

Comments on a New Library

Since March 2007, I believe I have attended more Library Trustee and Building Committee meetings than anyone other than Rhonda. This will be my last meeting, so I asked to be on the agenda in order to put on record my thoughts about three things: the site selection criteria, the division over the library, and a plan that might unite the two sides.

You can see from the handout that I am making a case for the Ski Tow Hill site, but please bear with me; there is a reason beyond my well-known bias.

I will start with safety, which is addressed in several of the criteria. At the last Trustees' meeting, John Walden talked about kids who come to the library after school, but as they are free to leave and to go where they please, parents need to be reminded that the library is not responsible for them except while they are in the building. Also, early on in the site-selection process, John made it clear that water is a magnet for the children he takes across Main Street to the park area by the river.

As proof of the lure of the river, the day after the last Trustees' meeting, three girls climbed over the railing of the High Street bridge next to the Water Department building, and one of them fell into the river. She managed to hang onto a tree, but her friends could not reach her to pull her out. Fortunately, a man who happened to be in his yard heard the girls' screams, and he ran to bridge and rescued the girl.

The bridge is a favorite place for kids to hang out after school, and if the library is built on the LSPA land, the Riverwalk will likely be their route to the building. That might be fine for half of the year, but when the harbor season is over, the large doors at the back of the Old Town Hall, through which Riverwalk passes, are closed. Then the only way to continue is on a narrow ledge in back of the building, a risky maneuver that would no doubt appeal to kids. You may want to talk to the OTH committee about keeping the doors open all year.

In regard to walking to the library on the Main Street sidewalk, the most dangerous point would be the High Street crossing, especially after the one-way loop goes into effect. At that time, every car coming from Rt. 11, going to the library, Knowlton House, Marzelli's, the harbor, Lake Avenue, Garnet Street, Maple Street and Burkehaven will have to turn at the High Street pedestrian crossing. That is probably more traffic and a greater hazard than on Rt. 103B.

If an accident were to happen there or on Riverwalk, the library would not be held responsible, however, there is a safety issue for which the library would bear full responsibility in case of a mishap, namely, when walking young children past three parking lots and then crossing a very busy street in order to get to and from the Ben Mere area so the children can play outside. I am puzzled as to why you rated the LSPA site high for outdoor use potential when there is no place for children to play outside. Ski Tow Hill would not have that problem.

I have put my comments on the criteria in the handout you have, but I want to talk briefly about two more. First, I found it troubling that the criteria for lot size was arbitrarily changed to suit the LSPA site. The original criteria presented by Barbara Chalmers and accepted by the Building Committee was for a minimal lot size of 1.1 acres for a 2-story building with 50 parking spaces. At that same meeting, the LSPA site was eliminated due to a too small lot. Later in the year, the site reappeared with a lot size of .9 acres, and now we have it at .7 acres and 15 parking spaces. Ski Tow Hill had 3+ acres and space for 50 cars if needed.

Second, the Ski Tow Hill land would be free while the LSPA lot will cost \$400,000 (more than 2 1/2 times the assessed value) and will necessitate added expenses to meet shoreland protection regulations. That is money that could better be used toward building cost, especially for green upgrades.

I do believe that any qualified person who knew nothing about the controversy in Sunapee, would upon making a comparison of the two sites, choose Ski Tow Hill.

Now, about the division in the town. What caused it? I think it began with resentment, first of all over the Alexander land, a situation which I agree was badly handled. That discontent led to a well-organized effort planned and led by a small group of people; a campaign which succeeded in convincing enough voters to vote against the Ski Tow Hill site so that now we do not have the new library which would have been finished this year. You are in a better position than I am to explain that side of the division.

I have been thinking about who the people are on each side of the division, and I think a look at the past and the present trustees is as good a description as you will find. The previous Board was made up mostly of retired people who had ended successful careers and wanted to serve the town in a meaningful way. They did not have young children, so they were not involved with the schools, the Recreation Department or other activities of local families. This Board, on the other hand, is made up of mostly parents of young children, so you have different interests than the past trustees. There are good people on both sides, but there is a large gap between them that will be difficult to bridge.

After the pleasurable excitement of planning a new building, you now face the formidable task of raising more than 4 million dollars. Many people who gave significant sums to the Ski Tow Hill library are still angry about what happened. They made donations because they knew the importance of libraries, they knew that Sunapee needed a larger one with a community room, and they liked the plans for the building. They gave what they thought was a wonderful gift to the town, and then that gift was refused in what seemed to them to be a vindictive, give us the money and get out of our way, manner. It will be difficult to woo those donors back, impossible in some cases.

The fact is that each side needs the other if a new library is to become a reality, so what might be done to unite the two and the town?

