

Middletown Springs Building Committee
Meeting August 15, 2013
7pm - Town Office
Approved Minutes

Present: David Munyak, Tom Hurcomb, Michael Beattie, Robin Chesnut-Tangerman, Laura Castle, Shirley Moyer, Patty McWilliams, David Wright, and Patty Kenyon

Call to Order: D Munyak called the meeting to order at 7:08pm

There was no formal Agenda for this meeting. The intent is to discuss the pros and cons of the Friends In Adoption (FIA) building and then move on to other pertinent business.

At the latest building committee meeting (last Wednesday 8/7/2013) the committee met with the Select Board and a representative from FIA at the FIA building to take a tour to see if their existing building (now up for sale) might be an appropriate space for a new Town Office. Subsequent to that meeting, members were asked to submit a list of Pros & Cons about the building to D Munyak to compile. We began the meeting reviewing the compiled list that D Munyak brought with him and opening up discussion.

Discussion started with the concern about the building's handicap accessibility, specifically the narrow hallway (inaccessible) between the front of the first floor and the vault which is at the back of the first floor. Also the second floor space and just what it might be used for without an elevator which would make it truly handicap accessible.

The committee then talked about compiling a comprehensive list of upgrades that would need to be done to the FIA building in order to bring it into compliance for a Town Office. The list could be generated fairly easily by the committee with the help of Michael Beattie who knows the regulations and could help us with that to do list and assign cost to it. Having this information is the only way to know just how much this building might cost us - the still unknown and comparison factor is the costs of the proposed building on the corner site, so there was some question as to whether or not proceeding with a cost analysis was the best use of the committee's time right now. There are still too many unknowns in regard to the former Parker site at this time.

There was also some discussion about whether or not the FIA building is in the flood plain and its proximity to the Poultney River. The current flood plain maps were not available in the town office for viewing by the committee. Also, the accuracy of the maps is an unknown, as Middletown Springs was re-mapped but only by viewing topographical maps, not physically and property owners in town have had issue with the accuracy since the re-mapping.

Other discussion focused on what would happen to the corner property if the town chose to purchase the FIA building and not use the current intended site. Would it be turned into Green Space, would it be sold after the cleanup was finished, etc? Some folks questioned why the committee is even considering changing course at this late date - just this week the underground tanks were removed from the former Parker site and we are in the middle of that site's rehab. Aren't we already committed to the site we've chosen?

Discussion then moved to the viability of the chosen site and some of the still unknowns or perceived unknowns, such as the well and septic, can the site sufficiently support both a well and a septic system - one that is big enough to see us through the foreseeable future and beyond? M Beattie assured the committee that the engineer has said yes, the site can support a septic that is more than

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adequate to house the Town Office with a 30 person meeting room and a library (if the library idea comes to fruition). The site also has room for a well - the location of each is fairly specific.

Then discussion turned to the well and the fact that since we know where it needs to be, that we might want to attempt to drill a well on the site in the specified location before we get too much further down the road, but after the cleanup is complete. This would be a good first step as the viability of the site depends on getting an adequate source of potable water.

Discussion then turned to back to the FIA building and its well and septic - comparing the issues that might be encountered on that site. The well is there -we do not know if the water has been tested, and the lister's card states the septic (after the renovation) as being "less than typical". So that could be a concern with that property as well.

Other items on the pros & cons list related to the age of the FIA building (150 years old) which significantly shortens its lifespan for the future of the town; that it cannot also accommodate the library (whose board is interested in pursuing the possibility of moving to the corner with the Town Office); that it has a vault, but that the vault is too small for our needs so would need upgrading; the building could be available fairly quickly - depending on the needed renovations; the building has adequate parking; it's a beautiful historic building and generally in good shape with some great renovations; it's close to the center of town; internet and phone wiring is up to date and move in ready; the location would have less safety issues than the 4 corners; it is an old building so maintenance could become an issue in the future; the current layout would not be efficient for a Town Office setting; would need an elevator to make 2nd floor accessible; no large meeting room; buying this property would remove it from the tax rolls; the asking price is significantly more than the tax appraisal value; the basement is damp and wet - might lead to mold problems.

After much deliberation and consideration the committee reached consensus and were ready to make a recommendation to the Select Board regarding the possibility of purchasing the FIA property.

Robin Chesnut-Tangerman moved that the Building Committee does not recommend pursuing the Friends In Adoption property at this time. Patty McWilliams seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Next item up for discussion: The next steps for the corner property now that the tanks have been removed. D Munyai started the discussion in regard to the next steps. Once the tanks are gone (which is now done) and the PCB's removed (will be happening in the next couple of weeks), we move on to the removal of the building under the Agency of Commerce grant. Through this grant we are eligible for funds to remove the building (lead and asbestos abatement) and also for some site excavation work, which if we were ready, could potentially include the excavation for the future building's basement. The snag is that we'd need to request that the Agency of Commerce grant us an extension on the work deadline because 1. We are not far enough along in our design process to determine the foundation needs, and 2. Even if we were, we would not have enough time to adequately finish the foundation before the winter. All agreed that we should try to get an extension on the grant so that we can push these decisions out to late winter and be ready for work in early spring still trying to take full advantage of this funding opportunity.

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We then discussed the “building program” which is essentially the individual function and space needs for each user of the building - this is how the size of the building will be determined which then leads to the building sketches and preliminary building designs. M Beattie will begin work on the program and the committee will meet with the Town Officials at their next meeting to discuss their space needs following up on discussions they have had with Michael previously. After that meeting the building program can be put together and then we will have a public meeting to share those space needs and gather input from the town on our projected needs, asking for ideas for improvements, other needs, and overall input.

T Hurcomb suggested that we should ask that some folks (at least one) from the library board join our committee and attend meetings since they have expressed interest in pursuing a possible co-habitation in the new building. The committee agreed. Dave Munyak will take this task on.

Discussion turned to building funding and how we might attract donors and in-kind sources similar to the model used in Wells. The question was asked, what makes our building attractive to a potential donor? P Kenyon suggested that one option would be to strive to design and build an “Energy Plus” building - one that produces more energy than it uses - that excess energy production can then be used to buy down other town uses not attached to the actual building site. Our town office could be a model for all types of new smaller public buildings. D Munyak added that we could include an educational component that would explain all the innovative systems and give credit to the folks who helped to provide them (which would be an additional incentive to donate some services). Patty also reminded the committee that we have an offer from an energy engineer to help us with a plan like this pro bono.

Some folks were worried that the townspeople might not go for this idea and would be afraid that this type of building would cost too much or ultimately not produce as planned. Other members thought that it was a worthy approach to producing a building that will bring us in some in-kind services and donations and also serve the needs of the town with no energy costs for years to come and at an affordable initial cost.

The conclusion was that the only way this type of forward thinking approach might work is if the townspeople are on board with the plans and could see that the technologies do work and that the build could be affordable. So the committee would need to be able to show examples of projects that have worked and share them with the townspeople on an ongoing basis.

No other ideas for securing funding were brought up.

Next building committee meeting will be Wednesday, September 4th. This will be a building program meeting. Representatives from each town department will be asked to attend to discuss their space needs for architectural planning.

Last order of business is to approve the minutes of August 7, 2013. There were a few minor corrections/clarifications suggested.

Michael Beattie moved to approve the minutes of August 7, 2013 as amended. Patty McWilliams seconded and the motion carried.

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Meeting adjourned at 9:18pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Patty Kenyon
Acting Clerk