

South Hero New Town Hall Building Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: July 9, 2024

Meeting Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Town Office Conference Room, 333 US Route 2, South Hero, VT
OR Zoom Meeting ID: 814 1959 0978, Passcode: 660440

Committee Members Present:

- Kathleen Swanson, Chair
- Phil Scott, Vice Chair
- Nate Hayward, Secretary
- Anne Zolotas

Committee Members Absent:

- Jill Lowrey
- Matt Reed

Members of the Public Present:

Steve Robinson, Peter Gregg, and David Roy. (one other member of the public attended, she did not sign in, and arrived after introductions - name unknown).

I. Introductions

The meeting began with introductions of committee members present.

II. Review and Approval of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed and approved with the following item added:

-Discussion of Ross Brown's vacated seat, and whether to fill that committee position.

III. Review and Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes (June 25, 2024)

The committee reviewed and approved the minutes from June 25, 2024.

IV. Discussion of open seat on committee

David Roy, member of the public, was in attendance and volunteered to join the committee. Anne Zolotas noted that she felt David Roy has professional experience that would benefit the committee. Phil Scott noted that David Roy was a good candidate because he has attended many of the committee meetings, and is therefore up to speed with our process. Nate Hayward made a motion that the committee recommend David Roy to the selectboard to fill the open seat. Phil Scott seconded the motion. Members voted unanimously to approve the motion.

V. Site Selection Process

● Site Attribute Scoring

- The committee reviewed the email from Leslie Carter, landscape architect with Reed Hilderbrand, which was received after the June 25th meeting regarding her thoughts on site selection. Her email was read aloud and is **attached to these minutes**.
- An additional email was received from Rick Breault, that was also read into the record and is **attached to these minutes**.
- The committee discussed the incorporated edits from committee and public comments that were added to the site attribute list.
- The committee decided to complete the scoring of the two sites. The results of the committee's **scoring exercise are attached**. Some notes:
 - Jill Lowery arrived after the meeting was over. She completed her scoring which is included.
 - All committee member's scoring favored location A, adjacent to the current town office.

● Cost Comparison Study

- The committee discussed the challenges with completing a cost comparison study. The committee felt like this was not a worthwhile exercise because the cost differences are too nebulous to accurately determine without completed plans for both sites.

VI. Discussion on Project Hurdles and Timeline

- The committee discussed a project timeline with key dates targeting a potential bond vote in March 2025.
- Phill Scott started a discussion around public outreach. Kathleen Swanson said she can lead this effort as this is her field of expertise. She said that this will require a public political campaign.
- The committee discussed creating a Q & A document to address potential community questions.
- Anne Zolotas discussed the Fire Department's construction bond being paid off in the next 2 years which may ease the blow of a new bond for the Town office. She said that the annual principal is \$130,000 and \$13,039 in interest last year. This was based on the \$1,300,000 bond paid over 10 years. Nate Hayward said potentially the new bond could be a longer repayment period to keep the tax impact similar. All members acknowledged that this is a bad climate for any tax increases.

VII. Owner's Project Requirements (OPR), RFP, and Charter

- The committee acknowledged the need to align the RFP schedule with the town meeting for the bond vote.

VIII. Next Steps

- Action Items:
 - **Form working group consisting of:** Matt Reed, David Roy, Nate Hayward, and Anne Zolotas to focus on the RFP and Timeline.
 - **Nate Hayward:** Convert the Waitsfield RFP pdf into Google Docs and

- share for joint editing.
- **Nate Hayward:** Share a Google Sheet document for timeline development to be incorporated in the RFP.
- **Nate Hayward:** Forward committee site selection to the selectboard for their review.
- **Anne Zolotas:** At next selectboard meeting:
 - Present the report prepared by Nate Hayward regarding site selection.
 - Determine the deadline by which the articles must be approved by the select board to have an article on the March town meeting vote.
 - Discuss adding David Roy to this committee.

VIII. Public Comment

Peter Gregg had questions about future expansion space, the committee provided comments on conceptual site plans showing either site has area for future expansion. David Roy actively contributed throughout the meeting.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:15PM.

