



Little People's Depot Preschool New Facility Development Project

By

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Submitted In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for a
Master of Science in Community Economic Development

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SCHOOL OF COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

APRIL 2006

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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to develop an affordable facility for a local non-profit cooperative preschool (Little People's Depot) in the Town of New Boston, New Hampshire using green building techniques wherever possible. The school was informed that their previous location would not be available to them as of the end of the 2005/2006 school year. The plan was to offer the use of the new facility through a long-term lease. As the founding member and manager of River Road Co-Prop, LLC, I was fully funding the purchase and development of a facility for this project. The school was to solicit for donations and attempt to organize volunteer support throughout the duration of the project. The facility would be developed in conjunction with the school teachers and board members of the preschool to satisfy the needs of the school and its members. The project encompassed many activities that included the (1) procurement of a facility, (2) application for and approval of a property use change with the Planning Board, (3) designing and engineering the conversion and construction of the facility, (4) converting and constructing the existing facility for the use of the preschool, and (5) managing and maintaining the facility after it has been occupied by the school.

The success of the project was measured by the satisfaction level of the board members, teachers, and members of the preschool and by the completion of the new facility in time for the next school year. The sustainability of the project was measured by our ability as property owners and managers to continue to offer an affordable facility to the preschool through a long-term lease agreement.



This is the proposed site for the new preschool facility. The attached barn in the rear of the house would be converted for use by the preschool.

Executive Summary

The project consists of locating and securing a property that will be used to house a local nonprofit cooperative preschool in New Boston, New Hampshire. The property will be renovated and developed to meet the needs of the preschool. The project has been targeted to the current and potential members of the cooperative, which includes students, parents, teachers, and other community members. This project not only impacts the members of the cooperative, but many others within this small and close-knit community as well.

In 2005 the preschool was faced with losing their current facility. A Future Facility Research Committee was formed to explore the school's options. The committee was unable to find a facility that met their needs. The school was limited because the town lacks in affordable rental space, the preschool lacks the resources to own. Then, a residential property with a large barn attached was placed on the market. The facility is adjacent to the property of the town elementary school. After a discussion with the director of the school and some preliminary research, it was decided that this met the needs of the school. Since the school wanted to be located at this property, my wife and I purchased the property and are undertaking the renovation with much community support.

The community recognizes that this preschool, which has been around since 1970, is a very important asset of the town and understand the negative impact that its loss would have on the community. Members of the community have been very supportive of all the activities associated with keeping the school not only open, but located in town as well.

The goal of the project is to secure a property and complete the development of a facility for Little People's Depot Cooperative Preschool in time for the next school year. In order to accomplish this goal the objectives that must be met are (1) to secure a property that will be used to development a facility for the preschool, (2) to gain commitment from the director of the preschool, (3) to gain required project approval from various state and town agencies, (4) complete the facility in time for the next school year, and (5) to incorporate green building techniques into the facility design wherever possible.

We have completed the first two objectives, the second will be complete this month, and we will be renovating the barn this summer. There are a few critical tasks that remain including finalizing the design documents, applying for the building permit, completing the renovation and construction of the school, gaining a certificate of occupancy, and holding an open house. Even though the project was delayed, ultimately the goal of the project will be achieved. The preschool is remaining in the community and it will have a nice new home next school year.

It is anticipated that the school will be completed within or under the budget. As a result of this project, we were able to maintain affordable preschool services for 36 children in our town. This project will help to preserve an important asset for the community. We will also be able to incorporate green building with some alternative design and building techniques, the hallmark of which is an alternative, ecologically sound, subterranean aerobic septic system.

One major recommendation when undertaking a project of this nature is to develop a risk management plan. Underestimating the time that it takes for the predevelopment phase of a fairly complex property development project, may lead to its failure. This project took a year longer than anticipated. It is recommended that a thorough and complete evaluation of the potential risks be an integral part of the plan. A risk assessment will help to ensure that the schedule of the project is accurate and achievable. A risk management plan is a critical part of ensuring project success.

