

**Town of Richmond
Town Center and Library Committee
Minutes November 17, 2022**

Present: Josh Arneson, Laurie Dana, Jeff Forward, Dave Healy, Amy Wardwell, Christine Werneke

For Black River Design: John Hemmelgarn and Andrew McCullough

- I. Welcome & Public Comment** - None
- II. Additions or Deletions to Agenda** -- None
- III. Items for Presentation or Discussion**

a) Creation of rubric for evaluating design options

Christine reviewed the draft rubric that she developed based on the major themes from all of the input community visioning sessions. There was a lot of discussion about items on the rubric including a clarification around the meaning of “Energy Efficiency” – including a suggestion that the title of this should be “Natural Environment” in order to distinguish it from Energy Efficiency.

The uses of the rubric were also discussed and included applying them to the 6 basic floor plans presented by Black River at the last meeting. The Committee acknowledged that some of the rubric items could be used to evaluate the 6 plans and some of the rubric items better apply to specific interior design proposals.

The Committee achieved some clarity around the fact that the differences in the 6 initial floor plans presented, are rooted in 4 decisions that need to be made before moving forward. The committee agreed that some or all of these decisions require review and approval from the Selectboard. They are:

- **Post Office** – does the Post Office stay in this location (regardless of whether we renovate or build new?)
- **Police Department** – Does the Police Department need space in a renovated or new building and, if so, how much space. How far into the “wish list” of additional things do we go?
- **Town Offices** – Do they need to be all on one floor or can some be moved to third floor? There are related questions about how much square footage to devote to meeting space.
- **Tenants** – How many, who and how much square footage do we allot to current or future tenants?

b) Discussion about next steps in resolving the renovate vs. new building options

In order to help the committee to address and resolve the question of whether to renovate the existing building or to build a new building on an unidentified piece of property, John and Andrew prepared some very rough cost estimates comparing renovation vs. new building.

The variation in costs showed that a new building would cost more than renovating and could cost as much as \$4 million more. They also provided an estimate of the difference between renovating the existing building “as is” and a proposed addition that would give the Police Department more of it’s “wish list” and some more tenant or meeting space upstairs. That difference was about \$1.2 million.

The increased cost for a new building includes items that would not be needed to renovate the existing building (additional permitting, surveying, site preparation, foundations, potentially purchasing property. They also observed that the existing building appears to be structurally sound.

They also observed if a new building is built, the town still has the responsibility for either leasing or selling the existing building as it is not a building they would recommend taking down. If the town leased the building, would they still be responsible for renovations?

A question did come up about whether an addition to the existing building is allowed under Richmond's Zoning rules when the building is partially in a flood plain. Jeff & Josh will check with the town Zoning Administrator on this to clarify.

- **Selectboard Presentation** – The committee agreed that we need to involve the Selectboard in the resolution of the questions relating to the Post Office, Police Department, Town Offices, and Tenants (outlined above) as well as the decision about renovate vs. new build (using the draft cost estimates). These items need to be presented to the Selectboard for discussion and decisions it would also be a forum for townspeople to weigh in. The primary agenda item for the Dec. 1 meeting will be development of a presentation to the Selectboard for a December meeting.

c) Minutes of the Nov. 3 meeting

Minutes from 11/3/22 meeting were approved.

- d) Other Business** – Jeff observed that Town Reports are due in late December or early January and the Committee should have a report. Laurie mentioned that the Selectboard presentation and any decisions made at that time could be the basis for the report.

e) Items for next agenda

- Information for Town Report
- Presentation to Selectboard

The next meeting of the Committee will be December 1, 2022 and will be a hybrid meeting. John and Andrew may attend virtually.