

Wales Historical Commission
Wales, Massachusetts 01081

Meeting Minutes

Date: Friday, January 26, 2024

Time: 10:00AM

Location: Virtual Meeting Only

Present: Rod Kincaid, Robyn Chrabasz, Lynn Greene, Rebecca (Becky) Smith, Carolyn Boehne.

Members Absent: None.

Public: Pam Leduc, Spencer Preservation Group (Lynne Spencer, Doug Manley, Meghan Rodenhiser)

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 10:03AM.

Meeting Minutes:

MOTION: To approve the meeting minutes from 12/15/2023. Motion made by Smith, seconded by Greene. 5-0-0. Motion Passed.

Correspondence: Lynn Greene inquired about the fee proposal from Peter Arabolis regarding the safe and how to get into it.

MOTION: To accept Peter's fee proposal for \$500 to open the safe. Motion made by Smith, seconded by Greene. 5-0-0. Motion Passed.

Feasibility Project for Old Town Hall:

The group was informed that the Capital Planning Implementation Committee (CIPC) is looking at how to fund the structural repairs. The Board of Selectmen and CIPC are currently now exploring the option that the town library moves into the elementary school and that the town offices move into Old Town Hall to consolidate resources.

Becky opened the discussion regarding Old Town Hall possible design and layout. She is envisioning the foyer as the museum, cable access studio on the second floor in the loft area, and either an elevator or lift to access the 2nd floor.

Meghan reviewed the plans presented and discussed the general concept that Spencer Preservation Group has started to work on, including several options for use of space and optional addition to the building. (See attached drawings.) Meghan identified that the code analysis is different for each option, and that the building could accommodate 312 people with the assembly use of the second floor and offices on the first floor. The options chosen would each dictate code requirements for number of plumbing fixtures, fire alarm, sprinklers, and other requirements.

In any option, Spencer Preservation proposes to eliminate the first-floor level changes (the ramp and interior floor steps) while addressing the structural issues.

Lynn Greene asked if there is a structural concern with having the library on the second floor due to the weight of the books, as shown in one option. Spencer's response was that structural deficiencies would have to be addressed for any option and made code compliant. Lynn also expressed concern in the plans that an adequate museum space is needed, as we have furniture and large objects in addition to the binders and wall mounted displays. Spencer mentioned that this is where an elevator would be beneficial over a lift, and that large objects could be on display on the second floor since they would fit in the stretcher-sized elevator.

Robyn pointed out that with any of these options proposed, and the proposed structural work, the cable access studio and the museum would all have to fully vacate the Old Town Hall. Additionally, Robyn expressed concern with the fact that the existing Town Office building at Hollow Road is nearly 1,800 gross square feet per floor with staff squeezed in, and the best Old Town Hall can provide based on these options is 1,500 square feet per floor if both floors are offices, 600 square feet less. Pam stated that it's up to the Board of Selectmen but perhaps uses like the police and cemetery do not get moved into Old Town Hall but maybe elsewhere.

Lynne Spencer asked if there is any concern with the trigger for fire suppression/sprinklers as required code and/or Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 148 Section 26G. Robyn asked Pam to talk to the Board of Selectmen, specifically Chairman Grasso on this matter to vet their opinions on sprinklers for the town building. Based on Robyn's previous experiences she believes we would not be exempt.

Becky and Pam will put together information by Wednesday on the staff (quantity, positions, etc) for Spencer to be able to provide more detailed layouts for the next steps. Spencer did not get into program details yet and was not aware that the police station is also in the Town Offices, which have their own special requirements.

Pam mentioned the Massachusetts Office of Disability and asked when their ADA grants are usually due in case this would be an eligible funding source; Robyn responded with August/September has been the annual grant deadline. Becky mentioned that it will be challenging to obtain a debt exclusion.

Next meeting will be determined later.

MOTION: To adjourn made at 10:58AM. Motion made by Chrabaszcz, seconded by Smith. All in favor, Motion Passed.

DATE APPROVED: February 10, 2024