

Facilities Master Plan Committee
July 20, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.
Town Offices – Auditorium

Members Present: Jim Ayres, Robert Barker, Kim Boas, Mitch Cichy, Carol Conz, Nick Dines, Fred Goodhue, Charlene Nardi, Eric Weber

Others: Dillon Sussman (facilitator, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)), Catherine Brooks (Healthy Hampshire, Collaborative for Educational Services (CES)), Bill Sayre (Board of Selectmen (BOS))

Members introduced themselves. Dillon gave an overview of the agenda and PVPC's role in the work with the Town and Committee. PVPC will facilitate the Committee meetings and guide the Town through the grant work.

Decided that the Committee didn't need to elect a chair person, but may want to appoint subcommittees as we work through the process.

History of this grant work: The Community Compact Program (CCP), Governor Baker initiative, was an opportunity for municipalities to partner with the State to accomplish up to three best practice goals. In 2015, the Town of Williamsburg applied for funding to begin developing a Master Facilities Plan to help give guidance to the BOS in making decisions on building reuse. As part of the CCP, the State awarded \$16,000 for the Town to work with the PVPC. The Williamsburg Council on Aging working with Healthy Hampshire applied for a Citizen's Institute of Rural Design (CIRD) grant to work on visioning around the two village centers and how residents viewed, used, and moved within those centers. The CIRD is a national grant and highly competitive. The grant application was viewed as highly favorable, but wasn't awarded. The CIRD forwarded the grant application onto the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) who works with Smart Growth America for consideration under their program. It was accepted and the scope was refined to look more closely at the options for reuse of the Helen E. James property and building, and its impact on the village center and uses or reuses of other buildings. The Facilities Master Plan Committee's (FMPC) charge is to make a best recommendation to the Board of Selectmen on the reuse of the Helen E. James site and therefore other facilities using the previous studies done in Williamsburg, Committee discussion and public feedback and involvement. The FMPC will be working with PVPC, Healthy Hampshire and Smart Growth America. The deadline for the work is December 2016.

Establish Monthly Meeting Dates: Second Thursday of every month at 5:00 p.m. – August 11, September 8, October 13, November 10, December 8 and final meeting December 22.

Ground Rules for Discussion: Dillon shared eight guiding principles for the work of the Committee. Everyone agreed. The overriding principle is mutual respect for all participants.

Additional Principles / Committee member's goals & thoughts on the Committee work:

- Everyone gets heard and to make the best choice;
- Do no harm;

- Looking far enough out to the future, don't be short sighted in our decision;
- Finances – get a clear understanding of how expensive it is to keep, maintain and run town buildings, educate the town's people and officials,
- Past practice has been to defer maintenance, there is a mind set in town about this, and we need to address building needs timely.
- Regionalization – Consider how we may work with other towns, look outside the box for solutions – financially we may have to work together, regional approaches to keep town in good financial position, utilizing renters to help offset cost, regional collaboration between municipalities but also non-profit groups (how can we share space to share cost), blurring the lines of building use being just for town use– noted that people / officials are resistant to regionalization because they are invested in their own department / town;
- We have a Capital Plan for vehicles, town doesn't have one for facilities (buildings)
- Develop plan with support of people involved and can help make it happen;
- Broader understanding of grants (federal & state);
- Talk about and promote the Community Preservation Act (CPA) – we keep drawing from the same fund well (taxpayers). [CPA is a program that gets adopted by town meeting vote designed to help communities preserve open space & historical sites, create affordable housing, and develop recreational facilities. It is an additional tax added to tax-payers (1 to 3%) which the State matches] Question about the state actually matching – acknowledged it is diminished but those communities (Whately/Goshen) that got in earlier at the 3% level are receiving a full match;
- Haven't made decisions about reuse or upgrades / challenges related to: emotional, impact on other buildings, fiscal impact on town;
- Need to look at value of parcels in three ways: tax rolls, place in town, to towns people – historically & culturally;
- Important to think through all the variables – creating a decision making matrix – getting input from public;
- Can't make decision in a vacuum, or just by cheaper cost – holistic view;
- James site – emotional attachment to the building but people may need to let go, communities have relinquished control (sold) of buildings but had requirements to maintain historical appearance; don't want to lose historical, but there needs to be modernization and not have buildings financially burden communities.

Healthy Hampshire: Defined: Mass in Motion--Healthy Hampshire is a collaborative effort of Amherst, Belchertown, Northampton, and Williamsburg health and planning officials focusing on healthy eating, active living, and promotion of healthy and safe physical environments. Williamsburg has been involved in this effort for the last five years. Catherine Brooks and others from Healthy Hampshire (Sarah Bankert / Caitlin Marquis) along with Marie Westburg, town representative, will facilitate getting public involvement and feedback through a survey, the two focus groups to work with Smart Growth America, and a public forum. The information gathered will be folded into the Committees discussion and decision making process.

Survey: Draft the survey questions by September 8th meeting.

- What do you want to get from the community? What questions do we need answered to aid in the decisions? Think about this and get back to Catherine, Dillon or Charlene prior to August 11th meeting.

