

The Board of Selectmen met on Tuesday, September 3, 2019 beginning at 6:00pm in the Main Meeting Room of the Town Hall for a Workshop Session. The following members were present.

James O'Neil, Chairman
Nancy Mackenzie, Vice Chairman arrived at
Ben Barrett, Clerk
David Salvatore
Mark Gallivan

Also present;
James Johnson, Town Administrator
Cindy Berube, Executive Assistant

Members of the Old Town Hall Reuse Committee
Richard Pilla
Ronald Fucile

Members of Historical Commission
Michael Amaral
Roger Turner
Jennifer Karnakis

Old Town Hall RFP

Mr. O'Neil we are going to pick up where we left off last week. Last together we gave our reviews. Looking for input from Downtown business folks and ECD. Like to do is focus on comments. There are two things interested in hearing. Comments the reuse plan itself, ideas and thoughts on how we might use. It we have an RFP here to solicit input from whomever would respond to it. Interested on feedback on the RFP. Towards the end we will vote.

Mike Amaral I gave a letter to the BOS and sent copy to Richard Pilla regarding the town hall and comments on the report. Like the two items below entered into the minutes.

First, to the Walpole Board of Selectmen:

I want to thank Selectmen Gallivan, Salvatore & former Selectman Ragosta for voting for my appointment earlier this year to the Walpole Historical Commission. I've since attended several meetings and I think the Commission members will agree that I am bringing some creative ideas to the Commission. No Tables have been overturned!

To both the Re-Use Committee and the Board of Selectmen:

During 2018, it was suggested to me by former Town Clerk Ron Fucile that I should attend a meeting of the Town House Re-Use Committee. During a meeting I attended shortly after, I suggested that a brief history of the old Town House should be included in the report. Members of the Re-Use Committee agreed and suggested that I write that history. I did so, sent it in to the chairman, and never heard back from him or the assistant town administrator, even after multiple requests to determine whether or not my history would be used.

The history I wrote was just over 1,400 words... (3 pages) of text, including several illustrations. Once I was able to view the actual full report at the beginning of this August (2019), I realized that my history had not been used. Considering that the writing exercise of that history took at least 3 evenings with several re-writes, I'd like to enter a

copy of this history into the meeting minutes for consideration as part of this project, and to share copies of that history with members of the Board of Selectmen.

After reviewing the re-use document I must say it is an extremely impressive work. I truly appreciate the detail put into the work and feel it is a very good foundation to move forward with. Since my name is mentioned as being a "dedicated Walpole citizen" in the introduction of the report, I feel justified in making the above entry into this meetings minutes (the history) as well as the comments below.

I was disappointed to see that the report does not break down in any detail whatsoever reasons why the Town House wasn't considered as a town-owned/town-used building, much like old Town Houses in nearby towns like Norwood, Canton and Medfield and many other cities and towns in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Consider this: When the Townhouse was in-use as the central town office building, citizens would enter the lobby, immediately see the Civil War plaques and be forced to consider the history of the town's participation in the War of The Rebellion and the names of those who perished to maintain the Union, and helped free nearly 4 million people from the Bonds of Slavery. The connection between being a local citizen and the responsibility of living in a New England town with a great history would be a constant reminder when passing such a monument.

In other words, our civic buildings, when re-vitalized/re-used as civic buildings, can help all of us to be connected to the history of the town itself.

This report takes what I would consider a politically conservative and slanted position: That it must be able to generate income in all of its future uses.

Moving forward, I think that the citizens of Walpole at least deserve a closer, detailed look at how this building could be used as a town-owned/operated building and not only as an income-generating edifice. After all, we don't expect most of our town-owned properties to be income generating, do we?

Mr. Pilla he did a great job. The architectural layout was very important. The report is really good, missing one thing, focuses on getting a businesses in there. Using the building as a civic bldg. Many towns use it for civic purposes. The intent should not be that we have to make a profit, when I was voted as a member of the Historical commission. He wanted me to get rid of the veteran memorial. Possible uses for the town.

Richard Pilla responded to Mikes questions as to why we did not recommend that it remain a town facility, coming up with ways for uses, given the amount of work that bldg. needs, commercial uses that could pay for it. The other comment we believe the uses we are rec are town uses. The Third level the auditorium. For town and private functions. RFP process, the board decides finally which way the town wants to go. Would have to make the space for town events. Regarding the RFP it was our rec to go that process to see if there are ideas that we didn't think about. Given the course of rehabbing that bldg., the bidders are going to look for, what is the town going to do for us. Changed to make it possible for more development in that downtown area. Limit on height. Would the board consider expanding the height? To make it more feasible. Mentioned the last time if you look at the existing bldg., not one bldg. that has a floor plate. Special groceries. Brothers in Medfield. You can't accommodate that. Walpole would be a great place to locate that but were do you accommodate that. Look at underutilized space. Not the floor plates to accommodate the uses. I ma not saying a theme that doesn't give you flexibility uses Talked about the bldgs. downtown. Gives it a sense of this is where I am. Overlay district with zoning is different than what it there now. I just think it would add a lot.

