

**TOWN OF MADISON  
CONNECTICUT 06443-2563**

**MEETING DATE:** Thursday, October 11, 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, Henry Griggs, Bob Hale, Kathryn Hunter

Members Absent: Jerry Davis and Tom Scarpati

I. Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:36 p.m.

II. Public Comment:

Dick Passero and Catherine Ferrante gave a presentation in support of the community center option for the upcoming poll/survey, being a proposal for the Town to retain ownership and renovate the Academy Building for use as a community center. The presentation included a slideshow, 3D model of the building and plans showing proposed uses for each floor. The presentation stressed the need for an active community center in the heart of Madison, including activities and programming that will draw patrons to the town's commercial center (without competing with retailers), and the suitability of the Academy building's current configuration for adaptive reuse as meeting space, classrooms (for adult and childhood education), art society and event space, theatrical productions (small theater), athletics (gym), cafeteria (for culinary clubs and small scale event hospitality), co-working space and public events, lecture series and banqueting space (gym). The presentation included estimates for renovation and operating costs, potential funding sources (historic tax credits, state grants, philanthropic donations and a public capital campaign). In addition to providing a venue for the noted activities, programming and events, the presentation noted that the community center option preserves for the residents of Madison a historic building in the village district (consistent with the theme of state, church, school and public gathering), and an asset that may increase property values by offering an attractive town amenity. Among the questions raised by the Committee was the issue of parking; the proposal includes a 500-seat auditorium but assumes existing street parking and possible arrangements with St. Margaret's and the First Congregational Church for event parking. Bob Hale noted that parking rules are guidelines, not laws. Kathryn Hunter remarked that it might be the case that none of the

proposals for community use of the building conforms to standard parking guidelines and questioned whether the developer options require a change in zoning for the parking noted in each proposal. The duo requested to be included in the Committee's public education and information session and Dick Passero advised that he will offer the 3D model and floor plans for exhibition at the Town Campus. Sarah Barrett asked who would run/operate the community center. Dick Passero responded Beach & Rec or a branch department. Ms. Barrett asked if the community model includes a market. Catherine Ferrante responded that the cafeteria could provide concession foods and vending machines, but that food would be tangential to the activities and programming in the building so as not to compete with Madison's eateries and retailers. Rob Card asked if the various proposed uses are based on/informed by occupancy and capacity limits. Dick Passero responded that he had not verified limits, and would follow up.

Alise Ferency spoke in favor of considering the open space behind the building for the site of a new school as part of a multi-faceted reconfiguration of the school system. Mr. Hale remarked that any suggestion for revamping the schools would need the blessing of the Board of Education and some action on the part of the BOS, and that including it on the Academy poll without that approval in advance could give people false hope. Ms. Ferency also expressed her preference for a longer-term "vision" approach to Academy, a use that will bring activity to downtown rather than condos.

Catherine Donovan cautioned the Committee not to dilute the poll/survey with too many options and choices, as the poll/survey is not intended to gather information, rather to require the public to choose a preferred option for Academy.

Terry Vandendolder stated that Academy School is an asset and advocated that the Town retain ownership and restore it for a community use. She suggested that the informational sessions planned for mid-November be videotaped for playback on the local government cable channel. The Committee agreed that was a good idea.

### III. October 4 Minutes:

Mr. Hale moved that the October 4 minutes be approved, which Ms. Hunter seconded. The motion passed without objection.

### IV. Meeting with Colliers International:

The planned meeting with Colliers was rescheduled for next week. The Committee is seeking advice on several topics, including the costs of moving Town Hall to the Academy Building, along with maintenance and operational costs that might be associated with the various community uses that have been proposed. Ms. Hunter distributed to the Committee a revised Plan B model from Colliers showing reduced total project costs for a minimal restoration plan based on adjustment of construction and other factors, and assuming commencement of construction within the next 12-18 months. It was agreed that the subcommittee will attempt to firm up the revised estimate and report on same at next week's meeting of AGC.

## V. Information from GreatBlue Research:

Henry Griggs reported on his follow-up with GreatBlue Research on several topics: 1) GreatBlue will purchase the telephone sample numbers at a cost of \$1,000, as per their contract with the Town; 2) the firm said its costs for password protection, a method of ensuring quality of responses to the on-line questionnaire, would be \$2,500, and costs of adding another 1,000 respondents to the online questionnaire will be \$3,500. Ms. Hunter reminded that the Committee has for months pursued a paper questionnaire to supplement the online survey as a means to allow all who wish to participate in the survey process (including those without a computer). She reminded that GBR suggested a dedicated computer at Town Campus in lieu of the paper questionnaire, in order to maintain the integrity of the process (GBR collection, tally and summary of all survey responses), and that she has supported the suggestion so long as the cap on survey responses is raised above the contracted limit of 1,000. Mr. Griggs agreed to get more information about the password protection proposal, the dedicated computer and the cap on the online survey.

GreatBlue responded to a Committee inquiry about the possibility of postponing the start of the telephone survey to Dec. 3. Because of problems with scheduling the call center that actually does the telephone calling, the start of the survey would have to be postponed to January 9. The Committee agreed to keep the original state date of Nov 26.

GreatBlue delivered a FAQ sheet regarding the phone poll, which the Committee will incorporate into its public education and information materials. Chair Griggs distributed a News Release regarding the GBR phone poll and online survey and advised he will submit for publication and start of the Committee's public education efforts.

## VI. Discussion of Community Options to be Included on the Survey:

Because two Committee members were not present, the Committee postponed a formal vote on which community based options will be tested. Sarah Barrett reiterated her desire to see a proposal with a marketplace component included on the poll, since it has adherents in the community. Mr. Griggs said he would vote to include it; Mr. Hale said he would not. Ms. Hunter restated her position that while a marketplace is a great idea for Madison's downtown commercial district, it does not belong at Academy because it is a commercial/retail use that is, in fact, a private option without a private developer proposal, requires expanded zoning, competes with the town's retailers, is inconsistent with the historic village district (church, state, school and community), and is financially and operationally unfeasible for the town. Notwithstanding, Ms. Hunter stated she would rather see a separate option for the marketplace on the poll/survey than mess with the community center option to combine it with the marketplace proposal (for fear that the latter will lessen support for the community center option). Ms. Barrett noted that many of the proposed uses and activities included in the community center presentation by Dick Passero and Catherine Ferrante would be part of the proposed marketplace option.

Rob Card expressed his over-arching concern that the Committee be watching for proposals that would get residents and visitors to “cross Route 79”. Mr. Card noted that the 2017 working group on the Academy development RFP intentionally sought to cast a wide net to attract commercial proposals, not just residential proposals.

VII. Public Information Sessions and Publications:

The Committee firmed up the two scheduled public information sessions (one in the afternoon at the Senior Center and one in the evening at Polson) for November 13th or 14th. Sarah Barrett will confirm availability of space on those dates. Ms. Hunter distributed a draft “script” for the public information sessions and asked Committee members to review and advise.

VIII. Public Comment:

Kelly Klopp stated her interest in seeing some consideration given to creating a play space along the lines of Kids Zone or the Bounce! Fun Center in Clinton.

Terry Vandendolder commented there should be no cap on the online survey. She thanked Dick Passero and Catherine Ferrante for the community model presentation and the Committee for its service. She stated her support for a community-based option for Academy.

IX. Adjournment:

Mr. Hale moved to adjourn, and Ms. Barrett seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. The Committee adjourned at 9:13 p.m.

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