

**Town Center and Library Committee  
Minutes June 1, 2023**

**Present:** Josh Arneson, Laurie Dana, Jeff Forward, Dave Healy

**Black River:** Andrew McCullough John Hemmelgarn,

**Community Member:** Karen Yaggy. Richmond Historical Society

**I. Welcome and Public Comment - None**

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

**III. Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present**

**a) Review of Selectboard meeting regarding Town Center plans**

Both Committee members and Black River staff felt that the Selectboard presentation of the work to date and proposed Site Plan and Building Space program went well. John said that the Selectboard's consensus that the plans and the Committee's decisions thus far are moving in the right direction was what they needed to proceed with their work.

**b) Discuss structural analysis proposal from Engineering Ventures**

As the next step in exploring whether solar panels are feasible on the Town Center historic roof and/or Post Office addition, Engineering Ventures submitted an estimate to do a structural analysis of each roof (\$6,000 for the Post Office addition and \$7,500 for the historic roof). It is clear that modifications were made to the historic section of the roof at some point and that they do not appear to be "standard" modifications, more research is needed. After a lot of discussion, the committee decided to request funding for **only** the analysis of the historic section of the building. The rationale was threefold:

- i) To determine if solar on the historic section is even possible
- ii) Due diligence—if there are structural issues that should be addressed due to soundness of the structure and safety, now would be the time to understand this and correct if needed.
- iii) In terms of solar performance, the historic section would provide the biggest bang for the buck as the orientation and size of this section is more appropriate.

Laurie moved to recommend that the Selectboard approve \$7,500 from the Town Center fund to pay for a Structural Analysis of the roof of the historic portion of the Town Center building by Engineering Ventures. Dave seconded the motion was seconded and it was approved unanimously.

If it should become necessary, we can add on the post office roof exploration at a later date.

**c) Ongoing discussion of design issues with architects**

Two design issues were highlighted that will need to be resolved as Black River moves forward with their work.

**Windows** -- John posed a basic question about the committee's commitment to "historic preservation" in the building renovation--particularly in relation to the windows. He observed that Historic Preservation grants are often small and limit you to restoration of the windows and due to the cost and other concerns about restoration, these grants might not be worth pursuing. After a lot of discussion around clarifying what restoration vs. replacement looks like, the following ideas were raised.

- Two windows (on the stairwell) were actually restored by Sarah Fishburne. The plan was to evaluate their performance, but that was not done.
- Restoration of windows would leave all of the windows as single pane glass, necessitating storm windows, either exterior or interior. Exterior storm windows mean that windows are non-operable and cleaning could be a maintenance issue. Interior storm windows would need to be removed for operability in the summer—and maintenance and storage become issues.
- Replacement windows with double pane glass would be chosen to maintain the look of the historic windows (same size, mullion pattern, etc.). In fact, they could be made to look nicer and would be much easier to maintain. The weight pockets in the existing window frames would be filled for energy conservation.
- John asked about condition of the sills and frames for all of the windows and Jeff said they were not in good condition.
- Jeff asked Karen Yaggy, from the Historical Society, whether she felt that members would object to replacement windows—she did not know but will try to find a way to assess that.
- Laurie said that most important to her was that the Town Staff and tenants have a comfortable work space and that the energy usage of the building is kept low for the future.
- Ease of maintenance was also expressed as a concern.

John asked about the building's status as a historic building and whether there would be any state regulations that govern a renovation. Laurie said she will forward the letter from Devin Coleman as to the status of the building in the State registry.

**Post Office-** Andrew also asked about whether the Committee was interested in changing the design of the exterior of the post office. The Committee expressed an interest in hearing about anything that Black River felt might be an improvement to the design of the entrance and loading dock sides of the building.

**d) Review of schedule to warn a bond vote**

Laurie provided a list of the meeting schedules for the Selectboard and the Town Center Committee through the end of 2023. Basically, if we were to schedule a bond vote in November, we would need to have the cost estimate and develop the Bond Vote language by the first of September in order to follow all of the legal steps needed.

**e) Discussion of next steps**

The committee discussed other points at which the Selectboard would need to be involved in decisions and agreed that, once we have more firm designs and a cost estimate, they would need to be engaged in the discussion around feasibility of bonding for that amount. They will need to approve the final Bond Vote language as well.

The committee decided that it might be time to do some more community outreach to groups using the materials presented at the Selectboard meeting. It would be good to seek out opportunities to educate the community about the status of the project, plans and schedule. Karen will look into a joint Historical Society & Senior Center meeting of their members as one such outreach effort. The committee also discussed having a table at the July 4<sup>th</sup> festivities at Volunteers' Green. This will be on the agenda for the June 15<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**f) Update on funders conference organizing call with Preservation Trust**

Laurie forwarded the committee the invitation drafted by Ben Doyle of Preservation Trust of Vermont to a “Funder’s Conference” on the Richmond Town Center project to be held on Thursday, June 27 at 10 a.m. The list of invitees was developed during a conference call with Ben, Jeff, Laurie and Diane Meyerhoff, our grant consultant. Invitees include both historic preservation organizations; energy organizations; and other federal, state and local funding organizations.

**g) Approval of May 11, 2023 meeting minutes**

Dave moved to approve the minutes from 5/11 and Josh seconded. Approved unanimously.

**h) Other business**

**i) Items for next agenda – June 15 meeting**

Discussion of a booth at July 4<sup>th</sup>

Black River report on meeting with mechanical and electrical

Post Office design suggestions (possibly)

**8:00 PM IV. Adjourn**