

Ad Hoc Committee for the Future of the Field Library Building

August 31, 2022

Members attending: Richard Nathhorst, Kathryn Stoddard, Van Stoddard, Anne Schuyler, Ann Ferguson, Maureen Ippolito, Silas Ball, Kari Ridge, Sara Robinson, Donald Robinson, Judy Todd

Town residents that attended: Carol DeSanti, Carol Heim

Members voted to appoint Richard Nathhorst as chair of the committee and Judy Todd as note taker.

Those present at the meeting each took turns stating their thoughts of what should happen to the building.

Richard feels the building is a significant historic building and should be preserved. He is in favor of moving the building to a different spot since the building is in a difficult spot right now.

Ann Ferguson is interested in getting more town people's input. She wants to preserve the building and assess what town people want to use the building for. She is in favor of the town continuing to own it and feels it should be a multi-purpose building. It's an important building and it should be an archive. We should consider what best suits the town's needs.

Carol Heim (not an official member) Carol wants to know what others think about how it should be used. It's important for it to be maintained.

Kari Ridge is interested in looking at all the different uses and wants to see what the town residents want to do. We need to preserve our past and look to the future.

Maureen Ippolito want to see the building stay as it is. Historical Commission pays the bills and the town pays for the insurance on the building. The building needs to be more accessible for people.

Kathryn Stoddard became interested in the future of the building during Town Meeting. The article to sell it to the Historical Society needs to be given some thought. The town should keep thinking about it and how it can be used.

Carol DeSanti (not an official member) Carol wants to see the building preserved. There are historical articles there. People need to be aware of what is there.

Van Stoddard want to know more about the structural soundness of the building. We need to determine what uses are viable.

Ann Ferguson mentioned that the committee should have a site visit.

Anne Schuyler agrees we should all see the building. Her dad worked there when it was a library. Everyone should keep an open mind. We need to figure out how to promote it and spread information. Do a public outreach. Find out what the restrictions would be. The town's 2018 survey showed there is overwhelming support for preserving historical assets.

Richard Nathhorst pointed out that this committee is only dealing with the Field Building.

Sara Robinson agrees that the building needs to be preserved. It's owned by the town. People don't want tax money going that way. She feels that the Leverett Historical Society (LHS) should buy it and keep it maintained. The Museum has many historical things. The LHS would need more money to support it. The town library in Worthington has the same architect and was built in 1915. We need a beautiful town center. Eventually, after the Museum is stabilized we should do something about the Field Tavern. Bring these buildings up to good condition. We should seek town input.

Donald Robinson told us that the Worthington Town Library is a 501c3 organization and the architect for that library and our library is Nathaniel Putnam. Worthington has a book about their building and there is a picture of our library in the book. We need to accumulate facts about the Library's history—Elizabeth and Bradford Field. There are two land parcels at the building. We need to have a land survey and description done. It's 1.6 Acres. We need to evaluate parking and septic.

Richard pointed out that it's not possible to have a septic system. It's designated as wetlands.

Donald stated that we need to evaluate parking and the septic system. A raised system could possibly be put in and after that it will need further evaluation. There are also restrictions in the original deed about the use of the building. The upper floor was to be used as a museum and the lower floor was to be used as a library. There are LHS holdings in the building. It's the logical place for the holdings. There have already been two evaluations of the building done. In the past, requests for funding hasn't come forward. The envelope of the building is in terrible shape. Every day that goes by makes this worse. He is opposed to moving the building and is in favor of preserving and restoring the building on the site it's on now.

Richard Nathhorst began by letting us know that the State of Massachusetts has designated the land around the Museum as scrub swamp. The building needs maintenance done to it. He has been in touch with New Hampshire Building Moving company. He feels the best option is to move the building to the site of the current library lot. The current septic, water, parking, power, heat pump could all be used. There is handicapped access as well. The building can continue to serve as a Historical Society Museum and could be used for other services of the town. There is much better access if it were moved. The current lot has no parking and is unsafe. The moving company estimates the cost to be \$40,000 and it can easily be moved. New foundation would open possibilities. The building can be put on the National Registry and funding could be applied for. The building would need an elevator, but that might be waived. If we move the building, it could be an adjunct to the current library. The use of the building could continue on a different site. The building structure is sound. Building membrane needs work. There would be better preservation on a new site. He's opposed to selling to a non-profit. The Moore's Corner School House has not been maintained. He wants the museum as a town owned building and make it part of the town library complex.

Anne Schuyler commented that the town is not taking the maintenance seriously.

