

Town Hall Blue Ribbon Committee
Minutes

Monday, September 28, 2015
Lower Town Hall Meeting Room, 322 Concord Road

In attendance were Vice Chairman, Howard Gold; Susan Asbedian-Ciaffi; Christine Hogan; Bill Johnson; Sally Hild, Chris Morely; Frank Riepe; and Joe Sziabowski. Staff in attendance were: Director of Planning and Community Development Jody Kablack, Combined Facilities Director Jim Kelly, and Assistant Planner Jim Kupfer. Also in attendance was Stewart Hoover of the Sudbury Historical Society.

Vice Chairman Howard Gold called meeting to order the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Bill Johnson said that if a renovation at Nixon School was ok then he would prefer to keep the Town Hall as is. He said that the Historical Commission was fine with that plan. However, if the Nixon plan is infeasible then the Commission would prefer the option that has town staff moving from the Flynn Building to the Town Hall and an addition onto the building. He said that Mr. Kelly had asked for more analysis on costs and space at the last meeting and Mr. Johnson shared some handouts. He said that his ideas were based on page 65 of the BH&A Town Hall Space Needs Study which noted that 20,000 sf of space was needed for offices. He showed a 3-dimensional model that he had made of the structure which he said found 2,500 sf of attic space storage. He thought that there could be a 2-story structure built in the existing 2nd floor and attic. Mr. Kelly felt that the area of the 2nd floor is included in the BH&A space needs study and was not certain that there was additional room unaccounted for. There was concern expressed from the Committee that there would not be adequate storage in the Town Hall if filled with offices. Mr. Johnson then said that documents could be stored in the yet-to-be-built Loring Parsonage barn addition. Ms. Hild said that the Sudbury Historical Society may not be able to build that barn addition due to lack of funding and ultimately lack of necessity depending upon whether the Town Hall's meeting facilities could accommodate the Historical Society's programming needs.

Mr. Gold said that the THBR Committee was charged with looking at all of the impending space needs for the town which include the Fairbanks, Loring Parsonage, and Town Hall buildings. He said that it is clear that this committee does not want to knock down the Town Hall. Knocking it down does not solve any space needs problems. Therefore the issue to be determined is whether the town would be willing to fund a major renovation that would bring the building back to its existing use. He wondered whether that plan would be compelling. Mr. Gold felt that the committee agreed that the Town Clerk's Office is not worthy of the town. It is in poor shape and not functional. He wondered whether the Clerk's Office could be moved into the downstairs meeting area with a better entrance. Then the meeting space on the second floor could be updated.

Mr. Morely was unsure whether accessibility would be problematic with that scenario. Mr. Sziabowski concurred.

Mr. Kelly noted that Town Hall would become a restoration project. If the proposed addition at Nixon works out then planning for Town Hall would become secondary to the Fairbanks center project. He thought perhaps restoration could be done in phases.

Mr. Gold said that the Town Clerk's Office should be used as the selling point for restoration as he felt that there was perhaps nothing of importance other than the Town Clerk's office here.

Mr. Riepe said that on the contrary there are a lot of uses here. An analysis obtained by the Town's Office of Information Technology of how often the meeting room was booked showed that. Town Committees and other town groups use the space all the time. Ms. Hild said that with a proper space then more uses will be found if marketed properly.

A discussion about voting space needs then ensued.

The Committee then agreed that they were not in favor of tearing down the Town Hall. All agreed that renovating the Town Clerk's office was a priority. It was felt strongly that CPA funds could be utilized.

Ms. Kablack suggested that an interim report be given to the Selectmen so that the Committee could get feedback based on options.

Mr. Sziabowski said that the built fabric of a town does speak to a town's history. The Town Hall is and should be a working monument to the town. However, he doesn't feel that just preserving the building would be compelling enough. It needs to be made more functional.

Mr. Gold felt that the public won't spend money on restoration but would spend on maintenance projects. Mr. Riepe said that it needs to be accepted that the Fairbanks Community Center is priority over Town Hall, but in the meantime a new home needs to be found for Sudbury's School Department.

Mr. Kelly offered forward a 3-dimensional model of Nixon School which would have a 9,000 sf addition. He said that parking was adequate as is, according to DPW Director Bill Place. The original Nixon architect went through the building and verified space. Architectural Resources was consulted. He said that offices could be made functional as classrooms for a little more cost if more classroom space was ever needed. Mechanicals can be done new. The Board of health is looking into the septic system which would have a small load. Mr. Kelly also noted that there may be more classroom space elsewhere in the playground area. He said that Nixon had a lot of improvements made at the school this summer. Mr. Kelly is meeting again with designers and mechanical experts.

All agreed that the focus should be on solving the school space needs problem. The Fairbanks project would likely go forward next and then following would be the Town Hall.

The next meeting of the Town Hall Blue Ribbon Committee was scheduled for Monday, October 19, 2015 at the Town Hall. Upon a motion made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.