Another recommendation is to complete the pre-development phase prior to starting the development phase. In any project plan, the project approvals should be a requirement of starting the development. Without these approvals, resources may be wasted.

My experience in project management and my knowledge of construction were invaluable skills in planning and executing this project. Practicing project management best practices allowed me to deal with the difficult and complex obstacles that this project presented. Exposure to the practices, principles, and people associated with the School of Community Economic Development, has made the success of this project a beacon.

I. Community Needs Assessment

The needs assessment for this project has been conducted both formally and informally since May of 2004. Our second child attended the preschool last year and my wife was the president of the board of directors during this time. As you will see in the problem statement, the preschool's present facility will not be available to them in the future. So, the Board of Directors decided in May of 2004 that they needed to explore other facility options for the preschool and formed the Future Facility Research Committee. This committee was charged with finding alternative facility options for the preschool that could potentially be utilized in the future. The committee found out very quickly that the availability of an affordable facility for this type of operation does not exist in town. This is the nature of a small rural/suburban town.

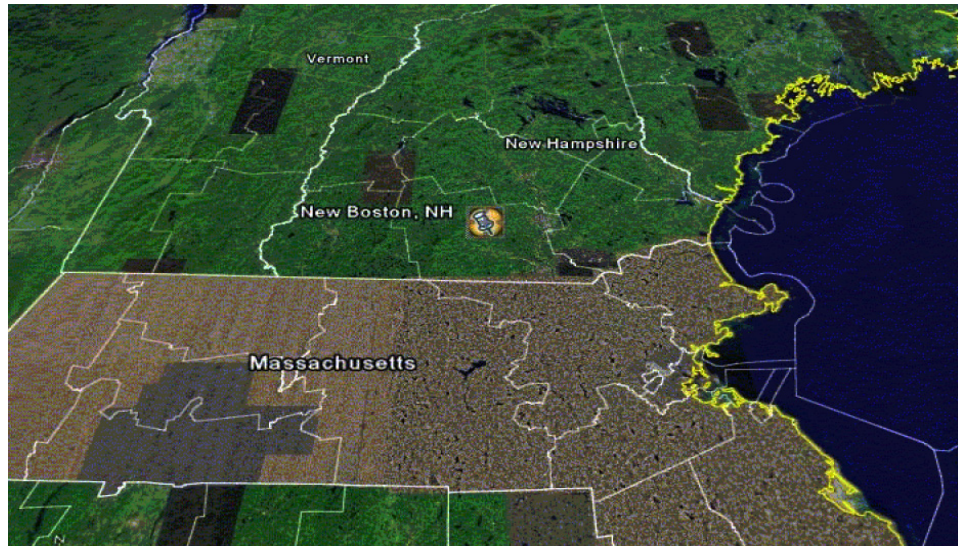
The lack of an existing facility has become clear through the research that was conducted by the Future Facility Research Committee and the primary research conducted through this project. The only two options would be either to relocate the preschool to the community church, which may not be acceptable to the church members or close the school. In either scenario, the community would be adversely affected.

In addition to the lack of an existing facility, there is also a shortage of affordable preschool services in the community. There are only two other private organizations that offer preschool in the community. Public preschool is also offered, but it is reserved for those with special needs first and then to the public second. There were 307 children under the age of 5 years old in New Boston, which is about 7.7% of the population, in 2000 (US Census, 2000). There were 135 children, or 10.8% of those attending school in town, requiring preschool services in 2000. It is estimated that there has been a growth of about 12.2% in the last three years (2000-2003) in town (NH Economic & Labor Market, 2004). If the percentage of those attending preschool in the population of those under 5 years old remains the same, this translates to an increase of 22 preschool age children in the last three years or a total of about 157 preschool age children in New Boston (See Appendix (c) & (d)).

