# Town of Norwich Childcare Committee Minutes March 8, 2021 Meeting

**Members present:** Rebecca Holcombe, Brian Loeb, Jamie Rosenfeld, Neil Odell, Bob Haynes, Mary Layton

Public present: Lisa Sjostrom (Child Care Center in Norwich, Inc.)

**Approval of Agenda**: The agenda was approved by consensus.

**Public Comments:** none at the start of the meeting.

**Review and approval of minutes:** The members agreed to strike the last line of item # 7, "The letter will be considered for approval at the March 8, 2021 meeting." Other than that sentence the minutes were approved by consensus.

**Correspondence:** Motion by Layton, second by Loeb to accept correspondence from Alyssa Bradley and Amanda Archer. Vote: Yes, unanimous. The two letters were from families concerned about the recent closing of a new Montessori school in Norwich.

Preliminary Report to the Selectboard: Layton submitted an article featuring an interview with Brian Loeb regarding his Norwich childcare experiences which was published in the Winter/Spring 2021 edition of the Norwich Times. She also submitted an interim report for the Selectboard packet for the March 10<sup>th</sup> meeting which included an agenda item to assess progress by the Childcare Committee. The Committee is requesting an extension until July for a more comprehensive interim report, and a final report with recommendations by December 31, 2021.

**Review of Current Vermont Legislation:** Holcombe spoke about House bill H.171 which sets goals to increase childcare subsidies and also provide subsidies to early childhood educators. The bill is at a very early stage in the legislative process. The Federal CARES Act may also include increased funding.

Review of Draft Survey of Childcare Supply: The survey drafted by Loeb aims to fill in gaps in information that are not available in state wide or county wide statistics. It aims to show the character of programs, slots available, times available, available through a business or college, wait list characteristics, costs, special needs accommodations, market challenges such as providing adequate teacher salaries and training, and the effects of the pandemic. Discussion centered around the elements that can contribute to a successful business with critical elements including economy of scale possible in centers, paying teachers a living wage, maintaining high standards, and subsidizing the cost to families. It was decided by consensus that Loeb would also create a Parent Survey to be reviewed at the April meeting.

**Review Methodology for MCS enrollment:** Odell stated that it is often difficult to predict with precision the enrollment numbers for the Marion Cross School due to movement in and out of Norwich of families with corporate employers. Loeb asked if information could be inferred from real estate sales. Odell said that had been tried but did not work out. It appears from data and trends that are available that there is not a large "bubble" moving through the system at the moment nor expected over the next several years.

Review Randolph and Alburgh, VT market surveys and process: Haynes stressed the importance of a market survey such as one conducted by Doug Kennedy for the Town of Alburgh, Vermont. In Randolph there was a four year process of citizen involvement followed by securing a 10K planning grant for a market study conducted by Reeva Murphy that confirmed local perception of need. A center is planned for Randolph run by Orange County Parent Child Center that includes a 60 slot day care center, other family support, and opportunities for internships through Vermont Technical College. It included USDA financing and significant private support. A caveat from Haynes: "do not develop a center without a strong operation."

### Next Action Steps and basis for draft agenda for April 5, 2021:

Layton and Holcombe will update the Committee on Selectboard feedback and timeline.

Committee members will send survey questions and comments to Loeb by 3/19

Loeb will work with Rosenfeld to refine the supply survey and draft a parent survey.

Layton will draft a cover letter for the survey(s).

Holcombe will provide a state list of providers for survey dissemination.

Loeb and Rosenfeld will look into using wait lists at child care centers for survey dissemination.

Haynes will invite Reeva Murphy and Brenda Metzler to attend the April 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Haynes moved to adjourn, Loeb seconded, vote: unanimous yes.

Selectboard Corner 2/11/21 Norwich Childcare Committee Gets Started

The Norwich Childcare Committee has been formed as an outcome of an Action Step of Childcare Section 7.13 of the Norwich Town Plan. It has been convened to conduct research into supply and demand of high quality of childcare for Norwich residents. Committee member Brian Loeb of the Planning Commission relates below his personal experience as it relates to the charge of the Committee: "Provide to the Selectboard, a framework of options for addressing the two key questions. a) Should childcare be part of the core municipal funded activities? b) What are the specific costs for significantly improving childcare in Norwich?"

Mary Layton-Selectboard Liasion to the Norwich Childcare Committee

"My family decided to move to the Upper Valley early in 2018, and, on the advice of contacts in the area, we began our search for childcare in parallel to our search for a home. We sought out center-based and employer-based options and quickly confirmed that availability was not assured for the level of care we needed. We sweated on a halfdozen waitlists up until the week before we moved to Norwich that summer, finally receiving the news that we had gotten extremely lucky. Though we made it through the gauntlet and our children found loving, engaging, supportive caregivers, we know that other families have an even tougher time. As we have learned from our new neighbors and friends (and I have investigated further as a member of the Norwich Planning Commission), there seems to be a severe mis-match between the care families need and the available supply, which includes the region at large and its commuting corridors. Families desperately and at sometimes hopelessly navigate a patchwork of formal and informal providers, trying to get the fit right, but often settling for fewer hours than they need, paying more than they can, or driving further than they want -- or, in many cases, withdrawing from the workforce to get by until the elementary school years begin. (Not to minimize the similar challenges facing parents in need of after-school care.)

"The charge of the Childcare Committee, made up of serious experts in town-based approaches to addressing childcare issues (and who just so happen to live in Norwich), is to refine the challenges I identified here and propose real, possible actions for the town to take to alleviate some of the pressures. This charge and the existence of the Committee is an outgrowth of the new Town Plan, which recognizes the interconnected nature of childcare availability and the town's ongoing accessibility, sustainability and vibrancy. On behalf of my fellow committee members, I want to encourage Norwich parents to reach out and tell us about your own childcare arrangements, the decisions you've made, and your ideas for shared solutions."