Mr. O'Neil are you suggesting we do not send out the RFP until we have an Overlay in place? Mr. Pilla whomever looks at this they are going to ask what I am getting? If you come in and take it over. You have to give them site control for a period of time. The other thing is the liquor licenses. A Minimum of two for that bldg. You can limit that type. More family oriented restaurants.

Mr. O'Neil so you are recommending do not send out the RFP. Some of those things will take some time to do. That could take months or years. We need a 2/3 vote at Town Meeting. Mr. Pilla a person can say they will have to spend a lot of money.

Mr. Gallivan when you are talking about the Overlay are you talking the whole Downtown area? There are three blocks of land that have underutilized space. Mr. Gallivan we should go all the way up to CVS. I think it is a good idea. Mr. Pilla the town common, common street to CVS, school Street.

Nancy arrived at 6:25pm. Mr. Pilla you need the cooperation of the other property owners. That area has to be attractive enough. Rent is a function of sales, some uses their margins are very low. Depending on how you want to program the Down town. A lot that goes into this. What does the Board want to see their Downtown become. Stay as it is or mimic towns around Boston.

Roger Turner I hope that the town considers town use because it is a town building, to see it not being used for town use, I think we are being disrespectful. The civil war plaques, moved and protecting them, a lot of unique things and hate to see some of them destroyed.

Jennifer from Historical Commission I would ask that you consider us, community preservation act, research or anything else you want to know.

Mr. O'Neil based on the input I would like to know what direction you would like to take. Mr. Salvatore I do not think reuse by the town could not happen. I don't think anything is off the table. Mr. Murphy mentioned last time; I don't know what I would do with the property. Because of the fire facility, look at one of the things, was a good way to reuse to add a modern structure to the back and side. What we could do is put in is the facility. Also provide for to orient that addition to the parking lots to the back. More of an attractive space. Not use if the RFP will attract a lot of attention. I don't think we have anything to loose going forward with the RFP. That is where I am at. I have seen, other RFP for other project. Multitude of options, create an ownership to be owned by an entity that we have control over. To be available for tax credits. Banks get extra credits for being involved. It is a beginning of a very long process and I think we are in pretty good shape. Keeping it dry and closed in. I think we should focus on that.

Mike Amaral you talked about addition to the rear, it is water over the dam, when I was on the Historical commission before and I had someone write about adding the old fire station to the Town Hall, if the town had been willing to do this. I am trying to add soul into the process. Mr. Salvatore I think that when this is all said and done it has potential of being a public space. We will find a way.

Ben Barrett I know people say not a lot out of this RFP, I do think it is important to get on these items we talked about tonight. Bring in Plan Board, EDC, and Chamber of Commerce

anxious to get started on this. Mr. Gallivan thinks we should go out with an RFP He has a friend in Boston who is an architect. Maybe they would be interested in the space. We could still use it for Town use. This is exploratory. Maybe we can get people to look at our Town hall.

Mr. O'Neil we have nothing to lose by sending this out. This would be another data point. Some brilliant idea might show up. How we word it. Mr. Gallivan we are interested in ideas. Be honest with people.

Mr. Pilla couple of things, how do you get the most response, put certain graphics and things and reach people that know nothing about the town. Mr. O'Neil the RFP incorporates your report. I think your point is covered. If there are inquiries, how do we handle that? Mr. Pilla in the 1 million dollars it included opening up the third floor. I would suggest have Mark Almeda, conceptual pictures of what that looked like. Mr. Amaral instead of spending 1million dollars to hire an architect to do a rendering.

MOTION moved by Mrs. Mackenzie to request the Town Administrator issue an RFP for the Old Town Hall , seconded by Mr. Gallivan VOTED 5-0-0

Mr. O'Neil suggested having a rent number. Mr. Johnson that will be determined.

Mr. O'Neil read the new charge proposed by the Town Hall reuse committee. Any questions? Mr. Salvatore we should begin the paragraph should advise the Board of Selectmen. Advise on the following issues.

MOTION moved by Mrs. Mackenzie to disband the original Town Hall reuse Committee, seconded by Mr. Gallivan VOTED 5-0-0

Historical history of Old Town Hall

A little Historical Background on Town Meeting Places, and Our Old Town House



Just after the Incorporation of the town in 1724, and before the concept of separation of Church and State, town meetings were held in homes or houses of worship located in Walpole Center. The first meeting house in Walpole existed on Walpole Town Common from about 1730 to 1783. A granite cross marks the location of that structure. A

second meeting house was constructed on the site of the first in 1783, and portions of that first meeting house were re-used.

Parts of that second meeting house were moved to the location of the United Church of Walpole on Common Street, which existed from 1839-1930, when an addition to it was added onto it. A glint of that second meeting house can be seen in the front portion of the current United Church.

As the town of Walpole grew in the mid-1800s, it became evident that the town needed a larger structure, possibly modelled after other townhouses being built of Massachusetts. By the late 1870s, committees were formed to explore possibilities for a new town house.

