

PRESTON TOWN AND SCHOOLS STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2030



Preston: Committed to a Thriving Future



Our Project Vision

The Preston Joint Strategic Plan will become a road map to the future for both the Town and the School District of Preston. This plan will look to powerfully and accurately describe the fundamental goals and future aspirations of the Preston community. It will answer the question, “What do we want to be?”. The joint strategic plan will be a living, evergreen document that enables current and future community members from many backgrounds to plan and negotiate in an atmosphere of mutual trust and acceptance to create a model community. We look to the future with commitment, respect, and a deep sense of optimism.

Intentions Explained

The Preston Board of Selectmen and Board of Education have created a joint strategic plan. The plan provides guidance, strategies, benchmarks, and objectives that the entire municipal government structure will use to frame short and long-term decision-making, budget development, infrastructure priorities, and community enhancements at all levels.

These plans are publicly accessible, specifically designed to increase transparency, and created to support a positive vision for stability, growth, and development. Our plans will be executed while preserving all that is good in the community, validating the history of the community, and sharing a bright, hopeful vision of the future.

Our vision is to create useful, realistic, measurable, and well-understood benchmarks, goals, and objectives. We will approach this work assuming nothing but striving to ask the right questions and get to the root causes. As we go forward, our community will identify and reduce obstacles (structural, institutional, financial, and interpersonal) to validate and promote the growth of everyone in our community.

The Preston Joint Strategic Plan reflects the tenets of a global, optimistic, and growth mindset that encourages a positive outlook, leading to deep learning and personal well-being. We intend to place significant emphasis on compassion, consistency, kindness, honor, security, and humanity. We are challenging ourselves to communicate well, support personalized learning, seek parent, community, and student engagement, create innovative classrooms and municipal teams, and encourage community-wide prosperity.

Our Joint Strategic Plan is fundamentally a statement of intention and commitment and a reflection of future ambition. Our plan will be the organizational tool that drives our decision-making when creating our budget and designing community interventions. Our investment in our community will remain defined by our commitment to family, children, and community members. We strive to offer the best of ourselves, and we encourage others to be their best selves in the name of our children and all future generations.

Preston, Connecticut: A Brief History

It is important to understand the environmental and historical context in which the district and town operations are embedded. Preston was established in 1687 by about 25 to 30 families. For the first hundred years or so, the territory included a large portion of what is now Griswold, CT. The town government was established early on, and the structure remains very similar today. Town employees include a First Selectwoman, Town Clerk, Tax Collector, and Treasurer, among other positions.

The Town

The current population of Preston is approximately 4,830. Many residents are employed in the greater Norwich-New London-Groton region, which offers commercial, industrial, entertainment, and service opportunities. Although the town is rural in nature, easy access to Interstate 95 and 395 is available a short distance away. The town's Grand List value, established in April 2024, is estimated at approximately 630 million dollars.

The small villages of Preston City, Poquetanuck, and Hallville are a backdrop to scenic farmlands and roads; they have been designated as village districts in the Preston Conservation Plan of Development. The primary economic driver throughout Preston's history has been agriculture, and it remains an important component to this day. Farmhouses with outbuildings such as barns, silos, and sheds comprise the bulk of Preston's standing historic and architectural resources.

The Preston Riverwalk is an economic development project consisting of about 390 acres of the abandoned Norwich State Hospital property. This riverfront campus offers a stunning overlook of the Thames River, with distant views to Long Island Sound. More than half of the property is undeveloped, and a pristine forested hillside surrounds a former reservoir. The Preston Redevelopment Agency (PRA), on behalf of the Town of Preston, is charged with the responsibility to manage and oversee the development of Preston Riverwalk in order to expedite development proposals and bring them to positive fruition. An agreement has been entered into with the Mohegan Tribal Gaming Authority, and a conceptual plan has been developed. This project will be a key area of consideration in the development of this Preston Town and Schools Strategic Plan 2024-2028. Additionally, it will enhance our ability to forecast growth, needs, and priorities, as well as the Poquetanuck Village and Heritage Trail project on Route 2A.

Schools

Records indicate that Salmon Treat was the permanent minister and the first teacher in the town. As years passed and the town progressed, school buildings came and went. The first school board was established in 1900, transitioning from a school committee. In 1904, Preston paid tuition for high school students. In 1940, the schools were fully consolidated into the Town of Preston. As time went by, improvements were made, and the Preston Plains Middle School was established in the 1960s. In 2003, after much debate, the Preston Veterans Memorial School was built to house elementary school students from Poquetanuck (Pre-Kindergarten - grade 2) and Preston City School (grades 3-5), which were razed after completion of the Preston Veterans Memorial School.