Rebecca Holcombe <rebecca.holcombe@gmail.com>

### Re: Neighbor

2 messages

Mary Layton <marydlayton@gmail.com>

To: Amanda Archer <amanda.fasoli@gmail.com>

Cc: Rebecca Holcombe < Rebecca. Holcombe@gmail.com>

Hi Amanda Fri, Feb 26, 2021 at 9:12 am_	

I am forwarding your message to Rebecca Holcombe, Chair of the Norwich Childcare Committee. She is former Education Secretary and has state wide perspective.

I gained some knowledge of the preschool when it first was opened and it sounds like a terrific program.

I have the documents that came out of the Development Review Board meetings and will need to study them further to have insight on why the permit was denied.

Your feedback is very helpful to the Committee as a case study.

This action does not of course does not remedy your immediate childcare needs.

Let's keep talking about this.

If not re-elected there will be another Selectboard member appointed to the Committee. Childcare is a critical need statewide.

A letter to the Selectboard submitted as correspondence would be a very good action. Send it before Wednesday, March 3rd for inclusion in the packet for the March 10th meeting. The SB is considering an agenda item regarding the Childcare Committee and the timing of your message would be spot on. If there are other Norwich residents in your situation I would encourage you to ask them to write letters as well.

The Selectboard email is Selectboard@norwich.vt.us The physical address Town Manager

Tracy Hall Norwich Vermont 05055

I hope this helps Mary Layton Sent from my iPhone > On Feb 26, 2021, at 8:44 AM, Amanda Archer <amanda.fasoli@gmail.com> wrote: > > Hi Mary!

 $https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1?ik=a70ee5d024\&view=pt\&search=...sg-f\%3A1692767326274908763\&simpl=msg-a\%3Ar-6620020816331984678\ Page 1 of 3$ 

Gmail - Re: Neighbor 3/1/21, 9:20 AM

> .

- > I am your neighbor across the street at 1432 UV Rd. I'm sorry that we haven't gotten in better touch since we moved in this summer, but this pandemic has certainly derailed our ability to get involved in the town. We have been really busy with the kids and getting our business going, so I'm not sure we'd have much time outside of that anyway! >
- > Anyway, I hate to be a bother, but I've been reading a lot about you through the listserv these days. Good luck in the upcoming election! I saw in one post that you were the liaison to the Norwich Childcare Committee and so I thought I might reach out regarding a childcare issue we have been experiencing. I'm not sure if you are aware, but a preschool opened this summer in Norwich on Rt 5, Immersion Montessori, and we were fortunate enough to get spots for our 2 youngest children. It is a wonderful school, with incredibly loving, highly educated teachers, who have always provided a safe, enriching environment for our children. Their campus was perfect, with lots of outdoor space and animals for the kids to tend, and was especially attuned to hosting numerous kids in the pandemic during the warmer months; however, they were forced off their campus due to legal issues with the town, and now it seems will be gone indefinitely.

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> As you know, there is a critical shortage of childcare in the area, and this is a huge blow to our town. Before we discovered IMS, I was in the position of either having to drive an additional hour to the next closest childcare facility available, or not work at all. My husband and I are both dentists, and took over a practice from Dr. Kravitz, who has been the sole practicing dentist in Norwich for 30+ years. We have been visiting with Dr. Kravitz and exploring Norwich for 4 years prior to the pandemic, and decided to push forward with the transition despite the horrific timing. We lost many employees due to Covid, and so are both working overtime to fill the void of dental healthcare workers in the area, and I like to think that we are providing a valuable resource to the community. None of this would have been possible if IMS wasn't there to support our family and care for our children. Parents of other students include doctors, nurses, and other essential workers, all of whom rely upon IMS to care for their children so that they may perform their job.

>

> I am not a lawyer, engineer, or have any background in politics, and don't claim to understand fully the issues at hand. I have seen the documents that IMS submitted to the board requesting a permit/license to operate their facility, and it seems to me that Juan and Laura have responded to every issue presented to them, and spent tens of thousands of dollars of their own money to meet every requirement. After all of this was completed, the board responded finally by claiming there were issues with the facility that were entirely uncorrectable (ie, the steepness of their driveway). I am happy to forward these documents to you, if you'd like to review them personally. Like I said, I am no expert in these matters and am mostly going off of the information relayed to parents from the school.

>

> I have walked through Norwich and seen signs calling for essential childcare and have heard the cry over and over by parents in the Upper Valley. Why then, are we pushing away the opportunity to host a wonderful childcare facility in our backyard? Why now, do I have to travel an additional 15 miles, or 40 min a day, to attend the same school in NH, when I could better spend this time at work, helping the people in our community?

>

> Thank you for taking the time to read this and I appreciate any help or insight you may provide in this matter. Again, good luck in your election and I hope we'll be able to meet in person soon!

>

- > Best,
- > Amanda Archer

**Rebecca Holcombe** <rebecca.holcombe@gmail.com> To: Mary Layton <marydlayton@gmail.com> Co: Amanda Archer <amanda.fasoli@gmail.com>

Fri, Feb 26, 2021 at 10:13 AM

Thank you, Mary and Amanda.

Another person also reached out, and that communication will also be shared with the committee at the upcoming meeting.

My understanding is that someone from IMS is reaching out to the Development Review Board for clarification about the concerns related to the driveway and safety, and that this conversation is still developing.

This has clearly been a frustrating process for IMS.

Best of luck to all.

