

**Town of Richmond  
Town Center and Library Committee  
Minutes – October 28, 2021**

**Present:** Committee Members: Josh Arneson, Christine Werneke, Jeff Forward, Dave Healy, Linda Parent, Amy Wardwell

**Public:** Jay Furr

**I. Welcome & Public Comment:** None

**II. Additions or Deletions to Agenda:** None

**III. Items for Presentation or Discussion**

**a. Create visioning meeting content outline**

We opened by reviewing the draft agenda for the November 18th visioning meeting. We plan to begin that meeting by summarizing what the TC& L Committee has done so far for the Library and Town Center campus. Christine would like to present this as a timeline- which Laurie has drafted and shared. We will then move into communicating the “planning ahead” phase of our work and solicit community input on the various options for the future of the Town Center building.

Much of the meeting became a discussion of how to frame the presentation to the community and what information should be included: keeping in mind that our purpose is to engage the community in the visioning process and that we want to make sure we are hearing from as many constituent groups as possible. The committee wants to make sure the community is active in the 11/18 meeting and has the opportunity to offer ideas not just be presented to.

Jeff asked a process question- Had people reviewed the draft document he shared last meeting that compared renovation v. new build costs? Jeff feels strongly that a question on cost will likely come up and we should be able to speak to the elements of comparison. He wants to be prepared to respond to questions and present a very general estimate for the basic difference between these two options.

A lengthy discussion ensued about whether it was useful at this point in the process to talk with the community about the cost of renovation v. new construction since we haven’t completed the visioning process. Christine thought we might wait on this point since we can’t fully cost something out until we know what kind of space the community wants. We also want to avoid the impression that the committee has already made a decision on this point before consulting the community.

Jeff wants to provide a general comparison for people to consider and would need some time to consult with Breadloaf to work up an estimate for this. We discussed how the community has made decisions in the past on town building projects- this question will come up and we should be prepared to address it in broad terms. We also must make clear to the public that these two options are comparable- renovating the current building is going to give us a “new building” and can be akin to building a brand new structure. We decided that we should be prepared to speak

generally to this comparison IF it comes up but we want to focus primarily on gathering community input on their vision for a Town Center campus.

The discussion moved us to look at Section IV of Christine's proposed agenda, which is a list of criteria to consider when deciding on whether to renovate or build new. We want to make sure cost is not the only factor driving this decision. We thought the community could be asked if any new criteria should be added to the list the committee came up with and that they should prioritize said list.

Several clarifying questions came up about renovation. Jay asked about the basement as usable space and Linda asked if it were possible to have a display of what a renovation to the building would look like to show people at this meeting. She also wondered if we could have an addition built that would offset the loss of the basement space.

Again we came back to the discussion of cost comparisons. Jeff reminded us cost has historically been a major driver of bond votes in the past. Linda reminded us that the cost of temporary work space for current tenants could be a huge addition to any consideration of a tear down or significant renovation.

We moved on to look at Section V of the draft agenda and the fact that this is the one of the most important conversations to have with the community at this point: When we say we want to create a space that "meets the needs of the staff and the public" What do we actually mean? What are the needs the public wants to have met?

We have a draft list of some possible "needs" and added some additional items to this list. We want to get the community to add their input to this list. We will need to decide on a process for collecting the information and opinions we gather at this meeting- Zoom poll? Paper?

Jeff cautioned us to learn from the experience of the Public Safety building proposal and solicit a wish list, BUT to be aware that down the road we will have to "trim our list" and prioritize. He also advocated for us to include information for the community on our anticipated next steps. Some of those steps might include:

- Examples of how and when we will present to other constituent groups not at this meeting.
- Hiring an architect to help us synthesize the community vision into an actual Town Center building.

We thought it would be useful to have some visuals (before and after pictures of other Town Center projects (Hartford, Waterbury, Shelburne, Middlebury) to give the community some "sparks" for thinking about our own village. We could present some slides that show "Here is what other VT towns have done with their Town Center buildings- as we think about our own what do we want? What could be possible for Richmond?"

Christine has checked with MMCTV and they have this on their calendar to broadcast the November 18th meeting.

Before our next meeting we will try to accomplish the following tasks:

- Amy will find before and after pictures of the Town Halls for a presentation
- Jeff will contact JJ to ask if he'll attend the meeting to give some input on reno v. new if it comes up
- Christine will format Laurie's work on the Timeline
- David will do the summary of past/present survey responses
- Josh will send Amy a Zoom link to include in the FPF blurb. There will be a weekly post on FPF between now and 11/18

The next committee meeting will be on November 11th at 7:00 PM.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.