

Town of Wheelock
MERP Committee Meeting
Tuesday January 27, 2026, 1pm – 1:45pm
Agenda

At Town Hall and by Google Meet: <https://meet.google.com/cht-ffvr-pym>

Or dial: (US) +1 413-438-3914 PIN: 823939324#

The purpose of the meeting is to meet with Carter Finegan, Northeast Kingdom MERP coordinator to discuss Town Hall MERP project that must be completed by 12/31/2026.

Committee members:

Russell Ruff

Ann Lawless

Erin Swigart (may not be able to attend due to her clerk/treasurer workload)

Others are welcome to attend.

MERP Assessment Report is here <https://storage.googleapis.com/juniper-media-library/154/2024/10/Wheelock-Town-Hall-MERP-Energy-Assessment-sm.pdf>

Agenda:

Review enclosed spreadsheet of 1/25/2026.

Go over questions:

1. Jeremy Roberts, electrical instructor, St. J Academy, has time in his fall schedule to do the wiring project. He recommends removing basement ceiling to ensure existing wiring is code. This is not included in our building assessment report but it is a darn good idea for safety reasons. Could this be included in the project? (See cells 6 & 7/G)

He wants us to send him a Scope of Work.

2. Does the wiring project need to be put out to bid if we are planning for it to be a student project?
3. Since it is light construction to remove and put back the basement ceiling, could it be combined with sealing the attic hatch?
4. Do these need to be put out to bid?
5. ADA discussion. We know our town hall needs ADA washrooms accessible to both floors and a means for everyone to get to town office in basement from outside or from main hall that does not involve stairs. People need to come in to get a dog license or pay taxes! Many architectural proposals have been put forward over the decades and they repeatedly get voted down. See <https://townofwheelockvt.org/town-hall-ada-2/>. When the US Dept of Justice entered into a settlement agreement with the Town in 2020 to bring us into ADA compliance, we planned and completed the easy, least expensive and middle-cost improvements that were recommended

in the [list of accessibility violations](#) prepared by Patrick Fraser. The ADA washrooms and movement between floors remains to be accomplished. We sought grant funds and hired an architect and community outreach specialist. They came up with two plans. COVID hit, and Town Meeting had to be held by Australian ballot, with YES/NO answers to every question on the warning. Both plans were voted down. The most recent effort (not posted on our website yet) was a 2022 plan with yet another architect to install a lift and one ADA washroom in the space occupied by stairs at the side entry, without increasing the building footprint. As we were fundraising for construction the selectboard voted to cancel the project. The work area in the town office is not really large enough for the clerk and a lister working at the same time. The vault is too small. In 2023, 2024 and 2025 we have been hit with major flooding, and the town's efforts and funds have been directed there. We are in debt. We have expensive bridge repair projects ahead of us with no help from FEMA because 2025 is not declared a Federal Disaster. Taxes are increasing due to many things beyond our town's control. Townspeople's interest in town hall improvements is probably as low as it has ever been. Many believe maintaining this beautiful historic building costs money and a new building all on one floor would be better. A committee explored the potential for selling it, and it was nil, considering the new user would have to make a lot of improvements.

We have a proposal of Feb. 2025 from Coe & Coe architects. This is informational; not procured in a full bidding process. It seems wasteful to hire yet another architect to come up with the same ideas and a public presentation that no-one is likely to want to attend. We have a new town plan project underway, and there will be community outreach and at least one public meeting. We are applying for a CDBG planning grant due 3/2 for a Hydrology and Resilience study to come up with guidelines for bridge and culvert repair/replacement. A public hearing on the application is planned for 2/17/2026. We already know the Fall Brook Road bridge condemned by the state on July 11, 2025 must be replaced because one of the abutments is floating and the riverbanks are compromised. This will be VERY costly. Another public meeting about Town Hall is likely to be poorly attended.

Do we have any other MERP options to meet the ADA requirement?

If not, do we have to put it out to bid?

Any other business

Adjourn :1:45pm