rollout and Resiliency Project 2-pager”). See pages 26-27 for that project.** *This version of the project takes into account that the community or SB may decide not to allocate additional funds for a match directly to DV Fiber, but that the concept of supporting fiber uptake and access throughout the community should still be planned for. Funding streams would depend on what services can be provided directly through DV Fiber/federal programs for the direct connections/conduits*

**Project Partners:** DV Fiber, Halifax DV Fiber Reps, Emergency Management Director, partners like SASH/Senior Solutions, other social service agencies providing services in Halifax, Schools (Halifax School and local Middle/High Schools for mentors)

**Timeline:** 2023-2025 as rollout progresses

**Barriers:** Understanding practical amount of cost; timing to coordinate with fiber rollout; understanding what services would be covered by funding already allocated directly to DV Fiber and what additional funding or services may be needed; making sure that services are not duplicating efforts, but rather addressing community needs that are not being met in other ways.

**Resources:** Coordinate with Halifax school as well as surrounding high schools/career center (potential for youth mentors/trainers), information distribution via senior lunches, coordinate with local libraries in Wilmington and Jacksonville for training opportunities. Potential to connect with other area towns addressing this topic (Readsboro, Marlboro, Wardsboro)

**Starting Action Step Matrix: *Halifax Town Broadband Rollout: Access and Training***

Action step	Funding needed	Resources/Partners + Details	Timeline
<p>Broadband committee: compile full list of (known) items to include in this project. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local grants for things like conduits to homes (what would NOT be covered by previous funding grant to DV Fiber); local grants for equipment purchases (in-home)</li> <li>No-cost items such as training/mentoring on using equipment in-home using community volunteers</li> <li>Subsidize or cover installation of key buildings for emergency management (Town Garage, Community Hall)</li> <li>Community gatherings – purpose-planned as well as appearing at ongoing events like Senior Lunch</li> </ul>	none	<p>DV Fiber, other similar community broadband committees (ex: Wardsboro, Readsboro: what are they doing?)</p> <p>Consider eligibility requirements for <a href="#">Affordable Connectivity Program</a> vs outstanding community need</p> <p>Coordinating with other local Broadband committees in Marlboro, Readsboro, Wardsboro, etc. – make a regional plan for local execution? (SVEP and DV Fiber can possibly help coordinate)</p>	ASAP
<p>Meet with DV Fiber or local DV Fiber rep to clarify what costs (from above) DV Fiber and/or matching federal programs might be able to assist with or are already covering.</p>	none		ASAP
<p>Develop budget – for requesting ARPA funding grant from Select Board</p>	none	Select Board	Fall 2023

Potentially: develop process and application materials for local grants (in-home equipment and/or installation costs) – for homes not eligible for assistance through other programs.		Select Board to approve this based on above, TBD if desired or needed	
Invite school, social service providers, senior lunch organizers to a meeting to discuss how to share information about potential grants and information about upcoming Fiber service.			
Prepare information packets for above partners to share	Yes; tbd		
Work with DV fiber on list of households who have yet to 'take up' fiber		DV Fiber, grand list for cross checking	As rollout commences
Accept and review grant applications (if above programs are in place)	Yes: for funding as needed	Broadband committee can either approve applications or work with the SB for approvals	
'Using the Internet' training – plan a program for mentors or group classes in the community	TBD: costs for marketing and refreshments	Community libraries, High Schools	
<i>Additional steps as needed</i>			

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## Project Sheet: *Warming Center*

**Community Goal it helps to accomplish:** #2: Support community connection in Halifax through improved communications systems that are accessible to all residents (*specifically around emergency management*).

**Local Project Lead:** Anna Duca

**Description of Project:** Coordinating with available space resources and existing protocols of the Emergency Management Director (Paul Blais), develop a more widely understood and functional protocol for making warming centers available during periods of extended severe cold and/or power outages during winter months.