Prepared by: Nate Hayward, Secretary

On Thu, Jun 27, 2024 at 4:51 PM Leslie Carter <leslie@reedhilderbrand.com> wrote:

Hi Nate,

Please extend my thanks to the committee for listening again to my presentation about street trees and landscape at the meeting on Tuesday. It was helpful to listen to further discussion and debate about the two sites and I'd like to again offer my insights, which have evolved over the course of studying this in plan and listening to the various factors at play. The rationale for establishing the civic green and tying the new building to the old meeting house was to establish a presence on Rt 2 and avoid congesting the area around the meeting house so as to keep open sightlines into the park. Connection to Rt 2 is not an issue for the south site, which already has a presence and high visibility. The other design ideas – maintaining open sightlines into the park, reducing paving around the meeting house, and connecting the meeting house to the park with lawn – are also all better achieved *without* the town office building sited in the park. I still recommend all of those design principles to carry through with the park design.

While I was initially intrigued by some opportunities for public engagement with the park location, that is outweighed by concern for the growing program of the building and the ultimate scale of the footprint. The program SF of the building itself is larger than we originally thought, plus once you factor in the public bathrooms and the outdoor performance area this is becoming a quite large building with a chance of growing more in the future. I believe there is a risk here of losing the park entirely. A small pavilion with public facilities would fit much better within the park site. Also, as I briefly mentioned on Tuesday, siting the building within the park puts additional pressure on that building to have multiple public faces – a complexity that, to be done *right*, will surely add cost, even if that is not reflected in the building take-off cost estimates. Lastly, there is sound logic to reinforcing the energy of the "Main Street Corridor" along rt 2 by keeping the highly programmed building facing the street. That frees up the park to just be a park, with full flexibility for recreation, play, and open space.

I realize these are just some of the many, many factors going into this decision, but I wanted to summarize my final recommendation and professional opinion for your consideration. I do wish I was able to come to this conclusion sooner, but such is the process.

Thank you,

Leslie Carter
Senior Associate

802 734 7791

Reed Hilderbrand LLC
Landscape Architecture

From: jrb010 <jrb010@aol.com>

Sent: Monday, July 8, 2024 6:50 PM

To: Town Administrator <townadmin@southherovt.org>

Subject: New Town Office location

Sue,

I can't attend but my opinion has always been to keep it where it is.

In my opinion there would be too much traffic near the old White Meeting House.

When the meeting house is finished plus the Restaurant (or whatever ultimately is going to be there) the Town Rec. Park, the Town Museum, Grannies Attic and the development that I think will eventually be out back the parking will be terrible.

I think when a lot of people go to the Town Office they are on a mission and are in a hurry to get in and get out and won't want to deal with traffic or find a place to park.

Rick Breault

Location A - East of the existing Town Hall located at 329-333 US Route 2 (The Existing Town office and Island Craft Shop Parcels).															
Location B - North of The Old White Meeting House located at 318-320 US Route 2 (Old White Meeting House parcel, old Red Fire Station Parcel, and adjacent future park land).															
	List of attributes (see attached detailed explanaitons)	Phil Scott		Kathleen Swanson		Anne Zolotas		Nate Hayward		Matt Reed		Jill Lowrey		TOTALS	
Attr. #	Location:	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
1	Land Area:	3	5	5	0	3	2	0	0	5	0	4	2	20	9
2	Septic:	3	3	3	3	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	2	8	12
3	Costs:	4	5	0	0	2	2	1	2	0	0	4	2	11	11
4	Disposition of Old Red Fire Station Building:	3	2	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	3
5	Disposition of Old White Rescue Building:	2	2	4	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	5
6	Building setback from US Route 2:	4	3	4	1	3	2	2	0	4	0	4	1	21	7
7	Open land / Green Space:	3	4	0	0	2	2	0	0	3	0	3	0	11	6
8	Maintaining viable foundation and buildable footprint of the existing town office:	2	3	5	2	3	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	10	9
9	Required permitting:	2	1	5	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	10	7
10	Required cooperation:	2	3	2	4	3	2	2	1	0	1	4	2	13	13
11	Disruption to everyday business during construction:	2	3	2	3	3	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	8	10
12	Expandability: If we need to grow beyond the anticipated footprint in the future what is the expansion potential for each site:	3	3	4	2	2	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	11	9
13	Synergies:	4	3	4	1	4	1	0	1	0	2	2	1	14	9
14	Historical location:	1	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2
15	Creation of a Town Center:	5	3	3	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	2	10	10
16	Building positioning relative to overall lot:	5	3	3	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	12	8
17	Building size and park compatibility:	4	3	0	0	4	1	1	0			0	0	9	4
	TOTAL Score:	52	50	48	23	39	26	7	6	14	12	28	17	188	134
	Percentage:	51.0%	49.0%	67.6%	32.4%	60.0%	40.0%	53.8%	46.2%	53.8%	46.2%	62.2%	37.8%	58.4%	41.6%