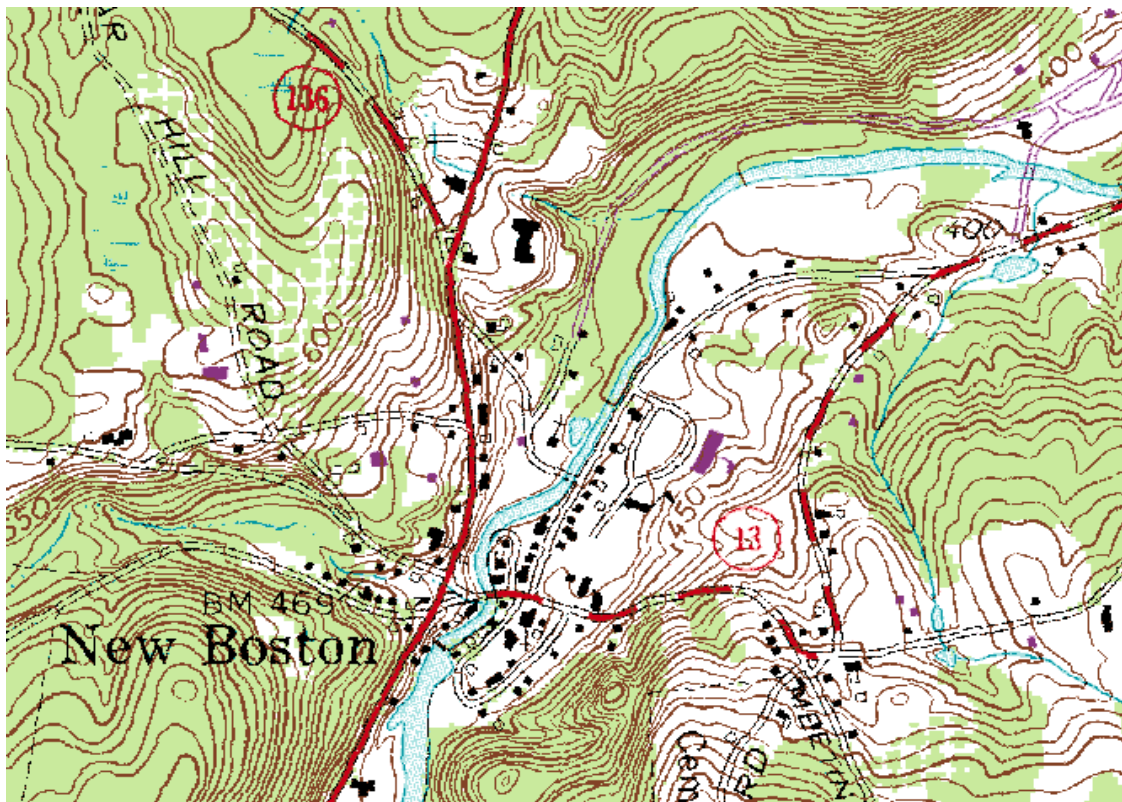
After doing primary research it was determined that there are about 120 preschool spaces including Little People's Depot, which has 36 spaces (LPD Handbook, 2003). This means there are about 37 children or 24% of the preschool age children that have to go outside the community for preschool services. Without Little Peoples Depot Preschool that would increase to more than 70 children having to leave the community for preschool services. This would mean about 45% of the preschool age children in town could not attend preschool within the town that they reside.

The need for an affordable facility that can be utilized by Little People's Depot Preschool exists more than ever before. The population in the community is growing at a significant rate and the number of preschool age children in the community is growing with it. Not having a majority of children attending preschool in the community within

which they live is not healthy for the community. The loss of Little People' Depot would have a tremendously negative impact on the community.



