

HOLLIS SELECT BOARD
November 30, 2020
PUBLIC MINUTES 6:30 PM
Approved 12/07/2020

SELECT BOARD MEETING

Select Board present: Chair Mark Le Doux, David Petry and Paul Armstrong
Select Board via Zoom: Susan Benz, and Peter Band,
Staff present: Lori Radke, Town Administrator

COMMUNITY ROOM

Hollis Town Hall Community Room, located at 7 Monument Square, Hollis, New Hampshire.

This meeting was conducted in the Community Room and virtually via Zoom, pursuant to Emergency Order #12. The public may attend the meeting in person or may choose to participate via the Zoom platform. The Community Room has been arranged to accommodate CDC guidelines, which include a 50% venue capacity.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, followed by the agenda review.

PUBLIC HEARING-FARLEY BUILDING

M. Le Doux explained that several years ago, the residents voted at Town Meeting to mothball the Farley Building. Mothballing the building included some maintenance such as roof restoration, minor painting and securing the building. A video of the history of the Farley building, created by Town Administrator, Lori Radke, was played for the board and audience. The video was followed by a slide show presentation including timelines, plans and recommendations from the 2011 Farley Building Committee. An elevator, ADA accessibility and other remediation measures are necessary in order to use the building.

The two main options for the building is either to take the building down and rebuild a replica or restore the existing building. The building could potentially be used for town offices, Town Clerk and SAU41 administration. The Hollis Select Board received letters from the Historical Society, Historic District Commission (HDC) and Hollis Heritage Commission who support doing something with the building. It was believed that the deed includes restrictions that it must be used for certain public purposes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

D. Petry supported either rebuilding or restoring the structure, adding that his concern is with the cost.

P. Armstrong was glad to see people participating via Zoom and was interested to hear from the community. His immediate concerns is for the exterior of the building, stating that perhaps it could be painted in the spring, if it was decided that the exterior wouldn't be renovated.

S. Benz also supported doing something with the building, adding that the town may want to restart the original Farley Building Committee and look into raising private funds prior to town or tax payer funding.

P. Band suggested that there may be some innovated ideas that the Board hasn't thought of yet, that could justify the investment. He felt the building should be preserved and not continue to deteriorate.

Bob Desrosiers (Cameron Dr) asked about the benefits to the town's people if it were to be renovated and what needs the town may have regarding space.

M. Le Doux stated that there are several potential uses for the Farley building including SAU41 administrative offices, Town Clerk office and town offices. The concern is whether the SAU will pursue and/or pass a bond

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article in the amount of 1.2MM to retrofit the current administrative building. A previous bond article was voted down at the last Town Meeting.

Eric Ryherd (Witches Spring Rd) stated that the town could take the building down and resurrect a building to the 1904 version, adding the importance of air conditioned and humidity controlled environment for document storage. There are a lot of old documents stored in the current Town Hall basement which is not a controlled environment. He felt funds are needed to maintain the current Town Hall as a historic building. He would rather spend tax payer money to make an attractive, modern, energy efficient building that has really good storage for documents and also reserve funds to maintain and repurpose the current Town Hall for town use.

Bridget Sullivan (Cleasby Ln) supports providing space for the SAU and Town Clerk and to use the building for more than just classrooms.

Anna Birch (Hayden Rd) felt the Farley building is a worthy cause and recognize how much money it would take to renovate the building. Since the middle school parking lot is already congested, she questioned how additional parking spaces could accommodate office staff. A. Birch inquired about the relationship between the town and the school regarding the ownership.

M. Le Doux stated that the town owns the building and if the town were to negotiate a long term lease with whomever would use it, such as the SAU, they would pay rent to the town. Since the town has a need and a parcel, the town needs to know how it can be better used and be economically viable for the town.

Tom Jambard (Twiss Ln) felt that if it were decided to restore the building, the interior would need to be cleaned of harmful materials, such as asbestos. He felt that was a substantial issue that would help decide whether to rebuild or restore the buildings. In his opinion, that should be the first part of the process prior to presenting to the town's people. Once that is completed, you could really assess the structure, to determine if the building is worth restoring. If there is a new building, he recommends using the basement as usable space. He was also concerned about the congested parking, mentioning that creating parking on what is currently the front lawn would be a controversial issue.

D. Petry responded, stating that believes the parcel extends further back into undeveloped land, which could be used for parking. He didn't feel anything would be needed to be done to the front, however the traffic flow would need to be assessed and adjusted for the two driveways as far as entering and exiting the area.

