

Town Hall Blue Ribbon Committee
Minutes

Monday, October 19, 2015
Lower Town Hall Meeting Room, 322 Concord 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; Sally Hild, Chris Morely; Frank Riepe; and Joe Sziabowski. Staff in attendance was Combined Facilities Director Jim Kelly. Also in attendance were Rosemary Harvell; and Tom Travers of the Capital Improvement Advisory Committee.

Mr. Gold provided an overview of decisions made at the September 28. He said that the consensus of most committee members was to keep and renovate the building, and restore the upper level into a meeting room or performance space as was its original use.

Frank Riepe distributed a sketch that he had drawn up which showed the restored building with major functions being two public meeting rooms, one minor and one major, a renovated Town Clerk's office, and updates to the building overall including handicapped access, mechanicals and electricals and bathrooms. The integrity of building envelope would be maintained. The sketches laid out proposed floor plans to show the configurations and circulations within the spaces.

The major change that would accommodate handicapped access would be building a secondary entrance on the northeast corner, in close proximity to where the existing handicapped access shed is located today. A short ramp would run up to the clerk's office where there would be a supplementary set of men's and women's restrooms, a lobby and elevator, stairs to basement, public entrance and desk facing new lobby. The northeast stairwell would be reconfigured. Bathrooms on the first floor would be gutted and reconfigured. Sudbury TV's control room would be moved to another area to maximize restroom space. The southerly entrance to clerk's office now would become an egress door (emergency exitway). On the second floor the wings of the stage would be reconfigured along with the stage house. Ventilation would be taken out to regain floor space. As for the lobby in upper town hall, it could just re-decorated with new lighting, curtains and painting, but its configuration could stay the same. It would be restored to better than the original with more life and color.

Mr. Riepe's sketches also included a plan for the Northeast corner which could be entered from the parking area. Brick treatment was suggested to match the rest of the building. Ms. Hogan asked about the proposed flat roof. Mr. Riepe said that it could change. Mr. Morely added that the main entrance to the Town Hall would most likely become this northeast entrance which would have equal importance as front entrance, handling much of the same traffic and more.

The Committee discussed the roadway that runs between the Grange and Town Hall. Fire access was mentioned but alterations could be made to deter the speeding that occurs today.

Discussion ensued about the proposed elevator plan which has five stops. A variance from the Commission on Disabilities and Architectural Access Boards would be needed to simply restore the balcony without handicapped access. – need a variance from disabilities commission to keep.

The Committee discussed how much extra square footage there might be in the basement when overhauled. Mr. Morely and Mr. Riepe said that there could be options for use there where none exists today. Right now the basement is unfinished and has moisture problems. Bedford's town hall was discussed as an example where a kitchen is included in the basement level. A kitchen with elevator access could be beneficial for building uses. Vaults for the Clerk were discussed.

Given that the Town Clerk, Rosemary Harvell, was present, Mr. Gold asked what Clerk's priorities might be. Ms. Harvell said that functional workspace was essential. For example, the ability to have large tables for working with maps and historic records, election materials, researchers looking for genealogy information, and space for a computer that is not hooked to the Clerk's drives would be ideal if not essential. She said that the current square footage is adequate but not configured well enough.

Jim Kelly estimated that this plan would still cost approximately \$ 5.7 million. He approved of Mr. Riepe's drawings. He said that a renovation could qualify for CPA funding. The cost estimates come from the BH&A plan which outlined renovation as a valid option. However, a next step would be a re-appraisal of cost with the newly defined plan.

Ms. Harvell asked about polling location. It would be ideal to have polling in one location, but the Town Hall would probably not be able to accommodate all three precincts.

Next, Bill Johnson presented his arguments for why the auditorium shouldn't be renovated. He still maintained that offices should be built on the second floor. He said that as a performance space the 2nd floor is not as good as the high school or middle school. He said that renovating the Town Hall does not solve the Town's space needs problems and he felt that the town's space needs could be met with his concept. Mr. Kelly noted that BH&A's study reported that the entire Town Hall has less square footage than is needed to solve the space needs issue. Mr. Johnson said that he was finding room in Town Hall by creating storage space in the attic and he noted that perhaps the Loring Parsonage would have space for storage. His cost estimates were done by Deck House in Acton. There was a good deal of discussion about the Town Hall needed storage for functional work flow and the impracticality of having storage in the attic for first-floor offices.

Mr. Gold agreed that the Town Hall needs to be renovated to accommodate the Town Clerk's needs but he was uncertain whether Town Meeting would approve 5.7 for a lower-priority project. Ms. Asbedian-Ciaffi was also concerned about how to present the project to the community.

Mr. Travers noted that how the project is funded and then how it's used are going to be dependent upon the priorities of the Town's capital needs.

Morely said that the vast majority of the Town Hall work would be CPA eligible.

Mr. Sziabowski said that he doesn't support renovating the building into two large meeting rooms. He said it would be an uphill battle to get people to pay for that.

Mr. Riepe said that the timetable for the project will be dependent upon the Selectmen's priorities. It was felt that the Fairbanks Center is perhaps the next building in line for priority work but that can only

be done if another place is found for the schools. The sense was that the Town Hall project will be done later.

Mr. Kelly then ran through all of the BH&A options and costs. One example was the \$9 million option of creating office space and an addition at Town Hall. In addition to expense, there would be all of the moving of various office space that would need to happen. Or, there is the option of adding on to Nixon for \$ 4 million and Town Hall for \$5.7 million at a diff times for same amount of \$\$ as the Town Hall Office scenario.

Ms. Hogan said that the School Department wants to stay at Fairbanks as long as possible. They have no desire to build new and are looking at costs for leasing space. It was estimated that leasing would cost about \$150,000 per year which would be added to the operating budget.

Mr. Kelly still does not have the final cost estimate for the renovation at Nixon

Mr. Travers said that looking at a leasing option is a smart option given all of the other needs in town.

Mr. Gold said that in the end it is the Town Hall Blue Ribbon Committee's job suggest an alternative solution for the Sudbury Public Schools and that has been done by suggesting an addition at Nixon School.

In terms of next steps the THBR Committee could attend the upcoming Town Forum on November 9. It would offer a way to reach out to public to get a sense of reaction.

Ms. Harvell said she could put an insert into the census to get the word out.

Mr. Travers said that the committee has made progress in the way of a study by determining a great use of the Town Hall for some point in the future. He felt the THBR Committee has fulfilled its mission. He said that the Committee has offered a solution that solves the School Department's problems and Fairbank's space problems and determined that those problems are not going to be solved in the Town Hall. He suggested presenting next steps to the community in terms of what the projects are, when they might be done, what they will cost, and where the funding might come from.

The Committee agreed that the next step was to write its report, allow for response, make the pitch for saving the Town Hall. Then, using Frank's plan, and determine how much of CPA funds could be used and the pros and cons of the plan. Potential programming could be considered. Mr. Morely said that he could write up the list of reasons. Ms. Hild was to note how the Historical Society could use the building to eliminate the expensive addition at the Parsonage.

The Committee would attempt to make a presentation to go before selectmen at their Nov 17 meeting.

The next meeting of the Town Hall Blue Ribbon Committee was scheduled for Tuesday, November 3, 2015 at the Sudbury Town Hall. Upon a motion made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.