

Fairbanks Museum w/Senator Welch - 7/7/21

\$764,000 CF

[Salutation]

On behalf of USDA Rural Development Acting State Director Cheryl Ducharme, Community Programs Director Eric Law, and all the staff at our agency, we thank you Director Kane and your staff here at the Fairbanks Museum for the exceptional work you do. Every time I visit I am taken by the quality and curation of its contents, and the comfort of its space and surroundings. Truly, you have created a jewel of the Northeast Kingdom.

To Congressman Welch and his staff, on behalf of our agency, we so appreciate and admire your unrelenting efforts to make the lives of rural Vermonters more stable and safe, and more robust and rewarding. You are all about action; we recognize it, and we thank you sincerely.

And to our other colleagues and friends, and our media partners who do such a stellar job covering the Northeast Kingdom, we thank you for giving us your time today.

USDA-Rural Development has made significant investments the last six years in the Fairbanks Museum & Planetarium, ranging from energy-efficiency improvements to a solar array to STEM educational exhibits...

It is our hope that these initiatives have strengthened the Museum's mission to "inspire wonder, curiosity and responsibility for the natural world..." by embracing social responsibility while providing stimulating public engagement in this fast-moving and demanding 21st century. Walk in the doors, spend an afternoon here, and you will see and feel the Museum's refusal to be complacent.

Last year, with help from the USDA, the Fairbanks purchased North America's premier Mass Timber exhibit from the National Building Museum in Washington, DC. It was a bold move and a brilliant one, and I feel that one day, we may look back and say it was the seminal decision that began the reinvigoration and restoration of Vermont's forest economy, and that of all of New England...

By using local wood products to build cleaner, smarter, more beautiful buildings, Mass Timber has the potential to redefine the way we sustainably manage our natural resources and develop our rural communities.

In Vermont and New England, the logging industry has suffered tremendous losses in the last decade due to the effective evaporation of the woodchip and softwood pulp market after paper mills, primarily in Maine, closed their doors.

In Mass Timber, this below-construction-grade wood product can be processed into strong, dense panels and pillars, and used in local building projects. The result would be new supply chains and much-needed economic development, a significant reduction of carbon emissions, and the reinforcement of essential environmental regulations.

Now, that is one vision of the future out of many possible visions, and there's no escaping that climate change is casting a darkening shadow over many of them. On top of this existential risk is now heaped the raw economic reality of inflated building-material costs across the U.S.

But it is during these tough times when our most insightful and inspiring work is done. The illumination of learning—and learning *together*—has been the guide for our species from the beginning of our history, and that is why this project is so essential:

It embodies the striving and struggle to find solutions to our most pressing problems.

In that eager spirit of knowledge acquired, I pose the following questions:

Did you know that Mass Timber

- is designed to meet the same performance and life safety standards as concrete and steel structures, including fire- and earthquake-resistance?
- That it could reduce global CO2 emissions by a third if all sustainable forestland was used?
- That Mass Timber buildings are 25% faster to construct and require 90% less construction traffic?

If you didn't know these things, now you do. And there will be much more to know at the Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium as the Tang Science Annex gets underway.

As the first large-scale Mass Timber project in Vermont, it will be something beautiful to see and interesting to talk about.

We hope you'll join us in spreading the word.

[Handoff]