

Peter Fitzpatrick Feasibility Committee

Meeting Minutes

26th January 2019 / 3:00pm / Peter Fitzpatrick Cafeteria

Meeting called to order at 3:15pm

Attendees

Committee Members: Craig Hansen, Bill Greathead, Dave Lavender, Dave Herman, Deb Fountain, Steve Temple, Amanda Huntington

Not in attendance: April Healey, Grover Pillsbury

Consultant: Brett Pelletier

Town members attendance headcount: ~40

Introduction and Presentation

Craig Hansen introduced the committee and acknowledged the great work and commitment of each member to date. Mr. Hansen also thanked Mr. Pelletier for providing his services pro bono. Mr. Hansen presented the committee's approach, the data gathered, analysis, and findings. Preliminary conclusions and recommendations regarding the Peter Fitzpatrick property were also presented to the community:

- Repurpose as mixed-use under current zoning regulations
- Engage a non-profit to manage on behalf of the town
- Objective is to keep building open, maintained, and used
- Generate revenue and invest back into the property / community
- Get local organizations into the building for programs and services

The committee will be firming up its recommendation and gathering additional cost data prior to formally presenting to the board of selectmen within the next month or two.

A recording of this meeting and the full presentation are available for viewing at <http://www.pepperellchannel.org/VOD.html>

Community Discussion

Following the presentation, the floor was opened to community members to ask questions and/or provide comments.

Q - Did you explore senior housing?

A- Answered by Brett Pelletier - Yes, we explored that option. Brett gave a detailed answer, including comparable properties, as to why senior housing would not be ideal for this particular building. The layout is not ideal for developers. The process to sell the building would take at minimum 2 years due to various factors including financing. Most developers would offer pennies on the dollar.

Q - If used for recreation and education, how is the town going to pay for the building?

A - Answered by Craig Hansen - Craig explained the town is paying for the building regardless of its use due to maintenance, utilities, and insurance. Utilizing it will help generate profit to offset those expenses.

Q - How much is the insurance for the vacant building

A - Answered by Andrew MacLean, Town Administrator - We would save approximately \$20,000 by not having the building vacant (need to get it 33% occupied). The TA has asked us to get more exact expenditures when formulating our final conclusion for the BOS.

Q - Is there a recommendation to rezone the property commercial?

A - Not at this time. However, the committee has discussed some specific uses that would require a zoning overlay. Rather than simply rezone the property without a concrete plan, we would recommend coming forth at town meeting with a very specific use in mind (ie, coffee shop, music store) and look for a specific use overlay.

Q - Is the building in good enough condition to be sustainable?

A - Answered by Brett Pelletier - Yes, in 1994 the entire building was renovated and brought up-to-date. There are things that will need to be addressed in the future, however, to date it is "move-in ready".

Q - Do you expect to go to town meeting for extra money?

A - We need to re-evaluate our number for our final report before we can give a yes or no answer.

Q - What is the current zoning - Could it be used for assisted living?

A - Answered by Brett - Current zone TR (Town Residence). Assisted living could fall under the current zoning, however that is not the best use for the building. Standard Assisted Living business models are changing.

Q - Will this building be used 24/7

A - No. Our proposal is for mainly before and after school programming, daytime access, and evening community education, recreation programs.

Q - Inquiry regarding the use of the commercial kitchen.

A - We took the information and passed it along to the group who was looking to coordinate a schedule for a community kitchen ("The Farmers").

Q - If we rent to the school who is interested in the building can we still use the building?

A - Yes. We recommend there be a "shared space" clause in the contract for common areas such as the gym and cafeteria.

Q - What about the asbestos?

A - The exposed asbestos was remediated back in 1994. Any remaining asbestos is sealed/contained and does not pose a threat. The only risk would be during demolition or if a renovation disturbed an area with asbestos.

Q - Have we looked into alternative energy?

A - We have and will continue to research alternative energy resources.

Q - A representative from Pepperell Community Arts (PCA) spoke regarding their time in the building.

They left in October when the district left. PCA has over 250 local kids involved in their theater program and 1000+ in attendance at their shows. People from other towns come to Pepperell to utilize PCA because they offer such an affordable program. This benefits the town and local businesses. Plus, the PCA motto is "Service through the Arts". Every production PCA conducts a local service project to help the community. Utilizing the Peter Fitzpatrick building, they shared their vision of growth, including but not limited to, choir, instrument training, and dance.

Elle a 13-year-old from Groton, MA spoke regarding PCA being "Life changing" for her. Elle's mother also spoke giving rave reviews about the program.

Q - Can businesses rent space? Possible shared office space for remote employees?

A - Brett answered - It depends, there are "tables of use" under our current zoning by-laws.

Q - Why the does the building have to turn over to a non-profit to run?

A - A non-profit is able to fundraise and can qualify for grants not accessible to a municipality. The town would still be very involved. A town BOS or employee would be a board member and the building would still remain under the ownership of the town.

Q - Did we look into utilizing the building for Public Safety?

A - Yes. The committee is open to public safety utilize space within the building. However, as Andrew stated previously, "nothing is free" and in order to sustain the building, any town department would need to pay for space like any other tenant. The funds would go back into the building for improvements and maintenance. The police Chief wrote a letter regarding the building, indicating it is not ideal and they did not desire to renovate "another old school" for use as a public safety complex. We did not have any written response from the fire chief or housing authority regarding use of the property.

Action Items

The committee will compile all our data analysis and formulate a final report for the BOS. The committee will also continue working to compile a more exact costing model with regards to income potential and ongoing expenses.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, February 5, 2019 @ 7:00pm in Peter Fitzpatrick Office