

Special Town Hearing Meeting -Rochester Town Office Conference Room

February 23, 2026

Present: Pat Harvey, Mike Teetsel, and Chad Richardson.

Guests: Kristen LaPell, Julie Smith, Nancy Woolley, Vic Ribaldo, Mickaela Richardson, Steve Cummins, Asia Kennett, Larry Straus, Tara Murray

Microsoft Teams: Robert Franks

Pat called the Special Town Hearing to order at 5:00 p.m.

VCDP Implementation Grant Resolution

Pat read aloud the resolution authorizing submission of an application to Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) for an Implementation Grant.

The resolution affirmed that:

1. The Town of Rochester possesses the legal authority, as defined in 10 V.S.A §683(8), to apply for and administer the grant
2. The Town agrees to comply with the terms, conditions, certifications, and assurances required by the program.
3. The Town has a duly adopted and current Municipal Plan dated April 27, 2020, and the proposed project is consistent with that plan.
4. The Town has received documentation from the Regional Planning Commission confirming consistency with the Regional Plan.
5. Kristen LaPell is authorized to serve as Contact Person and to provide all necessary documentation and coordination for completion of the application.
6. Patricia Harvey, Selectboard Chair and Chief Executive Officer as defined by statute, is designated as the Municipal Authorizing Official (MOA) for the Intelligrants system.
7. If awarded, receipt of CDBG funds (federal funds passed through the State of Vermont) may require an audit under the Single Audit Act, and grant funds may cover only a limited portion of that cost.

Public Comment and Discussion

Pat opened the meeting for public comments and questions.

Rob Gardner asked what the grant funds would be used for. Pat explained that the Town is required to hold a public hearing as part of the application process and that the funds would support the HUB's Phase 1 renovation of the former Rochester High School building.

Vic Ribaldo, representing VHI, explained that the requested \$600,000 would contribute toward the total Phase 1 renovation cost. Estimated costs one year ago were approximately \$4.8 million, with additional \$200,000 in non-construction expenses, including architectural services during construction, grant administration by Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission and Builder's Risk Insurance.

Due to a 5% increase in construction estimated, total projected costs are now approximately \$5.2 million. The \$600,000 grant would be part of that total, leaving approximately 1.3 million still to be raised in addition to federal grants and donations already secured.

Rob asked whether costs could increase again. Vic explained that if sufficient funds are secured or committed by late summer, construction could begin in the fall and is estimated to take nine months. If not, fundraising would continue through the end of the year, with construction potentially beginning in Spring 2027. The grant award decision is expected in late June or early July.

Pat confirmed this is a re-application following last year's unsuccessful request. Vic stated that last year funding priorities were directed toward housing. The request amount has been reduced from \$750,000 to \$600,000 to reflect funding availability and competitiveness. He noted that if awarded, the amount may be less than requested.

Pat asked about plans for solar installation. Vic stated that VHI has contracted with Catamount Solar to install solar panels on the south-facing roof of the classroom wing. The system is projected to generate sufficient electricity to offset building usage, potentially selling excess back to Green Mountain Power. A \$25,000 deposit was made by VHI before December 31 to qualify for a potential \$100,000 federal incentive.

Pat asked whether the roof beneath the panels would be replaced. Vic confirmed that a new reinforced metal roof would be installed in that section to support the weight of the panels and snow load. Only that portion of the roof will be replaced at this time.

Pat inquired about the current building's use. Vic reported that art and music classes are held on Mondays and Tuesdays. The School Board Endowment Committee recently approved \$15,000 to support the building use this fiscal year. The building continues to host events through out the year, including the Summer programming.

Action Taken

Pat moved to approve submission of the VCDB Implementation Grant application. Mike seconded the motion. All in favor. So, approved.

The hearing adjourned at 5:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Smith