

Town Center and Library Committee
Minutes March 7, 2024
7-8:30 p.m.

Present: Josh Arneson, Laurie Dana, Jeff Forward, Dave Healy, Jake Marin, Amy Wardwell

Community Members: In person: Andrew Bessette, Mike Storrs, Jay Furr, Dolores Carter, Tom Lisle + 2 men. Online: Cara Labounty, Irwin Langer, Adam Wood, Judy Bush, Steve Bower, Ian Bender, Steve Bowen, Kyle Werner, Brooke Machia, Lee Diamond, Patty Bruschette, Bard Hill, Lisa Miller, Emily Mitchell, + screen names SH, Loldr.

I. Welcome and Public Comment – None

II. Additions or Deletions to Agenda

Jeff Forward stated that this would be his last meeting as both chair and a member of the Committee as he was resigning. The Committee members thanked him for his leadership over the past several years and his commitment of time and energy to the project.

III. Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

a) **Review of results of bond vote and discussion of next steps,**

Jeff invited public comment and Mike Storrs started with a very thoughtful presentation which led to a lot of great input from members of the public & Selectboard in attendance.

Members of the community had these comments for the Committee:

- **Mike Storrs** stated he feels there is more work to be done by the Committee to look at what is really needed, what we really should do, and what can be dropped. Also look at how the project could be phased. He identified flood mitigation, finding a home for Radiate Art Space, moving the mechanical room as “must do.” His “really should do” list included sprinklers, ventilation (asked whether we could just clean). His suggestions for not doing or doing differently included keep existing heating but move to 1st floor, replacing windows a few at a time. Some of his comments dealt with the cost of achieving energy efficiency and whether we know what new system would save. Dropping the stairwell, doing the post office as a separate project. Mike acknowledged that he doesn’t understand all of the complexities.
- **Dolores Carter** felt that we should drop the site plan and that the overall project was simply too expensive.
- **Andrew Bessette** also said that the timing of the vote was bad with the recent reappraisal and uncertainty over education taxes. He would also like to see the Police Department on the first floor and asked whether moving Police Department to a new building at the Fire Station would be more cost-effective.
- **Tom Lisle** offered his assistance.
- **Steve Bower** thanked the committee and liked the desire to save the building that is important to having a village center.
- **Cara Labouty** commented that she would favor phasing the repairs. She mentioned that several years ago there was a plan to replace a few windows a year.
- **??** a community member asked if we had explored geothermal solutions to HVAC
- **There was general agreement** that there is a need for the project but many comments about more communication and clarification needed about specific parts of the work including energy efficiency and flood mitigation. There was also agreement that, while much of the project is needed, the cost was too high and the timing for the bond vote was terrible due to factors beyond our control.

Members of the Committee then talked about what the next steps would be.

- **Dave** feels that we should still be thinking about finishing up library projects.
- **Laurie** commented that the Town still needs to have a better plan for ongoing maintenance of all their buildings and achieving cost savings by combining contracts and projects.

- **Jeff** expressed the consensus of the Committee that we have fulfilled our original charge from the Selectboard to decide the future of the Town Center Campus and buildings.
- The committee feels that the Selectboard needs to determine the next steps for this project and establish a new charter for the Committee.
- **Laurie** observed that we have some momentum around issue and it would be good to build on that, not just let it drop.
- **Jake** observed that membership on the committee could/should change.

Selectboard members in attendance agreed that they need to discuss the next steps.

- **Jay** talked about his concerns about health & safety for our employees in terms of air quality, fire protection and that flood mitigation was also important to him. He worries that an unhealthy workspace could cost the town money in terms of legal liability and/or being able to hire employees.
- **Adam** said it was clear that the committee needs a specific and achievable mandate
- **Bard** felt like we needed to “reset the founding principles” and look at phasing the project.
- **Lisa** feels that this is an important legacy project but there are more ideas coming from the public that could be kicked around.

b) Approve minutes from 2/8/24 meeting

Amy moved to approve the minutes from the 2/8/24 meeting, Jake seconded and the motion was approved.

No further meetings of the Town Center & Library Buildings Committee will take place. However, the Selectboard has scheduled a discussion of next steps for their meeting on March 18 and invited Committee members to attend and provide input.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.