

TOWN OF MADISON

CONNECTICUT

06443-2563

MEETING DATE: Thursday, August 30, 2018

MEETING PLACE: Town Campus, Room A, 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

Members Absent: Tom Scarpati

Others Present: Al Goldberg and Bruce Wilson, both Board of Selectmen

I. Call to Order

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

II. Public Comment

There was no initial public comment.

III. August 23 minutes

The August 23 minutes were adopted without objection. Mr. Griggs noted that Committee members are welcome to amend or extend their remarks at Committee meetings or when draft minutes are circulated. Ms. Hunter noted that her review and additions to the Committee minutes are intended to add greater detail on issues discussed - for the public record and for those unable to attend Committee meetings.

IV. Communication from GreatBlue Research

Henry Griggs reported that GreatBlue Research is recommending that the poll be postponed until after the election because there are highly contested races that will likely involve extensive phone polling. The Committee agreed to accept this recommendation, but the question came up about how this would affect the paper questionnaire that has been suggested for Election Day. Ms. Hunter expressed her opinion that the GreatBlue phone poll, with online survey and hand questionnaire, be conducted in the month of September (in advance of the feared pre-election polling

crush), and urged the Committee to proceed in its work with GreatBlue to formulate the poll/survey questions.

It was the sense of the Committee that the kick-off meeting with GreatBlue should still take place as soon as possible and Mr. Griggs said would follow up to schedule it.

Ms. Hunter distributed a draft survey with suggested form and content for the poll. The Committee agreed to review the draft.

V. Communication with the First Selectman's Office

Mr. Griggs said he had received replies from Tom Banisch in response to Committee questions. In the first instance, Mr. Banisch said he is not aware of any further developer proposals beyond the Horton Group's and that the Committee should consider August 31, 2018 as the official cut-off for proposals. In the second case, Mr. Banisch agreed that the Committee could consult with Colliers to probe cost estimates already provided and to get more cost estimates for various proposed municipal uses, including operational costs, and that he will ask Dave Anderson to coordinate that effort.

VI. Report of the Developers Subcommittee

Jerry Davis reported on the Subcommittee's meeting with the Horton Group. This proposal is different because it includes 11,000 square feet of commercial space along with market rate residential apartments. Ms. Hunter noted that the estimated total project cost for the Horton Group's proposal is under \$10MM. Mr. Hale again noted that construction costs for a public building will be higher than those for private uses. He opined that the estimates from Colliers should be reliable, but that the cost estimates for abatement of hazardous materials seemed high.

The discussion then moved to proposals and options relative to cost. Mr. Hale expressed his concern that any recommendations the Committee makes should have a good chance to "be successful." Ms. Hunter reminded that the Committee has yet to define what a "viable option" is for purposes of the poll/survey and that in her view to be "viable" an option must be supported by a firm proposal or cost estimates for the public to rely on when making a choice. Although appealing, she said, it is not enough for something to be simply a "good idea".

The discussion turned to the need for hard numbers for operational costs and for projects that clearly align with the actual uses proposed to date.

Al Goldberg stated that the Committee should not attempt to become experts in building construction costs but take as its first duty the need to build consensus around a small set of options that it has whittled down. Mr. Wilson stated that the poll is the first step in that process of "funneling" ideas.

VII. Other Uses Subcommittee

Ms. Barrett presented a template for discussion of various proposed uses of the Academy building, including (in addition to the already discussed private developer proposals) town ownership proposals, such as a park, a Community Center and relocation of Town Campus offices, and private/public hybrid uses, such as a cooperative marketplace. Ms. Barrett clarified that the co-op/market option may be town owned or operated by a private venture, whichever best serves to protect the community investment.

It was the sense of the Committee that the hybrid uses, including the co-op/market idea, need some concrete detail regarding proposed structure, operations and funding if they are to be pursued much further.

Ms. Hunter noted that a decade of market analysis and town requests for proposals have resulted primarily in residential proposals; that the private sector does not appear to find it financially feasible to restore Academy as an income producing community center or marketplace.

Ms. Barrett pointed out that since there is demonstrated town interest in the market/community hub concept, the Committee should attempt to acquire structural and financial information to support this as an option to present to the public at poll.

The question arose as to whether the Town cast a broad enough net when issuing the 2017 Request for Qualifications so as to solicit community and open market proposals. Bruce Wilson suggested that Colliers could answer that question.

VIII. Public Comment

Dick Passero urged the Town not “give away” the Academy building, rather that the Committee consider options that enhance the Town center; fearing that residential will create a “dead zone”. Catherine Donovan expressed her concern that a proposal to use the land might still crop up notwithstanding the public outcry against high-density development and BOS statements that the land should be “off the table”. She reminded the Committee that the new building-only proposals are clear evidence that we do need to give the land away to have the Academy building restored.

XI. Adjournment

Mr. Hale moved that the Committee adjourn, and Ms. Hunter seconded the motion, which passed without objection. The Committee adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

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