OLD WHITE MEETING HOUSE FEASIBILITY STUDY

Prepared by: Old White Meeting House Steering Committee
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Executive Summary

In December 2018, the Town of South Hero received a Municipal Planning Grant from the VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development. This grant allowed the Town of South Hero to hire consultants to determine the feasibility of preserving and revitalizing this historic Town-owned building for greater community use.

The Selectboard has appointed a Steering Committee composed of community members to oversee project consultants and to provide the final recommendations found in this report. The Municipal Planning Grant called for the Steering Committee to complete the following steps to develop the feasibility study: have a structural engineer complete structural assessment, solicit community input regarding future use of the structure, and provide recommendations regarding future structural improvements and future use of the building.

A site visit by Engineering Ventures, PC and Arnold & Scangas was completed in April 2019 to assess the structural integrity of the building. The existing structure was documented and the architectural and structural conditions were noted. The full report on the structural condition of the Old White Meeting House can be found in Appendix C.

The Steering Committee conducted public engagement through a community survey and two events in the summer of 2019. The public engagement was focused on soliciting input on the future use of the Old White Meeting House and the design of the site. A full summary of public engagement is located in Appendix B.

The Steering Committee recommends that the Old White Meeting House contain two uses in the future: Granny’s Attic on one story and a multi-purpose space for community gatherings on the other story.

The Steering Committee recommends the following short-term structural improvements:

- Roof trusses should be added in the short term to increase snow load capacity. Any openings near the roof should be repaired to prevent further damage to the roof system.

- The second floor should be shored up to level over the garage doors openings as a short-term measure before more long-term repairs are planned.

Lastly, the Steering Committee recommends pursuing grant funding to fund further planning and pre-development work. This includes hiring an architect to develop conceptual designs for reuse of the Old White Meeting House (with more accurate construction cost estimates) and to hiring a civil engineer to develop a site plan for the Old White Meeting House property.

For a complete list of Steering Committee recommendations, please see the “Final Recommendations” section of this report (pg. 8).
Background

In December 2018, the Town of South Hero received a Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) from the VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development. This grant allowed the Town of South Hero to hire consultants to determine the feasibility of preserving and revitalizing this historic Town-owned building for greater community use.

The Old White Meeting House has been referred to by various titles over its history: “Old Town Hall” and the “Old White Church” are two of the most popular alternative names. Regardless of its title, the structure has served various community needs since its construction in 1816. Courtesy of Bret Corbin and information from the South Hero Historical Commission, the following is a summary of the Old White Meeting House’s history since construction:

1816 Constructed by Barn Carpenters
1816 – 1854 Congregational Church
1854 – 1900 Used for Town Meetings. Meetings were held on the 1st floor. Town Clerks operated the Town Office out of their homes.
1900 – 1911 Maple Lawn Academy. State approved 4-year high school level curriculum founded by William Stevens was located on the 2nd floor.
1911 – 1920 Use unknown.
1920 – 1949 South Hero students from grade 5 to grade 8 were sent to the “Old White Meeting House.”
1949 – 1953 Used as a public school; various grades were conducted as needed and the East room was used as a library for a few years before the Memorial Library was built. Closed in 1953 because Folsom School was completed.
1953 – 1999 South Hero Town Highway Department modified east side of structure’s 1st floor to house town trucks.
1954 – present Granny’s Attic occupies Old White Meeting House.
1999 – 2018 South Hero Fire Department used the 1st floor to store equipment.
2013 Steeple renovations completed.

As noted in the timeline, Granny’s Attic, a benefit shop started in 1954, continues to occupy the second story (and part of the first story) of the Old White Meeting House. Granny’s Attic accepts donations of household goods and resells them to the general public. All money from sales is donated to local nonprofits. Granny’s Attic is a completely volunteer-run organization. The Town of South Hero has allowed Granny’s Attic to use the Old White Meeting House rent-free since Granny’s Attic’s inception in 1954.

The steeple of the Old White Meeting House underwent substantial renovations in 2013.

Granny’s Attic has donated $8,400 for the preservation of the Old White Meeting House. This money is held by the Town of South Hero in the Old White Meeting House Preservation Fund.

Steering Committee

The Selectboard appointed a project Steering Committee in early 2019 to oversee the project consultants and to provide the final recommendations found in this report. Members of the Selectboard, Planning Commission, Development Review Board, Historical Society, Bicentennial Museum, Granny’s Attic, and the community at large were appointed to the Steering Committee. Consultants Mary Harwood (Harwood Consulting) and Taylor Newton (Northwest Regional Planning Commission) attended all Steering Committee meetings and served as ex-officio members. A full list of Steering Committee members is found in Figure 1.

The Steering Committee met twice per month between January 2019 and April 2019 to develop the community survey and organized the project kickoff meeting on May 30, 2019.

After the “close” of the community survey on August 31, 2019, the Steering Committee again met approximately twice per month to analyze the results of the survey, the final structural engineering report, and to develop final recommendations for the feasibility study.
Approach
To determine the feasibility of preserving and revitalizing the Old White Meeting House, the Municipal Planning Grant called for the Steering Committee to complete the following tasks:

1. **Structural Assessment.** The grant called for the Steering Committee to hire a structural engineer to complete an inspection of the property and provide a report with recommendations for structural improvements with costs estimates. Engineering Ventures, PC, was selected as the engineering firm to complete the structural assessment. Engineering Ventures, PC was assisted by Arnold & Scangas Architects, LLC. The results of the engineer’s report are summarized in this study. Regardless of the future use of the structure, the Steering Committee finds that it is important to understand the basic structural improvements that are needed to ensure continued occupancy of the Old White Meeting House. For the entire structural assessment, see Appendix C.

2. **Community Input.** The grant also called for the Steering Committee to collect community input regarding the future use of the Old White Meeting House. A community survey was released in hardcopy and online to solicit feedback on potential future uses of the building. Mary Harwood of Harwood Consulting was selected to lead development of the community survey. The survey was complemented by two “visioning sessions” which were held to solicit community input regarding the future design of the property. Taylor Newton of Northwest Regional Planning Commission was selected to complete the “visioning sessions” during the summer of 2019. The results of the survey and the “visioning sessions” are summarized in this report. See Appendix B for the full results of all community input.

3. **Final Report/Feasibility Study.** The grant also called for the results of the structural assessment and community input to be summarized in a Final Report. This Final Report to the community contains a clear recommendation regarding the feasibility of preserving and revitalizing this historic Town-owned building for greater community use. The Final Report contains specific recommendations about future structural improvements and uses. The report also provides the basis for a discussion about capital budgeting for improvements to the Old White Meeting House. Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) was selected to complete the Final Report on behalf of the Steering Committee.
Structural Engineering Report
An architectural and structural assessment of the Old White Meeting House was conducted by Engineering Ventures, PC and Arnold & Scangas Architects. On March 25, 2019 by Bob Neeld, PE, and Sara Dorr, EI of Engineering Ventures, PC and Laz Scangas, AIA and Jonathon Collin of Arnold & Scangas conducted a site visit. During this visit, the existing structure was documented and the architectural and structural conditions were noted. The following is a summary of the final report recommendations provided by Engineering Ventures, PC and Arnold & Scangas. The full report can be found in Appendix C.

Initial conceptual recommendations to be considered as renovation plans are developed:

- **Foundation**: The building should be shored up and the fieldstone foundation walls be replaced with full depth concrete frost walls. The new foundation walls may have an exterior shelf at grade to allow for fieldstone facing. There should be a continuous layer of insulation at the inside of the foundation walls.

- **First Floor Framing**: The existing portion of the first floor is in good condition, but may need reinforcing for public assembly occupancy. The rear two bays could have first floor framing reinstated between sill beams to match the existing configuration designed for the appropriate...
occupancy. An alternative would be to fill the lower level and place a concrete slab on grade. If a crawl space is to remain, it should have a vapor barrier and insulation.

- **Second Floor Framing:** The floor should be shored up to level over the doors and permanent supports installed between the perimeter beam & foundation. The interior beams will need to be reinforced for almost any occupancy.

- **Roof Framing:** The roof trusses can be easily modified to increase their capacity. A diagonal from the purlin support location to the bottom of the king post should be added with appropriate connections. Any openings where mice or bats could enter should be closed up to prevent further damage to the roof system.