New Boston, New Hampshire



New Boston Village, New Hampshire

II. Problem Identification

(a) *Problem Statement:*

Little People's Depot Preschool is a non-profit cooperative preschool that provides a quality, affordable educational experience for 3 and 4 year old children of New Boston, NH and surrounding towns. The preschool Board of Directors was informed last school year that their lease would only be extended for one more school year, and they recently received confirmation that the current facility would not be available to the school after the 2004-2005 school year. A Future Facility Research Committee was formed to explore the relocation options for the cooperative preschool for the 2005-2006 school year. So far, they have been unable to find a location that will meet the needs of the school. Little People's Depot has played an important role in the community, and our family has had a long history with the program. Little People's Depot Preschool was founded in 1970 and has been a fixture in the community ever since. The school is a cooperative and has acquired non-profit [501(c) 3] status in the State of New Hampshire. The school currently offers an affordable preschool education to thirty-six preschool age children in New Boston and the surrounding communities. The school provides two good jobs (teacher & aide) to members of the community. If a facility is not available by the start of the 2005/2006 school year, Little People's Depot may cease to exist and the existing and potential members of the cooperative may have to go outside the community for preschool services.

(b) *Project Target Community:*

The target community of the project is current and potential members of the cooperative preschool (especially those requiring an affordable preschool education in town).

(c) *Project Goals in CED Terms:*

The goal of the project is to secure a property and complete the development of a facility for Little Peoples Depot Cooperative Preschool in time for the next school year. In order to accomplish this goal the following objectives must be met.

(d) *Project Objectives:* [For Logic Model See Appendix (h)]

- (1) Secure a property to be used in the development of a facility for the preschool
- (2) Gain commitment from the director of the preschool
- (3) Gain project approval from the required town officials
- (4) Complete the facility in time for the next school year
- (5) Incorporate green building techniques into the facility design wherever possible

III. Project Design

(a) *Literature Review:*

One of the theories that was discovered to be very much prevalent in the surroundings of this operation was the Central Place Theory. The town that we live in is a rural town with a population of about 4,600 people. It was an agricultural based town and has been able to maintain its small New England town feel. The center of town is where all of the businesses and commercial sector resides. The centralized nature of the town is an evolution that can be described by the Central Place Theory. "The smallest hamlets include the narrowest range of residential services, most often a grocery, gas station, and café (Bingham and Mier, 1993)." New Boston is no exception to this rule. This about explains our town to the tee. The pre-school is one of the oldest fixtures of the community and has been near the center of town since its inception in the mid 1970's. Another way in which the pre-school fits into this theory is the fact that all of the pre-school families commute towards the center of town to bring their children to the school. Should the school be forced to operate outside of the center of town, there would be many negative aspects. The school would no longer be easily accessed by most members of the community, it would be far from the town library, and it would no longer be located near the elementary/middle school. This would inconvenience many families and may lead to a natural dispersion of the cooperative.

Another theory that seems to explain the nature of the school is the Product Cycle Theory in rural areas. The theory states that since the nature of centralized rural areas are not very diversified they are vulnerable to the instabilities of the market (Bingham and Mier, 1993). In other words, if the market is bad and the grocery store in town closes, it has a substantial impact on the community. This is clearly apparent in the situation that the school is facing. The property owner of the facility that they are currently operating in will not renew their lease. The lease is being discontinued because the property has been purchased and the usage of the facility will be changing. So, if they are unable to find a new location that is affordable, they will no longer be able to operate in town. The natural ebb and flow of the marketplace and the product cycle theory have impacted the school in a very direct way.

So, these theories have allowed me to better understand the nature of this organization and, more importantly, the nature of the problem. I now know that the two major reasons that this problem exists is because of the centralized nature of our community and that market influence will have an impact on the organizations in a very specific way. Now, I can use this understanding to better prepare a solution to the problem. One of the ways in which this can be accomplished is through the establishment of a long-term lease in the center of town.

(b) *Specific Program:*

The program consists of the development of an affordable facility for the long-term use of the local non-profit cooperative preschool in town using green building techniques.

(c) *Participants:*

River Road Co-Prop, LLC, the director, and members of Little People's Depot Preschool, Town of New Boston Planning Board, Town of New Boston Building Department, Jonathan Willard, site plan design, Jamie Neefe, architect, and Ken Duchesne, MEP specialist. I have included a Project Organizational Chart and a Stakeholder Analysis Matrix to help in understanding the relationship structure.