After much heated argument over what kind of structure to build, the town voted for the one we have at the corner of Main & Stone Streets, Walpole Center.

Its original uses included town offices, a library on the first floor, a few jail cells for a very small police department, and a large upper-level hall that served as a live theater, meeting room, movie house and sports venue. Rooms within the building also housed meetings for the E.B. Piper Post 154 of the Grand Army of the Republic, the Union Soldiers Civil War Veterans organization and in later years, parts of the building were utilized as a district court.

Those rooms also most likely hosted meetings of the Women's Relief Corps, an adjunct organization to the GAR. Sometime after the construction of Blackburn Hall in 1932, and perhaps feeling that since the growing town had the need for more office space, the decision was made to partition off the large hall and create ceilings for offices on the second floor. Unfortunately this changed the interior character of the building in a significant and negative way.

The tower, the tallest structure in Walpole Center, contains a mechanical clock of the Howard Clock Co., currently wound on a regular basis by town employees. A gift to the Town of Walpole funded by prominent citizens, the clock lost its bell sometime in the mid-20th century...its whereabouts currently unknown.

The foyer contains two marble plaques, engraved with the names of locals who perished during the War of The Rebellion, and also lists the names of those that served and survived.

In 1981, 100 years after its construction, members of the Walpole Historical Commission, along with the Massachusetts Historical Commission coordinating with the US Department of the Interior, placed Walpole's townhouse on the National Register of Historic Places. Shortly thereafter, town offices were moved from this structure to the Stone School building, and the police department then occupied the building until only a few weeks ago.

The People who built the Old Town House

Who were the people of Walpole who originally funded this building in 1881? The majority of them were descendants of the original Puritan English dating back to the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Originally a part of Dedham, the residents requested incorporation as a separate town and did so in 1724. They had complained that the distance to the meeting house in Dedham was too far on the old roads of the day, and surely they were tired enough from their agricultural and sawmill pursuits to make the trip.

From the start of its Sawmill Heritage up until the present day, Walpole's residents have shown that a better life could be made through thrifty industriousness, creativity, inventiveness and education. They were innovators in engineering, squeezing a lot of productivity out of a small amount of horsepower from the Neponset River. They used the local stone materials to construct one of the most unique combinations of a railroad tunnel & road bridge in Eastern Massachusetts, in constant use since the mid 1800's. To this day, local stone materials are still mined and used throughout the area for construction and in roofing materials shipped throughout the North East.

In the case of the Bird family, they instituted reforms about shortened work weeks and benefits for their employees. In fact, many of these people shared their wealth with local people, donating time, money and land to the people of the town of Walpole.

Their choice of structure for a town house in 1881, though greatly argued about before contracts were settled to have it built, reflects many aspects of their culture:

Its church-like appearance: The religious background of their ancestors

The huge granite blocks of its foundation: The rock-solid foundations of our New England heritage

Its upper level meeting hall: Representative of bringing the town folk together for their New England Town Meetings, where free speech was exercised

Its jail cells and one-time use as a local District Court: A reminder of New England's heritage revolving around Law, Order, and Fair Judgement



The Tablets dedicated to Its Soldiers of the War of The Rebellion: A Perpetual Memorial to their sons telling us Union & Freedom should never be taken for granted. Its clock, in continuous use since 1881: The timelessness of the founding documents of our nation: The Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution; documents that have been consecrated with their blood & sacrifice during the American Revolution and the War of the Rebellion Its position on the high-spot of town center, with its tower easily seen when one enters various roads into town: That of a "City on A Hill" first mentioned by John Winthrop in 1630 in England before departing to create the Massachusetts Bay Colony...Neighboring cities and towns are watching us as we deliberate on this issue

Our Responsibilities

We the people of Walpole in the year 2018 are charged with deciding what the future of this building will be. I believe that we not only have a responsibility to take charge of and maintain this public building, but also to tell the story of those who built it and their hopes for a better world and a More Perfect Union.

These Sons & Daughters of Liberty, great grandchildren of the Walpole men who departed Walpole Town Common on April 19, 1775 to Lexington & Concord, inherited a wonderful legacy. And in 2018, we inherit theirs, this Memorial to their generation and their commitment to Liberty and Union.

We are confronted with the need for action regarding the preservation of this building: What will we do about it? Some of us see an old public building and see fault. Some see architecture with historical significance. Some are tempted to discuss things like selling it off or tearing it down. Some have a tendency to overlook the trust we have inherited from previous generations. Personally, I see a perpetual trust endowed upon us to utilize, preserve and protect this public property forever.

I'm very pleased to see a new birth of interest in Historic Preservation in Walpole, and I am extremely hopeful that this interest extends to what I consider this crown-jewel of Walpole's historic properties. With the organization of the Re-Use Committee made up of very serious and preservation-minded folks, I believe the town will do the right thing.

Inspired by their direction, may we all come together in the spirit of E Pluribus Unum to preserve & maintain this public treasure, this living memorial to Freedom by those that built it and by those of you who have considered its importance and are willing to preserve it for future generations.

