

Minutes of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Bradford M. Field Library
October 13, 2022
DRAFT

Committee Members present: Richard Nathhorst, chair; Ann Ferguson, Van Stoddard, Kathy Stoddard, Ann Schuyler, Sara Robinson, Don Robinson, Kari Ridge, Silas Ball, Maureen Ippolito
Judy Todd and Andrew Vlock absent
Guests: Pat Duffy, Sam Black, Cynthia Baldwin, Tom Hankinson (representing Leverett Selectboard)

Van Stoddard proposed his plan to move us ahead. This is the email he sent to Richard: "I would like to suggest that we confirm the procedure for getting the CPA money from Danielle. The funds would be to: 1) locate the property pins on site. If this is not possible, get a surveyor to locate them; 2) contact a septic engineer to tell us if a system can be designed for that location—this would involve a perc test; and 3) find a well site on this property that meets setbacks. With this information, we can move forward with what people want to do with the library. Let's get in with the productive work that must be done."

Ann F—Are you putting this as an item on the agenda?

Van—I want it as a motion on the agenda.

Richard—I sent Van's email to CPA. No response.

Van—We might be able to go through Margie. I met with Barbara Carulli from Affordable Housing and she explained how they work with CPA and Margie is involved.

Richard—Van, can you follow-up on this with Margie?"

Van—Yes. We got approved for the money at Town Meeting, so I want to make sure that if we start scheduling contractors that we can pay

Patty—Is that because it's a town-owned building that Margie has to initiate?

Van—CPA funds have to go through Margie, or at least that is how Barbara explained it to me, to approve/issue the money or something like that. I was not privy to the whole thing.

Ann F—I thought Danielle suggested last meeting that the money wouldn't be dispensed until there was some clear process for determining what kinds of uses the building would have and then they would dispense the money to have a team of people inspect the site

Richard—That was my understanding too.

Van—We have to have a process. I have outlined one that I think will work. I have done this quite a few times with other buildings I have restored. This seems the logical, straight forward way to move.

Maureen—I do like Van's idea. Maybe we can try to get the money before we figure out what reuse or a plan for the building or ideas. We are talking about a septic system, but if that area can't accommodate a septic system, then that is off the table. I feel this is an important piece of information that if we don't have any money, we are never going to get.

Van—We were approved for the money at town meeting. A lot of us were there. I think the money is available. The only reason I even put that as the first sentence of the plan is that typically in my situation, I would be moving ahead with this with the money in hand. We were approved for the money. But since we don't have the money in hand, I just want to assure the committee that we will get the money and this is the way to do it.

Kathy—If we don't do this then—I understand the work we have been doing to solicit opinion and make sure everyone is included, but I don't want to lead people down a primrose path, so to speak, and let them think they can propose ideas that would not be legally able to be implemented. It seems to me we need to do something to narrow down the options that we can realistically propose.

Don—Margie really does not get involved with CPA in terms of process. In 2016 she submitted a proposal for the museum to CPA which included a number of things that needed to be done to the building. I don't think it even made it to Town Meeting to be voted upon. It goes through Danielle and

there is an October 1 deadline to get proposals in and the CPA deliberates on those and determines whether or not they go forward to Town Meeting. That is what the process entails. I am wondering if to implement what Van proposes can be done with the \$30,000 that was voted upon at town meeting to resolve this

Van—This is exactly what I am talking about. That's why I said in the first line of this "I would like to suggest we confirm the procedure for getting the CPA money from Danielle." The CPA money refers to the money we were approved for at Town Meeting. I believe with this money, we can accomplish these goals I have laid out.

Don—I concur. Richard has something on the agenda about the site. Is that, Richard, what you want to discuss?

Richard—We have jumped out of sequence since Van asked for the floor. That is why I put it on there.

Ann F—I would like to support Van's proposal to Danielle to ask for some clarity about CPA funding and when it is going to be dispersed. And to ask if the committee is ready to make a case that we need to have some of that money dispensed now before we have the uses to understand the possibilities at the site. I am also thinking we need other ball park figures of the cost involved in fixing it up at the existing site, whether or not it has septic. Some members think a sani can for occasional use is possible. Then there is the other question of whether uses should be discussed and some kind of plan developed with the uses and the costs of moving the building vs the costs of leaving it there and having it be for example a warming shed which also has a museum that can be occasionally used. So it's not regularly used by the public. It would be a different kind of use, but it would involve different kinds of costs. I think the charge of this committee is to think of all the possible options. Not just the options that any one segment of this group wants to have and look for the facts and the costs that the town would have to undertake if it decides to leave it on the site and what limited used then can be used for it there, the costs that would be involved for moving it and put on a new foundation and the uses there and then what happens if it is sold to a nonprofit that has to assume the cost and the budget that the nonprofit would have and the sources of funding for their possible plan. As yet, we don't have the facts to support these options. If you want, Van, to try to get funding before we have answers to these three options, then that's fine, but there may be push back from the CPC.

