

Minutes from Russell School Committee Meeting

Monday, March 6, 2023, 5:30-7:00 pm

Hybrid: Hadley Public Library Community Room and via Zoom

Present: Courtney Meyer (Chair), Dan Regish, Carolyn Holstein (clerk), E. Dragon

Absent: Alan Weinberg, Amy Parsons (Select Bd liaison)

1. Minutes from 2/6/23 were unanimously approved

2. CPA recap

a. Members recommend funding the entire \$1.2 million without borrowing. CPA has the funds, and will be receiving \$72k more this year. Chair Mary Thayer stated that Carolyn Brennan, Town Manager, and Gary Berg, DPW, want more accurate costs for stabilization. The building (excluding the land) was most recently assessed at \$855,000. If repairs cost more than \$100,000, building must comply with accessibility requirements. Dan feels that the figure is 1/3 the assessment which is \$250,000. Either way, the repairs are over the limit. Question: does historical restoration have different limits?

b. The survey results stated the goal for the building is to stabilize it for use in the future. This was our committee charge, as this writer understands it.

c. Dan said that the town hall is older than Russell school, was one story; the second story added in 1909. How stable is this building – shakes when trucks drive by, for example.

d. Dan stated that the Building Committee discussed making the roof asphalt shingles, instead of metal. That would cost much less, but the lifetime would only be 20 years or so.

e. Courtney, Carolyn Brennan and Jake and Sean from Architect Heritage Foundation met and discussed the future of the building. They said the Foundation would give 4-5 hours (no cost) to examine the building and give an estimate for stabilization. (Dan said 4-5 hours won't go very far). Old Mohawk will update the repair estimates for \$8,400.

f. Another idea - lease the building to Hadley Historical Society, which is a 501c3 nonprofit, and can make the repairs without having to abide by the prevailing wage required for municipal entities. They could be responsible for receiving donations.

g. Items to be collected in advance of the CPA meeting on 3-27:

Check in with town hall to determine who in town needs office/admin/storage space (moving parks and rec to the school might be best to appeal to some other funders) - Carolyn to do

Meet with Carolyn Brennan and Gary Berg to get them comfortable with our plan to stabilize/rehab the structure - Dan and Courtney to do at the AHF meeting on 3-9)

Keep Select Board informed and comfortable with our decisions

Learn if the school has to adhere to stretch codes (in effect 7-1-2023)

Collect the most current assessment of the building

Provide a list of other grant opportunities

Draft an RFQ for town hall to review

Collect letter of support from climate change committee (Dan to attend 3-9 meeting)

Collect assessment/feasibility study from Architectural Heritage Foundation (as discussed at last night's SB meeting)

3. Select Board meeting recap

- a. The board wanted an update on our committee's progress in finding more funds than CPA for the building. Even though the survey showed that the majority of respondents want the building stabilized, the Select Board wants the committee to identify funding sources and collect estimates for restoring the building for future use. The Goodwin library CPA Application from 2020 suggested providing space for town hall offices, parks and rec, conservation committee, planning board, and storage for town departments. They are a long way off from realizing these plans, as the RFQ is just about to go out. Concerns were expressed that we are proposing similar ideas about the Russell School, but committee members recognized that the Russell School would be a better fit for such offices.
- b. At this meeting, Dan suggested that perhaps a non-profit entity could lease the Russell school, so that the repairs to the building could be done less expensively. Courtney offered to help with fundraising and donation collections as a HHS member. Dan will talk to Alan at the Historical Society to see if this is possible.

4. Other funding opportunities

a. Courtney recommended all committee members to review the grant opportunities spreadsheet, and add as they find additional funding options.

5. Conflict of Interest Training

a. Courtney and Dan completed the training. Dragon and Carolyn have not yet. Alan - unknown.

6. New business

a. Courtney brought up her recent visit to CitySpace in Easthampton, who leases the old town hall, who rehabbed and continues to maintain the building on their own dime via fundraising.

7. Next meeting: April 3 at the Library

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm

Respectfully submitted, Carolyn Holstein