Preston Veterans Memorial School holds the Pre-K to grade 5 students who number 300. Preston Plains Middle School has a student population of 144 in grades 6 through 8. Eighth-grade students have the option of choosing from several different schools for their high school years. The predominant high school selected by students is Norwich Free Academy, a public/private high school located in Norwich, CT. Other options include Griswold High School, North Stonington's Wheeler High School, Ledyard High School, a technical high school, and multiple magnet schools. Preston's total Pre-K to grade 12 student population is approximately 675. Our Pre-K to grade 8 students are supported by a certified staff of 43, a non-certified staff of 52, and 7 administrators.

Unity

Preston is rich in history and potential! As the largest major employer in Preston, schools are a key infrastructure. Preston Public School District comprises two-thirds of the town's operating budget. The town government is the builder, planner, repair and maintenance caretaker for the municipality. It is responsible for the quality and well-being of the entire community. Therefore, it makes sense for the school district and town government to work together in a unified manner.

Primary Source: Preston in Review, sponsored by The Preston Historical Society, Inc., December 1971. The Franklin Press Inc., Norwich, CT.

Our Process

The District and Town hired Martin and Associates Inc. to conduct a series of information and data-gathering processes to assist in creating a set of broad goals and objectives, which have since become the focus of this Joint Strategic Plan. After framing the prioritized goals, the town and the district have created a layered document that weaves the selected joint goals as well as some details of specific town and district priorities needed to incorporate all aspects of operations for each organization and the community.

The joint planning team has created a comprehensive list of documents that represent all the subgroups and departments of the municipality. These include existing plans, data presentations, and other details. For example, town and district technology plans, building and grounds plans, fire department plans, land use plans, parks and recreation plans, public works, youth service bureau plans, zoning priorities, and many other formally approved public documents have been incorporated into a comprehensive appendix for all to reference.

Theory of Action

In an effort to prioritize our revealed ideas about the future of the town and the school district, we suggest an organizing structure driven by a Theory of Action. Our plan will not simply state that we will “do more,” “try harder,” but describe how we will accomplish unrealistic goals. It is our intention to achieve measurable outcomes that are well understood and committed to by our entire community.

Thus we say,

IF the municipality of Preston, representing both the town and the school district, pursues a joint planning design that encourages creativity, clear thinking, curiosity, and open dialogue that offers meaning and purpose to our community members; THEN we believe the community will agree on measurable outcomes that will evolve into a model community, with a joy, care, and commitment to each other.



Preston Town and School District

(Informed by the 2023-2024 Strategic Planning Process)

Vision and mission statements provide the pillars for the community's growth toward the future. This will serve as our guide in building our foundation.

Vision

Preston is and will remain a vibrant community. We will embrace opportunities that enhance wellness, respect all members, and create a future of prosperity for all. We will create an exceptional quality of life that not only engages all citizens, but provides economic stability and growth. This will include new leisure amenities, the promotion of business and employment opportunities, and unsurpassed schools in the state of Connecticut.

Mission

Preston citizens, stakeholders, and civic and school leaders have collaboratively identified the following goals to improve Preston Town and School operations, its overall economic outlook, and the character of our community into the future. We identify the following as goals to be addressed in the immediate period of 3-5 years, and with extension, to 10 years.

- ◆ Create and implement an Evergreen Joint Strategic Plan.
- ◆ Create and implement an economic development plan that generates new energy and revenue, all while preserving the town's rural character.
- ◆ Create and implement a plan to improve all aspects of education and municipal services.
- ◆ Conduct a study and implement a plan for the best use of all school/town facilities.
- ◆ Invest in technology for residents, schools, and government (including broadband, cybersecurity, and technology needs).
- ◆ Validate and reinvigorate civic pride through communication, community events, and new initiatives.

Preston's Core Values

Preston citizens, stakeholders, and Town/School leaders have collectively and clearly expressed the following Preston Town, School District, and economic aspects of value concerning its culture, climate, and optimism for the future.

Integrity

A community-wide commitment to follow through with our joint plan, matching our words and passions with thoughts and actions, with no desire other than for the greater good of the community.

Protection and Safety

Our people are first! Appreciation of Preston's small and rural town character, as well as environmental, inclusiveness, and personal health, is a must. We strive to keep Preston safe for its residents, coordinate initiatives regarding public health, and improve its town and school buildings, property, and geographic infrastructure.