**Project Partners:** Town office, Emergency Management, School, Community Club

**Timeline:** Summer/Fall 2023, ahead of coming winter

**Barriers:** Difficulty of communicating when warming shelters are available: who decides this/how to have residents express need? limited facilities/limited usable hours of school facility, requirements for Red Cross Shelter not met in an extended emergency

**Resources:** Existing communications like FPF, newsletter, school 'Snow Day' alert system, potential for Community Hall use if renovations are completed

**Action Step Matrix: *Warming Center***

<b>Action step</b>	<b>Funding needed</b>	<b>Resources/Partners + Details</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Convene meeting or call w/Emergency Management Director	no	Determine what is needed: what are the gaps, what are the logistical problems that may be causing those gaps, how can a community-based solution be reached	ASAP
Determine ways to help solve the gaps – and develop a small budget for any equipment needed, for example, signage, a robo-call service (opt-in only)	TBD	Reach out to neighboring towns (Jacksonville, Readsboro, Marlboro) to see how they might solve similar problems. Call Town Admin and ask who is the best person to call!	Summer
Work with Emergency Management/SB for sign or equipment/software purchase if needed	TBD		
Develop a communication system for Winter Warming Centers – opt-in robocall? Regular updates in town communications? Note added to tax bills?	None	School could help advise on robocall system. Can the Town Office maintain the list with help from Emergency Mgt,?	
Contact the community with this information! Outreach to get signups if there is a robocall or phone tree system to opt into		Senior lunch, FPF, town website/newsletter, community club newsletter, posters and flyers distributed	

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## Halifax Community Project Ideas by category: ideas in search of Champions!

### OUTDOOR

#### RECREATION/CONNECTION

- Nature trail
- updating the Bill Ackeman memorial nature trail at the school.
- Pavilion – square dances
- Community garden?
- Disk golf trail
- Accessibility to playground
- Health course/parkour
- Rec center
- Community Skating rink
- Accessible trails in 4 or more areas of town: Trail along river (similar to West River in Bratt) maybe starting with just an out-and-back mile, but flat and easy to walk for many ages – strollers, seniors, runners

#### EDUCATION/SCHOOLS

- More communication between the town and school
- Greater investment in school- by community members
  - Adult ed classes (& especially seniors)
  - Outdoor learning locations
- Homeschool coop/group
- Computer skills class
- Childcare/pre-k in town
  - Cultural experiences for early childhood
- Wildlife classes
- Outdoor Learning Resources (Programs and after school)

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Local farm business sustainability
- Promoting current business within town
  - Service Place
  - Gun Shop
- Events attracting visitors
  - Craft fair, snack shack
  - Weekly farmers market
- Pub
- Coffee shop
- General Store
- Population
  - Keeping young adults within town, opportunities etc..
  - Encouraging new folks
  - Attract people/tourism

### COMMUNITY

#### ENGAGEMENT/GATHERING

- Establish community cooperative
- More for everyone to do in town
  - Recreation, fitness, crafts
- Monthly reuse repair sessions; makerspace
- Community space available at low cost/easy
- Pavillion on Old Town Garage Site
- Social opportunities, a place to get together- routine community connections
- Services for seniors, place to gather
- StoryCorps – local recorded history
- Community center
  - bring people together - what opportunities can be offered

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## RESILIENCE & SUSTAINABILITY

- Disaster preparedness
- Environment enhancements/improvements
  - Climate resiliency
  - Solar
  - Wildlife Corridor
  - Charging stations
  - Public rides
  - Greenways
- Barrel recycling for families
- Energy Efficiency Upgrades for Town Offices
- Solar Panels for Town Garage
- Generator for Community Hall/Warming Shelter
- Solar Panels & Batteries for Community Hall
- Flood Resilience Plan
- Ash Tree Maintenance/Removal

## COMMUNICATION

- Townwide communication/info
  - What's available to sign up for?
  - Digital notice board for town
- How do we understand the community needs that might exist
- Greater role or presence in Windham county
- How can new people be invited into the process

