

Wales Historical Commission

Wales, Massachusetts 01081

Meeting Minutes

Date: Saturday, February 10, 2024

Time: 8:30 AM

Location: Virtual Meeting Only

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

Members Absent: None.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 8:33AM.

Meeting Minutes:

MOTION: To approve the meeting minutes from 01/26/2024 as amended. Motion made by Chrabasz, seconded by Kincaid. 5-0-0. Motion Passed.

Correspondence: None.

Safe: Lynn provided an update that Peter Arabolis was able to crack the safe and it is now open and has been partially cleaned. Noted for all to not close the door as it locks easily and that one door is a fake with no combination. Peter was able to determine the combination and Lynn will make sure the Town Clerk has it also. Contents are moldy books. Peter wants to volunteer additional time to come back and clean the entire safe.

Feasibility Project for Old Town Hall: Becky forwarded building plans from Spencer Preservation Group (SPG) on 2/9/2024. Group discussed the plans and all had preference for Option 1, keeping both sets of front stairs. Each member expressed their comments on the plans and the following list is provided as a summary:

1. Treasurer needs private space for confidential paperwork and discussions, and constantly moving to the single private room is not convenient.
2. Need more file storage. (Post-meeting note: Can get more with vertical instead of lateral cabinets, which the town has vertical now)
3. Cable Access Mezzanine: This area would be best suited as a room with walls to create the enclosed “sound booth” needed to broadcast events from the room. The cable server and workstations would then be in the enclosed room. The “Studio” is essentially the entire 2nd floor; any event could be recorded here.
4. Option 1 has no room for police department and maybe others would have to share space or move elsewhere, like Cemetery Commission.
5. The ramp as is will likely detract from the façade. Can the ramp fit behind the columns when it turns onto the front façade area to be less obvious?
6. Code required spaces are missing that will take away from square footage – like janitor’s sink that is required on both floors per plumbing code.

7. Need the following:
 - a. Janitor's closets (includes storing paper goods)
 - b. Storage closets
 - c. Vault or safe
 - d. Code enforcement flat-file drawers for plan storage to be shown in layouts
 - e. Copy machine and office supply area (or closet item b)
 - f. Separate break room as encouraged by OSHA
 - g. Corrections to the bathroom layouts to be fully MAAB compliant (noted that the sinks need a 5'-0" turn radius and doors may be swinging wrong direction into clear floor area)
8. Can the accessible lift be simplified as a drive-through style instead of 3 stops with an adjacent corner entry/exit? Would that likely cost less?
9. Security discussions:
 - a. There should be a way for the public to get into the private meeting room without entering the office area.
 - b. Monitors, etc., should all face away from each other so the public cannot videotape the screens.
 - c. As learned from first amendment auditors, once the public is let into one area it is permanently considered a public area – therefore consideration should be made to keep the office area private only.
 - d. Layout seems to work for security for night meetings upstairs, where public restrooms are available once entering the door.
10. Becky will review plans with staff on Monday, there may be more comments.

Robyn mentioned that we own 3 options from SPG per the contract, in addition to site plans showing parking. The current submission is more of 3 variations on a theme, and the group agreed that we should have 3 schemes as follows:

1. Existing footprint – use the current proposed plan Option 1 with the considerations from above to design a space to fit into the current building.
2. Elevator Addition – Use the previous option from SPG with the elevator addition to gain more space in the main structure. Elevator addition would be functional space: bathrooms, mechanical, janitors, egress stair to eliminate the fire escape.
3. Full Addition – This third option would be taking all building program and consolidating it on this site as the Selectmen propose – but not trying to squeeze the space. The addition would be the addition in Option 2 plus whatever additional square footage would be needed.

On March 18th the Board of Selectmen and Capital Planning Committees meet. It would be nice to have SPG present to the entire group at that time. In order to do that they may need a site visit meeting to view the current Town Offices and other spaces. Robyn to reach out to SPG with all of today's notes and comments on setting future meetings.

Museum and Collections: Given the structural report, Robyn asked if we want to not have the museum open in 2024. Robyn also asked if we want to move the binders back to the library with the rest of the binders. Group consensus was yes, binders only. The collection items will remain in Old Town Hall until action is needed. Lynn may need more supplies and Rod can help order them as tax-exempt.

MOTION: To not open the museum in 2024 contingent upon structural findings. Motion made by Smith, seconded by Kincaid. 5-0-0. Motion Passed.

Master Plan Implementation Committee Updates: Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is underway and there will be a visioning session for all to attend.

Funding/ Cultural Council: Rod will continue and close the grant for the video conversions. Group gave Ann Chrabasz permission to plan the Women of 1776 and find a location for the event knowing Old Town Hall is not an option. Event will be on April 20th, 2024.

Becky will try to find out if the \$50,000 earmark from the state for FY2024 for Old Town Hall has been cut; it is currently unclear.

Annual Report (2023) and Annual Budget (FY2025): Robyn asked the status of these two items. Becky is working on them. Group consensus to level-fund the Commission budget for FY2025.

Next meeting will be determined later based on SPG meetings.

MOTION: To adjourn made at 10:20AM. Motion made by Smith, seconded by Greene. All in favor, Motion Passed.

DATE APPROVED: March 23, 2024