- **Access.** If the first floor is to be framed at the original elevation, access via a ramp will be needed. It may be possible to change the elevation of the building- although this may have impacts on other facets of the building. An enclosed stair and elevator may be required for second floor public access and egress.

- **Utilities.** Mechanical and electrical systems will likely need replacement or upgrades. Site considerations including waste disposal and parking will need to be addressed.

- **Building Code:** Existing buildings that continue to be in use and do not appear unsafe are generally exempt or “grandfathered” by the Building Code (including, but not limited to, the Vermont Fire and Building Safety Code, Vermont Electrical Safety Rules, Vermont Plumbing Rules, Vermont Elevator Safety Rules, Vermont Access Rules (ADA)). Substantial structural alterations or changes of use to a building will typically require evaluation under the current Building Code with upgrades required prior to the modified occupancy. **Adding a new occupancy to the lower level would likely trigger a full code review and building upgrade.**

In their report, Engineering Ventures and Arnold & Scangas note that the above recommendations are only initial ideas that will need to be further developed as the intended structure use(s) and level of renovation are decided upon. The next suggested phase of work will be to develop architectural conceptual designs for reuse and/or continued use based on community input. As part of that process, construction cost estimates can be developed.

### Community Input – Survey and Meetings

#### Kickoff Meeting

The Steering Committee held a project “Kickoff Meeting” on May 30, 2019 at the Old White Meeting House. The Kickoff Meeting included an overview of the project goals and a tour of the 1st story of the Old White Meeting House. This part of the Old White Meeting House has not generally been accessible to the general public when in use by the Town of South Hero Highway Department and the South Hero Fire Department. A hard copy of the community survey was provided to attendees along with a link to the online version of the survey. Refreshments at the Kickoff Meeting were provided by the local Boy Scout troop. Approximately 15 citizens attended the Kickoff Meeting.

#### Community Survey

The community survey went “live” on May 30, 2019. The survey focused on gathering community input on the future use of the Old White Meeting House. The following is a summary of efforts to distribute the community survey to community members:

- Hard copies of the community survey were distributed at the Kickoff Meeting on May 30, 2019.
- A hard copy of the community survey was sent to all property owners on the South Hero Grand List in late May 2019.
- Hard copies were made available in several public locations throughout South Hero during the summer of 2019. This includes the Town Clerk’s Office, Keeler Bay Variety Store, and Island Beverage.

All hard copies of the community survey contained directions to return completed copies to the Town Clerk. In addition, hard copies also contained a link to the online version of the community survey at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com).

The community survey “closed” on August 31, 2019. NRPC entered all hard copies of the community survey into the online version of the survey to aid with survey analysis. Approximately 150 individuals completed the community survey.
Community Survey Results

Below is a summary of the community survey results. Please see Appendix B to view the full results of the community survey.

- **Overall Structure:** Most respondents disagreed with the idea of the Town selling or tearing down the building, with 79.9% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this idea. A slight majority of respondents supported weatherizing and renovating the building (60.9% agreed or strongly agreed that the Town should weatherize the building).

  Respondents overwhelmingly valued maintaining/restoring the building’s historic exterior, with 83.2% agreeing or strongly agreeing that such maintenance is important. Additionally, 72.1% agreed or strongly agreed that they would support phased structural repairs or renovation over an extended period of time.

- **First Floor:** A majority of respondents (67.1%) supported using the first floor of the building as a multi-purpose space for community gatherings such as recreation and arts activities, meetings, farmer’s markets or renting it out for weddings.

- **Second Floor:** A majority of respondents supported continuing to use the second floor as the home of Granny’s Attic Benefit Shop, with 59.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing to this idea.

Visioning Sessions

NRPC led two “visioning sessions” on June 19, 2019 and July 29, 2019. These meetings were advertised in The Islander and on Front Porch Forum. To differentiate from input received from the community survey, the “visioning sessions” were focused on site design. NRPC queried attendees on their preferences related parking, landscaping, and access.

Public comments received at the June 19th and July 29th meetings were highly varied, but there was generally consensus regarding the following topics:

- **Parking:** Parking on the property can be a problem according to attendees. Visitors to Granny’s Attic, the Blue Paddle, and CIDER all use the parking lot on site to varying degrees. Combined with the lack of parking lot striping and signage, visioning session attendees suggested that changes need to be made to the current parking lot layout and design to ensure that parking is sufficient and safe. Attendees generally agreed that the addition of striping to designate parking spots would help clarify the amount of parking on site. In addition, attendees generally agreed that parking should be added to the site, if possible (notably along the property line with CIDER).

- **Signage:** Visioning session attendees generally agreed that the addition of a ground-mounted sign, with adequate lighting, would positively improve the site.

- **Landscaping:** Attendees generally agreed that landscaping on site could be improved in order to make the property more welcoming and to create a greater village “feel” on site. Specific suggestions centered on the addition of landscaping and screening along the property line with CIDER and the addition of a lawn, or other landscaping, in front of the building. One attendee suggested consulting historical photographs to advise future decisions about landscaping on site.

NRPC also received several comments about property access, building access, and an addition to the existing building. Comments regarding these topics aren’t easily summarized. Please see Appendix B for a full summary of all comments received at two visioning sessions.
Final Recommendations

On September 3, 2019, the Steering Committee met to review the results of community input received via the community survey and the visioning sessions. On September 17, 2019, the Steering Committee met again to develop final recommendations for structural improvements, use of the structure, and design of the Old White Meeting House site. Below are the Steering Committee’s recommendations.

Structure

To ensure the long-term preservation and functionality of the Old White Meeting House, the Steering Committee recommends the following:

Short Term Recommendations

- Roof trusses should be added in the short term to increase snow load capacity. Any openings near the roof should be repaired to prevent further damage to the roof system.
- The second floor should be shored up to level over the garage doors openings as a short-term measure before more long-term repairs are planned.
- The Town of South Hero should work with an architect to develop conceptual designs for reuse of the Old White Meeting House and more accurate construction cost estimates.

Overall Recommendations

- Exterior historic elements of the Old White Meeting House should be preserved to the greatest extent possible. This includes restoring the east side of the building to its historical condition.
- Renovations of the Old White Meeting House shall weatherize the building and ensure that the structure can be used year-round.
- The fieldstone foundation walls should be replaced with full depth concrete frost walls with an exterior shelf at grade to allow for fieldstone facing. There should be a continuous layer of insulation at the inside of the foundation walls.
- The Old White Meeting House shall be made fully compliant with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Steering Committee recommends that ADA requirements, such as an access ramp and elevator, be added to the rear of the Old White Meeting House to minimize visual impact to the structure from US Route 2. This building addition shall also include restrooms.
- Some community survey respondents stated in open-ended responses that the Old White Meeting House should be used as the Town Office. While this is an intriguing idea, the Steering Committee finds that this may only be possible if there is a substantial addition to the Old White Meeting House. The Selectboard should make a definitive decision about whether or not the Town Office should be located in an addition to the Old White Meeting House before hiring an architect to develop conceptual designs.

Use

To ensure the use of the Old White Meeting House serves the needs of all South Hero residents, the Steering Committee recommends the following:

- Based on the results of the community survey, the Steering Committee recommends that the Old White Meeting House contain two uses: Granny’s Attic on one story and a multi-purpose space for community gatherings on the other story.
- The Steering Committee recommends determining which use should be located on which story of the building during conceptual design of the Old White Meeting House.

Site

To better support the land uses located on-site and enhance the village character of the Old White Meeting House property, the Steering Committee recommends the following:

- A civil engineer shall be hired to develop a site plan for the Old White Meeting House property. The site plan shall also include the adjacent property owned by the Town of South Hero (the property is
Currently used by Granny’s Attic for additional sale space. Development of the site plan shall be done in coordination with the architect who is developing conceptual designs for reuse of the Old White Meeting House.

- If possible, the Town should retain two curb cuts on US Route 2. The curb cut adjacent to Blue Paddle should be an “in.” The curb cut adjacent to CIDER should be an “out.” This would ensure that vehicular traffic on the site moves in one direction around the rear of the Old White Meeting House.

- Upon completion of renovations, the parking lot should be surfaced with asphalt and parking spaces lined. Signage should be added to delineate the use of each parking space to minimize conflict between the land uses located on-site and on adjacent sites.