Gmail - Re: Neighbor 3/1/21, 9:20 AM

Rebecca [Quoted text hidden]

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# TON-Childcare Committee For the March 8, 2021 meeting Emerging VT Legislation related to child care as of 2/24/21:

https://legislature.vermont.gov/committee/document/2022/16/Bill/313408#documents-section

Context: H-531

### Passed in 2019, still in initial implementation

https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2020/Docs/BILLS/H-0531/ H-0531%20As%20Passed%20by%20the%20House%20Unofficial.pdf Some features:

- 1. September 30, 2021, provides accessing CCFAP can't receive payment in excess
  - of the usual and customary rate for those services
- 2. Sliding subsidy scale adjusted to bring it more in line with market rate studies and to extend benefits
- 3. Ended the development grant program and turned unused revenues over to CCFAP

- 4. Funded an information system modernization plan
- 5. Student loan repayment for people working in privately operated programs
- 6. Scholarships for people working in privately operated programs
- "Variance" in experience and education requirements for people who continue to work in privately operated programs

### Just introduced: H.171

https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2022/Docs/BILLS/H-0171/ H-0171%20As%20Introduced.pdf

### Stated purposes:

- 1. Expand the eligibility of the Child Care Financial Assistance Program;
- 2. Appropriate funds for the implementation of the Bright Futures Information System

modernization plan;

- Establish scholarships and student loan repayment assistance programs for existing and prospective members of the child care workforce;
- 4. Require the completion of studies on child care financing and governance; and
- Establish an Early Care and Education Governance and Administration Advisory Committee.

#### Some features:

- 1. Adds that the purpose of CCFAP is to support healthy development of their children., and removes the requirement that folk seeking support be looking for work or working to participate, and states that the purpose is not to encourage employment, but to support employment.
- 2. Bumps up eligibility for support to 350% of federal poverty guidelines
- Expands eligibility requirements to include people participating in education or seeking treatment

- 4. Pays programs based on enrollment, not attendance
- 5. Ties payment to whether a program provides early childhood educator compensation that is commensurate with peers in other fields.
- 6. change the methodology used to inform the fee scale in its Child Care Financial Assistance Program from a market rate survey to a cost of care calculation.
- 7. States the intent is that by fiscal year 2026, a family shall spend not more than ten
  - percent of their gross annual income on child care
- 8. Adds \$4.7 m to implementation of the information system
- 9. Additional scholarships for private providers
- 10. Additional loan repayment for private providers
- 11. Funds for a governance study
- 12. Requirements for a study of how to finance early care and learning 13. Establishment of a "Governance and Administration Advisory Committee"

### Pending cases in federal courts with related implications:

A series of cases progressing through federal courts may influence how state and municipal governments choose to partner with private sector providers to support provision of public services, and may also trigger significant additional litigation, including in Vermont. One outcome: this might motivate any new public payers to be public providers, or to contract with a subset of private providers for inclusive public provision. VT statute currently prevents school districts from doing this with PK vouchers.

### Fulton v. Philadelphia

https://www.supremecourt.gov/search.aspx?filename=/docket/docketfiles/html/public/19-123.html

The SCOTUS is weighing "Whether a government violates the First Amendment by conditioning a religious agency's ability to participate in the foster care system on taking actions and making statements that directly contradict the agency's religious beliefs?"

If the plaintiff prevails, states may not be able to enforce their own public accommodations and anti-discrimination laws in private providers that provide public services, if the provider says those laws are in conflict with their religious beliefs (e.g. a taxpayer funded religious child care could refuse to serve the children of LGTBQ families)

### Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue

https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/19pdf/18-1195\_g314.pdf SCOTUS held that governments do not need to include private entities in publicly funded voucher or subsidy schemes, but if they do, they cannot exclude religious entities from those schemes on the basis of their religious status.

In **Vermont**, a federal circuit court just ordered 3 districts that pay tuition vouchers to also pay those vouchers to a religious high school, based on the standard set in

2 of 3

Espinoza, and slapped down Agency of Education proposed guardrails to prevent tax dollars from being used to support religious education as a condition of those payments. https://vtdigger.org/2021/01/27/ruling-allows-religious-school-students-access-to-vouchers-now-what/

Several other similar cases are still pending.

Because we have a single statewide education fund, this means tax payers statewide might argue this is "compelled support" of religious education, in violation of the VT constitution. Expect more litigation.

3 of 3

Randolph Childcare Task Force: CC Needs Assessment Notes on Supply and Demand Methodology and Assumptions

Demand methodology

### How many infants, toddlers and preschoolers live in the Randolph CC Region?

For population data relies on Vermont Department of Health Population estimates This provides general population by county and also by town. It provides a breakdown of population by single year of age by county but not by town because the census does not report this level of detail for towns with populations under 5,000.

The population of the 9 towns in the Randolph CC Region was compared to County level population data to derive a percent of total population in each county for the identified towns.

This percent was applied to the data on single year of age for each county to estimate the population of infants (children under 2), toddlers (children 2- 3 year of age) and preschoolers (children 3-5 years of age) for the identified Randolph CC Region.

Child Development Division (CDD) CC Licensing definitions were used for these age groups to create a reasonable comparison to CC Supply data.

### Is the population of children under 6 in the Randolph CC Region increasing or decreasing?

Observing population data over the past 10 years, it appears that the overall population of children birth - 5 in both counties is declining slightly which is consistent with the 2019 How Are Vermont's Young Children and Families Report published by Building Bright Futures which states "the total number of children born each year in Vermont has been declining since the 1980's."

Given the wide discrepancy between supply of childcare and the number of children under five with all parents in the workforce, the decline in the under five population does not have a significant impact on demand.

## How many of the children under 6 in the Randolph CC Region need Full Time (FT) childcare?

CDD defines full day care as 8 hours, five days a week (40 hours), consistent with a full-time work schedule.