## INFRASTRUCTURE & PLANNING

- Affordable housing, variety of economic levels
  - Senior housing
- Accessibility of internet/broadband, cell service
- Transportation accessibility for all roads/maintenance
- Digitize Land Records
- Halifax Historical Society Building Upgrades
- Municipal Vehicle Funding Strategy
- Improved Financial Policies for Town Government
- Cemetery Strategic Plan
- Permanent Post Office Location
- Various Roads Need Beaver Deceivers
- New Well for Community Hall

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## Additional Community Projects Submitted

### Halifax Fire Company Proposal *(For use of ARPA Funding)*

The members of the Halifax Fire Company Inc. would like to make the following proposals for the use of some of the Towns ARPA Funds. These proposals will provide a benefit to all of the citizens of the Town of Halifax through the increase in efficiency and safety of the firefighters.

As prices have skyrocketed the past few years it has made it nearly impossible to provide all of the necessary equipment to equip the volunteer firefighters with the proper safety equipment to protect them.

**PROPOSAL #1** – Upgrade the communications capability of the apparatus and personnel to meet the new national radio standards, increase the capability of the equipment, meet the National Fire Protection Association Standards and provide additional equipment to allow better communication on the emergency scene. Communications on the emergency scene is especially critical and its failure is one of the main causes of firefighters death and injury.

If funded we would:

- Replace 4 mobile radios with units that meet the new national standards and have an increased power output to provide communication back to our dispatch in some of our trouble areas.
- Equip each vehicle with a portable radio for each seated position in the apparatus as required by the National Fire Protection Association.
- Equip each vehicle with a Wireless Headset System integrated with the radio system. This system provides hearing protection for those operating the apparatus, allows for intercom communication between the occupants of the vehicle while responding to a scene, allows the operation of the vehicular radio from within 1000' of the vehicle, and allows intercom communication between wearers of the headsets without having to access the radio system while on scene.

COST TO FUND \$75,000.00

**PROPOSAL #2** – Purchase an Extraction washing machine and drying system for our personal protective gear. The department has been making a concerted effort to comply with the National Fire Protection Association Standards of replacing the personal protective gear on a 10 year cycle. This is a significant investment as each set is approximately \$3300.00. With the new awareness of the harmful effects of PFAS which is in all the older gear and the increase of cancer among firefighters due their exposure to a variety of cancer causing materials while combating a fire it is essential that their gear is washed on a regular basis. The NFPA recommends that the gear be washed at a minimum of every six months. The current station does not allow us to store our gear away from effects of exposure to even the vehicle exhaust. Currently we have to take this gear to another

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facility that has an extractor and then bring it home to dry it. We cannot afford to purchase everyone two sets of gear so we are without protection for one of our firefighters for at least two days. The gear has to be air dried so as not to deteriorate the integrity of the materials. This purchase will allow us to wash the gear on a regular basis and dry it in one day.

Cost to Fund \$10,000.00

**PROPOSAL #3** – To replace our outdated breathing air bottles. The self-contained breathing apparatus are the primary equipment to limit our firefighters exposure to toxic smoke and gases. This piece of equipment is what allows us to enter a smoke filled building to conduct a rescue or extinguish a fire. The tanks that contain the air are only good for fifteen years. The department was lucky enough to receive a donation of used breathing apparatus a few years ago but now all of the bottles have reached their expiration date. The department currently operates 10 of these units with a spare tank for each unit as recommended by the NFPA. We purchased 4 new bottles last year and 4 this year. That still leaves us with 12 bottles that are out of date and potentially dangerous for the person wearing them. As we do not have the capability of filling our own bottles to the new higher pressure we must take them somewhere to have them refilled. It is in violation of OSHA to fill an expired bottle so most places will not fill our expired bottles. The cost of these bottles this year were \$1300.00 each.

