

Town Hall Blue Ribbon Committee
Minutes

Tuesday, June 16, 2015

Department of Public Works Conference Room, 275 Old Lancaster Road

In attendance were Chairman, Mike Melnick; Susan Asbedian-Ciaffi; Howard Gold; Christine Hogan; Bill Johnson; Chris Morely; Sally Purrington Hild; Frank Riepe; and Joe Sziabowski. Staff in attendance were: Jody Kablack and Jim Kelly. Also in attendance were Selectman Susan Iuliano and Peggy Fredrickson from the Sudbury Historical Society.

Chairman Mike Melnick called meeting to order the meeting at 7:00 p.m. He asked if there were any changes to the minutes from the last meeting. There being none the minutes were unanimously approved.

Bill Johnson gave a brief presentation on a memo he had written dated May 19, 2015 with recommendations on approaches that included a possible gas-driven HVAC system with an electric generator so that the Town Hall could serve as an emergency shelter. Mr. Melnick said that option was looked into for the police station and deemed not possible.

Mr. Johnson then suggested that the office space on the second floor could be built with post and beam construction similar to Ashland's Town Hall. The second floor mezzanine option would address seismic force issues. Mr. Melnick suggested that the 2nd floor windows might be too low for that plan. Mr. Kelly suggested that the windows might be split and therefore a consideration. A discussion of current building code requirements ensued.

Next the committee presented their findings from visits to various Town Halls, including Acton, Ashland, Lincoln, Westborough, Westford, and Weston.

Mr. Johnson visited Ashland and described their recent renovations. He then compared it to Sudbury. He showed photos of the old Sudbury Common before 1930. He said that the Historical Commission does not want the view from the Hosmer House to change and would prefer the brick building, columns, and windows to stay the same. He said that Sudbury's town hall is taller and bigger than Ashland but the \$4 million renovations are close to what could be considered for Sudbury. Ashland's town hall had a stage area preserved the stage on 2nd floor. He suggested that records be stored in the attic.

Ms. Kablack noted that there was not a large meeting room in Ashland's town hall but rather a meeting room that seats 60. Sudbury needs to consider a space for its elections. Mr. Kelly said that a 60-seat room could accommodate most Selectmen's meetings.

Mr. Riepe reported on the Westford Town Hall which was built in 1870 and recently renovated and expanded in 2010 for between \$4 to \$5 million. The Town Hall has a meeting room upstairs and office space below. A hallway runs down the center of the office space and various departments have counters and offices. There is good public access with everything organized simply and all together. Saved were original features like a main staircase which does not meet code. The building is situated in the town center and is adjacent to the police and fire departments.

Mr. Riepe also reported on the Acton Town Hall which is being renovated. It was built in the late 1800s. The town hall is next to the library. Across the common is fire department. The main meeting room has been preserved. There are two low wing additions at the street level. The front door is locked and is not accessible. The second floor meeting room has a balcony and the upper lobby has twin staircases. There was no stage and it may or may not have had one. The building has three floors. The functional entrance is in the rear of the building. There was an addition to the rear of the building with an elevator and all floors line up. They did not match the windows in the addition to the older windows in the main section during the renovation.

Ms. Hogan and Ms. Asbedian-Ciaffi reported on Weston's town hall (c. 1917) which originally had columns like Sudbury. The building has a connector, a cupola, and a 2001 addition. The building was always used for office space. There was an auditorium without a stage, but Ms. Hogan and Ms. Ciaffi thought that Sudbury's second floor could be used in the same way for selectmen's meetings. They felt that Sudbury's Town Hall appears to have the same depth and tall windows. They suggested that the downstairs meeting room could be converted into office space. Overall their vision would include offices on the first floor and a second floor meeting space with an elevator. Elections could be held in the second floor meeting room. An addition could go on the back where the parking area is now. Ms. Hogan suggested a cell tower as a possibility for the cupola.