The US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (2014-2018) estimates that 71.51% of all children under 6 years old (5 and under) in Vermont have all available parents in the workforce. [This is the assumption used to estimate children Likely to Need Care (LTNC) in Let's Grow Kids (LGK) Stalled at the Start reports.]

Potential demand in the Randolph CC Region was assessed assuming that 71.5 children 5 and under needed FT childcare and assessed again assuming only 50% of children in the identified age groups actually sought to enroll in full time regulated care. An average of these two assessments was used to estimate demand.

Heart of a Child Early Care and Learning RSM 6/2020

1

Randolph Childcare Task Force: CC Needs Assessment Notes on Supply and Demand Methodology and Assumptions

### Other demand information

In the 2018 National Opinion Research Center (NORC) Study of Early Care and Learning in Vermont, 80% of families surveyed reported that all parents in the household were working. Two thirds of these families – over half of the families surveyed - used more than 30 hours of non-parental care weekly. The study also found that many of the families with only one parent in the workforce used some type of non-parental care – 15% of those families used more than 30 hours of non-parental care weekly. Just one in five of the responding households reported using no non-parental care.

The study found that children under 5 in Vermont are more likely than not to be in regular care and that 76% of responding families believed the program they were using was regulated. Center –based care was the type of care most frequently used, particularly for preschool aged children.

The National Survey of Early Care and Education conducted in 2016 and anecdotal data from families in Vermont indicate that many families cobble together more than one type of care to meet their childcare needs. Some parents choose to minimize the amount of time their very young children spend with non-family members. It is difficult to tell what families would choose if access constraints like cost and supply were removed from the equation as they considered childcare choices.

### Supply Methodology

## How much full-time childcare is available in the Randolph CC Region by age, type of care, and quality?

Data from the CDD Bright Futures Information System (BFIS) was pulled in May 2020. This data was rechecked in June 2020 and no changes were noted. This means that none of the regulated programs that were operating before the COVID-19 pandemic reported to CDD that they are now permanently closed for business. It does not mean they are currently operating or have scheduled re-opening.

CBCCPP = Center Based Childcare and Preschool Program
FCCH = Family Childcare Home
High Quality is defined as programs that have achieved a rating of 4 or 5 in Vermont STARS

All regulated programs have a licensed capacity based on square feet available for care and learning. Programs are also asked to self-declare the maximum enrollment they accept in each age group so that a more accurate picture of available childcare slots emerges. The declared enrollment capacity is the number use to assess supply in the Randolph CC Region.

Information about Publicly Operated Preschool Programs was gathered from BFIS and school websites to determine which of those programs could be considered full-time care. Of six Publicly Operated Preschool Programs, only Sharon Preschool and Child Care clearly offers

early care and learning for at least 8 hours a day, five days a week. Brookfield and Braintree describe extended hours in their school handbooks but not on BFIS. None of the programs are open outside of the school calendar. These programs are all on the list but only Sharon's enrollment numbers were counted in the available supply of full time childcare.

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1

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Supply Methodology

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Heart of a Child Early Care and Learning RSM 6/2020

2

Gmail - FW: Norwich Update 2/24/21, 11:24 AM



Rebecca Holcombe <rebecca.holcombe@gmail.com>

### **FW: Norwich Update**

**Elissa Bradley** <elissa.rehm.bradley@gmail.com>
To: Rebecca Holcombe <rebecca.holcombe@gmail.com> Cc: Joel Bradley <joelmatthewbradley@gmail.com>

Hi Rebecca!

Tue, Feb 23, 2021 at 7:24 PM

Hope you are doing well. Have you checked out the skiing at Brookmead and Parcel 5? It's been quite fun – though we'll see what the next couple days of warming will do to it.

I'm writing because I thought you might have some insight or be able to apply some leverage through your work on the childcare committee. The Norwich Development Review Board just rejected the second zoning application for Immersion Montessori. I think that Juan (the head of school for IMS) may be so fed up that he's ready to move on and focus on the NH site where kids are currently attending. However – I can't let this one go without making some noise; seems to me that the planning board is operating in a vacuum with no comprehension of how beneficial it would be to add additional childcare (daycare, Pre-K,

and Kindergarden) in Norwich. In my opinion they've also caused Juan to unnecessarily spend a ton of money.

As Juan mentions in his note below, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> decisions rendered by the Review Board are conflicting –

development criteria met in the first decision were not met in the 2<sup>nd</sup> decision, when no information changed between the two decisions. The lack of transparency here is upsetting, specifically because Juan and Laura chose to spend money to correct the small handful of items required by the first decision. Had they known that the Review Board was going to find a completely new set of issues on the second review, they might have realized quickly that the whole project was going to be too expensive. Reading the decisions I agree with Juan's assessment that they this board has been unprofessional and unobjective.

Anyway – before I work myself up into a huff (oops – too late!) I was wondering if you thought that perspective from another Norwich committee could cause the Development Review Board reconsider.

Thanks for taking a look at this! E&J

Elissa Bradley 802.734.6088

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Gmail - FW: Norwich Update 2/24/21, 11:24 AM

From: Juan Garceran <admin@uvims.com> Date: Tuesday, February 23, 2021 at 3:19 PM To: Juan Garceran <admin@uvims.com> Subject: Norwich Update

Hola IMS families,

It is with a heavy heart that we communicate that the Norwich Development Review Board has denied our second application. As you all know, we were allowed to operate by the zoning administrator while we applied for a zoning permit back in June. After the first notice of decision, we had to stop our operations and were encouraged to apply again. Today, we were denied our second application.