- Downcast village-scale lighting should be added to the parking lot area. This lighting will provide security and enhance the character of the property.

- A small freestanding sign should be installed in front of the Old White Meeting House. This sign could both call attention to the Old White Meeting House, but also provide an advertisement for Granny’s Attic.

- A lawn and landscaping should replace the asphalt in front of the Old White Meeting House. Historical photographs should be consulted to advise future decisions about the landscaping design in front of the structure. Additionally, landscaping should be added to the remainder of the site in order to make the property more welcoming and to create a greater village “feel” on site. This should include the addition of landscaping and screening along the property line with CIDER.

Next Steps
Additional planning and pre-development work is needed before implementing long-term improvements to the Old White Meeting House. To continue this planning and pre-development work, the Steering Committee advises the Town of South Hero to take the following “next steps” in the coming year:

Immediate
- Budget for and complete immediate repairs to the Old White Meeting House roof and to the second floor/garage area.

Match Pool
- Budget for a “match pool.” Funds in the “match pool” could be used as match for various grant opportunities sought by the Town in the future. The Steering Committee recommends a $20,000 match pool at this time. The recommendation is based on the required local match of the grant opportunity recommended below.

Water and Wastewater
- The Selectboard should investigate potential sites to treat wastewater generated in the future at the Old White Meeting House property to ensure that future renovations can be accommodated.

Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP)
- Meet with Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) staff in December 2019 to determine if the Town of South Hero is eligible to apply for a VCDP Planning Grant. The grant would be used to complete the following tasks:
  - Hire an architect to develop conceptual designs for reuse of the Old White Meeting House and more accurate construction cost estimates;
  - Hire a civil engineer to develop a site plan for the Old White Meeting House property and adjacent property owned by the Town of South Hero;
  - Complete several tasks required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This includes hiring an environmental consultant to complete a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, an archeological consultant, and an architectural historian to review conceptual designs developed by the architect; and
  - Hire a planning consultant to complete project management and grant administration on behalf of the Town of South Hero.
The maximum grant value for a Planning Grant is $60,000. The grant requires a 25% local match. The next two VCDP Planning Grant application deadlines are February 11, 2020 and April 14, 2020.

According to VCDP, all projects must “provide a benefit primarily to persons with very low, low and moderate incomes.”

**Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB)**

- Meet with representatives from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) to determine if the Town is eligible to make an application under VHCB’s Project-Specific Capacity Funding program, if the VCDP Planning Grant is determined to not be a good fit. This grant may be used to pay for planning and pre-development expenses and could be used to complete tasks similar to those identified for the VCDP Planning Grant.

The maximum grant value for a Project-Specific Capacity Funding grant is $50,000. There is no required local match and the application deadline is rolling.

See Appendix D for additional information about potential funding opportunities to implement the Steering Committee’s recommendations.
Appendix A – Survey

Community Input Survey for the Future of South Hero’s Old White Meeting House

The Old White Meeting House is an iconic town-owned landmark that has stood in the center of South Hero for over 200 years. Now that the fire engines are gone from the first floor, we’re asking you to help us decide how this resource can best serve our community. Please help us plan for the future by completing this survey, either on paper or online, no later than August 31, 2019. All ideas are welcome and will be considered. Please answer these questions, using a weighted scale from 1 to 5:

1. The Town should:
   a. Sell or tear down this building
      1 2 3 4 5
   b. Retain ownership of this building
      1 2 3 4 5
   c. Make only structural renovations to the building and continue to use it seasonally
      1 2 3 4 5
   d. Weatherize and renovate the building to maximize the possible uses of this space
      1 2 3 4 5
   e. Rent space to local non-profit organizations
      1 2 3 4 5
   f. Other ideas and comments

2. The best use for the first floor of the Old White Meeting is as:
   a. Increased sales or storage space for Granny’s Attic Benefit Shop
      1 2 3 4 5
   b. A multi-purpose space for larger community gatherings that could include: recreation, arts activities, dances, farmer’s market, meetings, rented for weddings.
      1 2 3 4 5
   c. Other ideas and comments

3. The best use of the second floor of the Old White Meeting House is as:
   a. The continued home of Granny’s Attic Benefit Shop
      1 2 3 4 5
   b. A multi-purpose space for larger community gatherings that could include: recreation, arts activities, dances, farmer’s market, meetings, rented for weddings.
      1 2 3 4 5
   c. Other ideas and comments

4. How important is it to retain/restore the building’s exterior historic integrity?
   1 2 3 4 5

Please turn over to complete the survey
5. I would support funding to do phased structural repairs and/or renovate the building over an extended period of time.

1 2 3 4 5

6. I want to be involved with planning for and/or helping operate and maintain the Old White Meeting House as a community space.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Other comments and/or ideas

Contact information (optional)

Name: ________________________________ Email: ________________________________

Address: ______________________________ Phone: ________________________________

Thanks for your feedback!

Please return this survey to the Town Office, PO Box 175, South Hero, VT 05486, or complete it online at no later than August 31 2019. For more information about this committee, and the history of the Old White Meeting House, please visit the town website, https://www.southherovt.org/community-links/old-white-meeting-house-study-committee.
Appendix B – Survey Results, Survey Analysis, and Visioning Sessions

Survey Analysis

MEMORANDUM

To: Old White Meeting House Steering Committee
From: Emily Klofft - AmeriCorps VISTA
CC: Taylor Newton – Senior Planner
Date: September 3, 2019
Subject: Old White Meeting House Community Input Survey Summary

The following is a review of the results from the Community Input Survey.

Survey Distribution
Survey responses were collected between May 30, 2019 and August 31, 2019. The survey was sent to all South Hero residents. Additionally, hard copies of the survey were available in several locations in South Hero and an online version of the survey was linked on the Town website. The survey received 150 responses.

Overall Structure
Most respondents disagreed with the idea of the town selling or tearing down the building, with 79.9% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this idea. Seventy-four percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the town should retain ownership of the building.

A slight majority support weatherizing and renovating the building. In response to Question 1c, 32.4% agreed or strongly agreed that the town should make only structural renovations and continue to use the building seasonally. In response to Question 1d, 60.9% agreed or strongly agreed that the town should weatherize the building to maximize the possible uses of the space.

Fifty-one percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the town should rent space to local non-profit organizations, while another 28.3% were neutral to this idea.

First Floor
A majority of respondents supported using the first floor of the building as a multi-purpose space for community gatherings such as recreation and arts activities, meetings, farmer’s markets or renting it out for weddings. In response to Question 2a, only 31.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the best use of the first floor was to expand Granny’s Attic Benefit Shop. In response to Question 2b, 67.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the best use of the first floor was a multi-purpose space.

Second Floor
A slight majority of respondents supported continuing to use the second floor as the home of Granny’s Attic Benefit Shop, with 59.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing to this idea. However, 37.8% of people agreed or strongly agreed that the best use of the second floor would be as a multi-purpose space for community gatherings.
Other Questions
Respondents overwhelmingly valued maintaining/restoring the building’s historic exterior, with 83.2% agreeing or strongly agreeing that such maintenance is important. Additionally, 72.1% agreed or strongly agreed that they would support phase structural repairs or renovation over an extended period of time.

Fourteen percent of respondents wanted to be further involved in the planning and/or operating of the Old White Meeting House as a community space.

Survey Results

**Question 1a. The Town should sell or tear down this building:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>66.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>13.67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>7.19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>5.04%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>7.91%</td>
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**Question 1b. The Town should retain ownership of the building:**

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<th>Responses</th>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>16.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>58.04%</td>
</tr>
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**Survey Results Summary:**

- **Answered:** 139
- **Skipped:** 11
Question 1c. The Town should make only structural renovations to the building and continue to use it seasonally:

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<tr>
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<td>17.65% 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>25.00% 34</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
<td>25.74% 35</td>
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<td>14.71% 20</td>
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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>17.65% 24</td>
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Answered 136  
Skipped 14

Question 1d. The Town should weatherize and renovate the building to maximize the possible uses of this space:

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<tr>
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<td>10.14% 14</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
<td>17.39% 24</td>
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<td>Agree</td>
<td>23.91% 33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>36.96% 51</td>
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</table>

Answered 138  
Skipped 12

Question 1e. The Town should rent space to local non-profit organizations:

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<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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<td>13.77% 19</td>
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<td>Disagree</td>
<td>7.25% 10</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
<td>28.26% 39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>27.54% 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>23.19% 32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered 138  
Skipped 12
Question 2a. The best use for the first floor of the Old White Meeting House is as increased sales or storage space for Granny's Attic Benefit Shop:

<table>
<thead>
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Question 2b. The best use for the first floor of the Old White Meeting House is as a multi-purpose space for larger community gatherings...