(d) *Community Role:*

The target community is involved by committing to using the facility once completed. They are also involved by providing input and feedback as to the design of the facility.

(e) *Host Organization:*

River Road Co-Prop, LLC

(f) *Method:*

Jonathan & Jessica Willard will act as the owners of the property and River Road Co-Prop, LLC will act as the developer of the facility for this project and as the property manager once project is complete. Once property has been secured and commitment has been received by the school, the project will be started. The sequencing of events is to start with informal discussions with the town to determine feasibility and start to develop the site plan for the property. Once the site plan is complete, we can apply to the town planning board for a property usage change. If successful in gaining approval from the town, we would complete the architectural and engineering design of the facility and apply for a building permit. Then, we would convert the facility for use by the school.

(g) *Products & Outputs:*

- (1) The procurement of a property that can be developed into a facility for the preschool
- (2) A finalized project proposal for the preschool
- (3) A final site plan
- (4) A site plan approval from the Town of New Boston Planning Board
- (5) Final design documents
- (6) Building permits
- (7) Inspection approvals
- (8) Certificate of occupancy
- (9) Long-term lease agreement

IV. Project Implementation

(a) **Implementation Plan:** [For Gantt Charts & Schedule See Appendix (i) & (j)]

Objective #1: Secure a property to be used in the development of a facility for the preschool

Activities:

- Identify potential properties available in the market
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 10/11/04
 - Resources: Computer & Time
- Conduct feasibility study
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 10/11/04
 - Resources: Computer & Time
- Select most feasible property
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 10/18/04
 - Resources: None
- Negotiate terms
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 11/1/04
 - Resources: Information
- Execute purchase & sales agreement
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 11/1/04 (Benchmark)
 - Resources: Deposit (from personal finances)
- Gain financing commitment from the bank
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 11/8/04
 - Resources: Information requested by bank
- Finalize and satisfy mortgage requirements
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 11/29/04
 - Resources: Information requested by bank
- Procure property (Close on property)
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 11/29/04 (Benchmark)
 - Resources: Down Payment (from personal finances)

Objective #2: Gain commitment from the director of the preschool

Activities:

- Develop preliminary proposal for facility development
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 10/25/04
 - Resources: Existing facility information and potential new facility info.
- Attend Board Meeting to present and discuss proposal
 - Responsible: Jonathan & Jessica Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 11/8/04
 - Resources: Preliminary Proposal
- Follow-up with any additional information requested
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 11/22/04
 - Resources: None
- If the preliminary proposal is accepted, seek formal commitment from the director of the preschool
 - Responsible: Jonathan & Jessica Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 11/29/04 (Benchmark)
 - Resources: None

Objective #3: Gain project approval from the required town officials

Activities:

- Develop preliminary site plan and facility usage requirements
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 12/6/04
 - Resources: Pen, Paper, Tax Maps, and facility research notes
- Present preliminary site plan to the Town of New Boston Planning Board in an information session for feedback and feasibility
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 12/6/04
 - Resources: Preliminary Site Plans
- Develop Warrant Article for Groundwater Easement Required by Town
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 1/10/06
 - Resources: Engineer, Attorney, School Board

- Gain Approval from School District for Easement (Vote)
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 3/7/06
 - Resources: Organizing, Signs
- Develop final site plan and architectural design drawings
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard & Ken Bliss (Engineer)
 - Timeframe: Complete by 3/21/06
 - Resources: Computer, Time, Site Visits, etc.
- Present final site plan to the New Boston Planning Board for approval
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 3/21/06
 - Resources: Final Site Plans
- Site Plan Approved by New Boston Planning Board
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 3/21/06 (Benchmark)
 - Resources: None
- If site plan is approved, develop preliminary facility design and architectural details and design mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) Systems
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard, & Jamie Neefe (Architect), & Ken Duchesne (MEP Design)
 - Timeframe: Complete by 3/27/06
 - Resources: Computer, Time, Site Visits, etc.
- Finalize project proposal for preschool
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 3/27/06
 - Resources: All Documents
- Apply for building permits
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard
 - Timeframe: Complete by 3/27/06 (Benchmark)
 - Resources: Design Documents