This process has been very frustrating and overwhelming because of the lack of professionalism and objectivity. We have attached all the application documents for you to see how much time and resources we have spent on this project. As you will see, there are several inconsistencies between the September denial and the February denial. I have highlighted two sections were the board considered that the standards were met on September, but not in February. This doesn't make any sense since the application documents were the same, and we had not

proposed any changes involving those two sections in the new application. The same traffic assessment was submitted with both applications. In September, the access from Route 5 was considered adequate while now they have highlighted several issues not brought forth in the first denial letter. Also, while they said that "there is no consideration given on plan to snow storage or stormwater management" (page 5), snow storage was discussed in detail during the hearings by our engineer. Additionally, our new site plan adhered to the Stormwater Manual with respect to avoiding the use of any additional pavement or gravel even though we provided proof that our project does not require a drainage permit since the total

impervious area is less than one acre. These are just a couple of examples of how dysfunctional, random, subjective, and unfair this process is.

Laura and I are extremely frustrated and consumed by this process. Our engineer and other experts we worked with have suggested that we should appeal the decision. However, we now find ourselves exhausted of resources, and are no longer able to invest financially nor emotionally any further on our own.

We are deeply saddened by this tremendous loss for the town of Norwich, but, at this point, we have decided to plan to stay in New Hampshire and focus on our current campus. We have plans to integrate the farm and expand the outdoor area, and are confident that the experience here will be equally enriching.

Feel free to email or call us with any questions that you may have. Best,

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Gmail - FW: Norwich Update 2/24/21, 11:24 AM

Juan

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# Market Analysis for the:

# Market Analysis for the:

Alburgh Family Clubhouse Child Enrichment & Family Network Center

Alburgh, Vermont

Prepared for: Town of Alburgh, Vermont Northwest Regional Planning Comm.

Prepared by: **Doug Kennedy Advisors** P.O. Box 858

Norwich, Vermont 05055

April 2, 2020

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Job 2001

# Alburgh Family Clubhouse

# Child Enrichment & Family

Network Center

Alburgh, Vermont



### Table of Contents Executive Summary

### Introduction

The Project & Site Site & Context The Project

Market Factors Market Areas Area Economy Demographics of Childcare Market

Background Demographics Age Specific Demographics Household Composition Household Income

Supply Factors – Available Childcare Services Local Supply

Childcare Pricing & Affordability Childcare Affordability

Community Survey – Community Interviews Previous Survey Community Survey

### Respondents

Respondents & Pre-school Aged Children Respondents & School-Aged Children Search for Childcare

### **Community Interviews**

Market Synthesis Demographics of Demand

### Summary Appendix A – Detailed Survey Results

Market Assessment - Alburgh Family Clubhouse Childcare Facility - April 2020

**Doug Kennedy Advisors** 

Page 2

### **Executive Summary**

- The Alburgh Family Clubhouse has proposed a new center-based childcare center to be located on the Alburgh Community Education Center campus in Alburgh Village, Vermont. The following report assesses the market-based feasibility of the facility;
- The center's proposed location places it in a convenient for most Alburgh residents. The location off U.S. Route 2/Main Street in the village is in a central location with respect to Alburgh's highway network. In addition, the Education Center campus has existing infrastructure and on-site amenities and is already a location where many parents pick-up/drop-off their children;
- The new childcare center will be a purpose-built structure. As of this writing, two potential floorplans have been developed, with capacities for 42 or 72 children. The center is intended to provide childcare services for children aged six weeks through 12 years, including services for pre-school and school-aged children. The center will work cooperatively with Alburgh's existing Pre-K program;
- It is likely that the great majority of clients for the center will live in Alburgh or immediately surrounding communities. For purposes of analysis, two market areas have been defined: a *primary* market area located within 12 minutes drive-time of the project site; and a *secondary* market area located within 12 to 16 minutes drive-time of the project site;
- We note that Grand Isle County and adjacent Franklin/Chittenden Counties are the exception in Vermont; all three counties are experiencing population increase and have strong economies. High employment rates correlate with demand for childcare services. In the short run, the impact of the Coronavirus/COVID-19 will have an impact on employment levels:
- Alburgh's population of persons aged 0 to 12 years is projected to remain relatively stable over the next five years. As such, current childcare demand levels can be expected to continue over that projection period;

- There are a significant number of Alburgh market area households with incomes in low to moderate brackets. Market rate childcare costs can present a significant financial burden to these households, making the Vermont Child Care Financial Assistance Program a critical component of childcare economics in the market;
- In Vermont and the defined market area, approximately 70 percent of children aged 0 to 12 years, have parents (single & couple) whose work and commuting schedules

Market Assessment – Alburgh Family Clubhouse Childcare Facility – April 2020 Page 3

### **Doug Kennedy Advisors**

result in time periods in which the parents are not able to provide childcare. As such, these households must seek some form of care for their children;

- Childcare supply is limited in Alburgh. Total regulated capacity for children aged 0 to 12 years is 50. 20 of these places are in the town's Pre-K program, which provides coverage for limited hours. The town's total capacity for children aged 0 to 2 years (Infants/Toddlers) is eight. Without question, there are limited childcare resources in Alburgh;
- Data and opinions gathered from a community survey and interviews make a clear case for the development of a childcare facility in Alburgh. Alburgh parents must currently patch together a series of care providers to take care of their children and to enable them to remain employed. Informants also note that a number of Alburgh families struggle from a socio-economic perspective and that a high quality childcare center would provide children with a strong background for school;
- The market for the proposed center can be summarized in stark demand and supply terms for the primary market:
- o Intheprimarymarketalone,thereare440childrenaged0to12years;
- Approximately275ofthesechildrenarelikelytoneedfullorpart-timechildcare

#### services:

- The comparison of demand (275 children) with regulated supply (childcare capacity 50) shows a deficit of approximately 225 childcare spaces in the community.
- Overall, the market analysis shows a clear market for a new childcare center in Alburgh. Current demographics suggest that the distribution of capacity within the center should be approximately as follows:
- Infant-20percentofcapacity;
- Toddler-10percentofcapacity;
- Pre-school-25to30percentofcapacity; After-school-40to45percentofcapacity.

