

**Town Center and Library Committee**  
**Minutes September 28, 2023**  
**7-8:30 p.m.**

**Present:** Josh Arneson, Laurie Dana, Jeff Forward, Jake Marin

**Black River:** Andrew McCullough

**Community Members:** Lisa Miller, Martha Nye

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

**II. Additions or Deletions to Agenda**

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

a) **Architect to review cost reduction options**

Andrew started his presentation on with a high-level look at various cost reduction options which include:

- Break out some hard costs that could be moved to different funding sources (department budgets, fundraising, grants, etc.)
- Phasing the project – doing part of the project now and then other segments as a different contract at a later time
- Removing scope of work altogether

We are already assuming that the solar panels and story pavilion have been removed as projects that could be done later and/or with different funding sources than a bond. These changes reduce the total project cost to \$9,841,602.

We looked at various options for changes to the Scope of Work. One example is the option that Laurie queried at the last meeting -- removing the optional site work. If we removed the “optional” sitework (paving, parking, pedestrian access, landscaping) for \$537,955 and the Library access work (moving the ADA ramp, stairs, etc.) for \$104,220 that brings the total project cost to \$8,890,402 or about 10% less than the original bid.

The more scope of work is removed the less the cost and Andrew & John worked on 6-7 various scenarios. We briefly reviewed the options and cost reductions and agreed that we need to examine them more closely and discuss at our next meeting. The consensus was that some of the options were non-starters even though they significantly reduce the cost—as they also sacrifice most of the benefits of doing the project.

There was discussion about the fact that these “broken out” costs might be useful in applying for specific grant funding, for example potential Library grants, ADA Accessibility grants or grants for energy efficiency improvements and/or solar.

Lisa observed that people feel strongly about certain aspects of the project such as the Post Office or the Historic Building and it is important to be able to present “subtotals” of the costs of the project that address specific aspects. Jeff and Laurie added the Life/Safety (new stairwell, sprinklers, fire alarms, security) aspects for our town employees. Energy efficiency is another category of interest for community members.

There was also discussion about what a new building would actually cost and Andrew agreed that we could state a brand new building would add \$2-3 million to the cost and that does not include the costs of acquiring, surveying and permitting a new site OR destroying the existing building—which the committee definitely does NOT support as it would be environmentally disastrous.

**b) Public outreach planning**

The discussion briefly moved on to groups, invitations, scheduling and content for holding public meetings to gather input and reactions to the proposed project.

Laurie had developed a list of potential groups to invite to meetings and discussed having at least one weekend meeting as weekday evenings could be difficult for elders and those with families to attend at the end of a long day.

There was a lot of discussion about whether to present more than one option (best, better, and good, for example) or whether to go with what we feel is the best project and the using the information Andrew & John presented on how changing the scope of work changes the costs if questions come up about reducing the scope of work.

Lisa commented that the framing of the project, particularly the need for the project, is important. She thinks it is important to show that doing nothing is not an option. She used words like unsafe, dysfunctional, awkward. Committee comments were also added resiliency to future flood events and energy costs.

There were also comments about presenting what we didn't do, that we considered and eliminated some more expensive options that would have involved additions, for example.

This topic should be the bulk of the next committee meeting. Laurie offered to start a draft of an invitation for review.

Andrew said that they will develop an elevation but need to know what option(s) we will be presenting before they do this work.

**c) Application for Municipal Energy Resilience Program**

Jeff said that the MERP grant program has a maximum amount of \$500,000 and that, at the moment, he is not sure that Richmond would qualify as we are not an "energy burdened" community. There is a large amount of money and it is worth taking the step of applying to have the required Energy Analysis, which would not cost the town anything. Jeff will ask for approval to do this at the next Selectboard meeting. He also said that the Vermont League of Cities and Towns has some helpful information on other grant funds.

**d) Update on remaining Library building work**

Tabled, waiting for more information from Jay Labare

**e) Consideration of approval of minutes from 8/31/23 & 9/14**

Laurie moved to approve the minutes from 8/31 and 9/14 and Jake seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**f) Other business - None**

**g) Items for next agenda – October 12 meeting**

Planning for public meetings

Update on Library building work left to do

**8:30 PM IV. Adjourn**