

Ad Hoc Committee for the Future of the Field Library Building

September 15, 2022

Final Version of Minutes

Richard Nathhorst called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm

Members present: Andrew Vlock, Maureen Ippolito, Silas Ball, Donald Robinson, Sara Robinson, Ann Ferguson, Kari Ridge, Kathryn and Van Stoddard, Ann Schuyler.

Guests: Brian and Nancy Emond, Carol Heim, Pat Duffy

Andrew introduced himself. He's been on the revenue committee for the last two years and this project has been discussed there. The mess over this at town meeting interested him. The revenue committee decided to have one member join the Ad Hoc Committee. He's lived in Leverett for 4 years and lives on Teawaddle Hill.

Richard had each of us introduce ourselves to Andrew Vlock

Judy Todd—I am on this committee so that I can keep abreast of what will be happening to the Field Building. I am a Field. I've been in Leverett for 50 years.

Ann Ferguson, she's lived in Leverett for 66 years. She's interested in the discussion of how to preserve the historical buildings. She has worked on the coop board. Really wants to help devise a good use for this building.

Maureen Ippolito, has lived in Leverett for 20 years. Got interested in the historical buildings because of being part of Leverett's 250th Birthday Committee.

Silas Ball—was born and raised in Leverett, he's been here for 40 years. Blood lines go back to before Leverett was a town. He's always been interested in our historical assets.

Brian and Nancy Emond—have been here since 1977, 45 years. They have served on every committee that exists. Nancy was on the select board. They are here because we care. Nancy hopes we can make this a democratic process. She's concerned about what happened in North Leverett. She doesn't want to see just a few people make the decision about what will happen to the building.

Pat Duffy is on the select board. She is here in a personal capacity. She feels this is an important issue. She has lived here since 2004. She loves this town and thinks it's wonderful. She loves the Field building and is interested in the democratic process.

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Kari Ridge—Kari is on this committee because she loves the town and history and the museum. She's on the coop board. She wants to help figure out what is best for the building and wants to help inform the town about this process. She's been her for 12 years.

Sara and Donald Robinson—she was born and raised here. She really cares about Leverett and the historical buildings.

Donald has been in Leverett since 1975 when they moved back into town. He was on the board of assessors for 35 years. Very interested in preserving the historical assets of Leverett. Is also involved with the Leverett Sawmill. Just helping his wife in whatever she wants to do.

Carol Heim—I'm not an official member of the committee. Interested citizen. Interested in historical buildings and records generally. Anything to do with the community preservation committee. She wants to be informed so she can make wise decisions.

Kathryn and Van Stoddard: They have lived on Cave Hill Road for 30 something years. Interested to see what we can do with this beautiful historic building. Van has been in Leverett for over 40 years. He has built many houses in Leverett and in the surrounding area and many studios and restorations in the Pioneer Valley. He's interested in what's going on in town. He's involved.

Anny Schuyler—her parents live in the Juggler Meadow house that became the estate for the Kittridge's. Ann lives at 95 Amherst Road. Her profession is historical museums. She works in one in Lenox. She tries to get people interested in history through stories (her profession). She wants to get people interested in the building and have it be something important in their lives.

Richard Nathhorst—came to UMass Amherst and stayed. He's the Research Facilities Manager. Co-founder of Preserve UMass along with Joe ?? They are responsible for the preservation of UMass Amherst campus. Wants to get the chancellor to work on the ?? building. The building is now the Jewel Box of the campus. It's used 365 days a year. He's the chairman of the committee and wants to echo the call for democracy for this committee. There will be a proposal tonight for a public forum for the future of the Field building.

Ann Ferguson—Richard was chosen as chair by the committee, not by the Select Board.

Richard—he thinks he was slightly misquoted by the Montague Reporter on the soliciting of information from an architect. That was his own call from Kuhn Riddle and it got a little muddled in the Reporter.

Silas—thank Judy for going down and opening the library on Saturday so committee members could have a tour. He wants to welcome Pat and Andrew.

Richard read the membership of the committee appointed by the Select Board. The formal members are Andrew Vlock, Maureen Ippolito, Silas Ball, Donald Robinson, Sara Robinson, Ann Ferguson, Kari Ridge, Kathryn and Van Stoddard, Ann Schuyler.

One thing we can absolutely agree on is that we want to make sure that the Bradford Field Library building is preserved. It's an important historical structure. We all want it to be used, to survive and be well cared for.

