

Field Building forum notes. Forums were held February 7, 2026, and February 12, 2026

Two forums to get town's people's opinions for the future of the Field Building were held. One forum was held February 7, 2026, and the second was held on February 12, 2026.

The forum held on Saturday, February 7, began at 2:01pm. The forum held on Thursday, February 12 began at 7:01 pm.

Committee members in attendance on February 7: Anne Schuyler, Maureen Ippolito (co-chair), Silas Ball (co-chair), Ann Ferguson, Donald Robinson (via Zoom), Ann Schuyler, and Judy Todd. Eric Gradoia, an architectural historian, who did a building assessment of the Field Building, attended both forums.

For the forum on February 12, committee member Don Robinson was not in attendance.

Townspeople in attendance on February 7:

In person: Louise Minks, Susan Mareneck, Carol Heim, Phil Carter, Eva Gibavic, Solomon Goldstein-Rose (briefly), Selectboard member: Pat Duffy

Viewed meeting on Zoom: Carol Shea, Carole DeSanti, Judy Ricker Ana Botta and Jim Hicks, Barbara Carulli.

Townspeople in attendance on February 12:

In person: Nick Bagley, Dawn Ward, Cynthia Baldwin, Seth Hemenway, Kari Ridge, Carol Heim, Denzel Hankinson, Julie Shively, Joan Snowdon, Janine Roberts, Tony Densmore, Eva Gibavic. Selectboard members: Jed Projansky, Pat Duffy, and Tom Hankinson.

Viewed meeting on Zoom: D'Ann Kelty, Lisa Werner, Lorna Rivers, Nancy Grossman, Kathryn Stoddard, Ana Botta, Jim Hicks, Sarah Zahn.

Maureen opened both forums by giving some rules for the forum and explained that we would have time for questions after the presentation and then ask for people's opinions about the Field Building at the end.

A Power Point presentation was put together by Anne Schuyler that included a history of the Field Building, the options for the future of the building that the committee decided upon, facts about what was needed to be done to the building, the cost of the upgrades, and a list of organizations that might give the town grants to help cover the cost of the building upgrades.

Anne Schuyler read through the history of the building portion. Silas Ball read through Option 1A, Maureen Ippolito read through Option 1B and Option 1C. Ann Ferguson¹ read Option 2, while Maureen read the Facts Presentation, a list of current needs/upgrades to the building, a list of annual maintenance needed for the building, and the possible grant opportunities. For the content of the options, please consult the Power Point presentation.

A voice message from Sara Robinson explaining her hopes for the future of the Field Building was played.

NOTE: All the facts and estimates are for the building at the current site of the building. A land survey, septic field evaluation and wetland delineation, and a perc test have all been done.

Discussion on Saturday, February 7:

Eva asked Eric to speak about what he found in the building.

Eric introduced himself and told us how he is an architectural conservator and historian. He gave his job history. He looks at, studies, and assesses historical buildings.

He wants us to know that we have a very good building that suffers from deferred maintenance. It's virtually unchanged since its construction. No maintenance, no plumbing, no parking, and mechanics need improvement. In looking at the building, it's just tired. Buildings have life cycles; they start out brand new and over a period of time all materials have service lives. The materials for the building need to be renewed. He still needs to walk through the building with a structural engineer, but he doesn't see any major issues. Painting, infrastructure (heating, electrical and lighting need to be upgraded). The scope for him was to look at the building. He feels this building would probably benefit from a small addition for bathrooms. You could fit a bathroom in the building, but it would take up space. A modest addition would also accommodate better stairs for the lower level. The walk out basement is a plus. He sees a landscaping plan where you have parking. Budget is everything. If you are adding an addition, you could also install an elevator. These things would really give the building a second life.

Eric looked at the physical building. The building needs a viable purpose. He can see a couple of uses. The collections as a portion of the building and a floor of the building used for something else. Don't try to force a "use on the building", look at the building and see what it would easily allow. This is his broad overview. He's seen far worse buildings that have been invested in and come back with a different purpose. You have open spaces on all 3 floors. It allows for different uses. The building did pass a perc test so you can get some plumbing in the building. It's in a good location. Architecturally, it's a good building. It's a piece of architecture that fits into the town. The building enhances the landscape in its design and location. The Field Building just

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needs an investment to be enhanced, updated, and improved. Those are his impressions. He'd like to answer anyone's questions.