- Is there support for CPA?
- Is there still a Williamsburg – Haydenville feeling of separation?
- We have high taxes – need to get at people’s feelings for this.
- Looking to do structured questions and a few open ended
- Survey will be online and paper
- Advertise in as many ways as possible: early fall newsletter, newspaper article, website, leave paper copies at library, town offices, post-offices, and school newsletter.

Two Focus Groups: Coordinate for the fall – purpose / goal is to have in-depth conversations around issues identified.

Public Forum: Plan for November

Members engaging the public: Supported members speaking with town’s people now, early in the process, to get feedback and thoughts.

- Discussed what we could learn from the Anne T. Dunphy School construction process because that decision at Town meeting went smoothly – determined it is engaging all stakeholders early and often through the process.
- Noted that successful projects had outside funding to support moving forward: Meekins and Highland Ambulance had private donations – town officials and involved department should be organizing and getting public involvement and running fundraisers (private capital). Note that Meekins and ATD project had State grants (Mass Preservation Planning Fund and School Building Authority)

Board of Selectmen: Board feels that the Town has to do something for Public Safety Complex and are committed to moving forward on that issue; the how, where and at what cost haven’t been determined. The Board is committed to support the work and listen to the recommendation of this Committee.

Previous Plans: There are many previous plans and studies that Williamsburg has done that feed into the work of the FMPC, but they aren’t linked together and that is the point of the FMCP’s work. Dillon handed out a detailed outline summary of the four most recent and major plans directly linked to the Helen E. James site and gave a brief verbal summary.

2010 Building Needs Committee Report: Details about condition of town buildings – structure and HVAC systems - and current use, with recommendations for future use.

- With all Town Buildings, Town has more space than needed;
- Duplication of buildings (two libraries, two town ‘halls’ (town offices, old town hall));
- May cost a lot to bring facilities up to standard;
- Deferred maintenance – which may be an issue until Town Meeting votes to fund maintenance on a regular basis.

2015 Building Repurposing Study – Colliers International Report: Contracted by the Repurposing Committee. The work was a visual survey of the Town Offices (in Haydenville) and the Helen E. James building with estimated costs for three options of addressing the needs of the buildings with reuse considerations. Options were defined as:

1. Repairs only, no reconfigurations
2. Entire renovation, no reconfigurations

3. Gut renovation w/ reconfigurations

Town Offices: Costs for options 1 – 3 range was approximately 1.5 to 3.2 million

Helen E. James: Costs for options 1 – 3 range was approximately 1.4 to 6.3 million

2015 Repurposing Committee Letter to Board of Selectmen: Made recommendations for Town owned buildings.

Williamsburg Fire Station: declare surplus and sell

Old Town Hall Building: demolish or move, put in parking

Haydenville Police and Fire Station: Three possible recommendations: Renovate for COA or Police use, or keep for axillary space for Fire to reduce size of new public safety complex.

James Building: surplus and sell – possible affordable housing.

Town Offices Building: leave as town offices and invest in annual improvements

Additional Conclusions: All Buildings, excluding the James, have limited resale or future tax revenue value; noted concerns with placing another town owned building (public safety complex) on the James site and its value to a buyer; however noted don't expect large amount received from actual sale; don't recommend town maintaining ownership and having them used for non-town use.

2015 Public Safety Complex Committee Report: Recommendation for public safety complex based on committee work and feasibility study done by Drummey Rosane Anderson (DRA).

The James site is the only site that fits the criteria established by the Committee. The criteria for location took in response time to all corners of the town – getting as close to the ½ way point between the villages. Bill Sayre gave an update on the details of the criteria and the other sites looked at during the process. The National Grid site, the Town Office site and Highway Department site were some locations looked at and were rejected either because of the location in the flood plain or size of the lot being too small. FEMA/MEMA do not recommend new safety buildings being built in the 500 year flood plain. The Committee came up with several schemes:

- Freestanding structure for police and fire – including three double bays for apparatus and office space – estimated cost around \$4 million (stick built not pre-engineered).
- New construction for fire department and renovation of basement level of the Helen E. James for police department – the cost for this was more than a new building for both departments.

Feedback forums were held with town committees / officials and the public: Concerns raised / discussions – cost and impact on taxpayers; size; impact on ability to address other town facility needs; location – impact on other uses / reuses for James building; visual impact in the center of town.

Noted that if James site is taken off the table for public safety complex, then the criteria would need to be reviewed / revised.

Additional plans that may play into the Committee's decision: Open Space, Hazard Mitigation, Village Centers (Pedestrian) Study, Mill River Greenway and Healthy Hampshire Report. Catherine will provide the Healthy Hampshire Report.

Committee members initial thoughts about the James site:

- Combining use – municipal and private
- Using the full James for public safety - upfront cost may be more, but long-term may be beneficial – one building (note that having fire department offices in the James was not looked at – only the police). One building reduces maintenance cost.

General Options: Dillon outlined general options for decisions based on recommendations of the studies:

1. Use the James Building and site entirely for Public Safety Complex (leaves some of building use undetermined as entire building not needed);
2. Public Safety Complex is entirely separate on the site and leaves use or reuse of James building up in the air
3. Surplus the James building and site, leaves public safety complex without site under current criteria.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.