Ann S—Is there a question that has to be answered before we can present a range of options. As I understand it, this committee's mandate is to present a range of options and not necessarily make a decision. Do we need to answer the septic question before we go any further. Do we need to have someone go out there and say yes/no about septic at the site. I do not think we are going to be able to get all those costs Ann F was talking about ahead of time before we present to town and CPC because I don't think we are going to get a lot of money (from the \$30,000) on something that is not specific.

Richard—I don't think we have the answer to that. I responded to Van's email and copied Danielle and I have heard nothing back.

Don—I met with Randy Izer from Harold Eaton and Associates and I concur with Van that those 3 steps need to be taken. In the meantime, on October 6, I met with Robert Leet, who is a septic design engineer as well as a structural engineer and Larry LaClaire at the site. Larry had previously told me that he had a successful perc done at the site which was witnessed by Dave Evans, who at the time was on the Board of Health. Robert Leet looked over the site. Those 3 steps that Van outlined do need to be followed through on, but Robert was quite encouraging that he felt there was a good possibility a septic system could be designed for that site. Larry volunteered to do a perc test.

Van—Do we have the location of the previous perc?

Dan—Larry has a good idea of where

Van—We usually design a septic around a perc test. There may have been several locations for a possible perc test

Don—I think Larry and the engineer would decide where to take it and also the boundaries would have to be verified.

Van—Are there pins?

Don—There are on the East side for Weiss family survey. If you look at the second deed, in 1974 when they transferred the second parcel to the town to expand the lot size for the museum, they referenced the survey done by Harold Eaton and Associates for the Weiss property. East side is well defined. The West side they talk about the stone wall and the extension of that stone wall another 300' beyond the original site.

Van—Would we be able to go down there are locate these locations?

Don—Tom Hankison and Eva flagged it on the East side. They flagged it and found the pins so you can walk it. Eva gave an approximation as to where they are on the West side following the existing stone wall that is referenced in the deed.

Richard—I think it is still necessary to get a licensed surveyor in there and survey the property and give us a plot plan

Don—Randy Izer said he would be willing to do that.

Richard—Is he a licensed surveyor?

Don—He is the owner of Harold Eaton and Associates.

Van—Can we schedule that as soon as we get some reply from CPA?

Don—Are you talking about using a portion of the \$30,000?

Van—I am proposing we use a portion of the \$30,000 to get us to the point of being able to understand the situation.

Pat—What Van said is an important process. Putting the cart before the horse could end up wasting people's time and disappointing people. I think it's important to find out what the Con Com says. It's great to get a surveyor out there. I am familiar with Randy Eisner, that's his business. And get it done by certified people and the commissions we use in town and Board of Health as far as is the one option viable as far as all those things go or we are just talking about it and we don't have a foundation of what can really happen. I want to second that idea that Van brought.

Don—I am willing to work with Van if he would like to and get that process completed.

Van—That would be fine. I would actually like to go on site and get a real view of the boundaries.

Don—Any time you want to go, Van, I will go with you.

Ann F—You could use Eva since she went to the trouble of sending the map with the explanation of how she saw the West boundary.

Richard—What we really need to do is get a licensed surveyor involved to do a licensed, official survey and to draw a plot plan. Everything amateur is amateur. It doesn't mean anything.

Don—Randy Izer said he estimated \$2000 to do his portion

Van—I think we can do all this for the amount of money that was allotted at Town Meeting.

Don—Less than that.

Van—I agree.

Ann F.—I heard Pat suggesting slight amendments to Van's motion which would be to connect to what I also heard Danielle to be saying, to contact the Board of Health and the Con Com about their understanding of the site. Their reactions are free. If you would be willing to include that in your proposal as something that would get us more facts.

Van—In the email I received from Richard, he said he had already reached out to the Con Com and I believe to the Board of Health.

Richard—I have not heard back from either so we will pursue that.

Van—If we need to send a letter endorsed by the entire committee, we can do that. Something to get their attention.