Market Assessment - Alburgh Family Clubhouse Childcare Facility - April 2020

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### Introduction

The following report summarizes a market analysis designed to assess the market-based feasibility of a proposed childcare facility (Alburgh Family Clubhouse Enrichment and Family Network Center) proposed in Alburgh Village, Vermont. The market assessment focuses on a facility that will provide childcare services for preschool children (Six weeks through Pre-K) as well as a limited after school care program. The childcare facility will operate in a purpose- built facility on the campus of the Alburgh Community Education Center at 45 Champlain Street in Alburgh.

As planned, the project is intended to accomplish the following:

"The proposed one-story building is to include programming and classroom space for children ranging from six weeks old through pre-K, as well as space for limited after school care, supply areas, and offices. Alburgh School District hopes to serve 40 to 50 children in the childcare facility at one time. The facility will be fully ADA-compliant and meet the physical space standards required for childcare licensing by the Vermont Department of Children and Families and for Pre-K licensing by the Agency of Education. This project will enable young families to meet their childcare needs in their home community, create much needed jobs in Alburgh, and work to address the poverty rate in the Town.

The Alburgh Community Education Center is part of the Grand Isle Supervisory Union and currently operates Alburgh's K-8 elementary/middle school. Locating the proposed childcare facility adjacent to the Alburgh Community Education Center will allow both entities to collaborate on programming and better support families in the community."<sup>1</sup>

The analysis and report address the following major topics:

- Project Plan & Context a summary of the project's location/access to markets, the project site, the critical elements of the project, project-based features and services and proposed service fees;
- Market Factors a review and assessment of market factors critical to the project's success, including: Prospective geographic markets; Alburgh as a location for a project of this type; Regional economic indicators; Demographics of the market areas; and estimates of prospective market pools;
- *Childcare Supply* a summary of area and local childcare supply, apparent demand, fees and project features;

Market Assessment - Alburgh Family Clubhouse Childcare Facility - April 2020 Page 5

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 $<sup>^{1}</sup>$  From: Requests for Proposals – Town of Alburgh – VCDP Implementation Grant, Market Study.

- *Community Input* we conducted an online survey oriented toward the Alburgh community. Survey results provided insight into childcare demand, pricing and the balance between overall demand and supply. In addition, we interviewed a number of persons with direct experience and insight into area childcare services.
- *Synthesis* synthesis of all market factors to make findings/recommendations regarding the market-based feasibility of the project, including: projected rate of usage; competitiveness of the facility; competitiveness of projected rents.

Significant market findings and relevant quantitative data are contained in tables, charts and figures contained in the text of the report. The analysis and this report are based on an ex- tensive review of available data from Federal, state, regional and local sources. In addition, a number of individuals with knowledge of local markets have been interviewed and surveyed to provide additional background material for the analysis. All project sources are cited in the footnotes to the report.

This report, including all background data, findings and recommendations, is based on market conditions as assessed by the analyst at the time of report preparation. In the event that there are any significant changes in a number of factors, including: macro-economic conditions, local/regional economic conditions, interest rates, local/regional competition, changes in the project program, or other factors affecting the appropriate markets, it is likely that the findings contained in the report will change. No guarantees are offered that the estimates, projections and findings in this report will be met. However, the findings contained in the report do reflect the judgment of the analyst, following an extensive review of market conditions.

### **Doug Kennedy Advisors**

Doug Kennedy Advisors brings a broad range of professional and project experience to its clients, with broad understanding of project work in real estate, housing, healthcare, community development, recreational market research, and growth impact assessments. With over 38 years of practice, our experience spans: real estate economics and markets; downtowns & community development; retail feasibility analyses; resort planning; fiscal and growth impact assessments. More significantly, our broad exposure to project work, in both up and down markets, allows us to provide realistic and strategic advice to clients both for the present and future. Out approach to focuses on a practical approach to real estate market and development issues and is focused on providing analyses that allows clients to make informed decisions regarding development feasibility and marketability issues. Moreover, our clientele includes a broad array of public and private sector organizations.

• Real Estate Market Research - Our clients seek our services to assess and document their real estate development plans. Whether our assignment involves conceptual analysis of highest and best use, or final documentation for a financing, we provide thorough and objective findings and recommendation that can shape development strategy. Our services include:

Market Assessment - Alburgh Family Clubhouse Childcare Facility - April 2020 Page 6

feasibility analysis, product identification, buyer/absorption studies, amenity needs, competitive assessment, and development consultation.

- Community & Economic Development our public sector work includes market analyses and
  economic development strategies for site redevelopment, rehabilitation projects, downtowns and
  commercial zones focused on improvement.
- Project & Strategic Planning Savvy developers know that planning for any project requires a bigpicture view an understanding of how a specific project will fit into its surroundings or a long-term
  plan. We can provide strategic and tactical advice both individually or part of a project team that
  can help to keep a real estate plan on track and best exploit market opportunities. This work is
  critical as the broad economy moves through a period of significant turmoil. Our services include:
  project advising and management, diagnostic assessments, background market findings, actionbased plans.

Working out of his Norwich, Vermont office, Doug Kennedy offers a broad range of professional and project experience to his clients. With over 39 years of practice in planning, economics and real estate, Doug's experience spans: real estate economics and markets; health and care facilities, downtowns & community development; retail feasibility analyses; resort planning; fiscal and growth impact assessments. More significantly, his broad exposure to project work, in both up and down markets, allows him to provide realistic and strategic advice to his clients both for the present and future. Doug takes a practical approach to real estate market and development issues and is focused on providing analyses that allow his clients to make informed decisions regarding development feasibility and marketability issues. Doug is a graduate of Middlebury College (Middlebury, Vermont) and has a Masters in City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania).