Richard also wanted to thank Judy. We are having another tour this Saturday at 1:00 for an opportunity to see the building. He feels it's worthwhile.

Ann Ferguson—let's review the minutes.

Suggested updates—remove Andy Vlock as being present. On the first page she mentioned that the committee should have a site visit, not a sight visit. The last correction is just that Ann Schuyler mentions a database and there is question marks there.

Ann Schuyler said that it's the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIF). Richard—MACRIF is maintained by the Massachusetts Secretary of State. It is listed as a resource. It hasn't been elevated to the Nat'l Park Service. Ann—it's part of the Historic Leverett inventory.

Sara—a minor thing, on page three...Leverett Museum, not Leverett Library. On page four the library in Worthington is Leona.

Kari—thanks Judy for taking 4 pages of minutes. One page 1 half way down—She wanted to see what the town residents want to do, not the town.

Ann—have everyone clap their hands for Judy

Donald—one page two...previously he said we need to evaluate parking and septic. "could possibly be put in and after that it will need further evaluation.

Ann Ferguson moved that we accept the minutes. Sara seconded the motion. Chorus of "aye" and the minutes were accepted.

Richard sent to everyone who is a member copies of town records from 2007 and 2008 concerning the Field building and what was done at that time. He hopes everyone has had a chance to read that.

Ann Ferguson—the minutes are posted on the town website and hopes everyone knows that.

Richard—We have to post the agenda to comply with the Massachusetts Open Meeting law. We take a shot at the agenda and it's always open to addition.

Ann is moving that the committee consider as an important part of it's charge to hold a public forum to get input from the town. It's important. She wants the committee to plan and schedule a public forum.

Seconded by Silas.

Ann Ferguson feels it was pretty clear that the Select Board was quite concerned to have a democratic process and solicit town opinion on any future of the Field Museum. It's important because people are confused about what the future of the building is. She knows we are divided after our first meeting. To solicit public opinion is important. We should do a face-to-face meeting with a hybrid option, if that can be managed. She feels it would be good to have a facilitator to be the chair of the forum because of Richard's opinions. She has approached Oren Kaufman, who has done mediation in his practice of law who could stand in. He could possibly not charge us money. We have no money from the Select Board. Whether or not we get him as a facilitator, this is her feeling about how the meeting should be run. It would be a democratic way to do it. If people have strong views or strong questions it would be a way for them to get their opinions known.

Ann Schuyler--we need to decide when that would happen in the process. If this committee is supposed to come up with certain options or recommendations. There are some options that would need to go to a consultant. Should we have this town meeting, or more than one? Do we need another one when we have more solid answers?

Richard--have one meeting after we meet with the consultant and another meeting after we have our ideas.

Kathryn—she agrees that it's important and essential to try to explore and then come back to the town with a more educated picture of options. Her concern would be that we have a town meeting too soon before we can have any recommendations. The meeting would be going on emotions and maybe even misconceptions. She hopes we have more research and factual exploring before bringing it to the town.

Ann Ferguson--yes, we need to develop more facts. We need to choose several options and what would be technically feasible to promote those options. We need to have the consultants talk to the committee and then have the public forum. Her idea would be that the committee would just be listening to the people and hear their opinions. If there are some facts that are relevant then

we would discuss those. We are meeting bi-weekly. Hopefully, we can get some facts to support option 1, 2 or 3 before we have that meeting.

Pat—She wanted to say two things...one, the fall town meeting is going to be November 1st. This committee can steer things around that. You could have an informational gathering/meeting where we are not asking people to make decisions or give opinions, just give thoughts. When we have that information, we can discuss what we learn. We can stress the importance of the process and hopefully people will contribute freely.

Van—My understanding of what the charge of the committee was is that we would do research and come up with factual and doable options that the town could pursue. Coming in without that information or what technology would entail would just lead to an unproductive meeting. People in Leverett have a lot of opinions, but without the factual information a meeting would be a waste of time. He'd rather get the technical options that this committee is in favor of so that the town would be more informed when the people voice an opinion.

Ann Ferguson—to that point, she agrees. We need to have options fleshed out and the do ability of each option before we have a public forum. People don't have the background information. It's part of our charge. The Select Board wants to see a democratic process and people didn't feel informed at the town meeting. People were angry when pushback happened at town meeting. We want to have a public forum where people can state their opinions. A factual meeting can be first. We need to have the background.