Consider this: Harry Tilton gave the Ski Tow Hill land to the town more than 40 years ago for recreational use. I am proposing establishing that land as the Harry Tilton Community Recreation Area in his honor and that the building be a combined Recreation Department and library. This is an opportune time for such a project because Sunapee has an outstanding Recreation Director, Scott Blewitt. I have not spoken to Scott about this, but he met with the Building Committee in August 2007 and talked about how the new library with a multi-purpose room could help serve the town's recreation needs. He said that a site that would connect with a walking trails system would be great as would space for senior and pre-school groups who are now under served for recreational needs. He asked that space planning not be constrained by current needs, that new ideas would happen. You should also note that many people who answered the library survey, and the middle-school kids who filled out the Master Plan survey mentioned a desire for a place to do crafts. I believe the Ski Tow Hill plan could be adapted so that the Recreation Department would have the left wing which would be enlarged enough to contain an office and community room on the top floor and a crafts/art room on the lower level. You can see the wing in the picture I handed out.

I am putting forward this idea in case you find you need a plan B, and I hope you will give it some thought.

Good luck,

Mary Epremian
May 20, 2008

COMMENTS ON SITE EVALUATION CRITERIA.

Mary Epremian, May 20, 2008

SITE SIZE: The original criteria as presented by Barbara Chalmers and accepted by the Building Committee in July 2007 called for a minimal lot size for a 20-year building projection of 1.1 acres and parking for 50 cars. At the same meeting, the LSPA site was eliminated due to small lot size. Later, to accommodate the LSPA site, the criteria was lowered to .9 acres, and now it is .7 acres and 15 parking spaces. Ski Tow Hill site is 3+ acres with room for 50 parking spaces if needed.

SITE AVAILABILITY AND COST: The LSPA site will cost \$400,000, more than 2 1/2 times the assessed value of \$108,500 for the building and approximately \$45,000 for the land. There will also be additional costs involved with meeting shoreland regulations. The \$400,000 could be better used toward building costs, especially for building green. Ski Tow Hill land would be free.

SITE ON TAX ROLE: Taking LSAP land off the tax role will cost Sunapee taxpayers.

PROXIMITY TO SCHOOLS: LSPA is a little closer.

CROSSWALKS AND SIDEWALKS: See page 1 on safety issues. Note: LSPA site has 3, not 2 crossings just as Ski Tow Hill does.

PROXIMITY TO "COMMUNITY CENTER": LSPA is in the village zone; Ski Tow Hill abuts it.

PROXIMITY TO FIRE DEPARTMENT: LSPA is a bit closer.

PROXIMITY TO OTHER COMMUNITY FACILITIES: LSPA is near the Harbor which is active half the year; Ski Tow Hill is near the Town Hall, Post Office, an attractive guest house and a large apartment complex that includes year-round businesses.

ZONING COMPLIANCE: Both OK.

FITS WITH OTHER COMMUNITY BUILDING NEEDS: Ski Tow Hill has space for other needs such as the Recreation Department.

VISIBILITY OF SITE: LSPA is visible from traffic on the street, but there is a more open view of Ski Tow Hill.

SITE HAZARDS: See comments on safety on page 1.

DEED RESTRICTIONS: LSPA requires subdivision.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS: See comments on safety on page 1.

VEHICULAR ACCESS: Easier access to Ski Tow Hill than LSPA after one-way loop is established.

AESTHETIC VALUE OF SITE: View of the river through trees from LSPA; wide view of town from Ski Tow Hill. In the eye of this beholder, a building looming over the sidewalk is not aesthetically pleasing.

OUTDOOR USE POTENTIAL: LSPA has no extra land for outdoor use, especially for the children's programs. Ski Tow Hill has unlimited outdoor potential.

SUN ORIENTATION AND EXPOSURE: In both cases, the lower floor will be built into the slope of the land. Trees will have to be on the land to the south of an LSPA building to conform with shoreland protection; Ski Tow Hill would be open on all sides.

OVER

TOPOGRAPHY: Both are sloping sites.

SITE DRAINAGE: More drainage work needed for LSPA site.

WETLANDS: LSPA must meet river edge requirements; Ski Tow Hill only protection of the ditch on Rt.103B.

FLOOD POTENTIAL: None for both.