Market Assessment – Alburgh Family Clubhouse Childcare Facility – April 2020 Page 7

### **Doug Kennedy Advisors**

### The Project & Site

The Alburgh Family Clubhouse Child Enrichment and Family Network Center has been proposed to provide a purpose-built, center-based childcare facility in Alburgh. The proposal has been advanced as a means to address a broadly perceived shortage of quality childcare in the facility. The project's impetus was a Promise Community Grant received by the two several years ago; the grant's focus was on increasing the 'readiness' of Alburgh children for Kindergarten. Much of the discussion around this issue focused on the need for high quality childcare in the community.

The basics of the proposal, the site and facility are summarized below:

#### Site & Context

The project building will be constructed on the campus of the Alburgh Community Education Center (45 Champlain Street). The Education Center campus is located in Alburgh Village and is

directly accessible from U.S. Route 2/Main Street. The Education Center serves as Alburgh's public school facility, providing educational services for grades K – through 8. In addition, the campus serves as the site of Alburgh's existing Pre-K program, which has a capacity of 20 children. As an existing school facility, the Education Center has support infrastructure and other facilities which will ease the development process for the childcare facility.

As noted, the Education Center is located in Alburgh Village, which is the most significant population center in the community. Although not a major commercial center, the village provides some day-to-day services for area residents. Moreover, the village is a significant 'crossroads' for both north/south and east/west travel in northern Grand Isle County. The proposed site is located within 15 minutes drive-time of virtually all Alburgh residents. Further, the site is located within 10+ minutes drive-time of Isle La Motte, approximately 20 minutes drive-time of Swanton Village and less than 10 minutes drive-time from Rouses Point, NY. The site will provide a convenient drop-off/pick-up location for parents with children of both preschool and school-age.

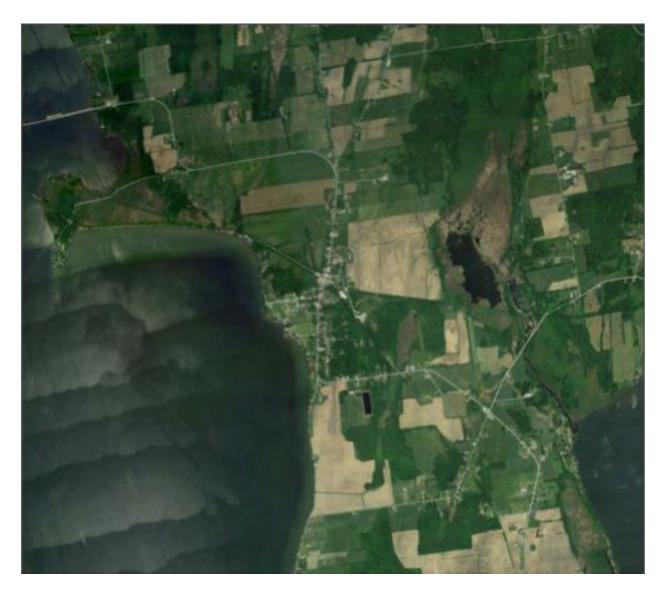
The graphic on the following page shows the Education Center site within its regional context.

Market Assessment - Alburgh Family Clubhouse Childcare Facility - April 2020 Page 8

### **Doug Kennedy Advisors**

Regional Context: Alburgh Community Education Center

The Alburgh Community Education Center Campus is shown in the graphic on the following page. The likely site for the childcare center has been highlighted.



**US Route 2 To Rouses Pt.** 

### **Education Center**

VT Route 78 To Swanton

### **US Route 2 To N. Hero**

Market Assessment – Alburgh Family Clubhouse Childcare Facility – April 2020 Page 9

### **Doug Kennedy Advisors**

Campus: Alburgh Community Education Center

### The Project

As currently planned, the childcare facility will provide care for infants (Six Weeks+), toddlers, preschool and after school. The facility's capacity is planned at 40 to 45 children. The facility will be fully ADA-compliant and meet the physical space standards required for childcare licensing by the Vermont Department of Children and Families and for Pre-2 K licensing by the Agency of Education.

Two schematic floorplans for the facility are shown in the graphics below; the first shows a building with a capacity of 42 children, while the second shows a building with a capacity of 72 children.<sup>2</sup>

Market Assessment – Alburgh Family Clubhouse Childcare Facility – April 2020 Page 10

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Source: Centerline Architects, Floorplan Capacity – 42 Children.

### **US Route 2/ Main Street**

**Champlain Street** 

**Alburgh School** 

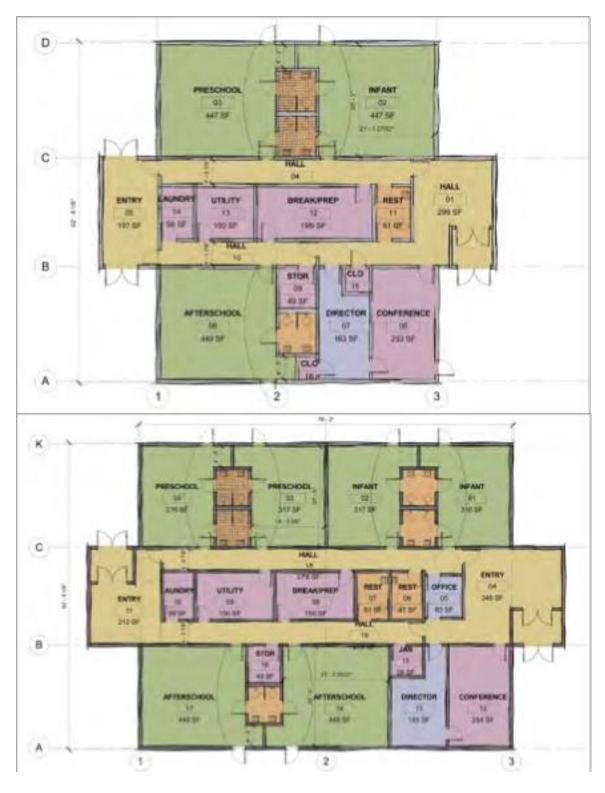
**Likely Childcare Center Site** 

Floorplan – Capacity 42: Alburgh Family Clubhouse Child Enrichment and Family Network Center