Pat Duffy: She is wondering about the painting of the exterior. She didn't understand whether there needed to be lead abatement. Don't the chips need to be contained if the building is scraped?

Eric is not an expert on lead abatement. It should be addressed and it should be a concern. There is a difference between lead abatement and lead remediation. The abatement of lead paint is only required when people are living in buildings and there is an age threshold involved for what needs to be done. We'd need to do an abatement of door openings and windows. With the exterior of the building, that can be done by a licensed painter trained in lead safe laws. You don't want to do sanding, but the paint can be scraped and the paint chips disposed of.

Eric: You are talking about respirators and masks. Costs are really difficult when talking painting, painting and windows go together when painting the building. You can put putty on the windows. Clearly defining what needs to be done to the building is necessary when asking someone to give an estimate of cost. There would need to be public bidding process. Paint, putty, painting.

Eric asked a painter to come and give an estimate, and it was for scraping, repair of siding in certain areas, and painting. Eric feels the building didn't get the best prep the last time it was done.

Pat: do you have a prioritization for the work that is needed?

Eric: Yes, my priorities are listed in the report. You need a tight roof, and to have perimeter drainage. This means repairing the exterior envelope. The roof hasn't reached the end of its life, but you need to start now to think about dealing with the roof. And also, it needs a paint job on its exterior.

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Silas: I want to speak to the painting. The two estimates we received for painting, one is for remediation (lead abatement) and then painting and the other is just for painting. The higher estimate is for the complete removal of lead. If we don't do remediation now, you will have to do it down the road and it will cost more then. If you do the lead abatement now, in future volunteers can re-paint the building for much less cost.

Eva Gibavic: she mentioned that we had people wanting to do the painting but couldn't. Can we sell the building with lead paint?

Silas: Yes, you can sell it with lead paint but just must state to prospective buyers that there is lead paint.

Louise Minks: Can we just replace the siding?

Maureen: If we didn't care about keeping it as a historically accurate building.

Louise Minks: But all historical wooden-sided buildings would have had to replace their siding regularly so replacing them when needed would be what previous owners historically would have done.

Eric: You could replace the siding with new wood siding. Personally, he doesn't think that having lead siding on the building is an issue. Even with remediation, there will always be a degree of lead on the building. When you paint a building, you shouldn't get to the point where the building would need to be scraped and painted again. Ongoing maintenance is necessary. Do spot painting. Keep things in good order. Eric feels that if the building gets a professional paint job—highest quality primers, high quality topcoat, you should get a very long life out of that paint job. Periodic maintenance would be all you need. The buildings in Historic Deerfield get scaped, primed, and painted with good materials. You are looking at 7 years for touch ups and 10 years before painting again. It's hard to pin down painting variables.

Eric: I probed the building in a number of areas. By and large the siding and trim on the building is solid, and it dates to the 1900's. He feels we are better

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off retaining as much as we can of the current siding. New siding would be much more expensive and not as good quality.

Susan Mareneck: She has a very old house. She took off the siding and it was yellow pine. You can't replace that.

Carol Heim questioned the number for the \$180,000 and \$50,000.

Eric: If you get a good paint job that will cost a good amount of money, if you maintain it, you wouldn't need to put another \$50,000 into it. Doing a good job costs money and you get what you pay for. If someone just does a quick job it would only last a few years. If you get someone who will do all the correct steps in the right season, you should have a paint job that lasts for a good amount of time with ongoing maintenance (6-7 years).

Carol Heim: The touch ups would still need to be done in lead paint safe ways.

Don Robinson (on Zoom): Thanked us for playing the video of Sara's hope for the future of the building. Sara's life was dedicated to the town. Don is a "newby" only here for 50 years. Don gave his work history at UMass. Don did a test he got from Cowls and the lead paint test was negative. Don feels we need to do a hazardous materials assessment of the building. Don talked about the estimate from Gentleman's Painters in Pittsfield and their willingness to paint the Field building. The bid probably includes money for travel expenses, but they had a great experience with doing the Town Hall. There are some big questions that still need to be answered by the town. Do they want to continue to pay the costs for the building. What does the town feel about the building. Do town residents have any other thoughts about the future uses of the building?

Maureen stated they she also found out that Lion Paws Painting in Leverett is also lead certified.

