

**MINUTES – BUILDING COMMITTEE
TOWN OF BARNET, VERMONT
TUESDAY, JUNE 28, 2016**

Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. in the library of the McIndoe Falls Academy (37 Academy Lane).

Committee members present: Chair William Graves, Gary Bunnell, Benjamin Heisholt, Leigh Larocque, Cathy McLam, Laurajean Stewart, David Warden, and Dana Young.

McIndoe Falls Academy Trustees present: Bobbie Ann Fearon, Alice Frazer, Mark Ruel, John Smith, Norman Stevenson, Larry Thomas, and Gary Thompson.

Others present: Richard Douglas Gilmour, Clara Heisholt, Claudia Heisholt, Luisa Heisholt, and Dennis McLam.

1. Consideration of McIndoe Falls Academy as proposed site for town offices

Lengthy and various discussion was had regarding evaluation of the Academy building as a proposed site. No decisions were voted on or made. Some highlights of the discussion were as follows:

- Mr. Graves spoke regarding the process of inquiring into this option as it has developed thus far, particularly in order to brief the Committee members who had not yet participated in the discussion. Mr. Graves and Selectboard member Dylan Ford conducted a preliminary meeting with the Trustees at a Trustees' meeting. A Committee meeting was then held on May 19, 2016, at which the Trustees were in attendance; a quorum of the Committee was not in attendance at this meeting. Mr. Graves spoke in favor of pursuing this avenue, as a means both to secure a good town office building, and to preserve town history. Mr. Graves indicated that the Trustees have shown interest in furthering the conversation, in the acknowledgement that some change in direction for the building will soon be necessary as alumni of the Academy age and interest in the building wanes. Mr. Graves indicated that there has been support from the Committee to pursue this option as well.
- Mr. Bunnell indicated that he prefers that the Town own as few municipal buildings as possible in order to minimize property taxes. Moving the town offices from the Town Clerk's Office to the Town Hall would accomplish a reduction in the number of buildings; moving to the Academy would not.
 - Mark Ruel suggested that a 99-year lease arrangement between the Academy and the Town, rather than an outright purchase, may allay some of Mr. Bunnell's concerns.
 - Mr. Bunnell responded, stating his concern that even in a lease arrangement the Town would be responsible for maintaining the building.
- Mr. Warden spoke, indicating a concern that adapting the building for town office use may destroy the history of the building.
- Lengthy discussion was had regarding the status of the building on the National Register of Historic Places. There was concern among the Committee regarding the restrictions on renovation that may be in place due to this status.
- Ms. McLam expressed a concern that the building may not be large enough for the Committee's requirements. She also suggested that the National Register status of the building may prevent the Town from adding to the building if more space is needed in the future.
- The Academy Trustees indicated that they would find and report answers to the Committee's questions about restrictions on the building based on its National Register status.
- Alice Frazer discussed the Academy's current lease arrangement with the United States Postal Service, which runs the McIndoe Falls Post Office out of half of the first floor of the building.
- The Committee recessed the meeting for approximately thirty minutes for a tour of the facility. The meeting was reconvened in the library.

2. Consideration of how to proceed with selection of site and other future action relating to new or renovated town office building

Interspersed with the discussion about the feasibility of the McIndoe Academy building for town offices, was lengthy and various discussion about the general plan of action with regard to site selection and other future action relating to new or renovated space for town offices. Some highlights of this discussion were as follows:

- Mr. Larocque voiced his preference that the Selectboard place before the voters the matter of acquiring, building, or renovating space for town offices, rather than making the decision themselves. He also suggested that the Committee consider the option of moving the public library to the Town Hall building and using the current library building for town offices.
- Mr. Graves indicated that he had requested that Mr. Heisholt contact Town Agent Steven Adler for information regarding the legal processes involved for the various options before the Committee. Mr. Heisholt indicated that he had called Mr. Adler, but had not spoken with him yet.
- Some discussion was had about the disposition of the Town Hall in the event that it is not used for town offices.
- Some discussion was had about the shared disadvantages of the Town Hall and Library Building as spaces for town offices. These are primarily lack of parking and lack of an approved septic system.
- Some discussion was had about the total square feet of the Town Hall and the Academy building, and about the challenges of retro-fitting older buildings for new use.
- The Committee discussed strategic approaches for informing voters and taxpayers about this process, and about the proposed sites.
 - It was agreed that the Committee should formulate a list of needs for town offices, which should include an approximate number of total square feet, and rooms and other individual spaces named with approximate square feet for each.
 - It was also agreed that the Committee should create a fact sheet for each proposed site, which should include general descriptions, measurements, historically significant information, and advantages and disadvantages as sites for town offices.
 - It was agreed that the Committee should arrange an open house tour of all of the proposed sites, to provide the public with an opportunity to view them prior to any possible town meeting regarding this matter.
 - Mr. Graves suggested that the Committee should have a firm proposal for financing the project prior to putting the matter before the public.
- The Committee agreed to convene another Committee meeting on Wednesday, August 3, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. at the Academy building.

3. Other business

No other business was discussed.

4. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

A true copy.

Attest: _____
Town Clerk