

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Future of Community Landmarks in Moultonborough Village



Community action: Bob Hammond of RM Hammond Excavation removed the giant fallen fir tree on the lawn of the historic Village School in May, which had been on the ground since Storm Stella's destructive path through Moultonborough in March 2017

What is the future of community landmarks in Moultonborough Village? 84% of respondents to the recent Village Vision survey supported preserving and repurposing historic buildings in the village area. Which vacant, at-risk, and underutilized historic buildings could be transformed into vibrant community assets once again?

Historic community landmarks in Moultonborough Village include the former Village School (1926), the Taylor House (c. 1840), the Moultonborough Grange Hall (c. 1810) and the Moultonborough Town House (1835). One stated goal of the recent Village Vision Committee study was to "preserve and strengthen the existing small-town character of Moultonborough Village, with its unique and landmark historic buildings, streetscape, scale, and ambiance...improving on what already exists in Moultonborough Village."

As Moultonborough prepares for a follow-up Plan NH community charrette on July 20-21st focusing on the expanded Moultonborough Village area, it is worth reviewing the changes that have occurred in our Village since the Moultonborough Village Charrette in 2012. Most importantly, a Village Center Overlay District (VCOD) was established at Town Meeting in 2017, adding depth to the village strip along Route 25, and including the Town-owned former Lions Club property on Old Route 109, now the site of our Community Garden.

The former Village School (built 1926), which later served as the Troop E Barracks and as a private residence, is now owned by the United Methodist Church, and rented to another congregation. This building, adjacent to the 'skating pond,' now needs cosmetic work and a re-use plan so that it can once again play a vital community role in Moultonborough Village.

In discussion of economic development strategies, the Village Vision Report (endorsed at Town Meeting in 2015) encourages the active re-use and redevelopment of existing historic buildings (rather than demolition) in order to maintain our village character, scale, and streetscape. Programs such as RSA 79-E, the Community Tax Relief Incentive (adopted in 2009) can assist in the redevelopment of privately owned historic properties, while promoting mixed-use development and enhanced downtown vitality.

There are noticeable recent improvements in Moultonborough Village, along what was once 'Main Street', now the heavily trafficked Whittier Highway (Route 25). In 2016, local businessman Scott Lamprey acquired and rehabilitated two vacant buildings for mixed use (retail and residential) next to the 'destination' Old Country Store (c. 1781). Such active reinvestment in the traditional village is encouraged by the recommendations of the Village Vision Report, and now also by guidelines of the Village Center Overlay District (VCOD).

Both ends of Moultonborough's historic village on Route 25 experienced major physical changes in 2017. In June, a Dollar General store opened across from the Central School. In September, the former Country Fare Inn (1843, built as Moultonborough's first Methodist Church) was demolished to make way for the recently opened Berry Pond Retail Center.

Loss of any more remaining landmark buildings at the core of the historic village would negatively impact Moultonborough's heritage and unique sense of place. Saving community landmarks and retaining small-town character are seen as essential in statewide efforts to attract investment, draw new residents and visitors, support local businesses, and promote economic vitality and year-round tourism. What role could Moultonborough's at-risk community landmarks play in village revitalization?

Key community landmarks in Moultonborough Village, most noticeably the Taylor House and the Moultonborough Grange Hall, are now under threat by neglect, lack of planning, and development pressures. Both are significant for their community history and for their architecture. Will these character-defining buildings survive, and find new uses? Could the Grange Hall be transformed into a dining and theatre establishment with its upstairs stage? Could the Taylor House become a community building, or professional offices?

Community members are encouraged to participate in planning for the future of Moultonborough Village, and the future use of town-owned properties in the Village Center Overlay District, by attending the Plan NH Charrette public input sessions (3:30-5 PM; 6:30-8:00 PM) and community BBQ on Friday, July 20th at the former Lions Club.