

Week # 1 DUE JANUARY 22

Town / Village Merger.....Moving Forward Together

In January, 2007, the Village Trustees and the Town Select Board voted to place the question of merging the Village and Town into one governing body on the ballot for voters to decide this coming March. Should the merger pass, we would have one year with our current system while the new charter is adopted by the State Legislature. The Town/Village Merger Committee has been studying this issue intensely for the past year and will offer this column of findings each week until the March 2007 vote.

This week we look at the question:

“I like the way things are now. Why change?”

- To bring the Village and Town Governments together to achieve agreed-upon objectives that have been stalled by divided leadership and resources.
- A merger will more clearly define and account for the allocation of funds for Village and Town needs.
- Restoring one government for Woodstock will bring greater efficiency, less duplication and, more importantly, a stronger sense of community for all of us.

Did you know: Woodstock is lucky – unlike other towns who have already voted to merge their Town and Village, we have a private water company and we have no outstanding bonds. Please feel free to visit our web site at www.TownVillageMerger.com

Schedule of informational meetings:

February 6 th	West Woodstock and Prosper	WUHS Teagle Library	7:30 pm
February 8 th	Village of Woodstock	Town Hall	7:30 pm
February 13 th	Town of Woodstock	Town Hall	7:30 pm
February 20 th	South Woodstock or Taftsville		7:30 pm
February 27 th	South Woodstock or Taftsville		7:30 pm

Week # 2 DUE JANUARY 29

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This week we look at the questions:

“I live in the town. What would I get out of a merger that I don’t have now?”

As one community, you and everyone else will have an equal say about matters in Woodstock. The Village is the center for Town residents, too, and its viability has important consequences for the Town. At present, town residents and the businesses owned and operated by these town residents have no voice in government decisions that impact everyone

“I live in the village of Woodstock. How will a merger respond to our special needs?”

- Village ordinances will remain in effect.
- The beauty and character of the Village, and of nearby hamlets, will be fully respected and not changed as a result of the merger.
- The Town has repeatedly proven its care and concern – just a few recent Town initiatives within the Village include the public restrooms and the High Street Pedestrian bridge.

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Week # 3 DUE FEBRUARY 5

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This week we look at the question:

“What would happen to police coverage?”

This past September the community voted to make this a separate issue. Expanding the police coverage into the Town has been well received and has already proven valuable in emergency situations.

Did you know: Many Vermont communities have merged or are seriously considering merging their town and village including Stowe, Northfield and Essex Junction. These communities are doing so for many of the same reasons Woodstock has and is considering a merger – strength of community and more efficient government.

See <http://vermont-archives.org/govhistory/governance/Villages/merge.html>

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Week # 4 DUE FEBRUARY 12

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This week we look at the question:

“Why are the village of Woodstock and the town of Woodstock separate?”

Woodstock Town was formed in the second half of the 18th century. Later, in 1836, the Town petitioned the Vermont Legislature to charter what was then called the North Village as an independent municipality, and Woodstock Village came into being. Since then there have been several attempts to merge the Town and Village, most recently in 1957 and 1981. One vote was defeated by the Town and the other defeated by the Village.

Did you Know: There is one Manager with two titles, Town Manager and Village Manager, who serves both the Town and the Village. Services that are already shared include the Planning Commission, Emergency Services Department (Fire and Ambulance), the Sewer Department, the Highway Department (the Village has two dedicated employees), conservation Commission, Planning/Zoning Administrator and Treasurer.

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February 20 th	South Woodstock or Taftsville	7:30 pm
February 27 th	South Woodstock or Taftsville	7:30 pm

Week # 5 DUE FEBRUARY 19

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This week we look at the question:

“Why are we looking to merge? Why now?”

In the fall of 2005 the Woodstock Town Select Board and the Village Board of Trustees asked the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) to visit our community. The VCRD is a Vermont group that seeks to help towns and villages identify local issues and possible solutions. Their team met with over 100 residents on several occasions, during which people from all areas of Woodstock chose four main areas where improvement is needed. One of these issues was identified as helping Woodstock become a united community. Out of these meetings the Town Village Merger Task Force was formed. This committee has met almost weekly since last January, studying the merger and moving it forward to a vote by the entire community. The next 25 years will be very demanding and require much vision. It is important that the greater Woodstock community speak with one unified voice.

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Schedule of informational meetings:

February 20 th	South Woodstock or Taftsville	7:30 pm
February 27 th	South Woodstock or Taftsville	7:30 pm

Week # 6 DUE FEBRUARY 26

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This week we look at the question:

“What will this cost me?”

We believe that as Town taxes may increase moderately, Village levies will decrease modestly. There will be some slight tax decreases due to the elimination of duplicated procedures and consolidation of audit costs. And let's not forget a large savings that does not have a dollar amount attached – our valuable time. These committees are made up of residents – it takes over _____ community members to make these committees work. Finding qualified and interested people is always a task. Let's save our valuable time and commitment and use it where it can provide the most good.

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Schedule of informational meetings:

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7:30 pm