

Town Offices Future Options Committee (TOFO)

May 5, 2008 Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order by Fred Szmit at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Fred Szmit, Joe Scrivani, Bayard Tracy, Mary Maxwell, Dutch Walsh, Ray Hutchins, Andrew Auger

Absent: Don Brehm, Peter Mitchell

Guest: Neil Jenness

Minutes of the April 15, 2008 meeting were read and approved.

Neil Jenness, Historical Society-Discuss Historical Merit and Preservation Alliance

Issues and Public Hearings: Neil Jenness gave a report of the building's historical significance and place within the town. Mrs. Jenness stated that the building's history did not require an official historical recording but would more likely need to be considered within the context of the town as a whole. As a local historian her opinion is that it should stay. However, should it be removed the process should be documented with a written record and photographs. She also asked if there was a possibility of the building returning to its original use as a residence. Fred Szmit noted that it was unlikely that the town could sell the building due to difficulties with zoning, water and parking issues. He also expressed doubt as to the town's interest in becoming a landlord and renting the property. Mr. Szmit stated that the state would allow no more than 15 people to use the building at one time otherwise a new water well would need to be drilled. Joe Scrivani inquired if there was any interest in the Historical Society moving into the current town office building. Mrs. Jenness indicated that the Historical Society was content where they were. Mary Maxwell provided the committee with some historical information on the building stating that it was roughly 150 years old and was included on the 1858 map. It was previously owned by the Marsh family and had some distant relation to the Jordan Marsh department store chain. She also stated that other town buildings had similar ages: the Town Hall 1851, current Historical Society building 1939, Post Office 1849 and the Legion building roughly 1850.

Fred Szmit asked what the process of determining the historical significance of the building would entail. Mrs. Jenness said it would start with a description of the building, inquiries with real estate agents and publicizing the process. Dutch Walsh offered that the building should be given a name as it no longer could be known as the Town Office building. He also suggested that a survey of the buildings in town has not been done and inquiries could be made regarding its addition to the state register of historical buildings. Mr. Walsh also suggested polling town residents for their opinion and having an informational meeting open to the public to discuss the options and present historical information. In this way new ideas could be generated and opinions heard in a low cost forum. Other members of the committee agreed that, though some informational meetings lack a robust attendance, it was necessary to hear from and inform residence of the town. Discussion of presenting the issues with the current town office building included: utilizing the town's website, possible photograph of the current site edited to show what it would look like if the building were removed and effective times of the year to have such a presentation. Dutch Walsh offered to contact the school about student

involvement and start gathering information for the meeting. Ray Hutchins agreed to help gather digital photographs of the buildings history. Mary Maxwell suggested creating a display with information about the building to set up in the entrance of the library.

Ray Hutchins asked if consideration had been given to what would happen with the lot should the building be removed. Joe Scrivani stated that there had been discussions of a possible gazebo for public use. Dutch Walsh said that there should at least be a footprint of where the building stood on the spot. It was generally agreed that it should remain a green space.

Renew Salvage/Manning Construction Follow-Up: Joe Scrivani followed up with the estimate from Renew Salvage and Manning Construction. He also stated that these were preliminary figures and that the Select Board would get bids. Fred Szmit asked if the estimated cost deducted the estimated \$6,000.00 of donated material to Renew. Mr. Scrivani stated that it did. It was agreed that the value of the slate roof was underestimated at \$1,000.00 and should be worth significantly more. Mr. Scrivani said that he had made inquiries with members of the town's Highway Department and that the cost of removing the building could be significantly less if the town were to fill the cellar hole itself rather than pay a private contractor to do it. He also advised that the committee investigate costs to repair the building for future use and the cost of moving it if it was sold for a new location for comparison.

Early Childhood Education Option: Dutch Walsh is still investigating the possibility of interest from the school for this option. He stated that the school is currently spending between \$60,000 and \$80,000 to send kids to the Keene district, but that the proposal should come from the interested parties. Fred Szmit reported that he had discussed this option with members of the school board and that, while they remained neutral on the topic, they had concerns with parking and traffic as well as hazardous materials in the building. Bayard Tracy asked if the town would be interested in renting to a business for use as a professional office space. Mr. Szmit suggested that the cost of the renovation could make this option too expensive to be appealing for a private business. Mr. Walsh stated that at \$100 -\$150 per square foot a rough estimate for renovation would be between \$150,000.00 and \$250,000.00.

Pros and Cons of List of Options: The current options under discussion were listed as: Tearing Down and Disposal, Sell and Remove, Continue in Use, Rent for Other Uses and Sell and Leave in Current Location. It was decided that during the next meeting of the committee pros and cons of these options would be discussed.

Next Actions: Presentation/Public Hearing, Slate Roof Value, School Interest and Pros & Cons of Options.

Next Meeting: Monday- May 19th, 7:00 pm at the Historical Society Building

Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Minutes Approved 5/19/2008