

**Town of Richmond
Town Center and Library Committee
Minutes – September 15, 2022**

Present: Josh Arneson, Jeff Forward, Laurie Dana, Linda Parent, 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) initial meeting and discussion with Black River Design

The committee welcomed John and Andrew from Black River Design who will be working with us on the Town Center project. They presented a draft schedule for our work together which outlined both a timeline and defined the different phases of work to get to a potential bond vote to fund a final project.

The draft schedule presented three timeline options:

1. Work toward a bond vote in March of 2023
2. Work toward a bond vote around May of 2023*
3. Work toward a bond vote around November of 2023*

*note both of these would be a vote only on the bond as there are no local, state or federal elections at this time.

The consensus of the committee is that option 1, with a bond vote in March of 2023, is not realistic giving the amount of work that is needed.

John also reviewed how they define the 4 phases of the work needed:

- **Phase 1** – site investigation and development of space needs, facilities assessment reports, conceptual feasibility studies; looking at options related to renovation vs. new construction
- **Phase 2** – Schematic design of initial project scope—the timeline for this may vary depending on decisions made in Phase I.
- **Phase 3** – Cost estimating—development of SC pricing set and establishing initial project budget.
- **Phase 4** – Public input, funding development and bond vote period.

In reviewing the phases, there was discussion about points where a public presentation and/or gathering public input might be important, for example, around the decision on new building vs. renovation of existing building. A presentation of an initial design and rough cost estimate might help build public support. The committee feels that it would be good to have material for a presentation on the project at March 2023 town meeting. Christine suggested that the timeline for phase 1 be adjusted to complete before town meeting, that would provide a good basis for a presentation on the project status and future steps.

John noted that if the decision in Phase 1 is for a new building, that could lengthen the process as any new site(s) would need to be evaluated and costs could vary widely depending on the site. He also noted that it is important to remember that if a new site were chosen, the Town would still have to do something with the existing building and that it would still have the same problems it has now.

The committee also discussed the need to identify the points at which committee recommendations need to be presented to the Selectboard for their approval. Again, for example, the recommendation for renovation vs. new build is one such decision that the Selectboard would need to approve.

The discussion then turned to work that will take place during Phase 1. John & Andrew, with others of their team, did a site visit of the building to get a sense of space, structure, etc. They plan to talk

with Town Employees, including the Police, to start to understand the needs of the various departments now, and into the future.

They also plan to talk with the current tenants of the building (Post Office, MMCTV, Historical Society, Community Senior Center and Radiate Art Space). Christine and John had a conversation about the process and that their interviews will ask employees and tenants about “must haves,” “nice to haves (and perhaps needed in the future) and then “wants and wishes.” Laurie expressed concern about accommodating the “wish lists” of current tenants—are we assuming all of the tenants are “coming with” the Town Center building if we build new, for example. Jeff observed that we need to keep in mind that the current tenants may not be the same list of tenants in 20+ years as things change. John asked if there were other potential tenants that are not in the building that we might want to consider. Laurie will look back at the list of those we spoke with as we invited new tenants.

John mentioned that a key piece of information for us, staff and tenants and the larger community to think about is *what community needs are not being met by this building or by other town-owned or available spaces*. Examples include the various meeting spaces in the library and the existing Town Center—are there other meeting space needs or configurations? How often are all of the current spaces booked—Laurie will ask Rebecca about library spaces pre-Covid. Looking at how spaces can be shared to maximize their use is important.

The discussion moved on to developing a list for John & Andrew of others to interview. They have been given the compiled results of the group meetings the committee has conducted but asked if we could provide the list of specific groups that were invited to each meeting. Jeff and Laurie will do a Zoom call with Andrew to provide that information.

There was some discussion around how to get a sense of the Police Dept. needs since we have an interim chief and are not operating with a full staff. In addition, there are discussions around shared policing with Hinesburg. John feels that they have some experience in this area. Josh confirmed that the town has budgeted for 4 officers and a chief. More discussion will need to take place around this issue.

There was also some discussion around the needs of the Post Office and whether the space is too large for their needs. That will need to be explored.

Jeff clarified the usual meeting schedule for the Town Center Committee (the Thursday before each regularly scheduled Selectboard meeting which are the 1st and 3rd Mondays). John feels that is going to work for them and they may attend some of the meetings via Zoom as well

b) Field Trip to see the Hartford Town Hall

Jeff has scheduled a field trip to look at the Hartford Town Hall building which is a similar building to our Town Center and was renovated a few years ago. The field trip is on Wednesday, Sept. 28 at 11 am

c) Status of Library and Town Center work

Jeff talked with Jay about the work at the Library and Town Center buildings with Opus which is being held up a little by the state building permit. Laurie sat in on the status call and is working with Jay and Rebecca on the schedule of the work in the Library building. Opus knows that there will not be a working elevator to the Mezzanine for that work.

d) Minutes of the Sept. 1 meeting -- approved

The next meeting of the Committee with Black River Design staff will be September 29 from 7-8:30 p.m. and we will look at a revised draft schedule and get a status report on the interview process.