

## TOWN OF WASHINGTON

### SELECTMEN'S MEETINGHOUSE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

April 27, 2010

#### 1.0 ASSEMBLY

1.1 Meeting called to order at 6:35 PM

1.2 Chairmen: Guy Eaton, Rich Cook and Ken Eastman

1.3 Members Present: Phil Barker, Lionel Chute, Bill Cole, Jim Crandall, Allan Dube, Arline France, Gwen Gaskell, Ronald Jager, Drew Queen, Sandy Robinson, Carolyn Russell, Jim Russell, Jed Schwartz, Robert Wright.

Members Absent: Anthony Costello, Sandy Poole.

1.4 Minutes taken by: Carolyn Russell

#### 3.0 NEW BUSINESS:

Guy Eaton opened the meeting and asked each member to identify themselves, share some background and comment on interest in being on the committee.

3.1 Members agreed to hold future meetings on the last Tuesday of the month at 6:30 PM.

3.2 The Selectmen will run the meetings which will generally be expected to last one hour.

3.3 Membership on the Committee is flexible and open to additional members who may want to join.

3.4 The Purpose of the Committee is only to support the meetinghouse. Our task is to start with a blank slate and to create a PLAN for the preservation and rehabilitation of the meetinghouse in accordance with the LCHIP grant. We will explore the different options for preservation and rehabilitation of the meetinghouse with the architect and NH Architectural Historian Dr. James Garvin. We will not discuss new buildings, or alternate locations, or other problems in town.

3.5 The following terms and definitions were presented so that we all understand them in the course of discussion:

##### Preserve, preserving, preservation

Most of us in Washington are in favor of preserving the Town Hall – even if we are not always sure what we mean by that. At a minimum preserving it means keeping it from disintegrating, keeping it useful for future generations. Saving it. Maintaining it. (Most Meetinghouses in New Hampshire were not preserved.) But if a building is not in particularly good shape, or not comfortable or efficient, or as useful as it could be, then preserving it is often not enough.

##### Rehabilitate, rehabilitation

So that is when you start talking about rehabilitation – upgrading a building, so that it serves as many as possible of its traditional functions, or its most important ones, but does so in a more effective manner, with better facilities and infrastructure – but always in keeping with its origins and history. Rehabilitation, when it is done properly, involves a good deal of “preservation” but it involves more than that, since it is focused directly on the past and on the future (The word “redevelopment” is sometimes used in a sense very similar to “rehabilitation”.)

##### Restore, restoring, restoration

Rehabilitation is not the same as restoration. Restoration is focused on the past, and attempts to recapture as fully as you can as much of the past structure and conditions and atmosphere as possible. To restore is to put something back as it was.

3.6 The Goal of the Committee is to prepare a plan and work in an advisory capacity with the selectmen, an architect and architectural historian to complete the plan in two years. The plan will serve as the basis for construction bids, fund raising, and grant seeking for the entire project. An energy audit has already been performed with the assistance of a grant and a copy of the report which discusses tests and results is available in town hall for review. A subsequent grant application was submitted for insulation of the building but was not awarded.

3.7 General Discussion of many ideas, in no particular order of importance, followed:

- What can be done to the building in terms of historic requirements? Dr. James Garvin, N.H. State Architectural Historian, will identify what can be changed, what cannot in his report.

- What are the ways to make the building more energy efficient? Windows will be one item to identify for energy improvement; possible use of internal thermal glass. Windows have weight wells creating voids. Cellulose insulation was blown into exterior walls in the 1970s has settled and created voids. The Energy Audit report will be made available. If it is available in PDF format, it can be e-mailed to committee members.
- Which is more correctly disturbed in a historical structure for improving insulation—interior plaster or exterior siding? It may be possible to use exterior storms and additional layer of interior glass. Possible replacement of clapboards could be investigated for access to insulation.
- Current discussion should be focused on other larger issues such as allocation of space and re-employment of upper floor rather than actual details of dealing with problems. Square footage (60 x 45) of building is 2700. We need to consider future use of the building, functions it will serve and realistic spaces for town needs. Space needs grow and allocation of spaces will have to adjust.
- First concern should be whether to create a full lower level which will provide additional space and allow for re-allocations of space. The cost of a full lower level vs. a 4 ft. crawl space is minor. Backhoe excavations have been done but no diagonal drilling to test for ledge. Soil under building is dry powder and soil surveys show good agricultural quality.
- We need to think of use of space conceptually before concentrating on details of how repairs can be done and allocation of spaces. Current construction of new office space for town clerk and tax collector indicates the need for both space and security. Work needs and schedules cannot be accommodated by so many shared spaces, desks, computers. The Municipal Space Task Force spoke to staff of different departments about needs and calculated square footage, projecting 15 years forward. New commissions and boards have been created in recent years and more spaces are needed to provide for work spaces and storage.
- Historically, the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor was used for many functions before handicap access was a requirement. The ceiling could be removed and lower floor reconfigured as original. In its current configuration the upper floor could be used frequently and would be much more likely if accessible. Plays, concerts, readings, displays, many alternative forms of entertainment and arts could be held. Do we need to look at other towns and how they have used their buildings? Websites have some photos and explanations of building uses. Visits to other towns can be organized and could provide useful ideas for our own building.
- Committee members agree that our building needs a full foundation. A full foundation adds functionality and best planning for future diversity. Complete preservation/rehabilitation work could be done in phases and spread out cost, if necessary. Selectmen caution against getting hung up on cost since grants and fundraising will reduce needs from town appropriation. These possibilities have yet to be thoroughly investigated.
- Can building be moved? Can it be moved while excavation is being done? Questions of structural stability and safety of crew are issues to be considered. Engineering study will decide. Existing foundation is what you see, no below ground level foundation.
- Former Future of Meetinghouse Committee has been disbanded. There is no agreement with Architect at this time.

### 3.8 Future Topics of discussion:

- A. The existing foundation and underpinnings
- B. Office spaces, including communications, utility and efficiency systems
- C. How to treat the floor
- D. Access to the upper floor and its potential uses
- E. Exterior care
- F. Coordination with Dr. James Garvin
- G. Investigation of other similar projects (Lempster, etc.)
- H. Fundraising – Old Home Days, future possibilities/programs
- I. Grant seeking

- 3.9** Each member was given a list of 5 questions to consider before the next meeting:
- Should we raise the building for a foundation?
  - Should we keep the Town Offices in Town Hall?
  - Should we provide access to the second floor?
  - Do you have suggestions for fundraising?
  - Have you read The Sacred Deposit?
- 3.10** The Selectmen thanked everyone for their thoughtful contributions and comments and invited everyone to enjoy refreshments before leaving.
- 6.0 ADJOURNMENT**
- 6.1** The meeting was adjourned at 8 PM. The next meeting will be 5/25 at 6:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Russell  
Secretary, Selectmen's Meetinghouse Advisory Committee