Richard Nathhorst stated that the building is not accessible or useable in the current location. The Select Board is inclined to see the town invest CPA money if we choose to relocate and repurpose. If the building stays as is, the Select Board is not interested in funding the building.

Ann Ferguson believes everyone wants to preserve the building. Should the building be used? What other purposes, what money? Can we combine it as a library and museum? If it's preserved, it opens up uses. A senior center is an option if it's moved. We need to talk about the possible uses and get town input. We need to do further research about land it's on. CPC wants the complex. Renovate for readapted use. Do people in town agree with readapted use? Can it be moved? Can it be reused? What dynamic would Select Board have?

Carol Heim mentioned that CPC money can't be used for maintenance of buildings, only improvements.

Richard Nathhorst added that if adoptive reuse is found and it has multiple uses with larger constituency the town is fine maintaining the building. Now there is no public use.

Silas Ball mentioned that it's what the committee decides that will rule, not people's personal opinions. He would like to see the committee meet in person more often than not. He has many opinions on the building. It's shameful that the town has let the building deteriorate. There have been many times suggestions have been made and it hasn't worked. Silas has done repairs when he was a town employee. The building is structurally sound. Handicap ramp needs to be built again. He feels the building should be kept as it is and where it is. Town decisions need to be taken into consideration. The town accepted the building and land and there was probably an agreement that the town would take care of it. The town made a decision twenty years ago to maintain historical assets. Many attempts have been made and shot down. CPC is not using their power to help. When the new library was built, the town was to maintain the old space. He wants to see it restored, preserved, and maintained by the town and have it stay a museum. Once the repairs are done, the town can assume maintenance.

Discussion began after everyone had a chance to voice their thoughts about the building.

Sara Robinson stated that we have opinions that people are saying are facts. People need to get into the building. She doesn't want to see it moved. She wants to build up the center of town. The sign on the building says "Leverett Museum". It's an historical museum.

Donald Robinson mentioned that the origin deed says "ordinary purposes as a library". The upper room is to used as a museum. The original donation needs to be honored. Richard has discussed things with the select board and we need to have one select board member here.

Kari Ridge asked if we could all see the deed. Donald will send a copy of the deed to everyone. Richard pointed out that it's in the registry of deeds online.

Kathryn Stoddard considers the current library and school to be a part of Leverett Center. There is the school, the library, the public safety complex. Does anyone know whether other town services are in favor of taking care of the building?

Richard said we can get their opinion. The school, library, public safety complex. Moving the Field Library makes it more accessible to all public services. It would have a lot more use, be visited more, be more alive. Town Hall is as far south as the public business goes. The common area is a traditional center of town. It's an area that needs a lot of work by the town. There has been some discussion of replacing town hall.

Van Stoddard is concerned about the climate the building needs. It's the worst possible climate where it is located now. Because of hilly terrain, mold is a problem, and would continue to be if we keep the building where it is. There are important archival papers located in the building. Paper is susceptible to mold. In the current location, it would cost a lot to find a solution to the mold. Evaporation of water has destroyed the timbers in other buildings. Ventilation and humidity would be controlled in a new location.

Carol DeSanti stated that there are other committees looking into other town buildings.

Anne Schuyler mentioned that some are aware that the current library is part of the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System database. It encompasses the town center up to the highway building. Integrity of the Leverett Historical District is important. What do we want to get out of these meetings? She believes the Select Board would still be hiring a consultant. We need to come up with possibilities for the building.

Ann Ferguson stated that we need to decide what the next steps will be. Should the meeting be a hybrid meeting? How often will we meet and what our charge is? The Select Board wants various options and to get the town's opinion. The Select Board would hire a consultant. We need to consider all the uses and form an opinion. We need to talk about the cost of the options. What do we want to get done? How will we set an agenda?

Lots of back and forth suggestions were made about the date and time of the next meeting. Richard made a motion that we have a tour of the Field Library building before our next meeting. Silas seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

Any meetings that we have would need to be held in a place that has internet so that people can join the meeting via Zoom or other internet connection.

Two times were set so that everyone can be at one of the tours. Judy Todd will bring her mother, Edie Field, to the building during the tours. The first tour will be Saturday, September 10th at 10 am. The second tour will be Saturday, September 17th at 1 pm.

Donald Robinson mentioned again that it would be good for people to visit the Worthington Library. The librarian, Leona, is very helpful and welcoming. He has a copy of the book about the Worthington Library.

Meeting was adjourned at 9 pm.