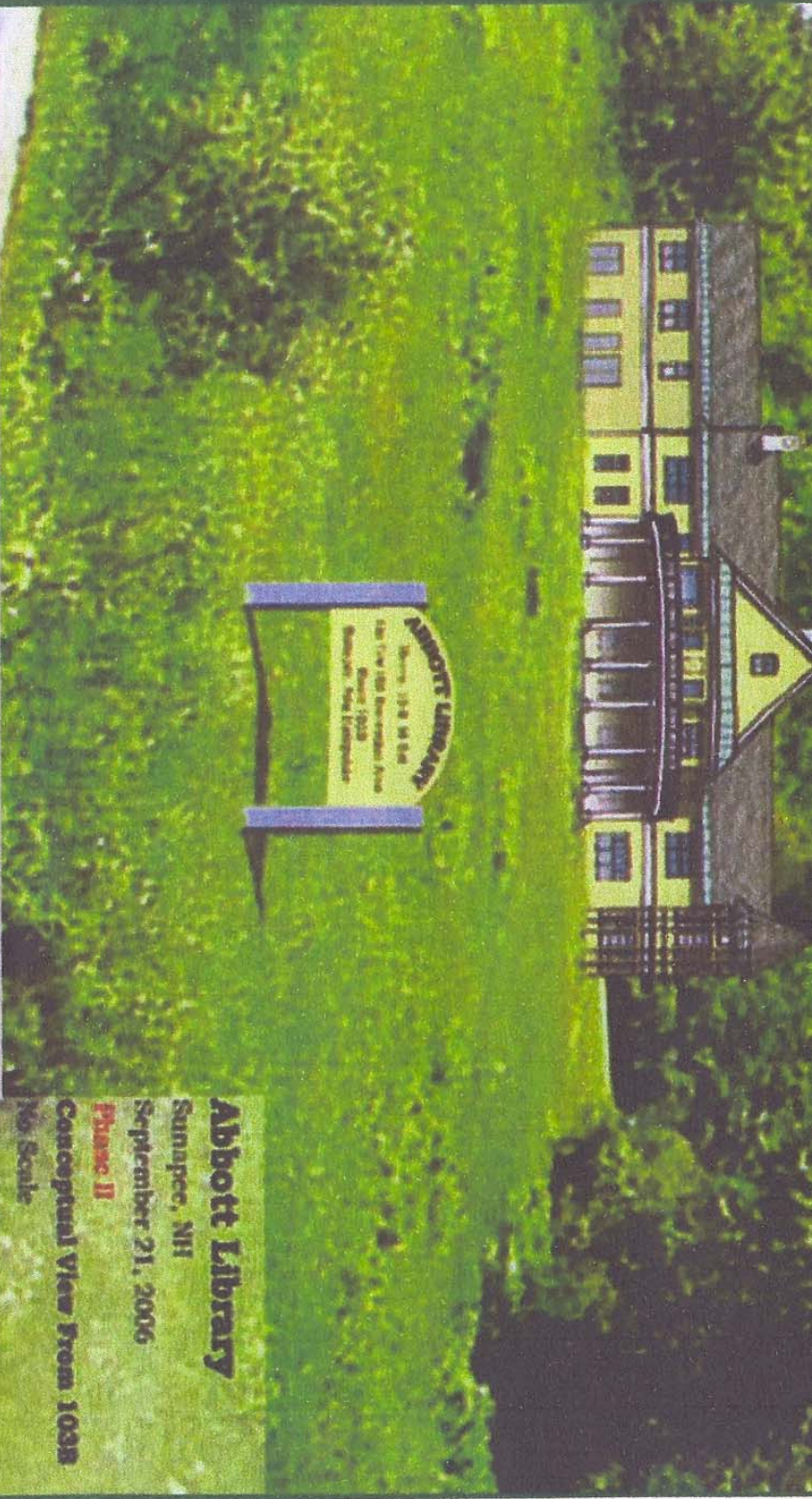
EXISTING SITE DISTURBANCE: LSPA has house/office; Ski Tow Hill will have Recreation Department parking lot.

SOIL TYPE: Ski Tow Hill has borings available.

WATER, SEWER AND ELECTRICAL SERVICE: All available to both sites.

HAZARDOUS MATERIAL POTENTIAL: Possible for LSPA site. Will need to be checked.

LIBRARY SITE EVALUATION		ITEM	LSPA/Riverway Site June 13, 2007	Ski Tow Hill Site Aug 8, 2007
Site Size			Approx 0.9 Ac	3+ Ac
Site Availability				Town owned
Site Cost or Assessed value			\$108,500 bldg \$45,000 land approx	
Site on Tax Role			yes	no
Proximity to Elem School - distance			2300 ft	3000 ft
Proximity to Elem School - Xwalks			1 - Rte 11 1 - High St	3 - 11, Main, Edgemont
Proximity to M/H School - distance			4300 ft	5000 ft
Proximity to M/H School - hazards			1 - Rte 11 1 - High St	3 - ditto
Proximity to "Community Center"				Not in Village District
Proximity to Fire Dept.			3200 ft	4000 ft
Proximity to other community facilities			Near harbor	
Zoning compliance			Zone VI	Resid - allowed use
Fits with other community bldg needs				
Visibility of site			Good	Good
Site hazards			River edge	None
Deed restrictions			Subdivision req'd	?
Pedestrian access			Ex sidewalk Main St & Riverwalk	Build Edgemont sidewalk
Vehicle access			Good	Excellent
Aesthetic value of site			High	High
Outdoor use potential			High, adj to river	High
Sun orientation & exposure			East/South/West	NE open & trees
Topography			Fairly level	Sloping
Site drainage			Slopes to River	
Wetlands			River edge	103B ditch line
Flood potential				None
Existing site disturbance			Yes, home used as office	None
Useful existing development			Unlikely bldg reuse	None
Soil type, ledge potential				Borings available
Municipal water and/or sewer			Yes, both	Yes, both
3 phase power service			Yes	Yes
Hazardous material potential			Possible	None to low



New Sunapee Library Building on Ski Tow Hill

Abbott Library
 Sunapee, NH
 September 21, 2006
Phase II
 Conceptual View From 103B
 No Scale

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Site Plan of Lower Ski Tow Hill

The **red outline** is the area to be withdrawn from Town Forest where the