Innovation and Resiliency

We will strive to effectively and affordably seek and act on new ideas to achieve our joint strategic planning goals. It is a process of continual renewal involving the entire government organization, as well as the whole participatory community. We are committed to strategic foresight, innovation, and intelligently investing in our people and community.

Responsiveness and Growth

We believe that it is crucial to improve Preston's economic outlook without negatively impacting its rural character. We welcome new business and economic growth in specific Preston locations. We exemplify responsiveness in our willingness to help constituents and to provide prompt service in a dependable and accurate manner.

Passion and Excellence

We are dedicated to excellence. We are committed to selecting and retaining high-performing employees, and encouraging community members to pursue their goals with passion and enthusiasm.

Partnership and Leadership

We will foster and create leaders at all levels. We support and expect our employees to assume leadership for tasks and projects where they have knowledge and ability. Our partnership extends to a community where accountability flows in all directions.

Open Communication and Transparency

We desire to better inform all members of the community with more and improved channels of communication regarding town and school events, public meetings, and recreational activities. We will achieve this by enhancing available communication tools. This includes digital messaging, improved internet and broadband access, and strategic placement of signage.



Preston Five-Year Joint Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Goal 1

Create and implement an economic development plan that creates new energy and revenue while preserving the town's rural character.

Residents value a plan that considers paced development of Preston Riverwalk, Poquetanuck Village, and land along Routes 2 and 2A to establish public-private partnerships for dining, shopping, and recreation.

NOTE: Preston Riverwalk is governed by the Property Disposition and Development Agreement between the Town of Preston, Preston Redevelopment Agency and Mohegan Gaming Enterprise. As such, a Conceptual Master Development Plan was approved in 2017 by the Preston Planning and Zoning Commission providing high quality, integrated mixed use for the unique nature of the site and consisting of entertainment, recreation, hotel, retail, and residential uses. Changes must be approved by the PRA and PZC.

Goal 2

Maintain and improve the quality of schools and municipal services.

Recruitment, retention, and succession planning for quality staff are essential areas of focus to sustain, develop and expand schools and municipal services. We will strive to implement best practices to support educators and support staff in all capacities and to strengthen municipal capacity through creating essential trainings, compensation strategies, and professional growth programming.

Goal 3

Study and implement a plan for the best use of all school/town buildings.

A community center, senior center, and municipal complex are of high interest to residents.

Goal 4

Invest in technology for residents (broadband) and schools/government (cybersecurity/technology needs).

Broadband and high-speed internet are needed improvements for residents, schools and municipal offices.

Goal 5

Validate and reinvigorate civic pride through communication and community initiatives.

Many residents desire better publicity of town actions, more outreach, and more community-centric events.



Action Plans

Note: All action plans include multiple layers of key stakeholder involvement including municipal and school staff at all levels, subgroups to be organized for specific tasks, community volunteers, and consultants as needed.

Goal 1

Create and implement an economic development plan that creates new energy and revenue while preserving the town's rural character.

Residents value a plan that considers paced development of Preston Riverwalk, Poquetanuck Village, and land along Routes 2 and 2A to establish public-private partnerships for dining, shopping, and recreation.

NOTE: Preston Riverwalk is governed by the Property Disposition and Development Agreement between the Town of Preston, Preston Redevelopment Agency and Mohegan Gaming Enterprise. As such, a Conceptual Master Development Plan was approved in 2017 by the Preston Planning and Zoning Commission providing high quality, integrated mixed use for the unique nature of the site and consisting of entertainment, recreation, hotel, retail, and residential uses. Changes must be approved by the PRA and PZC.

Action 1

(What needs to be done to accomplish Goal 1?)

Conduct an Infrastructure and open space review and assessment plan (the plan will tell town officials what can and can't be developed, as well as include cost projections)

Led By

(Who will be in charge?)

First Selectwoman
Board of Selectmen
Board of Education
Planning and Zoning Commission
Municipal Facilities Advisory Group
Public Utilities
Other Boards, and Commissions as appropriate.

Details

(How will we do it?)

- Review current landscape
- Conduct an inventory of utilities; extract from existing plans
- Connect with private utility companies
- Coordinate with legislators and State agencies

Timeline

(When will this be done?)

0-24 months, beginning July 1, 2024
Ongoing until complete

Performance Indicators

(How will we know we succeeded?)

Plan approved by Board of Selectmen

Action 2

Resurrect the Economic Development Committee with a new mission and adopt an updated ordinance to create said committee.

