

Minutes from Russell School Committee Meeting

Thursday, April 13, 2023, 5:30-7:00 pm

Held at Senior Center and on Zoom

Present: Courtney Meyer (Chair), Dan Regish, Carolyn Holstein (via Zoom)

Absent: Alan Weinberg, Emma Dragon, Amy Parsons (SB liaison)

1. The minutes from the previous meeting (April 3, 2023) were approved without comment/correction
2. The issue of details to present at the public forum and the Town Mtg panoramic summary was discussed at length. It was decided to give a very brief history of the building, its outstanding design & construction, and the building included as a very important part of the Town's Master Plan, adopted in 2017 ("Preserve Historic and Architecturally Significant Structures and Landscapes").
3. The HHC video will not be ready in time for Town Meeting. Instead, we hope to have the Panoramables video (or a slideshow of photos) available for folks to view upon entering Town Meeting.
4. Warrant Articles 18 & 19 proposed for the Spring Town Meeting were discussed, also at length.
 - a. Article 19, the Russell School Committee (RSC) Article, was unanimously approved, since it focuses only on four aspects of the stabilization of the building reflected in the RSC's CPA application, with small grammatical edits.
 - b. Article 18, The Select Board article, was voted as approved only if the following piece of the article is removed: "...said feasibility study to be undertaken prior to the expenditure of any further Community Preservation Act Funds which are being sought in Article 19 below (or being sought in a future article to be scheduled for fall town meeting once the study results released are available for town's review)...". The RSC strongly feels that requiring a feasibility study to be completed before any stabilization efforts may ruin any chances that the stabilization process will begin in year 2023. A feasibility study must go out to bid, which, in a best case scenario, may take months, then the study itself may also take a few months. A more likely scenario would be that the study will not be completed until next calendar year, thus exposing the building to more water damage and erosion. With the roof already leaking, the risk of mold damage and subsequent higher stabilization costs will inevitably ensue.
 - i. Therefore, the RSC strongly urges the Select Board to modify Article 18 to allow the stabilization efforts to move forward. The Town has already conducted

several studies of the building, and has delayed routine maintenance on the building many times, which could have prevented the problems that the building now experiences. Often the Town must spend money in order to save money.

- ii. Courtney to contact Jane, Jennifer, Carolyn, and Mary Thayer with our thoughts.
- iii. The RSC estimates that the cost of the building demolition may exceed the cost of stabilization. The Master Plan supports the Russell School, as did the survey conducted by the RSC. To do otherwise would go against the wishes of Hadley's citizens.
- iv. Select Board should be the ones to present article 18 as it is not our article.

5. All committee members are to continue working on speech for the forum and town meeting. Docs are due to Jennifer on 4-20.

6. New business - The Chair urges all to attend Open Meeting Law training on April 25. Chair to send around the recording afterward in the event that committee members cannot attend.

7. Upcoming meetings: April 25, 5:30pm at the Senior Center
April 27, 7pm - Public Forum at the Senior Center
May 4, 7pm - Town meeting at Hopkins Academy
May 10, 5:30pm - RSC meeting at the Senior Center

Respectfully Submitted,
Carolyn Holstein