

TOWN OF MADISON

CONNECTICUT

06443-2563

MEETING DATE: Thursday August 9, 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, Jerry Davis, Henry Griggs, Bob Hale, Kathryn Hunter, and T Scarpati.

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m.

I. Public Comment.

Dick Passero presented the Committee with a detailed proposal for a community/cultural arts center. It includes a review of shoreline communities from Branford to Old Saybrook and finds that Madison is the only town lacking some mix of community centers and cultural arts centers. The proposal states that Madison has the opportunity to convert the Academy building to a center that would enhance the downtown, complement the Historic District and serve most facets of the Madison community. Among the amenities it could house are a 100-seat theatre and a 500-seat theatre, an expanded visitor center, and a culinary arts school. Mr. Passero cited the Ivoryton Playhouse as a model. He guessed the construction costs would be around \$20 million, and suggested that funding “could be similar to the Senior Center and grants proposed by responders to the recent ‘building only’ R.F.P’s.”

Gus Horvath presented the Committee with a summary of his “evolved” thinking about the Academy building after 14 years of study. He noted that no consensus has emerged in that time, so he offered a multiple use proposal that would be mostly residential along with a co-working space and a multi-use arts space. He also turned over to the Committee a folder with background materials including floor plans and documents related to the Shoreline Arts Alliance.

II. Inventory of current and planned public-use spaces.

Henry Griggs presented a listing of public meeting rooms for groups that will be available when the expanded Scranton Memorial Library opens in 2020: a community room and exhibition space seating up to 90 people; a large classroom (45); a 1st floor conference room (12); and a 2nd floor conference room (10-12).

Rob Card offered a listing of public space available through the Department of Beach and Recreation.

These require scheduled booking

1. Dance studio
2. Activity room
3. Main room at Surf Club
4. Side room Surf Club
5. Bauer Park class room
6. Town campus gym
7. Memorial Town Hall top floor

Surf Club main room can be catered and is the only room that allows events with alcohol.

Memorial Town Hall can be catered.

Town campus rooms are reserved for town use and although the public may reserve them, town need takes precedent.

Senior Center-meeting rooms, game room, main hall. Limited schedule.

Surf Club-Colliers is working with Beach and Recreation director to understand options for renovations. A concept design with increased space has been submitted.

School property. Limited use, school has right of first refusal, limiting scheduled programs. Current programming is capped based on space/room limitations.

As a side note, Beach and Recreation is seeing more “pop-up” organizations requesting to use property or using property without proper approval.

Mr. Card summarized the situation by saying “nine locations does not make a community center.”

Ms. Hunter noted that as a general principle, rental fees don’t sustain public uses but only help to defray their costs.

Bob Hale suggested that Colliers International should be of assistance to the Committee in identifying public space, and urged that church space not be discounted.

The conversation turned the general question of limitations and drawbacks affecting public accessibility of Town-owned space, especially the schools and Town Campus.

Mr. Scarpati asked, “What purpose does the inventory serve?” Mr. Card said it shows we have done due diligence and will prepare the Committee to say we have looked at already available or soon-to-be-available space. Mr. Griggs added that the inventory could help calibrate the division of space within the Academy building if it is retained for public uses.

III. Mixed-use ideas

The discussion moved on to the possible mix of uses that might be accommodated in the Academy building. Mr. Scarpati noted that the now-defunct proposal from Greylock has many intriguing elements and food for thought. Mr. Griggs noted that the Greylock proposal contained a range of

“goodies” from gardens to a skating rink, all paid for “intensive townhouse development” on the ball fields.

Mr. Hale said that in a building of more than 50,000 square feet, a set-aside of 5,000 square feet might be appropriate. He also noted that the Island Avenue might be a “carrot” to induce developers to carve out public space in the Academy building. Ms. Barrett noted that the form of management that might oversee the public space is another question to be considered, whether a vendor under contract or direct Town management.

Ms. Hunter suggested that the Committee should consider the price tag first, then the operating costs. Mr. Card said the key question is not what the Committee likes, but what the citizens want. Mr. Hale said that the Committee might want to recommend that another Request for Proposals be issued to reflect the public’s desires.

IV. Public Poll

Ms. Hunter asked to revisit the discussion on polling as she was not in attendance at last week’s Committee meeting due to a family commitment. Ms. Hunter expressed her concern that a 400 captured call phone poll, however scientific and reliable, does not achieve the intended purpose of allowing the public a voice in selection of the option to be brought to referendum. Ms. Hunter stated that she supports a phone poll only if accompanied by a handwritten questionnaire made available at Town Hall, as well as an online survey. Mr. Davis advised that the Committee discussed the same with Great Blue Research, that the online survey is included in GBR’s proposal and that a handwritten questionnaire is possible at additional cost to the Town.

The discussion then moved to the nature/format of the poll. Mr. Scarpati stated his suggestion for a single threshold question regarding support for the sale of the Academy building for residential development at no cost to the Town. Mr. Davis said he likes the vertical approach to the poll because it asks about larger issues first before drilling down to more refined options. Ms. Hunter asked if the vertical approach will allow those polled to hear/see the other options prior to responding to the first option or if such approach will preclude all other options. Mr. Griggs suggested that the Committee remain open-minded and be guided by the polling company on how to formulate the questions and format the poll/survey.

Mr. Davis briefly summarized the Developers Subcommittee’s conversation with RAL, noting that the firm is not interested in developing the Island Avenue property. He also said the firm would not want to include public space in the kind of high-end condominiums they build.

Mr. Scarpati said that at the next Committee meeting, he intends to introduce a single residential development question to be referred to the Board of Selectmen for the November ballot. Ms. Hunter commented for the record that she cannot support any motion that is contrary to the Committee’s intended purpose and express charge, which is to review a mix of options and bring the same to public poll.

V. Adjournment

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

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