

What is involved?

Researching other villages by exploring population & size, budgets, charters, Bylaws, cost comparisons, and analysis, assessing needs, what's possible and practical. What's not? Examining the state statutes, specifications, and discussions with engineers, state agencies, state representatives, and town representatives. Fundraising to support the project, donations, pro bono, consignment, and volunteerism.

Educating the community, knocking on doors, holding sessions to provide answers to questions to gather support, many many hours of discussions among the team, and offering constant information to residents. Developing a draft charter, and estimated budget. Researching procedure, protocol, rules, etc.

Why you are doing it?

To be clear, we don't see Westbury creating an incorporated municipal village as a standard model but more as a unique solution of following a path looking for answers specific to our neighborhood.

The previous private for-profit owners although may have kept the lot rents affordable did not use surplus revenue to maintain and upgrade aging infrastructure. The co-operative as a non-profit relies solely on the lot rent revenue to operate an entity that is a municipal desert receiving only the essentials of police services (only when called) ambulance and fire dept services and education.

By becoming a municipality because of the **distinctive & unique structure** of Westbury's water system when compared to the 117 water systems that Champlain Water District supplies, Westbury should be eligible for municipal water rates as all other municipalities are provided.

The residents of Westbury Village should not be paying retail rates for water and receiving none of the benefits that others receive that are paying retail rates.

The purpose of creating a village was to seek equity and fairness for a community that in the past was not seen for its value to the community.

What issues you have encountered?

It takes much time and effort to gather information and money to receive expert advice. Creating a village in Vermont hasn't been done in our lifetime. Creating a village layered around a cooperative has never been done in Vermont.

Garnering support outside of the Westbury community has been a struggle. There is no doubt it is a complex concept however there were few that would attempt to listen. Curt Taylor was open to beginning that discussion.

The task force is asking all the right questions. What is important to distinguish is that in the formation of the village, the co-op has not changed at all. The co-op did not create the village. It was the registered voters of Westbury that did. A cooperative can not form an incorporated municipal village.

It seems that in the creation of a co-op, there are places where local government and the State can assist in helping the community to grow and thrive and there are also places where other policies may increase the risk of failure. That is what we are doing here, taking inventory.

Because of laws and policy that limits how involved a municipality can be with private property owners, the village formation was a good fit for us as we think it may fill in some holes. **(receive a municipal rate for water, partner with other municipalities on services like plowing or wastewater)**

The process of forming the village took roughly two years to get to this point and will probably take another year or two to ask the legislature to bless a specific charter which we believe will help better define our relationship with our Town.

The co-op did not change when the village was formed. Over time the co-op and the village separately will be looking at infrastructure that the co-op owns and determining if there are systems (like water or roads) that are better handled (owned) by the village.

Better handled might mean that there is a financial incentive like the cost of borrowed money (municipal bonds vs private bank loans) opportunity for municipal grants eligibility, or it might mean civic participation as a discussion in the village can be had by all 500+ adults whereas the co-op's decisions are made by 235 members.

At the end of the day, we are taking on the work and the responsibility so there can be greater community involvement in our decision-making and finding solutions and to reduce the risks that may try to keep us from being a viable contributing neighborhood in our town. Westbury's efforts remain focused on reinforcing our ability to thrive and progress.

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