Led By

First Selectwoman
Board of Selectmen

Details

- Review ordinance
- Seek approval to update ordinance, determine role with Preston Redevelopment Agency
- Recruit new members

Timeline

- Beginning in Spring 2025
- 3 months from the plan approval date listed in Action 1

Performance Indicators

Approval by the town to update ordinance and charge EDC with goals.

Action 3

Prioritize areas of economic development - seek grant/funding plan. Protecting Open Space and Conservation/Agriculture Commission, Historic Resources

Led By

First Selectwoman
Director of Finance
Town Planner
Town Executive Assistant
Public Utilities
Planning and Zoning Commission
Parks and Recreation Commission
Conservation and Agriculture Commission
Inland Wetland + Watercourse Commission
Historical Society

Details

- Federal, state, and regional grants
- Municipal support
- Potential long-term funding from Preston Riverwalk development PRA,
- Evaluate needs of the assessor to meet demand.

Timeline

1-2 years, ongoing

2-5 years, continue review

Performance Indicators

Grants and other funding made available from a variety of sources

Plan adopted by Board of Selectmen

Action 4

Protecting open space and Conservation/Agriculture Commission, historic resources

Led By

First Selectwoman
Director of Finance
Town Planner
Executive Assistant,
Public Works Manager
Planning and Zoning Commission
Parks and Recreation Commission
Conservation and Agriculture Committee
Inland Wetland + Watercourse
Commission
Historical Society

Details

- Preservation Plan for Natural Resources
- Agriculture
- Public access to open space, parks, and archaeological sites.

Timeline

1-3 years, continue review

Performance Indicators

Plan adopted by Board of Selectmen

Action 5

Public Safety Assessment (police, fire, EMS, DPW)

Led By

First Selectwoman
Fire Chief
Resident State Trooper
Public Works Manager
Preston Safety Advisory Committee
District Safety Committee
Other Boards and Commissions as appropriate

Details

Capacity study

Timeline

- January 2025
- Complete by January 2026

Performance Indicators

Assessment Completed, Preston Safety Advisory Committee and Board of Selectmen, PRA.

Goal 2

Maintain and improve the quality of schools and municipal services.

Recruitment, retention, and succession planning for quality staff are essential areas of focus to sustain, develop and expand schools and municipal services. We will strive to implement best practices to support educators and support staff in all capacities and to strengthen municipal capacity through creating essential trainings, compensation strategies, and professional growth programming.

Action 1

(What needs to be done to accomplish Goal 2?)

The Superintendent and Board of Education will prepare a plan for school infrastructure upgrades as needed (including identifying a high school capacity threshold) inclusive of state statute, mandates, mandates, and regulations.

Details

(How will we do it?)

School and Town representation on all Town Infrastructure planning initiatives.

Timeline

(When will this be done?)

Presentation to Board of Education and Town Selectmen in December of 2025

Led By

(Who will be in charge?)

Superintendent
School Staff at all levels
First Selectwoman
School Board Chair
School Staff at all levels
Parents, students, and community members

Performance Indicators

(How will we know we succeeded?)

- Viable plans must be created to update school buildings and infrastructure.
- Plans will be presented to the Board of Selectman, Board of Finance, and The Board of Education by December 2026



Action 2

Make upgrades to District employee retention and recruitment policies and initiatives

Led By

Superintendent
School Committee
Human Resources Committee

Timeline

Ongoing starting July 2024

Details

Add Commitments to...

- competitive salary
- equity recruitment plan
- cross training of staff
- increased professional development opportunities at all levels (include including multidistrict and LEARN consortium partnerships)

Performance Indicators

- Track data
- Create an annual report showing the number of employees staying and number of quality candidates applying for jobs, other "metrics."
- Increasing Educator Diversity Plan

Action 3

Advance Community Mental Health and Wellness Initiatives in Coordination with Schools

Led By

Superintendent
Board of Education
Administration
School Nurses
School Social Workers
Parks and Recreation and Youth Services
Athletic Director
District SEEL Team

Details

Utilize school infrastructure, communications, and health staff to help organize and promote community health initiatives.

Timeline

Propose first initiatives in January 2025

Performance Indicators

First Initiatives begin with the 2025-2026 School Year, Preston Health and Wellness Data Reports to be created annually (with elements to remain confidential).

Action 4

Commit to Best Practices for Teaching and Learning

Led By

Board of Education
Superintendent
Administration
School Staff at all levels

Details

- Advance initiatives to improve class size standards, curriculum, and professional development.
- Include advancements in curriculum for special classes, library, technology lab, VR classrooms, maker spaces, and generative AI.