Site attributes comparison Rating 0 - 5 (0 = low site rating - 5 = high site rating)		0	0	
	Location A - East of the existing Town Hall located at 329-333 US Route 2 (The Existing Town office and Island Craft Shop Parcels).	Rating (0-5)	Location B - North of The Old White Meeting House located at 318-320 US Route 2 (Old White Meeting House parcel, old Red Fire Station Parcel, and adjacent future park land).	Rating (0-5)
1 Land Area: Exhibit A:	0.8 acres. See attached documents		2.44 acres. See attached documents	
2 Septic: Exhibit B:	<p>This site, the existing Town Hall site, has a grandfathered wastewater system. There is a septic tank, but the leach field location and design are unknown. Exhibit 2 includes sections of the Wastewater System and Potable Water Supply Rules that Jay Buermann shared. The highlighted sections describe the permit exemptions for reconstruction, "clean slate permit exemption", voluntary demolitions, and the 50' calculation for reconstruction. Based on this information it would appear that a new town hall may not be built East of the existing town hall utilizing the existing septic system without permitting (unless it could meet the 50' calculation for reconstruction which appears difficult without first removing the existing town office). A "best fix" septic system, or a replacement field, would need to be located and permitted. The placement of this system would need to be determined before siting a new building and parking.</p> <p>A best fix system may limit potential future growth unless additional off-site wastewater is permitted.</p>		<p>Septic for this site would be in a mound system. The engineering and hydrostudy have been completed. The capacity of the proposed mound is 2,600 gallons per day. A Town Hall may use roughly 350-400 gallons per day.</p>	
3 Costs:	<p>Constrained building envelope may result in increased contractor costs for offsite building materials storage and parking.</p> <p>Building on this site would entail additional costs to build temporary parking on an adjacent parcel for existing town office use during construction. This would then need to be removed and turned back into grass.</p>		<p>More open land area allowing for ample space for efficient construction.</p> <p>The Selectboard allocated \$135,000 from the Federal ARPA funds for the development of town park infrastructure. That includes funds for the access off of US Route 2, parking, installation of the septic force main to serve the Town Hall. Exhibit C</p> <p>Possible savings from economies of scale (i.e. single electrical transformer, access drive, parking, sidewalks, etc., could serve multiple uses on the property).</p> <p>The are possibly other costs associated with requiring "multiple public faces" to address the public at teh entry and park faces.</p>	
4 Disposition of Old Red Fire Station Building (currently utilized seasonally by Granny's Attic).	Locating the New Town Hall on this parcel would NOT require demolition of this structure		Locating the New Town Hall on this parcel would require demolition of this structure	
5 Disposition of Old White Rescue Building (currently utilized seasonally by The Island Craft Shop).	Locating the New Town Hall on this parcel would require demolition of this structure		Locating the New Town Hall on this parcel would NOT require demolition of this structure	
6 Building setback from US Route 2:	<p>Building distance to US Route 2 between 40' - 75'</p> <p>Better visibility for drive-by traffic on US Route 2.</p> <p>More road noise</p> <p>"Reinforcing the energy of the "Main Street Corridor" along rt 2 by keeping the highly programmed building facing the street. That frees up the park to just be a park, with full flexibility for recreation, play, and open space." -Leslie Carter email 6/27/24</p>		<p>Building distance to US Route 2 over 200'</p> <p>Less visibility for drive-by traffic on US Route 2.</p> <p>Less road noise</p>	
7 Open land / Green Space:	Less open land for green area and landscaping		More open land for green area and landscaping	
8 Maintaining viable foundation and buildable footprint of the existing town office. Exhibit D	<p>Locating the New Town Hall on this parcel would require utilizing this area for parking.</p> <p>There is no question of "what will become of the old Town office site" because it will remain a town office and parking.</p>		<p>Locating the New Town Hall on this parcel would allow this to be utilized for other purposes in the future.</p> <p>If the new town office is built on this site it is unknown what the long term disposition is of the existing town office site. It could be sold, it could be returned to green space and retained by the town for future use.</p> <p>Possibilities: The existing town office foundation could be built on and be used for the 3 season farmers market.</p> <p>Possibilities: The existing town office foundation could be built on and be used for a new location for Granny's Attic thrift shop.</p>	
9 Required permitting: see attached Exhibit E describing "likely required" local, state, and federal permits	<p>This site likely won't require a Vermont Stormwater Permit #3-9050 since the new/redeveloped impervious surface are may be greater than 1/2 acre.</p> <p>This site would require engineering and permitting a "best fix" or replacement wastewater system. Off site septic could also be explored on the Lawrence parcel, or potentially at the Congregational Church via a force main easement across the Lawrence Parcel.</p>		<p>This site may require a Vermont Stormwater Permit #3-9050 since the new/redeveloped impervious surface are may be greater than 1/2 acre.</p> <p>Initial engineering has been completed for the septic mound wastewater disposal system. It will still need to be permitted.</p>	