Pat Duffy: The way she sees it, it isn't about getting the lead totally off the building. It's more about "we just need to paint the building". The touchups and all that, we'd need to figure out whether painting comes under any grants?

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Maureen: CPC funding should cover it. Maureen went on the Community Preservation Coalition website to look at past projects that got grant funding. Many included painting.

Pat Duffy: It might take a couple of years to get there, but in her mind the painting is the most obvious repair that it needs.

We didn't have any other questions about the presentation.

Moved onto people giving their opinions for the future of the building.

Eva Gibavic: There is no part of me that wants to move the building. In terms of the two other options for "it stays in place; how do we use it". She is personally willing to be there once a month so that people can get in there. She'd like to have more people participate in that. She's not opposed to multi-use. She tries to think about what the future uses would be. If the Yankee Candle thing goes through there will be huge changes to the town. It might be used for town offices. There are future uses that we don't know about now. It would be nice to get people interested in the future of Leverett and being on Town committees. When they started the scanning project (of documents at the Field Building), she was blown away by the currentness of the collection. There are articles about the Peace Pagoda and adding onto the school. We need to keep up with the documentation of what is happening now in town. The school kids run around, and they have a great time, and they are creating a history.

Louise Minks: We always need meeting spaces. The new library is always busy. She sees the building being used as a senior center. She sees it immediately as a really good meeting space. The first floor is a good size. She sees no problem with it being used.

Pat Duffy: She likes the opportunity of a mixed-use building. She feels Eric likes the idea as well. She likes the idea of a café in the building. Margie

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McGinnis agrees with this use. Pat wants to look at grant opportunities. The building is gorgeous and it should be modernized. Adding a bathroom is for the future. People would appropriate the bathroom. The vision should include parking. How could we make it accessible for parking?

Carol Heim: She is also not in favor of moving the building. She is quite open to the multi-use building. She takes seriously the question of where we would put the artifacts if we don't have the building. We'd need people that would rotate the exhibits. All of this is subject to the financial concerns of the costs the Town would incur.

Susan Mareneck: I feel like I should give some opinion, but she is really interested in some other people's opinion about it. Moving the building is not a good option because of preserving the building. The costs involved with moving are astronomical. Having another use would keep it more viable. If there could be more uses. Annette Gibavic wanted a café down there. There are multiple options and she is grateful to us and Eric for our involvement.

Carol Heim: She appreciates the LHS and LHC involvement. It would be wonderful to find someone who wants to join these committees and have them really want to help with the Field Museum and get things going. She might be interested in helping.

Judy Ricker: She endorses what Eva says, fix the paint, remove the lead. She wants to see the building used. She thanked us for doing this, you've done a lot of work.

Don Robinson (on Zoom) agrees with Eva and Judy Ricker.

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Jim Hicks: I've been listening and learning more about the place. Like most people have said he sees lots of reasons not to move an historic building. In terms of the multi-use option, he's intrigued to see what the options would be. Leverett folks have lots of ideas and they like to tell them. He loves Eva's idea about creating history now. He'd love to hear the stories of the people who live in the homes of the house photos that used to hang in town hall. I've never been in the building.

Eva: Eva announced that she will be down at the museum before the next forum and anyone can come to see the building.

Phil Carter: As a member of the Finance Committee, there are serious finance issues in this town. The maintenance costs for this building are something we can avoid and we should. He feels we should sell it. He respects the opinions of others. The maintenance costs show we need to sell it.

Ann Ferguson: I've been on the committee since it started and was the person who originally wanted to have it created after the question of selling it was tabled at the Town Meeting in 2022. I wanted the Town to have more information and decide democratically whether or not to sell it. She was originally on the "move the building" side. She thought moving the building to the library complex would allow the building to be used more because of accessible parking, and since the building is a museum, it would fit into the library complex. But she changed her mind after seeing Eric's report and his view concerning the danger of moving it. She also had concerns about the increased costs for this option, since Steve Ball judged that it can't be connected to the existing library septic. Now she sees a mixed-use at the existing site as the best option. It would be really good to have uses that give the town an income by exploring other options for the first floor. A working museum doesn't need to display all of its collection, so the first floor could be freed of artifacts for other uses which could be displayed in the basement. The cost thing is really important. You also have to think about who is writing the grants. We'd have to go to the CPC in conjunction with someone working

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with the grant organizations listed in Eric's report. She would like to see the first floor be used for something that would defray the costs.