Timeline

First initiatives to be proposed in Fall 2024.

Performance Indicators

Commitments cited and acted upon in budgets and annual plans.

Action 5

Staffing/capacity study of all municipal departments

Led By

First Selectwoman
Director of Finance, Treasurer
Department Managers

Details

Hire consultant to review and assess capacity in conjunction with municipal department managers and project growth.

Timeline

January 2026

Performance Indicators

Plan approved/adopted by Board of Selectmen, funding appropriated and designated as such by town.

Action 6

Infrastructure maintenance and growth plan

Led By

First Selectwoman
Director of Finance
Department of Public Works
Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds

Details

- Hire consultants to work with the Department of Public Works to assess condition, and capacity for growth as it relates to economic development potential.
- Coordinate with the Department of Public Works and District Buildings and Grounds where appropriate.

Timeline

Complete by January 2026

Performance Indicators

Plan adopted/approved/funded by Board of Selectmen.



Goal 3

Study and implement a plan for the best use of all school/town buildings.

A community center, senior center, and municipal complex are of high interest to residents.

Action 1

(What needs to be done to accomplish Goal 3?)

Conduct full evaluation of changing needs of district and municipal infrastructure.

Led By

(Who will be in charge?)

Superintendent of Schools
Board of Selectmen
Board of Education
Municipal Facilities Advisory Group
Supervisor of Building and Grounds
Municipal agent
Parks and Recreation Commission,
Department of Public Works
Public Safety
Building Inspector

Details

(How will we do it?)

Report on the changing nature and current capacity of:

- Instruction and curriculum
- Use of technology
- Need for storage
- Class size commitment,
- Transportation
- Air quality regulation
- Use of common spaces (auditoriums, fields, gymnasiums, etc.)
- Municipal spaces, including town hall, library, garage, transfer station, senior center, parks and recreation, et al.

Timeline

(When will this be done?)

- Initiated September 2025
- 1-2 years, milestones to be established in the project calendar.

Performance Indicators

(How will we know we succeeded?)

Evaluation of town and school buildings and grounds infrastructure presented to School Board and Town Selectmen.

Action 2

Propose a Plan for Future Use of Town and School Buildings

Led By

Board of Selectmen
Board of Education
Municipal Facilities Advisory Group
Department of Public Works
Department of Public Safety
Other town departments as needed

Details

- Submit a comprehensive proposal to the Town regarding the future use of all town and school buildings and grounds
- Include PPMS Building and Use Land Transfer of 400 Acre Land

Timeline

June, 2026

Performance Indicators

Proposal submitted by June 2026.



Goal 4

Invest in technology for residents (broadband) and schools/government (cybersecurity/technology needs).

Broadband and high-speed internet are needed improvements for residents, schools and municipal offices.

Action 1

(What needs to be done to accomplish Goal 4?)

Establish Preston Public Network for town-wide internet and broadband access.

Details

(How will we do it?)

Study and propose options to Town Selectmen and Board of Education for broadband options and DEEP. Seek FCC updates. All activities focused on town-wide broadband access.

Led By

(Who will be in charge?)

First Selectwoman
Preston Zoning Board
School and Town Technology Leadership
Planning and Zoning Commission

Timeline

(When will this be done?)

Proposal to be presented in Fall of 2025

Performance Indicators

(How will we know we succeeded?)

- Proposal submitted.
- Actions taken by Town and School Leadership
- Highlight cybersecurity and mutual aid partnerships between District and Town.

Action 2

Establish and maintain high-speed internet and robust Cybersecurity in all town and school buildings and grounds

Led By

First Selectwoman
Superintendent
School and District Technology Committee
Specific Service Providers

Details

Technology Committee for the Town and District will submit Plans to Town Selectmen and Board of Education.

Timeline

Proposal to be presented in Fall of 2026

Performance Indicators

- Proposal submitted
- Actions taken by Town and District Leadership
- Highlight cybersecurity and mutual aid partnerships between District and Town.

Action 3

- Repair and replace all technology infrastructure.
- Upgrade Town and District equipment, including all student devices, administrative and staff technology
- Upgrade all cybersecurity measures.

Led By

First Selectwoman
Superintendent
District and Town Technology Leadership

Details

Technology Leadership to submit five-year technology plan to Town Selectmen and Board of Education

Timeline

Annual proposals are coordinated with budget proposals starting in the fall of 2025.

