

# FARLEY BUILDING COMMITTEE FINAL REPORT



JANUARY 24, 2022

## **Farley Building Committee 2021 Report to Hollis Select Board January, 2022**

In late 2020, the Select Board solicited a volunteer committee to study the disposition of the Farley Building during the upcoming year and make recommendations of our findings.

Members assembled for this year-long activity include:

1. Kevin Anderson, Chairman, Community Volunteer, member of Planning Board
2. Doug Cleveland, Planning Board representative
3. Karla Vogel, Heritage Commission representative
4. Michael Bates, Historic District representative
5. Lynn Schur, Community Volunteer and Historic Society Member
6. Dr Jeanne Smith-Cripps, Community Volunteer and Historic Society Member
7. David Sullivan, Community Volunteer and Historic Society Member
8. Mike Leavitt, Budget Committee representative
9. Lori Radke, Town Administrator (non-voting)
10. Joan Cudworth, Director DPW (non-voting)
11. David Petry, Select Board

The Farley School (erected 1877) has a long history of educating Hollis children. In 2005 the school department vacated the building and turned it over to the town.

Significant studies and reports have secured the building as an important structure in the town.

1. In 2001, the Hollis Village Historic District was placed on the National Historic Registry and the Farley Building recognized as a contributing building in this designation.
2. The New Hampshire Preservation Alliance selected the Farley Building in 2011 for the Seven to Save Program.
3. This historic building has been recommended for preservation as an example of rural Victorian architecture in a civic building.
4. In 2011, a committee was formed to investigate and determine viable options for the disposition of this historic building. A warrant article allocated \$50,000 to conduct a condition assessment and a stabilization plan. In 2012, corrective actions were taken to rectify problems and maintain the building in a “mothballed” state until its future could be determined.
5. In Nov. 2020, this committee was incorporated to serve for year of 2021 with the goal of identifying recommendations and cost analysis in a report to be presented to the Select Board at the end of 2021.

This most recent study consisted of monthly and bi-monthly meetings to determine the building’s condition (past and present), size and uses for the space (apx. 8,000sq ft on 3 floors), sources of expertise to identify the structural condition and cost analysis to restore the space.

The outcome from our study was to make recommendations to the Select Board regarding four options:

1. Renovate/Restore the building and upgrade for town use.
  - Develop plan to modify building/ bring building up to code

- Keep existing footprint with 1920 façade (See photo in appendix)
  - Determine future use
  - Modernize interior consistent with proposed use.
2. Replace
    - Demolish existing structure
    - Determine future use
    - Build new structure consistent with 1920 façade.
  3. Tear down the building and recover the open space.
  4. Sell the building and surrounding property.

After much discussion and investigation, **the members voted to pursue steps to restore and upgrade the building.**

Several tours of the interior convinced us that the structure is basically very sound, there is extensive space on three floors plus the basement to accommodate a wide range of community use, there are unique architectural features both inside and out that historically should be celebrated through a restoration.

Three immediate tasks to promote the building were completed:

1. Secure a revolving fund account to accept donations for expenses associated with restoring the space.
2. Promote the interior of the building to the community through a virtual tour that can be viewed online. (See Appendix below)
3. Identify consultants to prepare an engineering report to bring the building to current standards for occupancy.

A funding line was open by the town to accept designated monies to the restoration of the building.

A visual tour of the internal features with a narration to provide community with a view behind the peeling paint.

To learn the scope of requirements for a restoration we met with several specialists:

- Charter Brothers Construction from Danville NH has experience in historic restorations as well as new construction.
- Windy Hill Associates, an architectural firm in New Boston.
- Ron Pike, Alpine Environmental has extensive work in restoring exterior of historic spaces.

We learned a wealth of potential from these specialists and became convinced that the building had “good bones” and a lot to offer once restored. The major issue then became how to get a realistic costs analysis in a fast-changing economy.

Since no one on the committee had such expertise, we launched into seeking assistance from the NH Preservation Alliance. We spent several months writing and gathering needed

documents to apply for a Reuse Grant. This program would fund 50% of the costs of hiring consultants with maximum award at \$4,500. The Grant application required a historian assessment and an architect report from firms approved by the Alliance. This became a major roadblock since both the historian and architect were backlogged with projects. Our grant request could not be submitted without the two studies. After much pressure by our chairman, it became clear that if we could get the required reports, they would be too late for the 2022 application. Despite the valuable information from the Reuse Study, we learned the costs to secure these reports far exceeded the maximum grant allotment. At that time, the committee refocused the approach to get a realistic engineering study through funds controlled by the town. A RFP for the 2022 Warrant Articles will request \$50,000 to have a company identify areas to restore, upgrade, code requirements and attach a cost to all these features.

This approach will give the Select Board the overall analysis for the restoration of the building. Our recommendation is a phased-in approach to the project. We feel if the building's exterior is restored first, it will provide a visual benefit to the citizens and offer incentive to conduct fund raising, apply for grant awards, and seek donors to tackle the interior rebuild.

In our research for the grant proposal, we discovered extensive documents that go back to the original deed for land to build the Farley School, to several engineering studies that have been conducted. These documents are now scanned and available for study on the town's cloud server. The engineering studies may be helpful for others who are contracted for a RFP. (See Appendix below)

The Committee spent significant time seeking clarity on the uses for the space. That knowledge would help secure grants and specify how to configure the interior, provide parking, identify egress to the space and who might be benefitting from a restoration. At the end, we were advised to consider the space in generic office use and meeting rooms. Many members strongly recommend the community have access to rooms for club activities, committee meetings, storage space, and potential community service spaces. If the citizens of Hollis cannot see a direct benefit to their lifestyle they will be reluctant to support the restoration with funding and encouragement. The building has the potential to enhance the main street landscape and community activity in Hollis. We strongly encourage the Select Board to support our recommendation to make the Farley School a historic landmark.

### **Appendix:**

1. Link to the virtual tour of building's interior:
2. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEipvNr\\_aL4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEipvNr_aL4)
3. Documents located, sorted, identified by committee members.
  - Complete Structural Review by Steffensen Engineering. Feb. 2007
  - Steffensen Engineering Report includes Structural Diagrams



- Historic District Submission of Placement in National Register, includes details on Farley School.
- Survey map of Coop Building by Sewall Old Town, Maine
  - Discussion of moving lot line for lots 5-2, 5-3, 5-4
  - Horowitz Structural Study with drawings, 1991
- Farley Building Deed Information, Lot line, and Leach field design
- Title Search done in 2006 by Hubbard and Queen Title. Includes deed information as of 2006
- Tax Map details 2006 (valued at \$754,707)
- Lease of Farley School to Coop, 1991
- Quitclaim Deed, 2007 when school was transferred to town. Includes discussion of water access.
- Seven to Save Application and historic reports to support the application.
- Application for Design Assistance PLAN NH Charrette Program, 2006
- Collection of communications regarding uses for the Farley Building.
- Lot Line adjustment documents, Quinn Law Office, Cuoco Cormier surveyors, 12/2011
- Miscellaneous folder of notes from Selectmen Meetings, work orders, maintenance expenses.

Disclaimer: There are additional materials not documented here, tried to capture the main topics that involved the Farley School. As best we could, the folders are organized by topic and dates. A closer look and recording could be in order, but at least we have a start on the archive collection.

