

Peter Fitzpatrick Feasibility Committee

February 5th, 2019 / 7:00 pm / Peter Fitzpatrick Building, 45 Main Street, Pepperell, MA

Attendees

Craig Hansen, Dave Herman, Dave Lavender, April Healey, Grover Pillsbury, Deb Fountain, and Amanda Huntington (arrived about 7:20 PM)

Not in attendance: Steve Temple, Bill Greathead

Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM

Craig thanked the Committee for their work so far. He received lots of positive feedback following the public forum and from the Town Administrator (TA). He is in discussions with the TA about some suggested follow up actions.

Meeting minutes:

April Healey made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from January 22, 2019; seconded by Grover Pillsbury. The vote was unanimous to accept the minutes as written.

Grover Pillsbury asked that his name be removed from the list of members who attended the meeting on January 26, 2019. Deb Fountain made a motion to accept the January 26, 2019 minutes as amended; seconded by Dave Herman. Unanimous approval except for April Healey and Grover Pillsbury, who abstained as they were not at that meeting.

Alternative Energy: Dave Herman encouraged the Committee to further pursue information on recommendations concerning alternative energy. Dave Lavender suggested contacting Borrego Co., who built the solar field on Nashua Road, and Grover Pillsbury suggested contacting Kimball Farms for info on their solar installation. Dave Herman agreed to contact sources and bring more information back to the Committee for discussion.

Town Administrator Discussions: Craig Hansen had some preliminary discussions with the TA concerning the Committee's findings and recommendations so far. The TA feels that we need to take a more in-depth look at the parcel at the rear of the property. He suggested using it for housing, or possibly demolishing "B" wing to allow sufficient access from Main Street. Craig looked at the 1994 building plans and identified a number of

concerns with creating access from Main Street, all of which would add significant cost to such a project:

- There appears to be two oil tanks at the north-west corner of the building. According to the Fire Chief, these were removed in 1994 and replaced with 1 large tank. This would need to be relocated. Soil remediation may also be required if contaminants are detected in the surrounding soils.
- An electrical transformer and utility pole sit close to the property line, off the north-west corner of the building. This would need to be relocated.
- All electrical service to the building feeds in from Main Street and enters the mid-point of the B-wing corridor. Service would need to be extended, re-routed, and new service panels installed elsewhere in the building.
- There isn't enough clearance for a proper roadway between the current building and the property line. Demolishing the B-wing corridor would require:
 - Asbestos remediation (estimated to cost \$25 per square foot).
 - A new ADA entrance to be constructed to replace the current B-wing entrance at the north-west corner of the building. This would reduce the linear foot clearance gained by demolishing the B-wing corridor by about 50%.
 - A new ADA exit to be constructed to replace the current B-wing exit at the west side of the building.
 - An elevator or new ADA ramps would need to be constructed to replace the current ramps at the southern end of the B-wing corridor.
 - Significant structural work would be required to shore-up the remaining portions of B-wing and A-wing. Since A-wing was added to B-wing in the 1990's, the western portion of A-wing is supported by B-wing.

Mr. Hansen also noted access from River Road would also be costly due to the length of the access road required (~1000 feet), reconfiguration of the parking lots, and relocation of the Big Backyard playground. There are also concerns that the required 100 foot wetlands buffer would mean the access road would be very close to the building. This will require further investigation.

There was further discussion about using the property for solar arrays or sports fields and ongoing discussions with FFLAC. The TA is reluctant to sign a long term lease with FFLAC. Craig also mentioned that the TA would like to see more details on costs to run the building. This is problematic as we only have data for the building being partially occupied by the school district. Deb Fountain asked if the Town would have utility billing records showing usage history when the school was being fully used. Craig will discuss this and obtain whatever utility bills are available beyond those he has already collected (December 2018-forward). Craig will continue to work with the TA.

Deb Fountain handed out copies of email correspondence from the Executive Director of the Pepperell Housing Authority stating her comments on possible re-use of the property for housing. In part, her comments were:

"I have contacted the folks at the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) several times via phone and email to discuss how to go about getting State funding for the redevelopment of the existing property. Unfortunately, no one has replied to my requests. As you know, there is a huge need for low-income housing throughout the state as well as the country. The State through DHCD subsidizes public housing and issues vouchers, namely AHVP & MRVP. The subsidy that is given to each State Housing Authority is minimal. We do run the units on the rents that we collect. The vouchers allow a person(s) to rent a private unit as long as the landlord is agreeable to accepting the voucher. The State wait lists for a public housing unit, and for either of the vouchers is years long. Without some type of rent control in the private rental sector, people are becoming homeless at an astounding rate. There is, also, the Federal side of the housing that I, unfortunately, know very little about. The managing entity for Federal housing is Housing and Urban Development or HUD. They subsidize public units and Section 8 vouchers.

Turning Peter Fitzpatrick into viable public housing units would be costly, in my opinion. Kitchens and bathrooms would be the biggest challenge. And once you start renovating, everything has to be approved by the Architectural Access Board (AAB) and has to be ADA compliant.

Based on what I know of the new addition, I think it would serve better use to a Boarding House for Veterans where rooms are rented and bathrooms and kitchens are communal. Just a thought. That might be cost effective. The land might be sold to a contractor who is willing to build a 40B complex, where a percentage of the units are subsidized by HUD and Section 8 vouchers are accepted. The complex on River Road is owned and operated by a private realtor and some of there units are subsidized. I can give your committee any contacts that you would like to talk to. I appreciate what you all are doing to make the best use out of the school. Please keep me up to date on your progress and hopefully, I will be able to attend some meetings."

Deb added that the TA replied to this via email, as follows:

"I hope the PF recommendations consider finding a way to add new housing to the rear. It could offset the operating costs and capital needs of the rest of the property while meeting this need."

Discussion followed, and most agreed that Brett provided us with strong reasons why this property is not suitable for housing. However, some of those reasons are not stated in his draft letter of recommendations to the Committee. Deb will send comments to April to see if Brett can add this to his final draft of the letter.

Moving forward with the recommendation of utilizing the building for community recreation and education, we need to firm up operating expenses and revenue opportunities, such as:

- Anchor tenants (per square foot)

- Programs (per person)
- Meetings / events / space rental (per hour)
- Create a sense of urgency to firm up those who have expressed interest in renting space in the Peter Fitzpatrick building

As a committee, we need to come up with a mission statement for the Town Meeting. Craig Hansen will write a draft and circulate through email. Deb Fountain to draft bones of the final report.

Discussion on our BOS presentation. Exact meeting date TBD.

Deb Fountain asked if anything needed to be added to the Pepperell website in regards to the PFB. Craig Hansen would like the presentation given to the town and the walkthrough video added.

Action Items

1. Get Financials - look at reports and gather data to update the powerpoint presentation
2. Get Brett Pelletier's final memo
3. Talk to Andrew regarding specific concerns
4. Talk to DPW about the demo of trailers
5. Supply a detailed report on roof condition
6. Invite TA to March 5th meeting
7. Get added to mid-March BOS meeting

Deb Fountain invited all to the next master plan vision session on February 7th at 6:30pm.

Dave Lavender made a motion to adjourn. Dave Herman seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned 8:49 pm

Upcoming Meetings

February 19th at 7:00 pm in Peter Fitzpatrick building conference room

March 5th at 7:00 pm in Peter Fitzpatrick building conference room