

# Common School Discussion Meeting notes draft

## Bent Northrop Memorial Library, February 2, 2024

**Present:** Damian Boomhower, Becky Cassel, Greta Brunswick, Sara Allerton, Mary Schreindorfer, Jeanne Hopkins, Julie Wolcott, Paul Pellitier **Zoom:** Jim Cameron

- 1) **Changes or adjustments to the agenda.**
- 2) **Welcome and introductions.**
- 3) **Draft Vision for Future Use of Building/Grounds.** The group reviewed 2 options for future use of the school summarized on the agenda, which had been discussed at previous meetings. Option 1 was to have the building remain in town ownership and either restore the building or demolish and rebuild a structure for to support community recreation and multi-purpose space for community programming. Option 2 was for the town to subdivide off a lot with the building and sell the lot for senior housing.

The group discussed these 2 visions and landed on the following **accepted principles:**

- Let the vision and cost/benefit analysis drive decisions around restoration versus demolition and reconstruction.
- Retain the character of the historic landmark in center of the village.
- The lot remains in town ownership as a community public space for all ages.

The group's consensus was not in favor of selling the common school building for several reasons including the disadvantage of losing town control over the property and the interrelationship and overlap between the property and the Fairfield Elementary School campus. The group agreed that the cost/benefit analysis submitted to the Selectboard should still evaluate it as one of the options.

The group reviewed the reuse option for the property that is compatible both with historic restoration of the Common School building OR demolishing the building and constructing a new structure.

**Revised Reuse Vision (Historic Restoration OR New Construction):** The building and grounds should be used primarily to support Fairfield recreation programs, including amenities typical to a "fieldhouse" such as locker rooms, bathrooms and general storage. An indoor basketball court is also desired, but more suitable for new construction; less compatible with a historic restoration project. The building should also provide multi-purpose flexible space for community programming, such as adult and senior classes and activities, extracurricular activities and clubs for school age children, afterschool and homeschool programming, historical displays and child care. Adequate management of the space may require additional town staff capacity; there may be opportunities to share resources with other communities. The town could rent space to private businesses for afterschool programming and child care.

- 4) **Restoration Feasibility.** Jim Cameron, a resident of Fairfield and local developer specializing in historic building restoration, volunteered his expertise and time to prepare cost estimates for restoration of the building. The estimates were organized into 2 plans, Plan A being a basic restoration and Plan B including everything in Plan A and plus additional items.

**Plan A:** Basic Restoration with access, bathroom, vermiculite abatement, septic and energy efficiency addressed. New bathrooms first floor, basic exterior porch lift.

**Plan B:** Plan A plus an addition off the southside with an at grade accessible entrance. Bathroom and an interior lift located in addition (see Gallup plans).

Jim provided the following advice to the group:

- Take advantage of community skills and resources to cut the expenses.
- Majority of heat loss is through the roof, ceilings, and air infiltration through walls.
- Engage the state fire marshal on day 1!
- Municipal bond should be considered to fund restoration and/or new construction due to the good rates and terms, which are much better than on the private market.
- All or nothing approach should be taken to achieve the vision; discontinue piecemeal improvements.

**Plan A:** Basic Restoration with access, bathroom, vermiculite abatement, septic and energy efficiency addressed. New bathrooms first floor, basic exterior porch lift.

Civil engineer / leach field & design/ permit	\$8,000;
Address drainage issues in basement/grade? New drains installed? (Leave basement baths?)	\$10,000
Remove asbestos insulation in the attic space	\$25,000
Install 2 inches of closed cell foam and 14-16 inches of blown in cellulose	\$18,000
Manually air sealing building and install "Aero Barrier" to entire building	\$12,000
Install new HVAC energy efficient system, 4 heat pumps? TBD in consult from Efficiency Vermont	\$40,000
Install exterior basic lift for access to 1st floor	\$15,000
Allowance for window repairs/replacement (basement)/weatherization	\$20,000
Install 2 new baths on first floor/one ADA (within existing footprint)	\$25,000
Install new septic leach field	\$20,000
10-15% Contingency	\$16,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$209,000</b>
Fee	\$20,000
<b>Total "Retail"</b>	<b>\$229,000</b>

Retail cost could be decreased with use of Town services and residents with professional skills.

Things to add/address: Add Fire Safety issues for compliance. Sprinklers? Consult the 2023 energy audit and incorporate any elements and costs from it that were not addressed.

**Plan B:** Plan A plus an addition off the southside with at grade accessible entrance. Bathroom and an interior lift located in addition (see Gallup plans).

Items in Plan A	\$229,000
Structural Engineering	\$7,500
Remove 1st floor ceiling finish/level 2nd floor system/install new ceiling to 1st floor	\$30,000
Adjust framing as indicated to maximize space utilization	\$10,000
Refinish existing HW floors, 1st & 2 <sup>nd</sup> floors	\$16,000
Addition to plan – Gallup 6-28-20 (Points of discussion around scope, etc.) Adjusted Gallup estimate based on items that would be addressed in other elements of Plan A&B	\$350,000 (+/-)
Contingency	\$64,250 ~10%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$706,750</b>

Fee	\$20,000 (?)
Total "Retail"	\$726,750 (?)

Note: Jim Cameron did not fill in the totals, contingency or fees due to the preliminary nature of this estimate and understanding that the scope is not yet well defined.

Jim recommended several next steps.

- Thinking about how to apply the vision to a specific layout within the Common School building. One example has been proposed as a concept Plan C. **Plan C** would include the improvements in Plan A and B but would utilize the first floor as a fieldhouse, with locker/changing rooms, bathrooms and other recreation related space. The second floor would be utilized as multi-purpose community space or afterschool/child care.
- Meeting with the Gallup architecture firm to review the plans and discuss updated costs in relation to current vision and other plans.
- Preparing comprehensive cost benefit table for the Selectboard that assesses all potential options for the Common School.

**Demolitions Costs:** Jim Cameron estimates demolition costs at \$75,000. This includes cost of removal of vermiculite

**Discussion:** The group's consensus was to retain town ownership of the building as noted above. The group also affirmed that the reuse vision would apply to either a historic restoration or new construction scenario and that both options are still on the table.

**5) Recommendation to Selectboard:** This group agreed to postpone providing a report to the Selectboard to February 26, 2024. Greta will prepare a comprehensive cost benefit table that list all potential options that have been considered along with known costs and benefits to review and refine with the group before providing to the Selectboard.

**6) Next Steps:** The group agreed to the following homework prior to the next meeting:

- Committee members will research examples of recreation and community centers that have been built in other communities. These examples may serve as inspiration or as models for what could be done here.
- The Committee will also research potential cost estimates for new construction of such facilities.
- Greta will prepare a cost/benefit table of potential options for the common school intended to be refined with the committee for submission to the Selectboard
- Greta will prepare an outline funding opportunities, strategies and sources
- Torrey will give the group background on the Gallup plans

**Next meeting:** Friday February 16, 2024 at 2:30pm at BNML and ZOOM