

# DRAFT

## MINUTES – SPECIAL BUILDING COMMITTEE MEETING TOWN OF BARNET, VERMONT MONDAY, APRIL 29, 2019

**Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. in the conference room of the Town Clerk's Office.**

**Committee members present:** Chair William Graves, William Biddle, Dylan Ford, Benjamin Gates, Mark Jefferson, Stanley Robinson, Catherine Roy, Norman Stevenson, David Warden, and Dana Young.

**Other Town officials and employees present:** Planning Commission/Zoning Board member Benjamin Adams, Planning Commission/Zoning Board member Mark Bowen, Lister John Cook, Lister Sarah Cook, and Planning Commission/Zoning Board member Bruce Denio.

**Members of the public present:** Donna Ellery, Kenneth (Tony) Faris, Mary Faris, Frank Jannarone, Roseann Leute, Kathleen Monroe, Jeffery Riley, and Cynthia Stuart.

### **1. Call to order**

Chair Mr. Graves called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

### **2. Consideration of approval of prior meeting minutes**

Mr. Robinson moved approve as presented the minutes of the regular meeting held November 14, 2018. Seconded by Mr. Warden and approved by voice vote.

### **3. Welcome Cynthia Stuart as consultant to direct funding development and public communication, and to maintain positive progression for the municipal office building project**

Ms. Stuart provided a brief summary of her personal and professional background, as reported in her curriculum vitae.

### **4. Recognize attendees**

Each member of the Committee, Town official, and member of the public gave a brief self-introduction.

### **5. Discuss committee's history**

Chair Mr. Graves briefly reviewed the history of the Committee's work since its first meeting in August 2014.

### **6. Invite public comment**

Chair Mr. Graves opened the meeting to public comment. Following is a summary of some individual comments and ensuing discussion.

- Kathleen Monroe spoke, stating that a small group of interested citizens had attended meetings, performed research, and prepared a 35-page report that they believe may save Barnet taxpayers considerable expense. Ms. Monroe provided this report to the Committee, and asked for the opportunity for her group to meet with Ms. Stuart.
- An extended discussion was had about a definite proposed site for the new construction option.

- Chair Mr. Graves repeated a comment made at previous meetings, indicating his caution against the Committee actively shopping for a parcel, as the Committee does not have authority to bind action by the Town.
- Bruce Denio suggested that the Selectboard could authorize the Committee to make inquiries.
- Several specific parcels were suggested by members of the public, including a parcel in East Barnet owned by Marvin, James and/or Jere Kendall, parcels in Barnet Village owned by Wells River Savings Bank and Joseph Desrosiers, and a parcel in Barnet Village owned by Antoinette Keenan.
- Ms. Stuart suggested that the Committee could use similar projects completed in other local towns to compare costs. Several suggestions of comparables were made, including projects in Enosburg Falls, Waitsfield, and Moretown.
- Ms. Ford suggested that the Selectboard may be willing to consider authorizing the Committee to explore acquisition inquiries, if the Committee approaches the Selectboard at a Selectboard meeting.
- Mr. Graves indicated that the Committee has not been approached by any private landowner other than the McIndoe Falls Academy Association.
- Sarah Cook indicated that she had researched the possibility of purchasing an existing ranch house and renovating for municipal use; her conversation with a Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation District 7 Permit Specialist Peter Kopsco suggested that this would be possible.
  - Mr. Young stated that a ranch house could not be renovated for municipal use without considerable construction to make it compliant with commercial building code.
  - Ms. Stuart indicated that Mr. Kopsco's job is to direct traffic with regard to permitting requirements; he would not approve permits himself.
- Benjamin Adams asked if Village Center Designation would be a consideration, indicating that municipal buildings are not eligible for related grants.
  - Ms. Ford indicated that municipal projects are ineligible; however, it may be possible, with a renovation project like the McIndoe Falls Academy, to perform eligible projects before the property is transferred to Town ownership.
- Discussion was had about the goals, requirements, and problems to be solved with new/renovated municipal office space. Mr. Graves provided a brief history of the Committee's approach with regard to necessary criteria.
- John Cook spoke, suggesting that the Town must take better care of the buildings it already owns before considering additional real estate. Discussion ensued regarding the Selectboard's budget, Town Hall repairs and plan for use, and disposition of the current Town Clerk's Office if municipal offices are relocated.
  - Ms. Ford stated that the Selectboard has charged the Committee with prioritizing the municipal office project above actions on other municipal buildings.
- Discussion was had about future maintenance costs of the McIndoe Falls Academy building versus new construction.
- Discussion was had about restrictions on McIndoe Falls Academy renovation based on its status as an historical building.
- Discussion was had regarding the presence of the Post Office within the McIndoe Falls Academy building, and its prospects for the future. Ms. Ford reported on the Committee's findings regarding the Post Office's stated intention of remaining at its current location. Mr. Stevenson indicated that the Post Office has two years remaining on its current lease with the McIndoe Falls Academy.

