

TOWN OF MADISON

CONNECTICUT

06443-2563

MEETING DATE: Thursday, August 16, 2018

MEETING PLACE: Town Campus, Room D, 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 Tom Scarpati.

Others Present: Al Goldberg, Board of Selectmen.

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

I. Public Comment.

Catherine Donovan of Save Academy stated that the Committee should keep in mind the petition signed by hundreds of Madison residents opposing the inclusion of the fields behind the Academy building in any proposed use of the property.

II. August 9 Minutes.

Ms. Barrett asked if the August 9 minutes should have included a listing of the other uses (beyond the three developers' residential proposals) currently under consideration and discussion by the committee. Henry Griggs said it was his recollection that they were in the previous week's minutes, but that the working options would be listed again. They are:

- Demolition of the building and creation of a park;
- Restoration of the building as a community center (including arts space);
- Restoration of the building for relocation of some Town offices;
- Restoration of the building for hybrid of public and private uses; and
- Restoration of the building for creation of a Hand Cooperative community building (with a range of amenities that might include a food court).

MOTION: Mr. Hale moved, and Ms. Hunter seconded, that the August 9 minutes be approved. The motion passed with all seven Committee members in favor.

III. Report of the Developers Subcommittee.

Ms. Hunter gave a quick summary of the Subcommittee's meeting with the Women's Institute regarding the institute's proposal for residential development of the Academy building. Mr. Davis, Subcommittee chair, noted that fuller details will be provided when all developers have been interviewed and the Subcommittee can provide some comparisons and analysis. Mr. Scarpati said he found the Women's Institute proposal to be very viable and fleshed-out. The proposal has some flexibility around questions such as a ground lease versus outright purchase. The Institute also volunteered that expected construction costs would come in around \$10.8 million. Ms. Hunter noted that the number supports further review of the Colliers estimates for restoration and adaptive reuse of the building. Mr. Hale suggested that development for private uses would usually incur lower costs than development done for public uses. Mr. Davis noted that the Institute's representatives said they would not be able to negotiate much further on costs or added amenities. Their proposal already includes a five percent set-aside for public use, namely, auditorium.

The discussion turned to the possibility of a fourth proposal coming in. Mr. Griggs said he would check the status of that. Mr. Scarpati cautioned against any abrupt cutoff of other proposals, because it could invite a complaint about unfair treatment. Mr. Hale urged that the Board of Selectmen set a deadline date for submission of any further proposals instead. Ms. Hunter reiterated earlier concern about "moving target" and supported a deadline for additional proposals so that the Committee may focus the list of options as it begins work with Great Blue Research on the polling questions.

IV. Report on Special Meeting of the Board of Selectmen

On August 6th the Board of Selectmen held a Special Meeting at which the contract with Great Blue Research was discussed and approved. Ms. Hunter appeared in her capacity as an individual and urged the BOS to approve additional funds beyond the \$11,000 previously discussed. The extra funds would go for dissemination and analysis of paper questionnaires to supplement the telephone poll and online survey. The BOS authorized up to \$16,000. It was reported that the Board of Finance approved the same amount. Mr. Griggs agreed to reach out to the BOS to ask when the contract with GBR will be signed so that the Committee can schedule the kick-off meeting with GBR.

The Committee discussed the need to better understand and probe the cost estimates previously provided by Colliers to the Town for various levels of restoration, demolition and new construction of the Academy building. In addition, the Committee would like to ask Colliers International for help sorting out how the Women's Institute proposal could have such a lower construction cost than the Colliers estimate, and if Colliers can provide estimated costs involved in relocating Town offices to the Academy building. Ms. Barrett added to the list of requests of Colliers some analysis of estimated operating costs of the Hand Cooperative idea, noting that the concept involves some payments from the operators back to the Town, which is "tricky but not impossible." Mr. Hale noted that there is something along those lines in effect at the concession stand at the Surf Club. Members discussed whether estimated costs to operate a community/mixed us/Hand cooperative may be an important factor and if it is possible to provide such information in the public poll. Mr. Griggs also said there was agreement that the costs associated with various proposals need not be highly detailed but along the lines of orders of magnitude. Ms. Hunter reiterated her earlier statement that it is entirely appropriate for the Committee

to probe cost estimates to obtain a degree of certainty regarding their source and reliability.