Site attributes comparison Rating 0 - 5 (0 = low site rating - 5 = high site rating)		0	0	
	Location A - East of the existing Town Hall located at 329-333 US Route 2 (The Existing Town office and Island Craft Shop Parcels).	Rating (0-5)	Location B - North of The Old White Meeting House located at 318-320 US Route 2 (Old White Meeting House parcel, old Red Fire Station Parcel, and adjacent future park land).	Rating (0-5)
10	Required cooperation:			
	Building on this site would require cooperation for adjacent property owner to provide parking for continued town office operations during construction. Parking for the existing town office would be in front of the existing town office and on the Lawrence parcel if Mr. Lawrence agrees.		Building on this site would NOT require cooperation for adjacent property owner to provide parking for continued town office operations during construction.	
	Building on this site involves potentially fewer "moving parts". Although there are challenges associated with building immediately adjacent to the existing town office, which will need to remain open and functional during construction, building on this site does not require any coordination with old white meeting house projects, or town park projects.			
11	Disruption to everyday business during construction:			
	Building in immediate proximity to the town office may add challenges to daily town office operations during construction.		Not applicable.	
	Not applicable		Future renovations of the old white meeting house could be a disturbance	
12	Expandability: If we need to grow beyond the anticipated footprint in the future what is the expansion potential for each site? Whether that is an expansion of the meeting room, adding additional staff to Planning and zoning, office space for a recreation dept director or Town highway supervisor, or something else we can't predict that comes up in 10, 20, 30 years down the road. See Exhibit F			
	Very limited options for potential expansion		More options for potential expansion	
13	Synergies:			
	Dedicated facilities that don't need to share with other uses		shared parking with the white meeting house and future park, possibility to serve the park with bathrooms/water fountains/shelter/ etc. these can reduce/share costs across all projects by not duplicating amenities.	
14	Historical location: The Town Hall has been located on the parcel at 333 US Route 2 for 60+ years (estimated).			
	If we build on this site the building would be closer to the current location.		Locating the building in this location would be across Route 2, and further away from the current location.	
15	Creation of a Town Center:			
	Locating the building in this location would be a stand alone building and a single use location.		Locating the building here would contribute to creating a town center when you consider the relation to the White Meeting House, the proposed Town Park, and the resulting possible civic green and events lawn.	
16	Building positioning relative to overall lot:			
	Since the plan is to keep the existing town office in operation so that temporary facilities are not required the new town office can not be centered on the property. It will need to be pushed to the East as shown on the skematic site plan provided by the landscape architect. Centering the building on the lot would create the best presentation of the building.		This site is larger and allows more freedom of design in terms of building location.	
17	Building size and park compatibility			
	Not a factor on this site.		"The program SF of the building itself is larger than we originally thought, plus once you factor in the public bathrooms and the outdoor performance area this is becoming a quite large building with a chance of growing more in the future. I believe there is a risk here of losing the park entirely." -Leslie Carter email 6/27/24	