Pat Duffy: If there are grants that need to be written for priorities, unless it's just sold, no matter what, costs can be incremental, it wouldn't be a giant cost at the beginning. The painting would come first; after that we could get a rehab grant to get a bathroom. This is more of a feasible way to look at it, as incremental changes and costs for the Town

Louise Minks: I completely understand financial costs. She feels that once there are some upgrades there would be people who want to use the building. Her church rents out spaces during the week. Lots of people who teach instrumental lessons need a space. The senior center really needs a space, but it wouldn't be much of an income. She feels that the goal is that it should be self-sustaining financially. You have the upfront costs to fix it up and then have ongoing maintenance.

Judy Ricker: She can remember coming back to town when the building of new library and an addition to the school were being discussed, the people in town voted for both. It took a lot of money to build the new library, but it was eventually raised, so don't be discouraged about the cost.

Don Robinson (on Zoom): He agrees with the need to get it set up to be used. The town has not followed through on the responsibility of maintaining the building. The fact remains that the building needs to be upgraded and maintained and the Town needs to do this

Eric Gradoia: In hearing everyone else's thoughts, he feels you need to deal with the collections that are in the building. There is no other place for the collections. When you talk about mixed-use, the collections have to be considered. You need to think of the first floor and basement as a place to display things. He's worked with museums before. Having spent time in the building, he feels there are some books and paperwork that doesn't really need to be kept because they are online. We need to think about better using the space we have, maximizing the space we have with storage units and

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shelving. You may be able to have everything downstairs in the basement and we'd have the rest of the building for alternative uses. As far as tackling work and how you do that:

You maximize your money by doing as much as you can in one project but sometimes you need to do it incrementally. The priority is to tackle the building envelope first, and then phase two can be what other Historical societies have done to update historical buildings, that is, to create an RFP that can be sent out to find someone to use the first floor of the building and see what people come back with to use the space. Executing a project like this takes a lot of work from a lot of people to write grants, looking at funding sources, finding out ways to use the building, and also volunteers to sift through the artifacts and decide which to discard, for example, some old papers that are digitalized, and to condense the holdings into smaller storage space.. This building is a good candidate for rehabilitation. He sees this building looked at favorably by grant organizations, particularly for the Mass. Historical Commission, also the granting organization which funds ADA renovations listed in his report.

Eva Gibavic: A younger person in town is interested in helping. Can we put Anne's PowerPoint on the town website?

Pat Duffy: Wants to thank the committee. It's been a long haul. She wants to thank us as a selectboard member, and she hopes we feel good about what has come out of our work.

Judy spoke: She would like to see the building rejuvenated and perhaps with a mixed use. When there was an open house in the building in January, the visitors there who had not visited before were amazed. She would like to see the museum continue to function.

Anne Schuyler: She would like to use the building in a different way so that more people can use it and the Town can still keep the artifacts. She talked about the Worthington library and how they attract more people to come to it

because they have children's programs. The idea of renting out the first-floor space might be good to generate revenue. She thanked people for their input.

Maureen Ippolitto: Keeping it as a museum and maintaining it like it is now is not very expensive, but any mixed use would require doing the upgrades to bring it up to code is very expensive. She doesn't know if any grants would cover the septic.

Silas Ball: The frustration he has is that this is committee 3.0: the third Town committee to discuss the future of the Field building. The first two committees' options are not available. The lead paint has been a hangup for the other committees and the longer we wait the more it will cost. Early on on this present committee we had a lot more members and quite a few bailed for various reasons. Moisture in the building is a huge concern. The deterioration of the building is a concern. Landscaping is causing issues with moisture. After the 1938 hurricane, the pond got raised by 5 feet and water and wetlands came to the other side of the road causing moisture. The top floor being inaccessible by ADA is a concern, but every single town building has the same issues. I do not feel that the building should be moved—overhead powerlines, I measured and there are 29 between here and the library which would be costly to go through in moving the building. You can't duplicate what we have now on the present site, the library and school do not have basements because of the high-water table on all that property. You can't put a lead building over a high-water table which is what the school area has.

