

Wales Historical Commission

Wales, Massachusetts 01081

Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, March 18, 2024

Time: 6:00PM

Location: Wales Senior Center, 85 Main Street

Present: Robyn Chrabascz, Rebecca (Becky) Smith, Carolyn Boehne, Lynn Greene.

Members Absent: Rod Kincaid

Joint Meeting – Other Committee Members Present: John Grasso, Michael Valanzola, Bill Matchett, Pam Leduc, Jessica Miller, Ed Fisher, Christine Jacques, Christine Randall, Danelle Laflower, Guy Lucia,

Public: Spencer Preservation Group (Lynne Spencer, Meghan Rodenhiser); Ann Chrabascz, Ella Gregory, Mike Adams, Mike Miller.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:01PM.

Feasibility Project for Old Town Hall: The Historical Commission, Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, and Capital Improvement Planning Committee met to hear options for Old Town Hall from Spencer Preservation Group (SPG) as part of an update from the Feasibility Study Project that was funded by the One-Stop Grant.

The first step to any renovation or reuse of Old Town Hall is structural repairs, safely estimated at \$700,000 to \$800,000, a substantial investment for Wales. The second step to add occupants is additional structural repairs; then renovation work could follow.

SPG presented two floor plan options. Option 1 is a layout fitting most of the town offices into the existing footprint of Old Town Hall, with a lift for handicap accessibility to the second floor and “cable access mezzanine” a few feet above the second-floor level. SPG was able to fit a significant amount of file storage, retained 9 pews, the stage and pulpit in the second-floor meeting room. A ramp is provided for front door access to the building.

Option 2 was similar, except the front entrance has the grade adjusted to eliminate the ramp and the space is rearranged due to the elevator/stair/ toilet room addition at the rear of the existing building. The lift would only be needed to go from the second floor to the mezzanine area but would still be needed in addition to the elevator. Both options have museum space in the meeting room to help cut down on occupant load.

General comments made were, in no particular order:

- A lift is a slow option, but small in footprint as a compromise (opposed to an elevator).
- An elevator annual cost could be expensive.
- The police department was not shown in either option.
- The Executive Secretary would not be an appropriate office on the second floor (both schemes), as currently she is the one who receives the most interaction with the public.

- Inspectors could be on second floor.
- Gender-neutral toilet rooms would not reduce the quantity of toilets needed and would likely increase the minimum needed under the plumbing code (Massachusetts code is a bit behind on this issue being addressed in the plumbing code).
- 70 people is the “magic number” of people that can be upstairs without triggering the addition (for toilet rooms/required fixtures).
- If the mezzanine in the meeting room (shown on plans as cable access) is accessed by the staff and/or the public, it must be accessible via lift or 30 feet of ramp. That includes if the area is only used as file storage.
- Parking and/or a site plan was not shown.
- Anything can be phased, like an addition after the main portion is complete.
- Historic grants, ADA grants, etc. – the town will need creative financing.
- The building is currently not listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places.
- Several people preferred Option 1 as Option 2 appears to be less financially feasible.

MOTION: To adjourn made at 6:49PM. Motion made by Smith, seconded by Greene. All in favor, Motion Passed.

DATE APPROVED: March 23, 2024