Floorplan – Capacity 72: Alburgh Family Clubhouse Child Enrichment and Family Network Center

Market Assessment – Alburgh Family Clubhouse Childcare Facility – April 2020 Page 11

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The 42 child capacity facility would have the following age/time capacities:

- Infant 8 children;
- Preschool (includes Toddlers) 16 children;
- After School 16 children;

- School Vacation time periods 16 children;
- Summer Vacation time periods 16 children.

As initially proposed, weekly rates will be as follows:

- Infants \$280;
- Toddlers/Preschool \$220;
- After School \$110;
- School Year Vacation \$180;
- Summer Vacation \$180.

Market Assessment – Alburgh Family Clubhouse Childcare Facility – April 2020

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Page 12

### **Market Factors**

The following report sections provide data and assessment for a number of factors that are significant in assessing the potential market for the project.

#### Market Areas

While the day care center is proposed for a site in Alburgh Village, it is apparent that the project's market 'reach' could extend beyond the town's boundaries. Our research indicates that residents of several adjacent communities might use the facility

We defined primary and secondary market areas based on a number of factors, including:

- Travel corridors and driving distances/times;
- Commuting patterns with particular attention to both destination and through travel that could provide market support for an Alburgh-based center;
- Location(s) of existing supply;
- Distribution of housing units in Alburgh;
- Area social patterns.

Alburgh Village is a minor commercial/service center in the region; Rouse's Point to the west and Swanton to the east provide a significantly greater range of services and employment opportunities. Many Grand Isle County residents travel to St. Albans and Burlington for major shopping needs.

Alburgh Village's highway connections include the following:

- U.S. Route 2 West/South this corridor provides direct connections to Rouses Point, NY to the west and North Hero to the south. This is a relatively heavily traveled corridor and an important regional thoroughfare;
- VT 225/Border Road North a direct link to the north and Quebec;
- VT 78 East an indirect link to Swanton to the west:
- VT 129 & West Shore Road South a direct link to Isle La Motte.

Market Assessment – Alburgh Family Clubhouse Childcare Facility – April 2020

### **Doug Kennedy Advisors**

Page 13

We assessed commuting patterns among persons who work in Alburgh to develop a good definition of the community's 'commuter-shed:'3

- 30<sup>+</sup> percent of the persons that work in Alburgh also live in the community;
- Worker flows to Alburgh include a number of commuters from: North Hero; Isle La Motte; Burlington and Swanton. There does not appear to be significant inflow from New York communities;
- Most of Alburgh's residents that work do so in other communities. Burlington, St. Albans, South Burlington and Colchester combined attract 40<sup>+</sup> percent of Alburgh's commuters;
- We also note that workers from several communities must drive through Alburgh Village to reach their workplace. These include: Champlain, NY, North Hero; and Swanton.

The graphic on the following page shows the distribution of housing units in Alburgh.<sup>4</sup>

Market Assessment – Alburgh Family Clubhouse Childcare Facility – April 2020

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Page 14

Housing Distribution: Alburgh

Alburgh's housing units are distributed along the major travel corridors along with a significant concentration in the village area.

We note that, for the U.S. as a whole, "On average, center-based arrangements for children under three years are 4.6 miles from children's homes. Center-based arrangements for children three

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Source: On the Map; U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Only year-round residences included. Source: Vermont Open GeoData Portal.

through five years are on average 3.9 miles from children's homes." However, we feel it likely that average distances are somewhat longer in rural areas such as Alburgh.

Market Assessment – Alburgh Family Clubhouse Childcare Facility – April 2020 Page 15

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Childcare supply is addressed in more detail in a following section of this report. In brief however, there is minimal formal supply now available in the town.

The graphic below shows the defined primary and secondary markets. The primary market (dark blue) is the area within 12 minutes drive-time of the proposed center location while the secondary market (light blue) is the area ranging from 12 to 16 minutes drive-time of the proposed center.<sup>5</sup> The defined markets include virtually all of Alburgh Town and extend into: North Hero; Isle La Motte; Swanton and Champlain, NY.

**Defined Primary & Secondary Markets** 

### Area Economy

A brief summary of major regional economic trends follows. Daycare services are typically predicated upon a working population seeking solutions for care of dependent children. Clearly, a strong economy and solid employment have the effect of increasing demand for childcare services. The regional and national economies are on a long term growth cycle, following a severe downturn during the 2000s. In Vermont, the economic recovery has been marked by very low unemployment rates, shortages of labor in certain markets – and extreme pressure on the

<sup>5</sup> The 16 minute drive-time area extends into Quebec. However, market area demographics only include areas within Vermont/New York.

Market Assessment - Alburgh Family Clubhouse Childcare Facility - April 2020 Page 16 Doug Kennedy Advisors



rental housing market. Furthermore, the aging of the population is having an impact on the economy, as many employers are unable to secure sufficient workers to fill all positions.<sup>6</sup>