Mr. Morely and Ms. Hild reported on Westborough which was entirely under construction so they could not tour the interior. The plans accommodate office space below, a meeting room on the second floor and they have a new rear entrance with an elevator and front entrance with a ramp to accommodate persons with disabilities. There is not a lot of parking except at neighboring businesses and limited street parking. Other town offices and the police station are across the street in a large annex building that was a renovated school building. The library, with at least one addition, is next door to that annex.

Mr. Gold toured Lincoln's municipal buildings. What is used today as the town hall was at one time a school. There was a recent \$7 million renovation which completely altered the building creating an open plan space. While there was beautiful brick work on the exterior, there was little other character in the complete rehab. Meeting space was on the first floor. Lincoln also has Bemis Hall, their 2nd town hall, which is more traditional as a town hall building but appeared to house smaller town departments. There was street parking. No money is being put into this building now. It has a split staircase, large meeting room with a stage and balcony. Mr. Gold described it as a gorgeous space to accommodate the town's speaker series which is apparently a popular program in Lincoln. The space is also rented out for gatherings.

Discussion then focused on Sudbury's second floor as a meeting space, and the entire town hall serving as a community gathering place. A few committee members suggested putting some town offices on the first floor.

Mr. Sziabowski returned the discussion to Ashland and its comparison to Sudbury. He noted that Ashland's town hall is smaller, but has three stories. The auditorium is different and the entire treatment of smaller meeting space and office space in the old auditorium is unique with preserved features of the old town hall built in such as a stained glass, a jail cell, vault door, half walls, and the preserved proscenium from the stage. One floor is below grade. The front of the building faces main street but it is not in the town center. There are newer replacement windows throughout and the asymmetry of windows was fixed up during renovations. The site does have different levels.

Committee members questioned how much of the old building needs to be up to code if a new addition is simply attached via a connector. Mr. Kelly was going to look into that answer.

Next the group looked at Town Hall vision statements that were submitted. As only three were submitted the groups were asked to submit more for the next meeting.

Mr. Melnick reminded the committee that the task is also to address space needs in community, namely the school administration location. He noted that the Bargmann Hendrie & Archetype, Inc. study did not include preserving any of the original meeting rooms but rather, it did include a big addition in the back. Major issues that need to be factored in are the need for a Selectmen's meeting room, a place to vote, and the overall building systems.

Ms. Kablack reminded the committee that its mission statement tasks the group with determining the pros and cons of the options presented in the BH+A study.

Mr. Kelly presented the following as options:

- 1) Do nothing.
- 2) Determine immediate needs and capital impact. Preserve the building so it does not further deteriorate.
- 3) Create accessibility and bring it back to its original use as a meeting hall.
- 4) Move SPS into Town Hall with an addition and renovation.
- 5) Move Flynn departments into Town Hall and reconfigure the building.
- 6) Tear Down the building and build a new office building.
- 7) Or maybe there are other options not yet identified.

Mr. Johnson said that the Sudbury Savoyards use the high school and Curtis for performance spaces so performance space may not be needed in town hall.

Mr. Riepe said that he feels that the basic function of a town hall building is that it is essential to civic life as a central building where people come together to run the town. Others felt that if the building creates the public function then people will discover it and be creative about how it is used.

The committee agreed that doing nothing is not really an option, capital improvements really only offer a band aid and could cost \$1.5 million. Mr. Kelly simply reminded people that office space is needed in town and if the building is torn down then the cost of building new office space could be less expensive. He did not think that would be a choice supported by the town, however.

Ms. Kablack offered to make a spreadsheet to help organize the options and the committee would fill it in at the next meeting. Mr. Kelly said that the drivers of the project are the space needs as outlined in the Town Hall report so he encouraged the committee to read the BH+A report for the next meeting.

The next meeting of the Town Hall Blue Ribbon Committee was scheduled for Monday, June 29, 2015 at the Goodnow Library. Upon a motion made and seconded, the meeting was to adjourn at 9:10 p.m.