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Question 3a. The best use of the second floor of the Old White Meeting House is as the continued home of Granny's Attic Benefit Shop:

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Question 3b. The best use of the second floor of the Old White Meeting House is as a multi-purpose space for larger community gatherings...

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Answered 135
Skipped 15

Question 4. How important is it to retain/restore the building's exterior historic integrity?

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Answered 143
Skipped 7

Question 5. I would support funding to do phase structural repairs and/or renovate the building over an extended period of time.

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Answered 140
Skipped 10
Survey Results – Open Ended Question Responses

Overall Structure

Question 1f. Other ideas and comments

- I believe that after tearing down the original building that the town should then decide on an appropriate use for the property in the future. A new replica of the previous architecture and style of the building which can be utilized in a practical way for office spaces or other town uses.

- Granny's Attic should remain according to its current arrangement with the town.

- Not sure if these comments belong in THIS space but to explain the “neutral” responses to the questions above: more info is needed. I can’t give an opinion before knowing the costs to make renovations in order to make the building usable for public events. The goal must be to make the building self sustaining which I truly hope can be done!


- A town gym should be put in to help community members stay active and healthy even throughout the winter months.

- Renovate for the Town of South Hero Town offices and sell the current bldg.

- Rent to for profits as well.

- Curious how much revenue "Granny's Attic" donates to town non-profits + schools; surely that should have some bearing on the discussion?!

- Keep the building as a historical site. It gives the town the old time feeling and makes you want to stop.
• If not a non-profit use...then something that may generate income for the town

• The town has spent enough money on this building its time the town spend money on a new structure for all of its towns offices and possibility of renting space to other organizations

• Sell it to some one who will renovate and bring business.  Or lease it to some one who would do the same.  It seems structurally sound, it has been around this long, it would be a shame to tear down.

• If not used as Granny's, sell it

• It should remain a town meeting house, once it has been made structurally sound, and weatherized and renovated.

• Rent should be charged at fair market value, no more free rides.  Or the Non profit should give its assets back to the town.  The answers given depend upon cost.  Without a cost element these questions are pie in the sky.

• Sell it to someone as a business site.

• It's hard to know what the potential uses are, and how the space can economically and socially benefit the town.  I don't know what other uses have been suggested.

• I would move our town offices to the new building and then offer the old town office building for community activities.

• Sell the building so our taxes don't go up.

• The town should accept bids to rent the space to businesses that might enhance commerce, culture, etc.

• Is the building at it's highest and best use?  I'm not sure.

• Granny's Attic should remain.  Brings in a lot of money which is donated, attracts tourists

• Windows

• Should tear it down and put up a McDonald's or other modern store.

• Music Space

• There are no bathrooms/septic would be too expensive!

• Item E - rent to locals and free to non-profits for limited periods of time, to have more general variety use of space.
• Renovate with chair lift or elevator for handicapped access

• Why not renovate the building and move our town offices to it; then convert our town office building to a Community Resource Center

• I am a little puzzled as to why this question is coming up, since it wasn’t long ago the town or someone spent a huge amount of money taking down the cupola and restoring that, I would be concerned about the town decision making to have spent town money or someone’s money to do that with only the description to tear it down in the near future?

• Complete restoration. Revert back to a meeting place/Town Clerk Office. Grannies Attic could move to the current Town Clerk Office. SELL the Fire Station building to Blue Paddle and use income to help renovation. The Fire Station has no historical value, it’s only about 60 years old +/-.

• Sell to developer who is willing to renovate while keeping as much as possible, the historical aspect of the building could be use as a function hall and rented by outsiders if not sold.

• Keep Granny's Attic in the building.

• Don’t tear it down!

• Political meetings, voting, etc.

• Structural renovation is paramount. Use free for open community events and rent to generate $ for ongoing maintenance

• This is a beautiful landmark within a very eclectic (not pretty) town center. We need to make the most of it.

• Restaurant and a few either apartments or guest rooms on second floor.

• my understanding is that Granny's Attic contributes all of the money earned back to the community. Why would you want to charge this non-profit organization rent? It is run by volunteers who dedicate many hours to keep it going. This only benefits the community and saves taxpayers money.

• Put in water and sewer, insulate, move Granny’s out and make it the Town Office building and community space to use for events, yoga classes, etc.

• Donate to Granny's Attic.

• Weatherization and structure renovations depends on cost. Both are good options.

• Short-term leases only. We need to formulate a long-term plan for the property based on future needs....such as community meeting hall, town office, etc.
- Continue use by Granny's Attic

- Would need to know financial factors to have a good idea of what to do, but I support retaining it.

- Use for town functions. Retirement parties, weddings, graduations, plays. We need a big space that has better acoustics than the gym at the school.

- this historical building has cost the town of south hero alot of money in the steeple restoration as of this date...the non profit organization that now occupys this space is not self sufficient...they require money from the town each year to continue their operations...i would like to see the building sold and put back on the tax roles of the town....some new business person may renovate the building and put in new spaces for a greater use of the building...the town does not need another town space as we have a nice school gym to hold wedding receptions and the town meeting and etc...lets stop wasting our tax dollar...we who are struggling to pay the current property tax are sick of the town throwing away our money...lets be more aware of where we spend our money....

- Don't take away Granny's attic!

- Expand the space for other nonprofits and run granny's attic year-round

- A place for various groups to use...playgroups for local kids to get together parents and the children, afternoon activity place for school age kids, evenings can also host adult activities, etc

**First Floor**

*Question 2c. Other ideas and comments:*

New construction of town office space and or police offices as well as meeting space

- Granny's Attic is almost an icon of South Hero, is a great place staffed by the hundreds of volunteer hours given by its dedicated supporters. I love Granny’s Attic and they do great work by supporting so many local non-profits. But it must be self sustaining and not be subsidized in any way by the taxpayers of South Hero. Do they pay rent, utilities, maintenance and upkeep? I have asked and but not received an adequate response so don’t know. I could see that it could increase receipts if it had higher inventory turns and longer hours.

- "B" is a good option but new town offices better idea.

- Granny's Attic needs to price their stuff to sell- not just store it

- Have never seen the space, other than entrance and stairs up to Granny's. [Question 2b] Possible if it's feasible financially?!

- Use the entire building as granny's attic.
• The multi purpose space makes the most sense as long as the historical value is maintained.

• Possible town office or sale of building with preservation stipulation.

• Relocate our town offices to the first floor.

• Move our town offices to the first floor; renovate our current town office building for Community use

• Again not sure why this question is coming up after the huge expense already spent in it.

• Perhaps it could be flexible for both uses?

• Grannies Attic storage is ok until renovations begin but not afterwards. I agree both first (and second floors) should be used for meetings, small gatherings, art activities, hunter safety courses, boys & girl scout mtg's, etc.

• Either

• musical events, art exhibits, guest speakers, etc.

• 1st Floor Accessibility is better (obviously!).

• Free distribution for Habitat for Humanity

• I think it would be important to preserve the historic aspects of this building and then maybe sell it as a potential bed and breakfast with a small restaurant on first floor.

• If Granny's attic had access to the first floor I believe they would use the space for bigger items that come in, ie. furniture, not for storage. As to having it used for dances and weddings, there would have to be a major renovation of the whole building. Who will pay for it??

• Town offices and tear down existing town office for parking lot.

• We already have that....the Congregational Church and Viva Marketplace.. Does it (the buidling) qualify for grants? Depending on how much it costs and if taxes are going to be raised.

• The meeting house is a landmark property that distinguishes South Hero. Keeping it for seasonal use would have the least financial impact on the town.

• New Town Offices

• We have limited community spaces. Grannie's Attic is a community resource but it is open such limited hours ( understandable given the volunteer force). It would be good to have the space more widely used.
Granny’s is a very important part of our town. It makes money for us that helps in many ways. I’d like other uses to compliment granny’s. Granny’s is only open in the summer. What can we use the building for all winter?? If you build it, they will come!! We don’t have to know what it is, we just have to fix it up so it is possible!!

