

New Town Office Committee Meeting **APPROVED** Minutes

Meeting Date: April 18, 2024

Meeting Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Town Office, 333 US Route 2, South Hero, VT

Committee Members Present: Anne Zolotas, Phil Scott, Matt Reed, Nate Hayward, Rick Breault, Kathleen Swanson (via Zoom)

Committee Member Absent: Ross Brown

Member of the Public Present: Tim Maxham

I. Introductions

The meeting began with introductions of all committee members and the member of the public present.

II. Election of Officers

- Chair: Kathleen Swanson (Motion by: Anne Zolotas, Seconded by: Matt Reed)
- Vice Chair: Phil Scott (Motion by: Phil Scott, Seconded by: Matt Reed)
- Secretary: Nate Hayward (Motion by Nate Hayward, Seconded by Kathleen Swanson)

This slate was voted in unanimously.

III. Review of Agenda

The agenda for the meeting was reviewed and approved by the committee members.

IV. Review of Charge for the New Town Office

The committee reviewed the Charge for the New Town Meeting House prepared by the selectboard. The Charge outlined the committee's purpose and responsibilities.

V. Discussion Topics

V.A. Assessing Space Needs for New Town Office

The Committee discussed the space needs. The focus was on assessing the current and future space requirements for various municipal functions within the new town hall, including elements like the clerk's office, zoning office, treasurer's office, lister's office, and the town administrator's office. Recognizing the need for additional space beyond individual offices, the committee also discussed the need for meeting rooms, a vault, and storage space.

To get a head start on assessing space needs, **Anne Zolotas will investigate the existence of any preliminary space requirement documents** from the municipal planning grant process or prior committee efforts. This information could serve as a valuable starting point. Additionally, to aid in the planning process, **Matt Reed will provide the committee with examples of an Owner's Project Requirements (OPR) document and a sample survey for property owners.** These documents will be reviewed at the next meeting. It was acknowledged that input from existing office staff would be essential for the committee's planning efforts. Phil Scott inquired whether a future Town office should have additional space for future growth. Anne Zolotas

summarized some of the staff spaces required. Rick Breault inquired whether office staff need individual offices rather than open shared space. Anne Zolotas thought most office staff require individual offices for various reasons. Phil Scott and Matt Reed discussed how much parking may be required, and that it is likely more than the Zoning Regulations require.

Matt Reed suggested that the committee visit other local new town offices for ideas.

V.B. Identifying Potential Sites for a New Town Hall

The committee discussed the process of identifying potential sites for the new town hall and ultimately recommending the most suitable location to the Selectboard.

- **Past Considerations:** Three locations were previously explored:
 - Former Pharmacy building - Dismissed due to insufficient wastewater capacity, parking limitations, currently leased, and unsuitability for conversion into a town office, also not presently for sale.
 - Existing town office parcel.
 - Former fire station and associated future park land.
- **Town-Owned Parcels:** No other town-owned parcels along Route 2 were deemed suitable.
- **Scope of Consideration:** Discussion arose regarding the breadth of the Committee search
 - Should we consider:
 - Only town owned properties?
 - Properties for sale?
 - Properties not presently for sale?
- **Financial Considerations:** The committee emphasized the importance of minimizing taxpayer burden. Buying new land would represent additional financial hurdles. Should these be considered if existing town lands or donated options are viable?
- **Pros and Cons Analysis:**
 - Anne Zolotas presented a preliminary pros and cons document based on prior committee discussions. **(see attached exhibit A)**
 - The committee agreed to refine this analysis by expanding it and detailing each item. This would provide a comprehensive foundation for informed decision-making and clear communication to the community and Selectboard regarding the final site recommendation.
 - Some of the pros and cons the committee felt required discussion and analysis were: utilities (power, water, sewer), vehicle and pedestrian access, Act 250 site or not, intensity of permitting required (state, local, federal), prominence of location, association with other town amenities, etc.

Action Item: All committee members are encouraged to identify and share any additional potential parcels for consideration.

V.C. Other discussion:

Anne Zolotas inquired with Matt Reed about geothermal heating as an option for a building. Matt shared his thoughts and experience with this.

Nate Hayward inquired about how far in the planning process the regional planning grant of \$20,000 can take us. Matt Reed said that we will need to develop enough of a plan to get a cost estimate so that we know how much to bond for. He elaborated that we could potentially bond, or pass an article, for the project "soft costs" which generally are about 20% of total project costs. Anne Zolotas asked if we could put an article on the ballot in the next election to get money for the architectural and engineering services

that will be required. Tim Maxham stated that there was not sufficient time for the warning.

VI. Public Comment

Tim Maxham provided public comments about office staff space considerations. He said that most office staff felt that individual offices were preferable to open work areas. Tim stated that presently, Sue Arguin shares space with the lister's, Kim Julow prefers a private office to better allow her to focus without distractions, Martha Varney's space is presently too restrictive and perhaps too public, creating too many distractions, and that the existing vault is too small.

VII. Next Steps

The committee discussed the future meeting schedule and frequency and agreed on Tuesday evenings and every other week is best in the beginning, then perhaps change to once per month as required. Kathleen Swanson suggested agenda items to be included for the next meeting.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM. The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday April 30, 2024 at 6:00 PM at the town office.

IX. Prepared By:

Nate Hayward, Secretary

Report to the Select Board re. Siting a new town office

Given that the selected site should be on currently town owned property there are two parcels that were reviewed, the first being the current site on the south side of Rt 2, and the site the red fire station occupies on the north side of Rt 2. In order to make a well considered choice between the two parcels the following list of pros and cons has been compiled.

NORTH SIDE

SOUTH SIDE

Parking.	More than adequate with some concerns about competition from the adjacent restaurant and the as-yet-undetermined use of the White Meeting House. Staggered parking needs by current and future users would be controlled by signage and assigned employee spaces and by taking advantage of the 86 parking spaces in the rec park for overflow.	More than adequate utilizing the additional space created by removal of the Craft shop.
Septic	Deeded access by forced main across rec park to an engineered mound system on private land. Town would share construction cost and be responsible for a portion of yearly inspection costs, as well as any repairs and failures as might occur.	Existing system is adequate and likely to be grandfathered. Could be upgraded at a later date if needed.
Site suitability	Removal of red fire house building creates adequate room for construction without disruption of current use. This minimizes construction delays which are projected to take a year. <i>GEO THERMAL CAPACITY</i> →	Removal of Craft shop would be necessary for siting of new building. Construction activity would eliminate employee parking and severely limit customer access. <i>NO GEOTHERMAL</i>
Water.	Town water	Town water

After due consideration and weighing the pros and cons as presented by the Feasibly study and outlined above the Select Board has decided that the more suitable site is on the North side of Rt2. This reflects a slight economic advantage, but a strong factor in this decision is to highlight and showcase the day to day business of the town and pair it with the new rec park to create a vital hub for the village.