The building doesn't require a huge bathroom facility. The Town Hall needs a new septic system and actually has a design for one that includes plans that would include pumping septic up from the Field building to the Town Hall septic and water down from the water at Town Hall. This would just require one pipe in and one pipe out from the Town Hall to Field building and back. In terms of mixed uses, the building is very close to the 4-H forest which also hasn't been used and could be used as a meeting place for the 4-H club and as a starting place to use the trails in the 4-H forest.

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The important thing is to preserve it before it falls down. Get the roof, chimney, and siding repaired and take our time to figure out the best uses.

Louise Minks: The historical society and historical commission are represented here.

Ann Ferguson thanked Maureen for all the work she's done since taking over as chair of the Field committee last year.

The forum ended just after 4:00.

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Questions and opinions from the forum held on Thursday, February 12, 2026

A question about whether the valuation of the building is current or after renovation?

A question about what the mixed uses could be for the building.

Ann Ferguson answered about how the library and school feel about the building being on the school property. Neither the school principal nor the library board think that proximity to their complex is justified because it would require use of recreational space, so the disadvantages outweigh the advantages of moving the building from their point of view.

Silas Ball commented about the mixed uses. There has been a lot of discussion about what the mixed uses could be, and everyone has a lot of opinions, not all of which are feasible

Ann Ferguson mentioned that at the other forum someone had suggested sending an RFP out to have those interested in renting the first floor to tell us what they would use the building for.

Eric Gradoia introduced himself and went through his qualifications for assessing historic buildings and talked about the things he noticed in the building.

Someone asked about what kind of weatherization is needed.

Eric Gradoia: You have to keep the water out. The roof is nearing the end of its life. Exterior painting needs to be done. The windows are good; they need some work. This would help with deterioration. From there you could improve the building. You can improve the

windows (e.g. add storm windows), add more insulation, and tighten up doors.

Tom Hankinson—Select Board member. He wrote the charge to the committee. He is impressed with the detailed work we have done on this project. One of the reasons for holding these forums is to ask the public what they want done with this building. He's not necessarily concerned about cost. He's concerned about functions that the town needs. One need is a senior center. Another is a place to store historical records. What we really want to know from the Town is what do you want done to this building. He asked whether there email address that people could use to send messages to about what they feel the building could be used for. Maureen suggested sending emails to Margie McGinnis.

The email to send ideas to is: TownAdministrator@leverett.ma.us

Eric Gradoia—there are characteristics that the building has in its favor which are an open space on the first floor, a full basement, and while there is a gable roof, there is space upstairs for storage.

Jed Projansky—Select Board member. He is concerned about the money side of this and it's important that we know what the costs are. What about asbestos, what about the cost of structural assessment by a structural engineer?

Eric Gradoia has the structural assessment lined up and an engineer Eric has contacted will be doing this soon. The process would be that a structural engineer would do a walk-through of the building. If you get into a discussion of mixed uses of the building, especially changes in use, that will trigger structural changes that would have

to be considered, and you would need to pay for additional structural design renovation plans.

Jed Projansky—Considering all of the material that is stored there, have you considered organizing the documents, cleaning and organizing. Open the boxes and see what's there, etc.

Eva—A CPA grant was used to scan all the boxes of material. We have partial lists of all of the artifacts. Eva is willing to spend time doing that and others are willing as well.

Jed Projansky—ADA compliance: is that in the cost assessment?

Eric Gradoia—He didn't do that type of assessment because a future use would need to be decided before what we'd know exactly what is needed. There are grant funds for that.

Jed Projansky—As a suggestion, the Council on Aging is an organization that we all love but have no space for. He feels that having a senior center is an option.

Maureen—if the town decides to go forward with a multi-use for the building, a senior center is an option.

Jed Projansky—did I hear you say that you are all willing to stay on the committee until all of this is done. He immediately said, "thank you so much for saying "yes". (Note: But members of the committee did not agree to take this on.)

Nick Bagley: We have a building in downtown Amherst and for the last 20 years it has been empty. We are trying to get people to use it. It's very, very hard to get people to use it. Possibly the school. He feels it's hard to find people to use the building. He's dealt with old

buildings, and he knows the cost of keeping them up to date. Have you considered the Field Tavern? He looked at it before and has thought about the Free Masons contributing some work towards fixing the at building since they used to meet there years ago. Is there a way to combine the two properties and develop them together?