Don—Those three steps we outlined would need to be taken. The plot plan, the perc test and septic engineer to determine if the design could be done for the site

Van—Also including the well. I assume wells can always be drilled in Leverett. It is just how much it is going to cost you. That has been my experience

Don—Robert Leet has donated time in the past for projects such as this. Maybe he can be asked if he can do that for this one as well.

Ann F—Can I ask a question about the septic engineer? We have the surveyor ball park estimate at \$2000. If we are also suggesting a perc test, which was going to be volunteered, so no cost. What kind of cost would the septic engineer involve?

Don—We can find out. I have 2 recommendations from Carolyn, who works for Larry LeClaire, and Bob Leet.

Ann F—The reluctance on the part of the CPC to have all \$30K all go towards determining if that site is acceptable. The reluctance was if you weren't sure what uses the town would approve having that site fixed up for then that money, the \$30K, would have been put to a use that was not the best use of the \$30K. That was why she was delaying suggesting when she proposed the article on the warrant, there should be some forums or survey or somehow an understanding of what people want the building to be used for so we could decide if want to move, leave it, sell it to the nonprofit. If it is a small amount, maybe a couple thousand for a surveyor and a couple more thousand for a septic plan and well, maybe CPC would go for that because the bulk would be left for other issues that would have to be addressed for possible uses by the town and require more specialists. I am willing to vote for this motion. I think we need to vote on it. I am willing to support the motion because I think it is important to have the plot plan clarified, whether or not the place can be perced, a possible septic plan, but I am concerned about the cost of taking that out of the \$30K that the CPC proposes to allocate to this if it is more than \$10,000 so the bulk of the money could be sued for when the committee has done more if its work an actually surveyed or had forums to determine what people want the building to be used for and/or if they want it used at all or sold to a nonprofit. It is important how much of that money is going to be used to deal with the objections or the framing the CPC proposed in that article for the money to be used for.

Sara—If we go ahead with the process and it works, who is to say where we would put a bathroom. If it doesn't work, what are the other options? There are a lot more pros and cons we aren't addressing directly. This wouldn't be the final answer. There are other possibilities for a bathroom besides a septic system. There are more variables involved.

Pat—It is important to get some baseline information. Some from the Con Com and BoH. Sani-can issue is BoH I think. These would be free. This is incremental. You aren't getting a grand finale without getting your baseline information. That's how you do this work. That is why I said the cart before the horse. If you don't know what you're dealing with, you might throw out options that aren't workable. The baseline is good. Get some prices, set an amount you would approach Danielle with and go from there.

Richard—I think we need to get real prices. I think we need to pay for all this stuff. Volunteer stuff is all very nice, but what we want is written up, stamped drawings, stamped, certified percs. We can get info from Con Com and BoH for free. Everything else we should get real documents.

Ann S—We need to narrow down the options. We all know the 3 or 4 options percolating in the group. Probably similar to what will be suggested in the larger group. One of the questions that needs to be answered is can you put plumbing in there, can you put septic in the site. If no, we go on from there and present other options, if yes, we go on from there and present other options.

Kathy—Now that I have heard Pat, Ann F and Richard, I agree we need to get some basic facts so that we are not proposing things that can't be done legally.

Richard—That is why we need to get the property surveyed and get a plot plan and then get someone to site a well and someone to design a septic and do a perc test. All of these things have to be done before we can make any decisions.

Van—I think the order I introduced these ideas in is the order I would use if I were working on a project on a professional basis.

Ann F—I would like to move a substitute motion—we approach the CPC with Van’s motion, in the order he proposed it, to have these specialists come do their reports on the existing site and if funding for such reports is \$10,000 or less. I think this is something the CPC could agree to because it leaves \$20,000 of the \$30,000 to have other experts after we figure out some possible uses and renovations of the building. That is my motion.

Van—Is this only the items I listed for funding?

Ann F—Yes, only the items you listed. Given that some of the things we can get free from the Con Com and BoH, I think we can reasonably get this done for \$10,000 and hopefully the CPC will see this as a reasonable use of 1/3 of the money that was allocated by the town.

Richard—I don’t think we should put a dollar amount on it. We should just ask to do the things that Van has suggested get done because they need to get done. Whether they can get done for \$10,000 or not, I don’t know. We should just say this is what we want to do. There is \$30,000 appropriated. We have no idea what it is going to cost so shouldn’t put a dollar amount on it.

Ann F—I think we should move the question.

Richard—It hasn’t been seconded, so you can’t move it.

Ann F—Is there a second for my motion? No one seconded it so I withdraw it. I move Van’s motion.

Don—Seconded.