Second Floor
Question 3c. Other ideas and comments:

- Again, not enough information to provide a fair response.
- A second floor area for Granny’s Attic is not recommended.
- Keep as is.
- Germany’s Attic benefits South Hero not only through its donations to town non-profits but as a much needed "reuse, recycle" resource for town residents who want to get rid of things too good for the landfill without driving "off island" to make a donation.
- Please do not boot out Granny’s Attic. I donate to this organization and if ever needed, I know I can get things there. If you did not allow a Dollar Store in to South Hero...then please remember the poor as you develop
- Until egress is improved the building should not be used. Then a fair rental agreement could be arranged. No more free ride.
- Find a space to continue shop. "b" is a great idea.
- This use of 2nd floor might require installation of an elevator for handicap access in favor of elevator if needed, if on eis not already in use?
- Granny’s attic may have outlived it's usefulness
- Why was this not considered in the reconditioning of the cupola
- Grannies attic could continue to use second floor only until renovations begin. Grannies Attic needs to continue operating, they provide an amazing service on a volunteer basis, the money they earn and donate to various organizations is wonderfull.
- Keep Granny's Attic!
- leave it alone!
- If it isn’t sold to an independent entity, continue to use for Granny's Attic (increase space to full building use).
- Retail space? Office space?
• Free distribution of goods.

• The bottom line is, what is it going to cost taxpayers? I would hate to see an Historical building torn down. This building has been used by Granny's Attic for years. My understanding is that they have contributed thousands of dollars to the community from hard working volunteers. I would think people who have contributed items to Granny's Attic, would love the money to flow back in to our community. Why would you want to change that??

• Using second floor for these events would be difficult. Elevator. Too many stairs.

• Good ideas for another space in town. It would be great to have more private development along Route 2!

• Meeting space for town gatherings

• All depends on finances to make sure the use is sustainable.

**Other Questions**

*Question 7. Other comments and/or ideas:*

• If financially plausible, would prefer to keep and use. Would be interested in knowing the costs to upgrade and bring to code for public events and am looking forward to seeing this info being made available to residents. We need to determine it’s highest and best use, and I don’t know what that is! **I love how the group is involving the community in the decision making process and thanks for letting us complete online!**

• Only after development plan (outline various options first). I have an interest in the planning phases - as a professional land use planner and recently retired Director of Campus Planning for University of Vermont, I have experience in similar types of projects. I also have a very comfortable experience working with the State Historic Preservation Office and would be happy to assist as liason with them directly.

• Time to make more space for town offices several office spaces could be provided as well as a meeting room.

• Use contemporary materials when appropriate

• Keep Granny's Attic. It is a fun place to stop at every week.

• This question[question 4] was written to confuse people. Need to retain exterior historic integrity.

• Question 4 is meaningless.... it is not the type of question that can be answered by any sort of agreement or disagreement.

• It is imperative that we maintain this historical building. I also feel that Grannie's Attic should not be pushed out. They have provided amazing financial support to our local organizations.
But, I also understand that the building needs to be sustainable. Possibly renting a portion so building is multi use. I would also point out that parking is an issue that needs to be addressed and not pushed to the back burner. It is a problem already with the restaurant and continues to be a problem.

- I can help with the planning now and when I retire I can help with the operations then.
- I think it sounds like a great idea, however, I primarily live in California, and therefore cannot currently commit to helping operate and maintain the space. I can commit to donating funds to help restore the building.
- No grants!
- Sell the property.
- There are enough old buildings in VT. Tear it down and join the 21st century.
- I am deeply opposed to using any state grants to pay for any improvements.
- No grants involved in funding.
- It's Historic - must be renovated and preserved!
- Granny's Attic should give up old 3 bay red garage @ back of property. Granny's Attic should only be given use of 1st floor 2 garage areas is the old 3 bay fire garage is demolished. New space should be replacement, not expansion for Granny's Attic. Committee needs to publically report that there is no septic or restroom in old white meeting house!
- Charge Blue Paddle to use of parking.
- #6 because of our mobility and are not conducive to be much help
- I think the community as a whole would support fundraising and volunteering
- There must be a grant program out there for historic building preservation. Should have been done when the money was spent for the cupola.
- Definitely keep Granny's Attic which is a draw for locals and tourists and which gives valuable funding to community organizations.
- Thx for including community in this process!
- Keep it as a seasonal use building for Granny's Attic. The help all the non-profit groups in South Hero and the island communities. Please allow Granny's to expand into the whole first floor after the area has been renovated.
• We are in favor of keeping the building and fixing it up, hopefully for things that will be a benefit to the town: farmers markets, events, etc. However, we don't feel we know enough about the financials to make meaningful recommendations.

• Does Granny's Attic make a profit? Are there enough volunteers?

• 20-year summer residents

• With all the money going to build new homes and buying up all the green spaces...there should be some to do all that needs to be done and to let Granny's Attic continue. It's not all about the $$$ and taxes. Let South Hero be South Hero.

• South Hero is really missing a town center. We'd love to see more private development along Route 2. It would be nice to have a village like Jeffersonville with a diner, coffee shop, small attractions - a situation that is walkable with sidewalks.

• Sorry we won't be able to help out. We're moving out of town soon.

• Between health, age, and distance we're unable to help with the project.

• Perhaps the V&W would agree to use and manage the hall

• Granny's Attic has done so much for the town why would anyone want to change this? These ladies give so much of their time.

Visioning Session – Summary of Responses - June 19, 2019 Meeting
The following is a summary of responses from the June 19, 2019 visioning session:

Access (Road and Building)

• Question about access off US Route 2-Vtrans may require Old White Meeting House to change to 1 access point if project changes.

• It would be difficult for older people to walk around to front of building- think about entrance in the back and potentially sidewalk on the property, ADA compliant.

• One way traffic a possibility (enter near blue paddle, exit near Cider).

• Consolidate highway access near Blue Paddle (Add lawn in front and on Cider side w/parking in rear).

• Walkway from US 2 to front of structure
Parking

- Better parking may be useful, with a barrier on left side and bushes. An addition may be good in the back. Better parking = on the side where old garage was, more publicly accessible. This would also make it more inviting to people traveling.

- Parking on side where old garage was. Better parking that is closer to entrance of building and handicapped.

- Someone disagreed with the above statement about parking and stated that there is inadequate parking because of CIDER buses and Blue Paddle staff. Can’t drive around the building because of this. Between Granny’s Attic workers, Blue Paddle Staff and CIDER buses, there are no spots/room.

- The structural recommendation was not to have pavement up to the building because of water concerns. This would argue against having parking on east or west side. Having the front of building as a lawn would be much more attractive and appealing. Putting parking in the back follows most urban planning guidelines- so aesthetics of building could be appreciated and not polluted with car clutter. There is adequate parking in the back if it was properly lined and set up. Preservation should be the main concern.

- It might be a good idea to have a discussion with Selectboard about parking situation because there is too much overlap. Maybe designated parking for Granny’s Attic, maybe CIDER can’t park there?

- Add parking near structure that is demolished.

- Designate/reserve parking for Granny’s Attic. Friday 1 PM to 3 PM. Saturday 9 AM to 1 PM.

- Restrict Blue Paddle’s parking area to its own lot. If necessary or desirable, charge the Paddle for parking on G.A. lot.

- Add parking on Cider property line.

- Keep Blue Paddle side open for access/fire lanes

- Keep parking to one side, leave area open by Blue Paddle to provide firelane and access to red building.

- Provide lined parking (whole lot)

- Parking (whole lot)
Signage

- Having a sign for Granny’s Attic on Route 2. Bathrooms could be out back as well, or if first floor tenant needs special storage space.

- Add ground mounted sign in front of the building.

- Good signage with lighting in front of building.

- Have signage on Route 2 for whole building.

Landscaping

- Area directly in front to structure between two curb cuts could be a lawn.

- Look at old photographs in museum and gain ideas from them for a landscaping perspective.

- Add lawn in front of structure.

- Add lawn in front of structure and on the rear side of structure.

- Add landscaping to the Cider property line

- Add landscaping/visual barrier on Cider property line.

- Add lawn in front of structure.

- Add landscaping on Cider property line.