Cost to Fund \$15,600.00

### **Notes from SVEP**

With a total of \$100,600 requested above, and in light of other local priorities in need of funding, the Halifax Fire Department could seek grants for partially funding these important needs, using ARPA funding for matching funds rather than exhausting the ARPA balance of \$193,956.46 (as of March 7, 2023).

### **Available grant sources**

[FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters](#) Grant program. According to Michael Skaza, Chief of Training at Vermont Fire Academy, *"With respect to funding for equipment and firefighting gear, the best source is FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant. Even though it is funded at \$324 million, only 20% of the applicants can receive funding. This can be discouraging, but they should keep applying. There are really good resources available to help them improve their applications including in-person workshops hosted by the program's grant specialists. This program is set up so that volunteer fire departments compete against similar departments. The program recognizes the need of rural departments and funds many of these projects."*

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[USDA Community Facilities Program Direct Loan and Grant Program](#) is another program that is available, with the caveat that these are complex applications. However, the funder is there to help you, as is the [BDCC Community Facilities Technical Assistance](#) program.

In addition, Senator Sanders and his staff have been helpful in assisting with fund finding. Haley Pero is the staff member who supports emergency services initiatives for Senator Sanders and she might be able to help you connect with resources. 802-863-0697 or [Haley\\_Pero@sanders.senate.gov](mailto:Haley_Pero@sanders.senate.gov)

Other rural fire chiefs are also a good source of information! We recommend getting in contact with Scott Moore, of the Wilmington Fire Department. You can reach Scott at the Wilmington FD non-emergency number (802) 464-8047, or by email at [smoore@wilmingtonvt.us](mailto:smoore@wilmingtonvt.us)

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## Halifax Fiber Rollout & Resiliency Project

Submitted by Edee Edwards on 5/5/2023

**Community Goal it helps to accomplish:** Communication hub for activities, events, emergency info phone trees, internet for improved emergency resilience

**Local Project Lead:** TBD, options to consider include: David Jones, DVFiber Representative from Halifax; Halifax Broadband Committee; Paul Blais, Halifax Emergency Management Director; Initiated by Edee Edwards, former DVFiber Rep, current Selectboard Vice Chair

### Description of Project:

Halifax is towards the front of the line in getting DVFiber high speed internet to the home. Halifax has not, however, considered how else **the fiber optic network could be leveraged for greater community connection and emergency resilience**. Additional funding to DVFiber can help ensure a smoother rollout, and should be eligible for a further match if requested timely.

### Community Connection

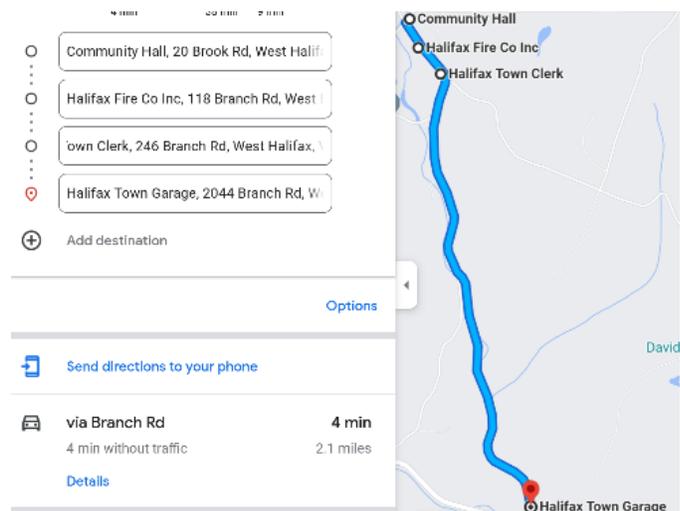
DVFiber will be quite a game-changer. But the truth is that change—even if it is wildly positive—can be hard.

This discussion should center around listening to why people might “pass up” getting internet service this way after so many years of waiting. Is cost a barrier? Is training an issue? Do people lack equipment in the home? What will be the actual costs of upgrading conduit in situations where that is needed? Can we reduce the “switching costs” and offer a universal subsidy credit available to all full-time residents (including renters) who “opt in” and connect, to help them get over the initial hurdles and start to reap the benefits of high speed internet?