Objective #4: Complete the facility in time for the next school year

Activities:

- Start construction
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard & Project Team
 - Timeframe: Complete by 3/29/06(Benchmark)
 - Resources: Design Documents

- Demolition of interior of building
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard & Project Team
 - Timeframe: Complete by 3/31/06
 - Resources: Design Documents & Funding
- Interior framing and partitions
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard & Project Team
 - Timeframe: Complete by 4/10/06
 - Resources: Design Documents & Funding
- Framing inspection
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard & Project Team
 - Timeframe: Complete by 4/10/06
 - Resources: Design Documents
- MEP system rough work
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard & Project Team
 - Timeframe: Complete by 4/17/06
 - Resources: Design Documents & Funding
- MEP rough inspection
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard & Project Team
 - Timeframe: Complete by 4/17/06
 - Resources: Design Documents
- Insulate building
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard & Project Team
 - Timeframe: Complete by 4/20/05
 - Resources: Design Documents & Funding
- Interior finishes
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard & Project Team
 - Timeframe: Complete by 5/1/06
 - Resources: Design Documents & Funding
- Final inspection
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard & Project Team
 - Timeframe: Complete by 5/1/06
 - Resources: Design Documents
- Acquire certificate of occupancy
 - Responsible: Jonathan Willard & Project Team
 - Timeframe: Complete by 5/1/06 (Benchmark)
 - Resources: None

- Execute lease agreement

Responsible: Jonathan & Jessica Willard & Board of Directors
 Timeframe: Complete by 6/1/06
 Resources: Finalized Lease Agreement

- Open house

Responsible: Preschool, Project Team, & Community
 Timeframe: Complete by 8/15/05
 Resources: Misc. Funding

(b) ***Staffing Pattern:*** [For Project Organizational Chart See Appendix (a)]

The majority of the project activities will be overseen by me. I will act as the owner and project manager and will have the following responsibilities.

Owner:

- Secure Property
- Work with A&E Team to define project scope and develop cost estimates
- Allocate Resources and Manage Procurement
- Attend planning board meetings
- Gain approvals from Town
- Manage property after project closeout

Project Management:

- Initiate Project
- Plan Scope
- Define Project Activities
- Develop Project Schedule
- Manage Conflict
- Allocate Resources
- Analyze and Monitor Risk
- Plan, Measure, and Control Quality
- Measure and Report Performance
- Project Closeout

(c) ***Budget:***

The budget estimates for the construction and renovation of the facility for the preschool total about \$28,000.00. This includes all of the components required to make the facility operational for the preschool. In addition, I have included a contingency fund of 15% of the budgeted cost for unexpected items that may arise during construction. For a detailed breakdown of these costs see Appendix (g).

V. Monitoring & Evaluation

(a) *Performance Indicators:*

I will evaluate the success of the project by measuring three variables. The first variable is the satisfaction level of the board members, teachers, and members of the preschool with the facility and the terms of the lease agreement. The second variable will be the scheduled completion of the new facility in time for the next school year. Finally, the third variable will be whether or not the project was completed within budget. The satisfaction levels will be measured through a survey that will be conducted after the completion of the project. The second variable will be measured by observing if the completion date of the project was met. The final variable will be measured by observing if the project was within the preliminary budget estimates as detailed in Appendix (g).

(b) *Management Information System:*

I will be using two MIS systems for this project. The first will be project management software called Primavera Expedition that will allow me as the project manager to monitor and analyze the project activities, schedule, project risks, quality control, and performance. It will also be useful in managing project procurement activities and change control. The second MIS system that will be utilized for this project is accounting software that will allow me and my wife as the property owners to manage the financial side of the project.

