

TOWN OF MADISON

CONNECTICUT

06443-2563

MEETING DATE: Thursday August 2, 2018

MEETING PLACE: Town Campus, Hammonasset Room, 8 Campus Drive, Madison, CT

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Ad Hoc Academy Building Guidance Committee

Members Present: Sarah Barrett, Rob Card (by phone), Jerry Davis, Henry Griggs, Bob Hale, and Tom Scarpati.

Members Excused: Kathryn Hunter

Others Present: Bruce Wilson and Al Goldberg, Board of Selectmen; Brady Lee, GreatBlue Research.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

I. Public Comment.

Roz Fahey said various groups on Facebook are interested in making an Academy-related questionnaire available to voters in the November general election. She reported on a conversation with the Secretary of State's office, which told her that the Registrars of Voters would have to give permission.

II. Report of the Developers Subcommittee

Jerry Davis reported that interviews are being scheduled with the three developers who have current proposals for the Academy building. The subcommittee has been considering the viability of the three proposals on the table, including the likelihood of widespread public support. Mr. Hale cautioned that any proposal that involves tearing down the building could trigger a lawsuit.

The Committee invited Bruce Wilson and Al Goldberg to join the discussion. Mr. Wilson noted that the three developers presented their qualifications regarding the financial and legal histories of their firms. Mr. Davis said the viability question extended to likelihood of public acceptance of the projects. Mr. Wilson replied that part of the committee's charge is to consider what the community wants. He added that "fidelity to the process" is paramount.

Mr. Griggs asked the Committee if it their sense that the original deadline of early September is impossible to achieve without rushing the process. The members all agreed. Mr. Wilson said that fidelity to the process is the constant, and the date of completion is the variable. Mr. Griggs said he will communicate that consensus to the Board of Selectmen. He added that perhaps the committee could complete its work within 14 weeks as an antidote to the 14 years of of inaction on the building's future.

III. Discussion of public opinion research.

The committee called on Brady Lee of GreatBlue Research to provide his input on public opinion research. Ms. Barnett asked how the poll questions will be crafted. Mr. Lee replied that the process starts with a project initiation meeting at which representatives of the Committee and the two lead contact from GreatBlue would start the process of creating draft questions. Mr. Scarpati asked if Mr. Lee will be the principal committee contact from his firm. Mr. Lee said he is the marketing director and two other people will guide the research and be available on a daily basis for questions and concerns.

Mr. Griggs asked if the poll would include voters only, and Mr. Lee said it would. Mr. Griggs also suggested that one line of inquiry for the poll might involve a logic tree, in which respondents are first asked to give their opinions of general approaches to developing the Academy building, such as private use, public use, and mixed use. Only then would they be asked to evaluate specific proposals. Mt. Scarpati urged an emphasis on the big questions, and suggested that the too much attention to the finer details would only provide "cloudy skeletons." He added that in fleshing out the details of other proposals, the Committee would benefit from having some basic architectural help similar to the "wavy line" diagrams in the Dakota Partners proposal.

Mr. Lee then noted that GreatBlue's research proposal goes beyond the public opinion poll of 400 voters to include an online questionnaire for as many Madison residents as care to fill it out. The results of that questionnaire and the telephone poll will be analyzed both separately and together.

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Goldberg said the Committee should consider its needs and relay its requests for assistance to the Selectmen. Mr. Goldberg added that he thought the "vertical approach" of posing general questions first reverse careful study.

Mr. Griggs asked Mr. Lee if he would advise making the wording of the questionnaire public in advance of the field calls. Mr. Lee said he would not, but that it makes sense to publicize the factual context of the issue with estimated costs and the pros and cons of all options such as gaining tax revenue for the Town, the possibility of lawsuits in the case of demolition. Mr. Griggs said he would check to see whether partial demolition would also expose any potential project to a lawsuit under the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act.

IV. Report of the Other Options Subcommittee

Sarah Barrett suggested the Committee needs to be ready to take a leap of faith regarding the poll. She then outlined several other potential project ideas that extend beyond the purely residential proposals from the three developers. These include tearing down the building and creating a park; creating a community center with a potential cost of about \$18 million; relocation of some Town offices with a cost of around \$23 million; a hybrid of public and private uses; and the creation of a

Hand Cooperative community building with a range of amenities that might include a food court.

The Committee then discussed the potential of using the Island Avenue Elementary property as an inducement to potential developers to provide more public amenities in the Academy building. Island Avenue The building will become unoccupied no later than 2021. Mr. Scarpati said the Developers Subcommittee would introduce the idea at their meetings with the three parties who have submitted proposals to date.

V. Adjournment

There being no objection, the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

The Town of Madison does not discriminate on the basis of disability, and the meeting facilities are ADA accessible. Individuals who need assistance are invited to make their needs known by contacting the Town's ADA/Human Resources Director Debra Milardo at 203.245.5603 (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf -- 203.245.5638) or by email to milardod@madisonct.org at least five (5) business days prior to the meeting.