### Emergency Resilience

Given the town’s history with weather emergencies, we should be planning for the future. How do we provide resilient connections to key operational centers in cases of emergency:

**Halifax Fire Company Inc.**  
**Halifax Town Office**  
**Halifax Town Garage**  
**(potentially: Halifax Community Hall)**



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**Each of these key facilities should have low-cost, reliable, high-speed Internet connections. Perhaps this could be subsidized by the Town for a set period of time as part of the commitment of funds.** And underground burial between them could be considered in conjunction with the existing utilities (GMP), affected property owners, and network engineers for feasibility and cost. Are there other common break points serving large numbers of people in Halifax that would reduce outages if wires were placed underground?

**Project Partners:**

Deerfield Valley Communications Union District (DFCUD)  
Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB)  
Possibly, Vermont Emergency Management and/or Green Mountain Power

**Timeline:**

2023-2025 for build

**Barriers:**

- Timeframe to commit and get more of the 100% matching funds is short
- If conduit is the chosen route, the funding will need to go directly to the resident/property owner. DVFiber doesn't install conduit.
- Act 250 may be triggered for some of the chosen projects
- Getting folks to "buy in" to the project

**Resources:**

<https://dvvfiber.net/>

<https://dvvfiber.net/dvvfiber-signs-contract-with-sertex-broadband-solutions/>

Hoffer, Doug. March 21, 2023 [Auditor Doug Hoffer Releases Report Identifying Risks to Vermont's Universal Broadband Efforts](#). (Press Release, with link to report.)

VCBB. March 31, 2023. [Response to auditor's report](#).

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## Sample Project Worksheet

**Project Name:**

**Community Goal it helps to accomplish:**

**Local Project Lead:**

**Description of Project:**

**Project Partners:**

**Timeline:**

**Barriers:**

**Resources:**

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### Sample Action Step Matrix

Project Name

Action step	Funding needed	Resources/Partners + Details	Timeline

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## Community Members in Attendance

*Community members present at the 3/25/23 meeting:*

Dennis Annear  
Mary Brewster  
Stephan Chait  
Diana Conway  
Laurel Copeland  
Alison Crossley  
Miranda Driscoll  
April Dupuis  
Edee Edwards  
Bekka Eöwind  
Mark Halverson  
Chris Lehner  
Kim Lehner  
Patrick McAllister  
Nancy McCrea  
Wendy Musiak  
Sandy Pentak  
Lesley Pollitt  
Andre J. Rand  
Gary J. Rand  
Betty Roberts  
Tristan Roberts  
Jean Sarnie  
Pete Silverberg  
Christine Stafford  
Justin Stafford  
Maria Stewart  
Elijah Summers  
Chum Sumner  
Deborah Sumner  
Mary Thome  
Merrit Youmell

*Community members present at the 5/6/23 meeting:*

Dennis Annear  
Stephan Chait  
Diana Conway  
Laurel Copeland  
Alison Crossley  
Anna Duca  
Dennis Huguenin  
David Jones  
Patrick McAllister  
Pete Silverberg  
Chum Sumner  
Deborah Sumner

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For any questions, or for more information, contact:

Meg Staloff  
Southern Vermont Economy Project Program Manager  
Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation  
76 Cotton Mill Hill  
Brattleboro, VT 05363  
[mstaloff@brattleborodevelopment.com](mailto:mstaloff@brattleborodevelopment.com)  
(802) 257-7731 ext. 222

**About the Southern Vermont Economy Project:** *The Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation's Southern Vermont Economy Project (SVEP) is a program that provides training and technical assistance to increase local capacity, skills, and resources in order to advance local projects in Southern Vermont. The program recognizes that local projects are critical to the ability of Southern Vermont to achieve its community, economic, and workforce development goals. SVEP is funded in part through the USDA Rural Community Development Initiative.*