There followed a general discussion about which resources are needed and which are needed to put reasonable price tags on various proposals. Al Goldberg stated that the Committee should not hesitate to ask for more resources as it identifies needs. Mr. Griggs suggested that a better estimate of needs would likely come after the work begins with Great Blue Research.

V. Report on Meeting with First Selectman

At the Committee's request, Mr. Hale and Mr. Griggs met with Tom Banisch August 7th. In the conversation, Mr. Griggs noted that the Committee was formed later than would allow the Committee to report its findings by September 1st, as was first suggested. In his newspaper column of August 9th, the First Selectman did state that the target date for the Nov 6th ballot would not be met.

VI. Scarpati Motion on Referendum Question

Mr. Scarpati made a statement recapping the Committee's work, noting that developing the full range of information for public presentation will take more than the three weeks required to meet the State deadline of September 1st for submitting referendum language. He asserted that "the overriding issue of Academy's future is more emotional than factual or economic," hinging on whether the voters would approve selling the property.

MOTION: Mr. Scarpati moved that the Ad-Hoc Committee recommend a referendum question to the Board of Selectmen: "That the Academy Building (with or without the adjoining fields) be sold for private residential development at no cost or impact to the Town". Mr. Hale seconded the motion.

Ms. Hunter raised a point of order, stating that the premise of the Motion is contrary to and outside of the Committee's charge. Mr. Hale agreed that the Motion is outside of the Committee's charge and said he had seconded the Motion to allow for discussion. Ms. Hunter explained that she was not intending to preclude discussion of the points raised (feeling it important for the Committee to engage on the issues), rather to clarify that if the Committee is inclined to support such a move it must recast the Motion to request the BOS to revise the Committee's charge to allow the Committee to recommend a referendum question for the Nov 6th state ballot prior to fulfilling its given charge of bringing viable non-residential development options to public poll.

Mr. Scarpati suggested that it was his belief that the referendum question would be voted down, with the logical implication that the voters would thus signal their desire to retain the building. Mr. Griggs pointed out that another interpretation of such a vote could be a desire to demolish the building or to do nothing.

Mr. Davis said he was not emotional about the question but primarily concerned with economics and that he felt the motion was outside the charge of the Committee.

Ms. Barrett said the Committee would be fooling itself if it believed it could accomplish its charge in a few weeks, and that public education aspects of its work are important and will take months to complete.

Ms. Hunter stated that she is opposed to any motion that will undermine the purpose and core of the Committee's charge, which is to bring viable options and reliable costs estimates to the public in a comprehensive polling method that will assist the BOS in discerning a supportable path forward for Academy School. Ms. Hunter noted that the referendum language proposed by Mr. Scarpati is a single residential development question that leaves voters unaware and wondering what other options they may have. In addition, the referendum question as posed includes the fields (contrary to public outcry and BOS statements that the "land is off the table" for many months) and allows the public no say in the named developer, nature and scope of development, monies to the Town and approximate tax revenues (all of which should be part of any referendum question on the sale of Academy).

MOTION WITHDRAWN: Mr. Scarpati withdrew the Motion, and Mr. Hale his second, without objection from the Committee.

VII. Action items.

The discussion turned to action items. Mr. Hale suggested that the Committee request that the Board of Selectmen a few hours of time from Colliers International to review their cost estimates, along with help estimating costs of proposals such as moving Town office and the Hand Cooperative suggestions.

Mr. Card offered the following list of questions for Colliers, some of which were addressed in David Anderson's presentation to the Committee in July:

Cost to renovate to code, rebuild new or demolish. Cost to tax payer per option.

Cost and revenue of operating a co-op. Ms. Barret to provide contact.

Cost to move town offices.

Revenue from residential, cost to town for residential

Annual cost to operate the above options.

Mr. Griggs said he would relay the request.

The Committee also agreed that it would work to establish a timeline for working with Great Blue Research, and that the initiation meeting with the firm would involve the whole Committee. Mr. Griggs said he would check on the earliest possible time to set that meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Roz. Fahey asked why \$10,000 needs to be spent on the telephone poll. Mr. Griggs pointed out that the decision was the Selectmen's, not the Committee's, and Mr. Hale said that "the ship has sailed."

ADJOURNMENT – Mr. Hale moved, and Ms. Barrett seconded, a motion to adjourn. There being no objection, the committee adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

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203.245.5638) or by email to milardod@madisonct.org at least five (5) business days prior to the meeting.