(c) *Evaluation Plan & Reporting:*

Gantt charts have been created for this project, which will allow for the tracking of all scheduled activities. The benchmarks identified will be used to determine if the project is on schedule. This will be monitored and analyzed on a weekly basis to determine if any corrective actions are required to maintain the scheduled completion date. See Appendix (i) & (j) for a detailed breakdown of the scheduled activities and durations for the project. A similar process will be conducted to monitor the project's estimated budget. See Appendix (g) for a detailed breakdown of the line item budget estimates.

VI. Sustainability Plan

The sustainability of the completed project and the facility for the preschool hinges on the creation of a long-term lease agreement between the preschool and the owner of the property, River Road Co-Prop, LLC. The intent is to create this long-term lease agreement at or before the completion of the renovation of the facility. Once created, the space will be secured for the preschool.

(a) *Field Observation:*

Filed observations will be conducted on a monthly basis to ensure that the items identified in the Evaluation Plan are on track and within budget. A field observation report will be created and used as an analysis tool in this process. See Appendix (m) for Progress Reports.

(b) *Sustainability Elements:*

The sustainability of this project is dependant on a long-term lease agreement being reached between the owners of the facility and the preschool. There have been preliminary discussions as to what this lease will include and determining the needs of both parties involved. The final agreement will be determined as these discussions continue to evolve and as we near completion of the project.

(c) *Institutional Plan:*

Through a long-term lease agreement, both the property owners and the school will be able to maintain a symbiotic relationship that will allow both organizations to coexist. This coexistence will not only benefit the property owners and the school, but more importantly the members of the cooperative and the community as a whole.

VII. Conclusions & Recommendations

(a) *Results & Conclusion:*

As a result of a positive show of support from the voters in town, the project has been vindicated and approved by the community. The school warrant article that was the last major hurdle for this project passed with overwhelming support with a vote of 763 in favor and 158 opposed. This article received the most support of any on the ballot this year. The community has spoken. Prior to this vote, we were able to fully complete objective #1, to secure a property to be used in the development of a facility for the preschool, and objective #2, to gain commitment from the director of the preschool. The passing of this article allows us to complete objective #3, which is to gain project approval from the required town officials, within the next few weeks. After receiving planning board approval in May, we will complete the renovation of the facility by July, 2006.

The schedule for the project was extended by about 6 months because we had to wait for the town to vote on the school warrant article. This delay was the result of a requirement by the planning board to get a septic permit from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. Since we were unable to do this without an easement from the School District, we had to wait until the voters approved the measure. The only factor that would have enabled us to complete this objective on time would have been to know about the requirements before we purchased the property and started the process 6 months earlier. If we had done this, the project would have been completed on time.

In conclusion, the project was delayed and will be completed over a longer duration than anticipated, but the project nonetheless is a success because the goal is still being met. It is also a success because we were able to successfully mitigate the unforeseen occurrences and maintain the desired outcome.

(b) *Recommendations:*

One of the major recommendations is to not underestimate the time that it takes to implement a complex development project. This project was a year longer than I had anticipated. The development was held up by one very significant site condition that was unknown at the beginning of the project. In order to meet the requirements of the planning board, we had to get an easement from the town, which required it to go to a town vote. Again, this delayed the project significantly. So, the recommendation is to really conduct the due diligence required to ensure that the schedule of the project is accurate and achievable. There will always be unknowns, but the mitigation of these risks is critical to ensuring a successful project.

Another recommendation is to not start development before pre-development is complete. The project approvals are a requirement prior to starting development of a project. Take it from experience that you do not want to use any resources on

development until you have approvals in hand. Without the approvals, these resources may just be wasted.

I felt that my experience in project management and construction were invaluable in planning and executing this project plan. Some of the project management best practices that I have acquired over the years added to my ability to deal with the difficult and complex problems that were faced on this project. I am grateful for my exposure to the logic model, pro forma budgeting, and stakeholder analysis exercises. The stakeholder analysis allowed me to consider everyone's interest in the project and how to include their interest in the plan. The logic model was helpful in considering my long and short term goals and the impact of the project as a whole. The pro forma budget exercise was something that helped me to better understand the financial picture of the project.