Don—I want to make the point that Larry Laclaire said he would volunteer his time and I think we should do this as least costly as possible. Randy Izer can show the needed lines for the site without doing a full survey. He knows the process for putting in these types of systems and will work with us. He is trying to do it in the least costly way.

Richard—I am not. I am making sure it is absolutely legal.

Don—He will. It is his business.

Richard—That is why I want to pay him.

Don—He obviously will be paid.

Ann F—Call the question.

All voted and passed unanimously

Sam Black—In their discussions with CPC and with the help of a wetlands expert, they learned that CPC funds were not to be used for that. They had to have the permits in place before requesting CPC funds.

Richard—We voted to ask so we will ask. Maybe that’s why I didn’t get an answer from Danielle.

Ann F—Van, can you send us all a copy of your motion?

Van—Richard, can you do that? You have all the emails.

Richard—I will do that.

Don—We also need to involve a wetlands consultant to delineate the wetlands. That should be included in what we do. Do you agree, Van?

Van—Yes, I thought we had a map of the wetlands.

Don—We have the DEP map. The on the ground process would require delineating the wetlands.

Van—I was mistaken. I thought we had that. Then we should do that.

Tom H—I can get you access to folks who are qualified in that area.

Richard—I make a motion that we add wetlands to the request.

Don—Seconded.

Pat—Isn’t wetlands Con Com? We have an agent. We pay an agent. They do wetlands protection.

Richard—They don’t survey. They go to outside specialists to do their surveys.

Pat—Be careful with outside specialists. Sometimes they have certain agendas depending on who they work for. Need an impartial group that does that.

Richard—Agree. That's why I want to pay people and not do good ol' boy network.

Richard—Vote to add professional wetlands survey. All those in favor.

Vote passed

Ann F—I would like to have Kari speak to this. You have on the agenda discuss possible future adaptive reuse of the building, not considering site. And you also have discuss a community-wide survey. Last time, Kari and I proposed and people agreed to set up a subcommittee. We were thinking of a survey committee. She is going to discuss why we are going to do that somewhat differently.

Kari—The Public Opinion Subcommittee met and we realized that the best plan is to hold (likely) two public forums before we try to do any kind of survey (since people don't yet understand the issue and a survey right now wouldn't be informative).

At Forum #1, we can educate the public about the situation and the options. This Forum can be scheduled once the committee has clarified and discussed the facts.

It will be a presentation at which the committee can share those facts and information that we've been gathering on the options for the building and what we know, thus far.

We can answer the public's questions after our presentation.

We will have a note taker to report on what was shared at the forums.

Forum #2 would be an opportunity to present the facts about the building and site, to talk more about the potential uses and whether the town should retain ownership of the building, to share any additional information that has been gathered and discussed by the committee. A key element of Forum #2 is an activity to elicit public opinion on the future of the building.

The idea is that both forums would be led by a professional moderator, perhaps Oran Kaufman.

The forums will help guide the committee's decision on whether to then offer a follow-up survey (or if the public was already able to provide input on the preferred future uses of the building at the forums).

Ultimately, we can provide our final findings to the Select Board with the notes (taken by the notetaker) and the results of a potential survey, so they can see which options the public favors most.

Ann S—Will the forums be in person or a combination?

Ann F—Hybrid. Having a professional moderator would free up Richard or someone, a technical person, to run the hybrid version of the meeting from the Town Hall.

Richard—If someone else is running the meeting, I can do the technical side of it.

Kathy—How would this proposed set of forums coordinate with fact finding? Do we need to have the facts first?

Kari and Ann F—Yes. Absolutely. That would be the key in our presentation. When we schedule forums will depend on when we start getting facts back. When these experts get back to us with their reports then we will know when we can schedule the first public forum. But, yes, fact based.

Ann S—I think you will have to accept the fact that there might be people in the first forum who bring up something we've never thought about and we will need to find the answer before the second forum. It's an information gathering as well as an educational opportunity.

Richard—Do we want to talk about potential uses without site being discussed or are we done?

Ann F—I would like to talk a little about that if other members—well, it is 8:33, but we have been going until 9, but I know people's time is valuable so if people just want to wait until a following meeting to do that, that would be fine with me.

Sara—I think it's good that we share, each one of us, some ideas now—from the committee—what we would like to see the building used for/adaptable uses quickly. I don't think it takes much time. Then that would be kind of a base or what we can expect or share when we have the forum.

Kathy—I personally don't feel I could even state that with any certainty until I have some facts.