Brian and Nancy Emond—sorry you can't see us...it's to your advantage. One of his concerns is that if we come to the town with already pre-determined uses for the building limits it to what our wishes are. If we have a survey to see what the town would like to see done with the building, we can answer the questions of what each option would take. What would be the cost if we move the meeting, what would the cost of a septic system be. Nothing contentious. Would you like to see the town keep the building and how would you like to see it utilized? Then we have something we can start with.

Sara—wants to see factual information and that will cost some money for part of it. We don't have any money. We are volunteers giving our best.

Richard—feels we can get lots of factual information. We are dealing with various committees...we are in the process of asking the evaluation committee and conservation committee. Richard has asked an architect to give us a proposal of what it would take to have an architectural proposal done. The building needs work.

Sara—this information should be shared with the committee before we go to the public

Van—we are supposed to be finding information for what we can do in a real way and not an emotional way. If we have too many opinions it won't jive with what we can do.

Ann Schuyler—one problem is that a lot of people don't know what is in the building so there needs to be an educational process. She feels we'll need to go through a democratic process to

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hear people's opinions. We should have the facts of XYZ. We are just one small committee. If we want to get the townfolks involved, we'll have to have a public forum.

Van—when we present something to the town, he wants it to be real.

Ann Ferguson—to put having this public forum on the agenda now wasn't to put the meeting on the agenda now, it was to do our work so that we can present coherent facts to the town. At some point in the process, we need to have a public forum. IF there are factual questions, we need to have the factual answer. Everyone is busy. We need to put it on the docket now. She doesn't think we should have the public forum now, she just wanted to get this on the agenda.

Nancy and Brian—are wondering what happens if we don't have what we need by Nov. 1st. Is the committee locked into a timeline for this? Has the Select Board put a limit on the time we have.

Pat—yes, there is an end date.

Richard—it's December

Pat--thinks it should go into January. She doesn't think it would be a problem if the committee comes to the Select Board and asks for more time.

Nancy Emond—what about the spring town meeting??

Pat—that decision was made on the fly. If we want to revisit it, just bring it back to the Select Board. If we tell them “this is where we are at, this is what we want to do, we need to extend our plan”, the Select Board would be open to giving the committee more time.

Ann Ferguson—Tom Hankinson's thought was we wouldn't have enough time. The December date is so we can get the docket ready for January.

Pat—budget talks go through February. She doesn't think it would be a problem to get this on the warrant. She's done a lot of committee work. If it requires money, it will have to go to the Finance Comm. If it's CPC money. She's not quite sure where the money is coming from.

Richard—there is no money now.

Pat—it will take the time it takes. A deadline is good because it helps focus people. She was going to say through January.

Richard—we can certainly extend the time if we need.

Donald—it is important to gather facts. There was a pretty extensive report done in 2013. It lays out an exhaustive review of the Field Family Museum. In terms of preserving the holdings. What the facility needs in terms of maintenance and repairs. The other point, I'm glad that Pat is here, in going back to the minutes that we have approved it has a statement that “the SB is

inclined to use CPA money if we choose to move the building and not do anything if we don't move the building.

Richard—this was my statement, not the Select Boards statement.

Pat—she needs to see the Select Board minutes to see exactly what was said. There are three people that vote on this. She doesn't recall what was said.

Silas--Richard made the statement it's his opinion of what the members of the Select Board are feeling.

Richard—asked one Select Board member why it was a problem to maintain the building and the answer was that the building wasn't able to be open to the public as it is currently constituted and

Donald—that's not what the minutes reflect.

Richard—anything that goes through minutes and recording is subject to drift. Doesn't know what else to say about this issue.

Kari—official charge reads “please report back to the Select Board in September and October with final findings due in December 2022”. We know we can't meet that. What do we need to do to change this?

Pat—bring it back to the Select Board. That night it was a three hour meeting and it was a bit muddled. Everyone seemed to agree that it was OK. She doesn't see a need to have the deadline at the end of December. She's speaking as herself, not the SB.

Kari—we need to go back to the Select Board and ask for more time.

Pat—Yes.

Silas—wanted to mention really quick that there was a survey done three years ago. The historical group put together a survey and we were all asked to give our opinions. We should look at those survey results. Silas will contact Susan Mareneck.

Ann Ferguson—the survey was done in 2018.

Ann Schuyler—the survey is on the website. She'll send it all of us.

Ann Ferguson--it's on the historical commission section of the town website.