- Create seating/picnic area at rear of new building – pocket park.

- The museum has photography of the building as it was originally and should be seen to consider landscaping as it was (South Hero Bicentennial Museum)

Building Addition

- Put an addition on the rear or the west side of Old White Meeting House

- Add an addition to the rear of the structure.

- Potential new addition in rear. Could have elevator new town office and full basement.

- Addition for elevator/access plus new town offices or storage for Old White Meeting House tenants, could also have bathrooms.
Other

- Advocates for Granny’s Attic were not happy that the examples shown did not include a space that is similar to Granny’s Attic. Said examples shown were far from the current use (that includes Granny’s Attic.) They stated that Granny’s Attic has been around for a long time.

- Use old fire station building for Granny’s Attic.

- Keep Granny’s Attic as non-profit resale vendor.

- Refurbish and upgrade the building to code. Install HVAC preliminaries with an eye towards future water, septic services.

- Keep it as it is! Reduce lower section.

- Just keep it like it is. Fix the lower part the way it was before the town compromised the structure.

Visioning Session – Summary of Responses – July 29, 2019 Meeting
The following is a summary of responses from the July 29, 2019 visioning session:

Access (Road and Building)

- Sidewalk to connect to sidewalk on the street.

- Some site plans showed the retention of two curb cuts: one for an entrance and one for exit.

- Other site plans showed elimination of western curb cut. Many of these same site plans showed this area as being converted to lawn/landscaping.

Parking

- Strong sentiment that there should be parking in rear

- Add delineation of parking spots

Landscaping

- Add green space to the front of the building and/or to the west side of the building.

- Include: trees (including larger shade trees), benches, space for gardening.

Building Addition

- Building addition in rear or on the west side.

- Addition could include a kitchen and/or bathroom facilities.
Other

- Demo the building in the rear (old Fire Dept. building currently used as overflow for Granny’s Attic).
- Make sure there is adequate lighting in parking areas and in front of structure.
- Several site plans showed the property with the old Fire Department garage as a location for a septic system.
- Have less pavement on the parcel.
- Septic and stormwater management will be dependent on the use of the structure.
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At the request of the Town of South Hero, Old White Meeting House Study Committee, an architectural and structural assessment of the Old White Meeting House on Rte. 2 in the Village of South Hero has been conducted by Engineering Ventures, PC and Arnold & Scangas Architects. This study was partially funded by a Northwest Regional Planning Commission grant. A site visit was made by on March 25, 2019 by Bob Neeld, PE, and Sara Dorr, EI of Engineering Ventures and Laz Scangas, AIA and Jonathon Collin of Arnold & Scangas. During this visit, the existing structure was documented and the architectural and structural conditions noted. The following is a report of our observations, assessment of the existing structure. Attached to this report are existing conditions floor plans developed during this study.

Architectural Description

The Old White Meeting House was constructed in 1816 as the First Protestant Church. The Greek Revival Building is a two-story wood framed structure with a wood framed cupola and cut stone foundation. The building has wood trim and tongue and groove horizontal siding. It is listed on the State Register of Historic Places, as a contributing structure in the South Hero Historic District. The three-by-five bay rectangular gable-front building is highlighted by a two-stage, square steeple that sits at the edge of the front (south) raking eaves. The first stage is square with a molded cornice. The second stage is also square and has corner pilasters. The louvered openings of this stage are topped with a peaked lintel molding and the area between the openings and the pilasters are paneled. The metal clad bell shaped roofed is capped with a finial and weathervane. The main block of the building is roofed with slate. Trim pieces include overhanging eaves, cornice returns, crown molded cornice, flat frieze, 5” flat corner boards, back banded window and door trim and a water table with beveled top. A concrete masonry block chimney is attached to the rear (north) of the building.
The building originally had two separate front entrances, now there is one centered six pane door entrance on a raised wood framed platform deck with railings. On the eave sides of the building, there were 5 windows on the first and second floors. When the building was converted to a school, 4 second floor windows were removed and 4 larger paired windows were installed. The first window from the front at the second floor of the building retains its original sized window.

In the 1950’s the fire department was given the use of the first floor. Two overhead doors were added, part of the first floor was removed including the exterior sill beams and two truck bays were added.

At the rear (north) of the building, a shed roof wood framed addition and a wood framed stair that provides egress from the second floor was added.

Building Assessment

Roof:

The existing slate roof appears to be in fair condition. There are areas where slate shingles are missing or broken. There are areas where the spacing of the slate shingles are not proper and need to be adjusted and slate shingles added. If not corrected, leaks are possible in these areas.

Exterior Siding and Trim:

The existing horizontal siding and trim on the building is generally in good condition for a building of this age. While the existing horizontal siding appears to be clapboard lap siding, it is horizontal siding that is tongue and grooved at the top and bottom of the boards.
At some point, the horizontal siding on the front of the building was replaced with clapboard lap siding, from the top of the water table to just above the top of the first floor window trim. The ends of the replacement clapboard lap siding project beyond the corner board exposing the ends.

At the rear (north) of the building, the existing horizontal siding is pulling away from the building. The original nails have rusted away and are no longer holding the siding in place.

Also at the rear (north) of the building, there is existing siding that is water damaged. This damaged siding may allow water to enter the structure of the building and cause water damage.
The existing water table at the northeast corner of the building has rotted. This happens from the northeast corner to the north garage door opening and on the rear (north) of the building under the existing stairs.

There are sections of the existing water table that have been cut and ill-fitted pieces have been installed.

In a number of areas, gaps have developed between the connection of the existing trim pieces and the existing horizontal siding. These gaps allow water to enter into the wall structure. These gaps need to be closed with either new trim and siding that matches existing or if appropriate sealant/caulk.
At the first floor are existing original sized 2 over 2 windows. At the second floor are enlarged paired 2 over 2 windows. This was part of the renovation when the second floor was a school. The existing windows are in poor condition. The wood members are badly checked. Existing joints and their connections between the stiles and rails have opened and in some cases are failing. The existing wood sills appear solid. The joints at the underside of the sill and the horizontal siding have opened up in some locations.

At the second floor, a window pane is missing and a plywood panel has been installed at the inside face of the window. The plywood panel’s location should be relocated to the outside face of the window to lessen the opportunity for water to enter the building.

About two thirds of the first floor has been removed and two overhead doors and fire truck bays have been installed. A partition wall separating the two bays has been installed. Two historic chamfered wood posts remain. These two
openings have produced a sag in the second floor windows and roof mostly caused by undersized structural framing supporting the second floor and roof framing at these openings. See structural section of this report. At the north bay, the existing pressed tin ceiling and cornice remains. At the south bay, the existing ceiling has been concealed with panel board and battens. The hope is that the existing press tin ceiling remains above the ceiling at the south bay.

The existing front (south) entrance door is a six panel wood door and is poor condition. It does not appear to be original. A number of the panels have split. The interior face of the door has been reinforced with a number of pre-fabricated truss plates.
Interior

First Floor:
The front section of the first floor is all that remains of finished first floor. This front section has become an entry hall for a pair of stairs to access the second floor. The existing floor is a tongue and groove painted wood floor that is worn. The walls and ceilings are covered with bead boarded and Homasote and batten. There is existing surface mounted electrical conduit and wiring.

Doors that originally led to the remaining first floor have been locked/fixed in place. At the east and west sides of the entry hall are wood stairs that lead to the second floor. The west stairs have been modified at some point. The east stairs appear to be original.

The two existing stairs are wood with solid wood rounded top handrail with a boarded railing below. There are an existing wood post newel posts at each turn/corner of the stairs. The existing stairs treads and raised are painted wood. The stairs do not meet the life safety code.
Above the stairs are two existing windows that appear to be original. The existing window sill is part of a wood cap that sits on top of a horizontal wide boarded wall. Above the wood cap is a plaster and wood lath wall that is in poor condition. At the ceilings of stairs is a pressed tin ceiling and cornice. The tin ceiling appears to be in fair condition and appears to match the tin ceiling at the fire truck bay.

