

Municipal Building Committee for the Prescott School

Location: 1st Floor Meeting Room, Prescott School, 145 Main St., Groton

Members present: Annika Nilsson-Ripps, Becky Pine, Halsey Platt, Greg Sheldon, Gary Green, Anna Eliot

Minutes

1-25-2016 Call to Order 7:07pm by Greg Sheldon – joint meeting with Selectmen

- Mr. Sheldon called the meeting of the Municipal Building Committee for Prescott School to order. He said that he was pleased to be able to come in and discuss the Committee's vision and plans to submit final plan. He said that the Committee had been charged by the Board to submit a vision. Mr. Sheldon read the following vision of the Committee:
 - *A Vision for Prescott: To stabilize, preserve, maintain and invest in the Prescott School, using a sustainable financial operating model, as a unique and historic municipal asset for the purpose of serving the citizens of Groton as a mixed-use public building. The Prescott Building shall be geared towards three important purposes: a home for the central offices of the Groton Dunstable School District, a place for community engagement and learning, and as a space to house local businesses to support economic development in the town center. Prescott School will thereby add meaningful vibrancy to our town center and add an additional dimension to what the Town of Groton currently offers to the community.*
- He said that they were in the process of looking at and studying the code review and had just received the structural review that day. Mr. Sheldon said that he expected to have a final plan to the Board by March.
- Mr. Petropoulos asked if they were going to be recommending that the building be retained rather than selling it. Mr. Sheldon said that they had one business owner who wanted to purchase the building but the rest would be for mixed use and community. He said that after speaking to the business owner again, he would be willing to lease the space instead of purchasing. He said that there were potential restaurant ideas from two people, a gymnastics center in the gym, the Friends of Prescott were interested in adult education, and the possibility of a business visitor center run by the Town. He said that they were not in a position to sign leases or issue RFPs. The GDRSD expressed interest in staying in building. Mr. Sheldon said that the renters would contribute toward the operating budget. Mr. Sheldon said that there was a sense of urgency a couple of weeks ago to get a sense of where they were in their planning process and tonight set the vision and the future planning which would be done over the next six weeks.
- Mr. Cunningham asked if any action might be required by Town Meeting. Mr. Sheldon said that a plan had been done by the Friends of Prescott who were seeking CPC funding to help invest in the building. He said that the Committee was not endorsing any parallel effort at this time. He said that as part of their thinking they thought they could accomplish a lot through CPC funding over the next five or six years. Mr. Haddad said that the Friends of Prescott asked him to be their project manager. He said that their application had changed since last week adding that they were now looking to include more than just a sprinkler system but the money request was still the same, \$160K.
- Mr. Sheldon said that the Committee charge called for a short term 5-year and long term 20-year plan. He said that the Committee understands the financial stress of the Town adding that the 20-year plan would have a financial plan with it. He said that the Friends application was done in an effort to try to bring the building up to code faster. Mr. Degen said that it would be important for them to take all of this into consideration (a 5-year band aid approach vs 20-year full blown approach.) He said that the CPC money might be there but it might not be the best approach. Mr. Sheldon said that they were also looking at all funding options adding that they had reached out to UMass Lowell about grant writing and they agreed to help the Committee with the proposal and identify grants.

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- Mr. Petropoulos said that he was concerned about being a landlord and being reliant on rent from a number of square feet. He said that he was concerned about the burden if it was not rented out. He said that he hoped that the risk and concern was addressed in their report. Mr. Sheldon said that it would be addressed in the management plan. Ms. Becky Pine said that they were very much aware that the Board was not interested in being landlords. She said that their committee had been under the assumption that a plan should be developed sooner rather than later and that there wasn't a lot of money available. She said that she was seeing the Board's role there something different than what was said and thought that the Board needed to give them some information on whether that urgency to get to that plan done was still there. Mr. Petropoulos said that the observation was reasonable and difficult. Mr. Degen said that he didn't think it was worth putting the brakes on anything. He said that the work being done relative the Senior Center feasibility study needed to be done to be able to consider all options. He said that the CPC application, which he had stated was premature in that they don't know what the ultimate use of the building was going to be and thought this would potentially take money away from another project. Mr. Petropoulos said that if the vision is to retain the building, then these expenditures if school is going to stay there, is money well spent. Mr. Cunningham encouraged the Committee to go forward with their work. He said that they will be better informed if they know what the alternatives are. Mr. Prest asked if they had a sense for the total cost to renovate from top to bottom. Mr. Sheldon said that they didn't know what the cost was yet adding that it was the next step in their process. Mr. Petropoulos said that they have a school committee that is very important to them and that they need to keep that in mind. He said that there was some urgency in giving them a plan. Mr. Sheldon said that he had had a couple of meetings with the Superintendent and has a meeting set up with the facilities manager and business manager.

Minutes were recorded by: Dawn Dunbar, Assistant to the Town Manager

Respectfully submitted, Halsey Platt, Clerk