Silas Ball: The old Field Tavern building is privately owned and the owner hasn't shown any interest in taking care of the building.

Maureen Ippolitto: Does anyone else have any other uses for the building that we haven't heard?

Silas Ball: The Master Plan Committee he was on before, one of the questions was "what do you want to see in town?" For the tavern property they heard everything from gas stations, liquor stores, or Walmart. You can just throw out ideas.

Ann Ferguson: She stood up at the town meeting in 2022 to say she didn't think the building should be sold without more input. At first, she thought we should move the building, so that it could hook into the existing septic at the library, but Steve Ball said that was not possible. She now feels that moving the building is not an option not only because of its high cost but also that in Eric Gradoia's report he stated that moving the building is risky because it could cause structural damage to the building. She thinks a senior center is possible, but a café or an alternative business would generate enough revenue to pay maintenance costs and might be more cost effective for the Town. She mentioned that Louise Minks mentioned at the last forum that her church rents out their building which

brings in regular revenue to them. One concern she expressed is who will write the grants to get grant money to use for the building.

Anne Schuyler: She is in favor of finding a multi-function for the building and trying to pull in the school kids so the kids growing up here will know the history of the town. We need to get the kids interested in the history of the Town.

Jeb Projansky: To the possibility of moving the building, open recreation space is at a premium in town, and the Select Board has no plans to change the recreational space of the school playing fields to other uses.

Judy Todd: I would love to see the building maintenance done and the building brought up to code. A mixed-use is a great idea. My mom has done a lot at the building, as have other town people. It's important that the building is used.

Silas Ball: Moving the building is not an option. He is loosely open to a mixed-use that would require updating. He is strongly in favor of it being saved. He feels the town dropped the ball 20 years ago when they built the new library and didn't make any plans for the old building. He hopes that volunteers can be found to keep it open regularly.

Eric Gradoia: This came up in the other forum. There is no other place to store the records and artifacts in town. The building will need to continue to be used for that purpose. Part of the building can contain records, and other areas can be used for mixed-uses. For example, he sees that the first floor of the building could be used as a small office for the Town or a business. Using the building as a

senior center is something he feels is necessary to look into it a bit more to see if the building can be used for the purpose.

Eva Gibavic: She feels it is important for the Town to continue owning the building for future multi-uses. For example, what about the Yankee Candle property development and how that might change Town needs in the future? That will bring huge changes to town and more space for town offices will be needed. She knows that Lisa Stratford would love to move her office down there. Eva feels it would be a big mistake to sell the building.

Julie Shively—We have artifacts at the Moore's Corner School House, and more will be donated and it is now full. Where will you keep the artifacts if we don't keep the building as is. We'd have two museums and the sawmill. She knows the school won't take the artifacts.

Maureen Ippolito: Her thought was to start a non-profit, The Friends of the Family Museum, that could raise funds and solicit volunteers to staff the building

Silas Ball: The 4H forest doesn't get used anymore. There is a trail system behind the Tavern. The basement could be used as a 4H meeting place. No one has asked about the \$180,000 for lead abatement which is to try to remove all the lead so that future painting projects would be done with less money. There have been some groups that have volunteered to paint the building. We did not ask the company that gave the \$180,000 bid how much it would cost to paint the building without lead abatement. The Town Hall septic has failed; the well is close to the septic and that water is not potable. The Select Board purchased property out back of the Town Hall for a new septic that was never built. His opinion is that water could be sent from here down to the building and back to the septic here. This committee is the third committee that has worked on the future of the building. It's time to stop kicking the can down the road.

Jeb Projansky: For us to be able to push that proposal forward, we need that proposal from you. All three of us were here. We need a proposal from you so that we can push it forward.

Maureen Ippolito: In Eric's report, there was an estimate for prepping the building and painting the building. Every surface gets painted.

Eric Gradoia: You should also consider the landscape of the building. A trail network, a pavilion/gazebo. Think about the potential the landscape has.

Maureen—send any suggestions for the building to Margie,

The forum ended at 7:30pm

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To the committee immediately after the forum ended, Eric said his estimate is from Renaissance Painters. We need a clear apple to apples list of what we want done to give to anyone looking to do the painting. Then the estimates can be compared properly.

On the 20th of February at 10:00, Eric is meeting with a structural engineer at the Field Building. Any of the committee members are welcome to join them.