## **7. Discuss goals as seen by committee**

Mr. Graves asked each member of the Committee to speak about goals for the Committee's work moving forward. A brief synopsis of each response follows:

- Mr. Heisholt: To cooperate with Ms. Stuart in her job description "to direct and coordinate public communication and outreach, seek, develop, and clarify funding opportunities, and coordinate a documented presentation of the committee's and its consultants' goals, work, and conclusions" to the end of moving forward to an informed public vote.
- Mr. Robinson: To come to an agreement among townspeople on a workable solution, keeping in mind that money is not the primary decision-making consideration.
- Mr. Stevenson: To accept the gift of the McIndoe Falls Academy, as a good public building that has been well-preserved and would meet the Town's needs.
- Mr. Young: To formulate a cost comparison for a new building of 5,000 square feet and with character and style befitting its place as a representation of the Town, and to provide this comparison for public consideration in advance of a public vote.
- Mr. Gates: To plan for and move forward with a public vote on the municipal building question.
- Ms. Roy: To plan for and move forward with a public vote on the municipal building question.
- Mr. Jefferson: To end up with a building the Town can be proud of, regardless of whether it is a new or renovated building.
- Mr. Biddle: The McIndoe Academy has an attractive exterior, but a rabbit warren within. A good alternative would be a new building near the Barnet Elementary School, and in the same architectural style.
- Mr. Warden: Preference for the McIndoe Falls Academy renovation option, but only if cost is similar with new construction; otherwise a decent-looking new building is a palatable alternative.

#### **8. Discuss work plan/outline from committee's view and from Stuart's proposed path**

Ms. Stuart spoke about her work in the past with Kingdom East School District; she proposed some similar strategies be used on the current project to disseminate information and collect public input. A project website, a booklet, meetings, and a brochure/ mailing were all successful means putting forth information and collecting public comment.

#### **9. Selectboard offers directions and suggestions**

Discussion was had about the possibility of the Selectboard authorizing the Committee to investigate availability of specific parcels for new construction. The individual Selectboard members present indicated that any Selectboard consideration of this matter must be confined to the context of a warned Selectboard meeting.

#### **10. Discuss a tentative timetable toward October 22, for instance**

Ms. Stuart presented a proposed timetable with the following basic structure for public vote target date in October 2019:

- I. Information gathering (May-June);
- II. Research and present funding opportunities (May-June);
- III. Produce communication materials (July);
- IV. Public outreach (August-September);
- V. Outreach and encourage voter participation (October).

#### **11. Allow Stuart to summarize understanding of work plan, scope, scale, and chronology**

Ms. Stuart spoke briefly, summarizing earlier discussion, and thanking those present for their respectful engagement in this project.

**12. Other business**

No other business was discussed.

**13. Adjournment**

Mr. Gates moved to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Robinson and approved by voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

*A true copy.*

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Town Clerk*