Ann S—I think a lot of ideas have passed around from the first meeting. Unless anyone has more refined ideas, I'm not sure this would be a good point to go through this again. People have to remember to be flexible and open minded. I don't think we need to state our positions again.

Maureen—For those who are in favor of a septic system, what are their ideas for the building? I feel there has to be a pretty regular use of the building in order to justify spending the money—if it's even possible.

Richard—You can't have a building open to the public without sanitary services in it.

Silas—Says who?

Richard—Says MA state law

Silas—How come it hasn't been locked up? How come Edie can do an every other Saturday or a once a month. I mean she hasn't been lately, but she used to do a once a month Saturday.

Richard—Because Leverett is breaking the law, to be frank, and no one in town government is willing to shut them down. That is my answer to the question.

Don—Does that mean they can't meet at the Congregational Church, because Tom can confirm they have no bathroom

Pat—Why don't we find out what the law is. That shouldn't be that hard.

Richard—The Congregational Church is irrelevant because it is not a town building.

Tom—Richard's point is that it is a municipal building and has state regulations attached to it. How they got away with it until now is a good question.

Maureen—So if the Historical Society owned it, those state regs would not apply??

Pat—That is not necessarily true. I think it is important to find out what the regulations are. This goes back to that foundational learning as to what we can and can't do, in my opinion.

Ann F—For example, if it were just owned by the town and used as a warming site for Leverett Pond in the winter time, and with a few displays available for people who want to use it, with a sani can, would that be something that the town would not permit?

Richard—I think that is something the town should not permit if they follow the law.

Sam Black—If it is a municipal building, it is allowed by law to have a composting or incinerating toilet in MA.

Richard—That is true, but I have been told on good authority by a member of the Selectboard that they are not interested in considering that kind of alternative system because they are very expensive.

Tom—If you like, I can give you guys a little more definitive answer from the Town of Leverett. Let me pursue it and I will communicate with Richard.

Pat—Consider what the entire town is willing to pay for. An incinerating toilet--that turns people off because they don't know what that means as far as emissions. And the composting toilet. I am not against either of these things, so I am speaking personally, but we have to consider maintaining these things and the cost of purchasing them and the ongoing maintenance and whether townspeople really want to put their money towards that in an ongoing way rather than, lets say, a septic system which has a higher up front installation fee, which could or could not be paid for with CPA funds, but maintaining it would not cost that much considering the use. I think that is something to put in the back of your minds.

Ann S—To go back to Maureen’s question, I do think we have to think about the options we have and maybe all of us have come to this in our heads or maybe we haven’t yet in terms of what do we see this building as. What do we want this building to be in terms of appealing to the town, in terms of drawing more people to it, or just fixing it up. There is a variety of opinions, but having been on the Historical Commission for a while, one of the issues is people really don’t know about it. I know you all know this. And how do we get them interested in it? How do you pull people to that building no matter where it is. If it’s where it is now, how do you make it more accessible? I think we are going to run into this question with the general public as well so I don’t know how to answer the question of does it matter if it has a septic. We will have to answer that. Or not necessarily a septic, but facilities that make it accessible. And add parking to that issue as well. If we want to make that building attractive.

Richard—And safe. Right now, the parking is not safe. That is a fast road and people are barely off the road and there are 2 parking spaces so what is there is not very practical, so I agree with you.

Tom H—I wanted to sit in on a meeting to show the Selectboard is paying attention. Richard keeps us up to date on a fairly regular basis. We very much appreciate the hard work you are doing. It’s not easy work. It’s time-consuming work and has a lot of variables. If you can get your variables (options) straightened out so the general public can understand them when the time comes to hold forums, I think you would be doing yourself a big favor. Right now, I think you guys are doing a wonderful job and progress is being made. Best of luck.

Richard—Thanks for joining us. We appreciate it. We appreciate Pat joining us and Cynthia and Sam.

Ann F—There is one unanswered question after Kari gave the recommendation from our subcommittee. People seem to be interested in what we had to say, but we didn’t get an answer as to whether or not we should follow up with Oran to see if he willing to do this two-part forum whenever we are ready to have it as a committee-- when we have enough facts. Should we be following up to see if he agrees or be finding another facilitator if he doesn’t agree?

Richard—I would say you should be following up. It’s your proposal.

Maureen—Thanks (to Ann F and Kari) for spending the time putting that together. I think it’s a great idea and I definitely support it.

Van—Motion to adjourn

Ann F—Seconded

All in favor—meeting adjourned

Submitted by,
Maureen Ippolito