

Town Hall Blue Ribbon Committee  
Minutes

Monday, August 17, 2015  
DPW Conference Room, Old Lancaster Road

Vice Chairman Howard Gold called meeting to order the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

In attendance were Vice Chairman, Howard Gold; Susan Asbedian-Ciaffi, Christine Hogan, Bill Johnson; Chris Morely; Sally Hild, Frank Riepe; and Joe Sziabowski. ABSENT: Mike Melnick, Staff in attendance were: Director of Planning and Community Development Jody Kablack, Combined Facilities Director Jim Kelly, and Assistant Planner Jim Kupfer. Also in attendance were Lyn MacLean and Diana Cebra of the Sudbury Historical Commission and Ruth Griesel and Peggy Fredrickson of the Sudbury Historical Society.

Sally Hild presented an overview of the Sudbury Historical Society's proposed plans for repurposing the Loring Parsonage into a History Center and Museum for Sudbury. She noted how the Loring Parsonage project could not only support activities at the Town Hall but serve to bolster tourism and visitation to the historic Town Center which will be made safer and more feasible due to the Town Center Improvements to the roadways and walkways occurring this year.

Next the Committee reviewed Scenario Planning Options. Mr. Johnson asked why town office space was taken off of the Committee's matrix. The consensus was that the committee was moving toward a vision which incorporated auditorium spaces rather than office space. There was concern that costs would make the office scenario's infeasible. Ms. Kablack noted that the BH&A study even showed that there was not enough room in the existing Town Hall building for office space without an addition. Even plans that would utilize shared spaces, as was seen in other towns, may not realistically work for maximum office operations. It is not just a question of square footage but how the office spaces would actually function. The number of 5.7 million was discussed to renovate the Town Hall as is and bring it up to standard. Mr. Johnson's option never had a specific dollar amount assigned and so Mr. Kelly asked Mr. Johnson to provide estimates if he wanted the office scenario to be considered once again. Mr. Morely said that the best way to build office space is new construction rather than shoehorning office space into an existing building. Mr. Johnson disagreed and distributed a handout that he felt addressed the removal of the office space option. Mr. Kelly noted that BH&A discounted using the mezzanine as office space due to high costs. He said that if more concrete costs were known with the office scenario then the committee would discuss at the next meeting.

Mr. Johnson wanted the committee to get some feedback from taxpayers and voters to find out what they want to do. He was not sure that taxpayers would want to spend the money to make a function hall.

Mr. Riepe said that Mr. Johnson is assuming that a structural analysis would support the office space concept but putting a wooden structure inside the Town Hall may not be allowed. Mr. Kelly said that steel columns would be used.

Joe said costs unknown. Joes aid if going to pursue that option need to pursue costs. Real costs.

The consensus on the committee was that if Nixon School was considered a viable option for the School Department then there would be no need for town offices to go into the Town Hall.

Mr. Kelly said he met with an architect that worked on the Nixon addition previously and he will meet with him again. There is a set of plans that are 21 years old, but they may still be sufficient. He said that an engineering team would need to give a high level overview and determine whether the infrastructure was designed to be able to support an addition. He also wants to meet with Superintendent and School Department to get their feedback. An engineering study would cost around \$10,000 so a Capital Planning Article could be put in for town meeting. At the moment the town does not have the right documentation to say yes or no on Nixon.

Ms. Hogan said that assigning a cost would be difficult if it is unknown how much space the School Department needs. To date the assumption has been that 10,000 square feet would be needed. Mr. Sziabowski questioned whether Nixon made the best sense.

Mr. Gold said that moving the school department to Nixon takes some pressure off of doing two large building projects (Fairbanks and Town Hall) at once. One issue could be solved at a time. He thought that people might have a difficult time with large project.

Discussion then led to how present conditions at Town Hall would be affected if restoration had to wait. It was felt that as long as water was kept out and there was enough heat to keep pipes from bursting it could manage a little while longer. Some cautioned that there are some pipes that are wearing out and maintenance is needed. All agreed that the town hall as an asset is not being used properly.

The committee then debated its mission which is to continue the discussion of the BH&A report to see what is the best use. In the end the committee felt that the Nixon concept needs to be further evaluated. The Committee could update the selectmen that Nixon for the schools is the recommendation.

Mr. Kelly said that if it is the sense of the committee that the Town Hall should be preserved only, then the fairbank building is more of a stated need due to its occupants and the roof conditions.

Mr. Riepe felt that the restoration of town hall is more practical if there is an addition onto it.

Mr. Gold then asked the committee whether there was a consensus to move the School Department to Nixon. Many said yes, but the costs would need to be known in order to make it work. It was agreed that Mr. Kelly would speak with the School Department. There was concern that the Nixon addition would take away the urgency for a project at the Town Hall.

Ms. Kablack reminded the Committee that restoring town hall alone could be fully CPA-eligible and there would be no need to go to a ballot.

Ms. MacLean said if the school department were moved to Nixon then some of the parking problems would be alleviated. She noted that there was little parking for the Hosmer House functions now.

It was noted that the Committee would still need to look into an addition at the Town Hall if Nixon is not a viable option.

Ms. Kablack said that Town Staff would work on revising the matrix for the next meeting so that the Committee could discuss and prepare something for presentation to the Selectmen.

The next meeting of the Town Hall Blue Ribbon Committee was scheduled for Monday, September 28, 2015 at the Town Hall. Upon a motion made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.