Ann Schuyler--there is historical information about the museum. She doesn't recall that there were questions about what Leverett should do with the building. It was more historical. The survey had a list of historical assets in town. Hopefully the committee members can review the survey. If the town retains ownership, there is always an option that the town doesn't retain ownership, can we get a commitment for maintenance. Can we get maintenance money if the building is not moved? It's an important element in the decision. If the town isn't interested in maintenance at the present location, it determines what we recommend.

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Maureen—she echoes what Ann Schuyler just said. Will the town continue ownership, maintenance and paying the bills?

Ann Ferguson—on that point, I want to mention that we should discuss the past Select Board views and Richard’s discussion with Margie. We have a different Select Board now. They have not weighed in on this issue. The Select Board has changed their mind on issues in the past. The Select Board may be more interested in answering the question if they had more factual information about what the purpose of the building would be if it stays in the present location. It may be that we need to give them more research on the options before they give an opinion.

Pat—that was her thought. You read a survey and at the end it tells you more research is needed. Before she commits to this, she needs to know more about what is involved. The second piece is that it would go before town meeting in the budget. It would need to be sold to the town. The Select Board decision overshadows the town meeting decision. Town meeting is where the decision gets made. The Select Board can support it. We would need that information.

Kathryn—we are almost at the end of the meeting time and we spent the whole time discussing the process. Can we take the town meeting almost as an agenda? Can we back into the schedule that we need to do. We can go around and round with this discussion. We haven’t even talked about the building. With the Select Board, there was a suggestion of a deadline.

Carol—thanked Pat Duffy for the point that the Select Board is not the final say one what happens with the building. Carol agrees with Silas from the last meeting that it’s appalling that maintenance has been ignored. If the town owns it, they need to maintain it.

Richard—It’s coming up on 8:45. We have other things to go through. We need to meet every two weeks. The next meeting would be September 29th.

Ann Ferguson—I thought we agreed that we’d have meetings every two weeks.

Richard—we did.

Ann Ferguson—so we should put this on our calendars for every two weeks.

Nancy—I’m not on the committee but I’d like to make one more point. There are deadlines. If it’s not in the towns budget to maintain the building, we need to get the will of the public and what should happen with the building.

Richard—one advantage of a public forum is to get the consensus of what the people want to do with the building. The proposed uses of the building. This mitigates, the need to hold the forum and get the opinion of the town.

Ann Ferguson—given the discussion, I want to revise the suggestion. She wants to get a straw vote of whether people here want to have a forum. She’s not saying when. She’s interested in whether people want to have a forum at some point.

Sara---speaking to the forum. Agrees with the forum. Should we do a survey first.

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Richard—we've already said we'd bring in the information from the 2018 survey and share it with the committee. The information is on the town website from the last survey. We need to get a sense of the membership of the committee on the idea of a forum.

Ann Schuyler—we may need one or more.

Kari—do we need a second to vote on whether to have a forum? I'll second the motion.

Richard—it's a straw vote.

Van—let's have an actual motion.

Ann Ferguson--I propose that we have one or more forums in the future.

Someone seconded it.

Motion passed.

Ann Ferguson—Danielle Barshak is willing to come to our next meeting from the CPC to help us understand the proposals that have been made and the process.

Richard—I think we've accomplished a lot tonight. We are better organized. Pat, I want to thank you for attending.

Pat—I'll be back.

Richard—we are running up on 9:00. A could time to adjourn.

Kathy—in terms of the next meeting agenda, how will that be structured.

Richard—I'll be happy to take suggestions. Give me bullet points because it has to go up on a website.

Ann Ferguson—Richard, can you share your agenda before it goes on the website.

Richard—I always use a standard agenda

- Review minutes
- New business
- Any specific items that we have as business

This is what he is going to ask us to do, because this has to be posted seven business days ahead of the meeting. He has the additional problem that the town manager and town clerk don't work a full week.

Pat—The agenda needs to be posted by Monday.

Richard—if we don't meet the deadline for posting the minutes, we can't have the meeting.

Don--in terms of gathering factual information, I've raised this before. I am trying to research the actual lot lines.

Robert and Joan Weise had the east line of the lot surveyed.

Richard—there are two deeds.

Don—we have not been able to delineate the actual lot lines, except on the west side and the south side.

Richard will post the deeds of the Leverett Museum property on the website.

Sara motioned to adjourn. Someone seconded. Motion passed.