

Report from Oct 16, 2025 Heritage Commission Town Hall visioning session.

Aron DiBacco, Oct 21, 2025

Twenty-nine Deerfield residents gathered in the Deerfield Town Hall to answer two questions:

- 1) What is your big dream for this space/ what do you want to happen here?
- 2) What obstacles need to be addressed for this to happen?

After generating these lists, they were asked to vote on which uses they see as most desirable and which obstacles as most important to address. For this process they each had three votes to cast for each category. These could be distributed across one, two, or three options. Their answers are attached, ranked by the number of votes each received.

Themes that emerged from their answers about how to use the space:

- 1) A community center where people can hang out together. The strongest support was for a senior center. Community potlucks were mentioned, as were on-going art exhibits, crafts materials swap, cider tasting workshops, and yoga classes.
- 2) Performances including live music, kids staging plays, and a celebration of USA's 250th.
- 3) Skill building workshops from bicycle repair to the historically accurate way to glaze old windows. This included the broad concept of a "maker space" with access to the tools and expertise needed to explore creativity and learn a variety of practical skills.
- 4) Having commonly needed resources available for shared use. (A/V, games, tools).
- 5) Renting the space for personal celebrations such as weddings and birthdays.

Themes about obstacles to overcome included:

- 1) The dominant concerns were about the physical infrastructure. Over half the participants voted for improving the kitchen and bathrooms, bringing in potable water, or fixing the windows. They also mentioned resolving the rodent issue, keeping the building warm/cool as needed, improving outside lighting, adding electrical outlets, adding window shades, and increasing parking, as well as improving storage space.
- 2) Improving wheelchair access was strongly supported.
- 3) Some of the obstacles were about management and administration. These included improving rental procedures, better promotion of the space, developing and enforcing security and policies including insurance coverage, and dealing with damage control and post-event clean up. Some wondered if the no-alcohol policy limits rental/use options.
- 4) How to maintain the building's historic value while making it convenient for current use.
- 5) Non-town funding for this project.

Next steps:

Of the 29 attendees, 11 asked to be kept informed as this work moves forward and five would like to help raise the funds needed to make the Town Hall a vibrant center of community life in Deerfield.

FLIP CHART DATA

What do you want to see happen in this space?

- 1) A community event space (20 total)
 - a. A place for people to come to hang out (18)
 - b. A meeting space for organizations (1)
 - c. Community potlucks (1)
 - d. Having shared resources available at the space for groups to use (screen, game, tools, sound system) (0)
- 2) Senior Center (17)
- 3) Teaching skills (total 15)
 - a. Historic skill building workshops (window glazing, dressing a canopy bed) (6)
 - b. Maker Space/skill sharing (5)
 - c. Repair Café (4)
- 4) On-going art exhibits, including previews/review of Art Tour (9)
- 5) USA 250th Celebration – performance (7)
- 6) Off-campus classroom for DCS students, including week long history lessons (6)
- 7) Children putting on short plays (6)
- 8) Personal celebrations (weddings, anniversaries, memorial services) (5)
- 9) More live music (2)
- 10) Source and symbol of town pride – grown from use of the space (1)
- 11) DAR events (0)
- 12) Cider tasting workshop (0)
- 13) Ideas from cards on tables that didn't make it to the posters to be voted on
 - a. More community and social events (yoga, contradances)
 - b. Vibrant, FREE, community events such as live music, lectures and learning programs, child/family friendly programs, craft supply swaps, age-friendly efforts
 - c. More functions and concerts
 - d. Costume dance
 - e. Progressive dinner
 - f. Historic workshops with all antique names in Deerfield and surrounding towns
 - g. Workshops about restoring old homes properly (window glazing, wood cutting, attic insulation)
 - h. Rental calendar on the town website
 - i. Create a cozy spot with a wood stove
 - j. Redo staging platform

What obstacles need attention?

- 1) Improve kitchen and bathrooms (16)
- 2) Wheelchair access (13)
- 3) Fix windows (11)
- 4) Rodent control and cleanliness (8)

- 5) Source of potable water (7)
- 6) Climate control (6)
- 7) Maintaining historic value while making current use possible (4)
- 8) Lack of management (enforcement and security) (3)
- 9) Need funding sources – can't be town (3)
- 10) Alcohol not permitted (3)
- 11) Lack of process/policies for renting space makes it difficult (3)
- 12) More outside lighting (2)
- 13) Insurance for those using the space (1)
- 14) Wi-Fi (1)
- 15) Getting the word out about the space (1)
- 16) More electrical outlets (1)
- 17) Storage space (1)
- 18) Light control / need window shades (1)
- 19) Damage control and cleanup after events (0)
- 20) Parking shortage (0)