At the main room of the second floor, all the original walls and ceiling finishes have been covered. The existing blackboards and caulk trays remain. The existing tongue and groove painted wood floor is worn.
STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENT:

Introduction:

The 40’ by 48’ building had a wood framed first floor over crawlspace and fieldstone foundation, a wood framed second floor and a timber truss roof with a bell tower. Later the building was used as a schoolhouse and a partition wall was added splitting the second floor lengthwise. The building was renovated again in the 20th century for use as a firehouse. This renovation including removing the wood framed first floor in the rear two-thirds of the building and cutting through sill beam and foundation walls to allow for fire truck garage bays at grade elevation. The second floor of the building is currently in use as a part-time retail store (Granny’s Attic). The first floor is no longer in use, but still holds the shape of a fire station. Within the last 10 years the bell tower was restored with traditional timber structure and the original roof rafters were reinforced with modern framing lumber. There is a small shed abutting the rear of the building that is very lightly framed and has not weathered well. See Photos 1-4.

In addition to assessing the observed conditions of the building, the existing framing capacity has been evaluated where documentation was possible for conformance with current building code requirements. The State adopted International Building Code (IBC 2015) provides loading capacities for various uses. For reference, the following are typical mandated capacities:

- Residential: 40 Pounds per Square Foot (psf)
- Retail: 100 psf
- Public Assembly: 100 psf
- Roofs: 40 psf ground snow load adjusted for sliding and wind exposure

Observations:

Site/Drainage:

The site is generally flat. We did not observe site grading issues causing water damage to the building.

Foundation:

The fieldstone foundation around the perimeter of the original meetinghouse is in poor condition as observed from the exterior. The stones are loose and have shifted in some locations. See Photo 5. It is likely that the foundation does not extend to frost depth. Two 13’ – 4” long cuts were taken out of the east foundation & sill beam during the firehouse renovation. The foundation has been repaired with concrete at the location of these cuts. See Photo 6. The remaining exterior foundation in the two garage bays at the rear of the building appears to have been reinforced with a new concrete wall at the interior side of the stone wall. There are 16” high concrete masonry
unit (CMU) walls supporting the two interior sill beams separating the two garage bays and front room; these appear to be in good condition. See Photo 7.

First Floor Framing:

The front room/Granny’s Attic entry occupies the first third of the building, approximately 14’, closest to the street (south). Its floor is assumed to be framed with 7”x9” joists running north-south at 3’-0” on center bearing on notched 13”X9” sill beams. The joists have a live load capacity of about 50-60 psf.

The wood framed floor has been removed in the rear two thirds of the building, leaving the notched sill beams in place. Concrete slab on grade was poured for the firehouse renovation is now approximately 16” lower than the original wood floor. The slab is cracked and heaved, but can remain in place if a new wood first floor is framed above. See Photo 7.

Second Floor Framing:

The second floor is framed with 3” x 9¾” joists running east-west. The joists are supported on 8½” x 9¾” perimeter beams and three interior beams that were not measurable at the time of the site visit. We assumed these beams to be the same size as the perimeter beams; one runs the length of the building at the centerline, the other two are set 7’ – 9” inboard of the exterior walls. These beams span between the north and south exterior walls with posts down to the (2) interior sill beams on new CMU walls. The maximum span of these beams is about 17 in the rear (north) bay.

The joists appear to have a live load capacity of about 90 psf, and the beams about 20-30 psf.

There is some significant sagging of the floor over the garage door openings due to the roof truss load landing over the openings with inadequate beams over the doors.

Roof Framing:

The roof is framed with (4) heavy timber king-post trusses at approximately 9’ – 4” on center. The trusses are 12”x8” king posts, 9”x 8” top chords, 7”x9” chords parallel to the top chords offset 5'-0” horizontally, 3 ½”X4” shims between the top chord and parallel chord, 13”x10” tie as bottom chord. The trusses sit on 13”x10” sill beams running along the perimeter. 10” x 8” purlins span between the trusses at the midspan of the top chords. The original 3 ½”x4” rafters at 27” on center bear on the purlins and sill beams. The original rafters have been recently sistered with 2x8 dimensional lumber. The 2”x9 ½” attic floor joists span between the truss bottom chords and are spaced at 24” on center. There is 4”x4” diagonal horizontal bracing where the truss meets the sill beam. See Photos 8-10.

The large timbers appear to be hardwood and are clear and straight-grained with no signs of rot. We did notice two locations where there was rodent damage to rafters. See Photo 11. The roof boards are 1” or 5/4” thick with a layer of wood shingles under the metal roofing.
The code required snow load is 40 psf. The roof system has a capacity of about 15 psf, governed by the truss. The original roof rafters have been reinforced with 2x10’s and are adequate for the code required snow load. The purlins also have adequate capacity.

The roof trusses appear to be performing reasonably well although there is a noticeable sag/deflection. The connections were constructed with sound techniques that reduce the likelihood of failure often seen in trusses of this era. The top chords are subject to a fairly large load from the purlins; the truss capacity is limited by this member and is less than the required current code required snow load. The positive performance of the trusses is likely due to snow loads typically below code requirements due to snow sliding off the roof and wind exposure clearing the roof.

**Recommendations:**

While this report is intended simply as an assessment of existing conditions, we are providing some conceptual recommendations to be considered as renovation plans are developed. These are only initial ideas as the project design will need to be further developed as intended uses and level of renovation are decided.

The following are our conceptual recommendations to accompany a renovation project:

**Foundation:**

We recommend that the building be shored up and the fieldstone foundation walls be replaced with full depth concrete frost walls. The new foundation walls may have an exterior shelf at grade to allow for fieldstone facing. There should be a continuous layer of insulation at the inside of the foundation walls.

**First Floor Framing:**

The existing portion of the first floor is in good condition, but may need reinforcing for public assembly occupancy. The rear two bays could have first floor framing reinstated between sill beams to match the existing configuration designed for the appropriate occupancy. An alternative would be to fill the lower level and place a concrete slab on grade. If a crawl space is to remain, it should have a vapor barrier and insulation.

**Second Floor Framing:**

The floor should be shored up to level over the doors and permanent supports installed between the perimeter beam & foundation. The interior beams will need to be reinforced for almost any occupancy.
Roof Framing:

The roof trusses can be easily modified to increase their capacity. A diagonal from the purlin support location to the bottom of the king post should be added with appropriate connections.

Any openings where mice or bats could enter should be closed up to prevent further damage to the roof system.

General Planning:

The next phase of work will be to develop conceptual designs for reuse and/or continued use based on community input. As part of that process, construction cost estimates can be developed and decisions made about how to use the facility.

Existing buildings that continue to be in use and do not appear unsafe are generally exempt or “grandfathered” by the building code. Substantial structural alterations or changes of use to a building will typically require evaluation under the current Building Code with upgrades required prior to the modified occupancy. Based on our conversations, it is understood that the Town is considering restoration of the first floor. Adding a new occupancy to the lower level would likely trigger a full code review and building upgrade. Items to consider during renovation plans include:

- An enclosed stair and elevator may be required for second floor public access and egress.
- If the first floor is to be framed at the original elevation, access via a ramp will be needed. It may be possible to change the elevation of the building- although this may have impacts on other facets of the building.
- Mechanical and electrical systems will likely need replacement or upgrades.
- Site considerations including waste disposal and parking will need to be addressed.

Please review this report and let us know if you have questions. When you are ready we are available to assist in the next phase of work.
Structural Assessment Photos

Old White Meeting House
South Hero, Vermont
Photo 1: East Elevation

Photo 2: West Elevation
Appendix D – Potential Funding Sources

The following is a summary of potential funding sources for the rehabilitation of the Old White Meeting House. Information in this list reflects the most recent information available from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) Designated Downtown and Village Centers Funding Directory (https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/CD/CPR/CPR-Funding-Directory.pdf).

Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit
State tax credit for qualified historic rehabilitation, façade, code and technology upgrades for properties constructed before 1983 located within a state designated downtown or village center.
- **Range:** 10 – 50% of eligible expenditures
- **Eligibility:** Income-producing properties within a state designated downtown or village center
- **Deadline:** Annually the first week of July
- **Contact:** Caitlin Corkins, (802) 828-3047, caitlin.corkins@vermont.gov
- **Website:** http://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/tax-credits

Federal Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit
Federal tax credit for 20% of the rehabilitation costs (including labor, materials and architects or other consultant fees) for income-producing buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Range:** 20% of eligible expenditures
- **Eligibility:** Owners of income-producing historic buildings
- **Deadline:** Rolling application deadline; file application before construction
- **Contact:** Caitlin Corkins, (802) 828-3047, caitlin.corkins@vermont.gov
- **Website:** http://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives.htm

State Historic Preservation Grants
State 50:50 matching grants for the repair and restoration of historic buildings listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Range:** $1,000 - $20,000
- **Eligibility:** Municipalities and non-profit organizations
- **Deadline:** Annually the first week in October
- **Contact:** Caitlin Corkins, (802) 828-3047, caitlin.corkins@vermont.gov
- **Website:** http://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/historic-preservation-grants

Cultural Facilities Grant Program
Matching state grants for community facilities used to provide cultural activities to the public and to enhance or expand the capacity of an existing building to provide cultural programming.
- **Range:** $1,000 - $30,000
- **Eligibility:** Municipalities and non-profit organizations
- **Deadline:** Annually at the beginning of May
- **Contact:** Michelle Bailey, (802) 828-3294, mbailey@vermontartscouncil.org
- **Website:** http://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants-and-services/organizations/cultural-facilities
Vermont Housing and Conservation Board Grants

Outstanding Historic Building Grants
Funding for acquisition or rehabilitation of “outstanding” historic buildings located in downtowns and village centers as determined by VHCB. Projects are protected by a historic preservation easement.

Range: Varies. Match required for locally significant historic projects; no match required for buildings of statewide significance, but matching funds make applications more competitive

Eligibility: Municipalities; nonprofit housing and conservation organizations

Deadline: Multiple, depending on the availability of funding; deadlines on VHCB website

Contact: Karen Freeman, (802) 828-5067, karen@vhcb.org

Website: https://vhcb.org/our-programs/conservation/apply-for-funding

Project-Specific Capacity Funding
Awarded for pre-development expenses in excess of the amount available from VHCB’s Feasibility Fund and are limited to projects that have a higher than normal level of complexity or uncertainty. Examples include: site challenges, the presence of multiple sites or multiple goals, unusual ownership structure or special population to be served, community economics or demographics that make development of a project especially challenging. Project-related capacity funding can cover costs of appraisals, engineering work, title search, historic preservation or hazardous materials analyses.

Range: Up to $50,000

Eligibility: 501(c)(3) nonprofits, municipalities, and limited equity cooperatives

Deadline: Multiple, depending on the availability of funding; deadlines on VHCB website

Contact: Karen Freeman, (802) 828-5067, karen@vhcb.org

Website: https://vhcb.org/our-programs/conservation/apply-for-funding

Preservation Trust of Vermont

Implementation and planning grants available to preserve and rehabilitate historic buildings.

Range: Varies

Eligibility: Municipalities and nonprofit organizations

Deadline: Varies

Contact: Paul Bruhn, (802) 343-0595, paul@ptvermont.org

Website: https://ptvermont.org/grants/

Human Services and Educational Facilities Grant Program

Matching state grants for capital costs associated with the major maintenance, renovation, and development of facilities used for human services and health care, or educational opportunities.

Range: $1,000 - $25,000

Eligibility: Municipalities and non-profit organizations

Deadline: Annually in July

Contact: Judy Bruneau, (802) 828-3519, judy.bruneau@vermont.gov

Website: https://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants

USDA Rural Development Program

The USDA offers federal support for towns and villages through a variety of loan and grant programs aimed at enhancing rural quality of life through investing in housing, essential community facilities, municipal infrastructure, and economic development.

Range: Loan and grant support varies by program
Eligibility: Varies by program
Deadline: Varies by program
Contact: Ben Doyle, (802) 828-6042, benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov
Website: http://www.rd.usda.gov/vt

ANR Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund
State Revolving Loan to assist in the planning, design, and construction of municipal wastewater and stormwater systems. Details on various programs on website.
Range: No maximum or minimum project amount
Eligibility: Municipalities
Deadline: Accepted on a continuing basis for planning and design loans. Construction loans must apply by February 15 of each year to be on the priority list for the year.
Contact: Tom Brown, (802) 622-4205, thomas.brown@vermont.gov
Website: http://dec.vermont.gov/facilities-engineering/water-financing/cwsrf

ANR Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Construction Fund
State Revolving Loan to assist in construction of public, private and nonprofit community water, wastewater and stormwater systems. Details on various programs on website.
Range: $2,000,000 per funding cycle and $6,000,000 cap for any one project. No minimum project amount.
Eligibility: Municipalities, private developers and non-profit organizations
Deadline: Annually in February
Contact: Ashley Lucht, (802) 585-4904, ashley.lucht@vermont.gov
Website: http://dec.vermont.gov/tags/drinking-water-state-revolving-fund-dwsrf

ANR Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Planning Fund
State Revolving Loan to assist in the planning and design of public, private and nonprofit community water, wastewater and stormwater systems. Details on various programs on website.
Range: $100,000 maximum. No minimum project amount.
Eligibility: Municipalities, non-profit organizations and private developers
Deadline: Accepted on a continuing basis.
Contact: Ashley Lucht, (802) 585-4904, ashley.lucht@vermont.gov
Website: http://dec.vermont.gov/facilities-engineering/water-financing/dwsrf-water-planning-loan

Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP)
VCDP has several grant opportunities through their administration of Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) from HUD.

Accessibility Modification Grants – Federal grants to bring existing municipal buildings and non-school libraries into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
Implementation Grants – Federal grants for economic development, housing, public facilities, and public services that will benefit low to moderate income individuals, eliminate slums or blight, or address an urgent need.
Planning Grants – Federal grants for community development planning, downtown planning studies, and project development to benefit people with low to moderate incomes and/or eliminate “slums and blight.”
Scattered Site Grants – Federal grants to rehabilitate scattered site housing projects to benefit people with low to moderate incomes and/or eliminate “slums and blight.” Range: $3,000 - $1,000,000
Eligibility: Municipalities and/or municipalities on behalf of organizations and private owners.
Deadline: Open application with funding decisions made throughout the year.
Contact: Cindy Blondin, (802) 828-5219, cindy.blondin@vermont.gov
Website: http://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp

BGS Regional Economic Development Grant Program
Matching state grants to stimulate the creation and development or retention of economic development of individual or regional Vermont communities.
Range: $1,000 - $25,000
Eligibility: Municipalities and non-profit organizations
Deadline: Annually in July
Contact: Judy Bruneau, (802) 828-3519, judy.bruneau@vermont.gov
Website: https://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants

BGS Recreational Facilities Grants Program
State matching 50/50 grants for the development and creation of community recreational opportunities.
Range: $1,000 - $25,000
Eligibility: Municipalities and non-profit organizations
Deadline: Annually in July
Contact: Judy Bruneau, (802) 828-3519, judy.bruneau@vermont.gov
Website: http://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants

ANR Ecosystem Restoration Grant Program
State grants for the design and construction projects that target nonpoint sources of pollution that cause or contribute to the state’s surface waters.
Range: Maximum of $250,000. Local match varies
Eligibility: Municipalities, regional organizations, non-profits associations, citizen groups, and state agencies
Deadline: Two rounds annually, varies depending on funding
Contact: Allison Compagna, (802) 490-6124, allison.compagna@vermont.gov
Website: http://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/cwi/grants

Northern Border Regional Commission Grants
A federal/state partnership that invests in economic and community development projects in the six northern counties of Vermont (Essex, Orleans, Caledonia, Lamoille, Franklin, and Grand Isle).
Range: Grants up to $250,000. Match of 20%-50% of total project cost, depending on location.
Eligibility: Participating member states, local governments (city and county), nonprofit and Native American entities
Deadline: Annually in May
Contact: Tim Tierney, (802) 505-5496, tim.tierney@vermont.gov
Website: http://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/funding-incentives/Northern-Boader-Regional-Commission
Vermont Community Foundation

A variety of grants are available to support projects to improve environmental sustainability, cultural heritage, social justice, historic preservation, and vitality of Vermont communities

**Range:** Up to $25,000. No local match required

**Eligibility:** Municipalities, nonprofit organizations, grant availability varies by geographic area

**Deadline:** Varies by grant, throughout the year

**Contact:** Lauren Bruno, (802) 388-3355 x 222, lbruno@vermontcf.org

**Website:** [http://www.vermontcf.org/Nonprofits/AvailableGrants.aspx](http://www.vermontcf.org/Nonprofits/AvailableGrants.aspx)