Performance Indicators

Implementation of Five-year plan to begin in the 2025-26 school year. Actions taken by Town and School Leadership

Action 4

Incorporate Artificial Intelligence (AI), advances in meeting technology, mobile conference rooms and VR classrooms.

Led By

Superintendent
School and Town Technology Leadership
LEARN Tech Team
Star Tech Team

Details

Technology Leadership will submit five-year technology plans to Town Selectmen and Board of Education.

Timeline

Annual proposals beginning in Fall 2025 coordinated with budget proposals.

Performance Indicators

Actions taken by Town and School Leadership



Goal 5

Reinvigorate civic pride through communication and community initiatives.

Many residents desire better publicity of town actions, more outreach, and more community-centric events.

Action 1

(What needs to be done to accomplish Goal 5?)

- Revitalize town-wide celebrations and events through promotional community engagement plan / informational campaign, focused on key attractions.

Details

(How will we do it?)

- Create designate a group or board/commission to take the lead in engagement activities.

Led By

(Who will be in charge?)

Town and School District Administration
Parks and Recreation Commission
Parent Teacher Organization
Conservation and Agricultural Commission
Historical Society
Small business outreach

Timeline

(When will this be done?)

Ongoing

Performance Indicators

(How will we know we succeeded?)

- Increased community events annually

Action 2

- Utilize specific tools tailored to community engagement and electronic resources
- Develop a town app

Details

- Create expanded town-wide celebrations, concerts, fairs, etc.

Led By

Town and School District Administration
Parks and Recreation Commission
Parent Teacher Organization
Conservation and Agricultural Commission
Historical Society
Small business outreach

Timeline

April 2026

Performance Indicators

- No vacancies on boards and commissions
- Improved attendance at public events and/or meetings

Action 3

Improve Town and School Communication Channels to for Preston Residents

Led By

First Selectwoman
Superintendent
Town Finance Director,
Tax Collector/Town Clerk
Communications Committee

Timeline

Items to be addressed in 2024 and 2025

Details

- Improved design of website and media messaging
- Utilize and promote Clear.gov government budget indicator customized dashboards
- Sustain campus and Town Hall messaging boards
- Deploy onboard.gov

Performance Indicators

- Improved design of website and media messaging
- Utilize and promote Clear.gov government budget indicator customized dashboards.
- Campus and Town Hall Messaging Boards
- Fully implement onboard.gov
- Improve communication and engagement activities

Action 4

Engage in Town/School sponsored community wellness initiatives

Led By

School District Athletic Director
School Head Nurse
Director of Parks and Recreation
Youth Service Bureau
Municipal Agent
Uncas Health District

Details

Coordinated initiatives with State, Town, Parks and Recreation, YSB, and Schools, including the District Athletic Director

Timeline

Propose First Initiatives in January 202

Performance Indicators

Increased coordination with state and local health agencies and available local communications networks.

Closing: Leadership Values and the Need to be Fearless

Our learning and flourishing community will pursue the opportunities that encourage “Serious Joy”! Serious Joy is a phrase that is intended to capture the passion of hard work and focused energy that creates a flow of growth and harmony. Cicero, 2100 years ago, stated, “Not for ourselves alone are we born.” Part of his meaning was, in all things adults do they should be thinking of the children, of those we care for, of those we love, and of their futures. The circumstances of the next generation of children are hurtling towards us faster than at any time in history. This is the generation that will have to address Artificial Intelligence. This will be the first time in all of history that human beings will be confronted with something that is more intelligent than themselves; an intelligence that we created, but also an intelligence that will surpass us. In this coming generation, jobs will disappear and be recreated, money and economy will be redefined, and the meaning of what it is to be human will be confronted with the full force of cultural transition. Yet, intelligence isn’t the only feature of what it means to be human; care, empathy, acceptance, and a clear vision are also necessary.

Why is this important to our small hamlet? For our children to live long and happy lives, they must be guided to clear ethical thinking, compassion, and respect for each other. To accomplish such a crucial task, we must have an “evergreen plan” focused on rigorous discourse embedded in our hopes for the entire community. As we grow, we will require caring commitment from each other and vigilance directed toward our noble cause.

We must enact a long-term vision that works for our students, their families, our employees, and our community. We must set aside ego, self-righteousness, selfishness, and irrational worry and create a world for our children and our community members that is welcoming, positive, open, and accepting. These pages define the most essential organizational steps needed to move Preston fearlessly forward in the direction of hope, success, and joy.