

County residents share goals for region at forum

BY DAYMOND STEER

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OSSIPEE — About two-dozen area residents discussed ideas for improving Carroll County during an aspirations forum on Tuesday night.

The Carroll County Collaborative organized the forum, which was held at town hall. Facilitator Jay Connor, of the Collaboratory for Community Support, guided the forum. Connor leads similar discussions all over the country.

Connor said the most effective way to improve a

community is to get the stakeholders to work together towards a common goal. Although that sounds like common sense, it actually feels unnatural to many people because they are caught up in complicated bureaucracies and perceived turf conflicts, said Connor.

For example, 15 years ago, a dysfunctional family in Michigan would be interviewed seven different times per year by different social service agencies, said Con-

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nor.

"You would probably guess those interviews had to do with strategic case management of how they become a stronger family," Connor asked. "No, those interviews, by public and private agencies, were done so they could find more funding."

The system was antithetical to the actual goal of helping the dysfunctional families, said Connor.

After speaking for about an hour, Connor broke the residents into four groups. Each group was asked: how to define community; to name a goal; and to offer a method for measuring progress.

One group's spokesman, Nathan Ainsworth, said defining community was actually a difficult task, but his group did come up with sev-

eral ideas.

Groups seemed to see community as being larger than towns but smaller than the entire county. Aspirations from Ainsworth's group included improving employment opportunities, providing more transportation options, and accommodating tourism without impacting the local community.

Another member of Ainsworth's group, Peter Higbee, summarized the group's aspiration as the community becoming a place where "all people of all ages can stay, thrive, and be valued."

State representative Susan Wiley, (D-Sandwich) also said the community needs to welcome people of all ages.

Another group's spokesman, Josh Arnold, said his group saw a community as a place where peo-

ple share a common purpose. As for an aspiration, Arnold said his group would like to see people from different towns work together more often.

"We really saw the inability of towns to collaborate on projects as an obstacle," said Arnold.

One group called for a countywide protocol for sharing resources so that area agencies can "check their egos at the door," said one woman.

Tamworth Selectman Willie Farnum summarized the lesson from the forum in two sentences.

"No goal is achieved in isolation," said Farnum. "This group and that group have to come together."

Information gathered at this forum and similar forums in Conway and Wolfeboro will be pooled together and presented in November.