Wendy Trimble (Patch Rd) serves as Chair of the Hollis Heritage Commission stated that the commission provided a letter to the Select Board in support of preserving the 143 year old building. The Farley Building Committee of 2011 produced two major studies required to seek funding from the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance. The previous report should be resurrected and updated with further assessment to return it to public use. The Hollis Heritage Commission is dedicated to identifying, sustaining and projecting the significant, historic resources of the community for the benefit and enjoyment for the generation of Hollis residents to come. It was recommended that the Board initiate usage surveys to seek partners to identify uses and funding sources for the rebuild process. W. Trimble stated that the use of the facility will need to be determined, prior to rebuilding. She suggested the Board visit surrounding towns to see how they are utilizing their historic buildings, adding that there are funding sources for buildings, such as the Farley building.

Karla Vogel (Blood Rd) is a member of the Hollis Heritage Commission and attended a meeting with the New Hampshire preservation representatives. There is a systematic procedure that offers funding for various stages

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of development of historic building. The first stage was partially completed by the 2011 committee which was to perform an assessment by professional experts. The experts provide a detailed planning document, which can then be applied to the state for LCHIP funding. LCHIP is the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program enacted through state legislature. She felt the assessment would need to be completed prior to the discussion about uses for the building. She further suggested that the Board pursue the steps offered by the preservation alliance in order to get a detailed assessment. The costs would be updated by professionals in the field that rebuild historic buildings. When asked to clarify the funding criteria from the preservation alliance, it was stated that the preservation alliance looks at restoring structures, not rebuilding them, so they would want to work with the existing structure.

Michael Bates (S. Merrimack Rd) and Heritage Commission member added that the criteria for using the funds from the preservation alliance are not restricted, so the structure could have public use, private use or a combination of both in order to qualify for state funding.

Steven Carrus (Love Ln) figured it would cost approximately 2MM at the least to restore the building. The asbestos and lead removal need to happen regardless of whether the building is rebuilt or restored, which would be a significant cost to the town. It was noted that approximately 60% of the exterior of the building does not match since more than half of the building has been changed since the original construction. He inquired as to what the building would be used for after a potential 2.5MM investment and approximately \$50,000/year for utilities, maintenance, etc., adding that he felt there was more unknown than known, at this point.

M. Le Doux reiterated the potential uses, discussed earlier adding that long term uses for the building would need to be identified. Additionally, municipal bond rates are currently very low.

D. Petry suggested having approximately 6 potential uses and determining the how much space or square footage is needed for each use. It is preferred to have Town Hall personnel and the Town Clerk in one location for convenience for the residents. The SAU administration could potentially also use the building, based on the space needs for the offices.

Richard Stahl (N Pepperell Rd) stated that he spoke with the SAU Superintendent, Andy Corey regarding the need for an amphitheater or venue for the local community. He added that he offered to donate \$500,000 approximately five years ago toward the Farley building and stated that the offer is still on the table. He felt the amount of private funds or donations that could potentially be raised could be significant and should be determined prior to tax payer funding.

D. Petry thought the town should consider implementing a trust fund specifically for the Farley building, in order to accept donations. This would be done by warrant article at Town Meeting.

Kimber Harmon (N Pepperell Rd) commented that the building shouldn't be used only for administrative offices. She would prefer to see it used as a youth center or senior center.

Doug Cleveland (Hideaway Ln) suggested resurrecting the 2011 committee with the addition of any interested individuals, to evaluate the alternatives.

David Sullivan (Powers Rd) stated that he was a member of the 2011 committee. He felt the building was worth saving. The preservation alliance would bring together a group of designers, structural engineers and architects who would then assess the building and different uses then offer concrete information and drawings. At the

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time there was a 50/50 grant between the town and preservation alliance, which in his opinion was a huge opportunity. He felt it would be a shame to take the building down and lose the history of the building itself.

Eric Ryherd (Witches Spring Rd) added that the Hollis Congregational Church recently constructed an amphitheater/performance venue, which Mr. Stahl referenced a need for in his earlier comment

Michael Bates (S Merrimack Rd) member of the Historic District Commission (HDC) stated that the Farley Building has significant architectural and community value. The HDC would like to see the preservation and revitalization of the Farley Building, regardless of the use of the future building. It made sense to have the town offices and SAU41 combined. He felt it is an iconic building in the heart of the community.

Bob Desrosiers (Cameron Dr) suggested getting ahead of the various deadlines approaching, such as lease agreements or bond deadlines, in order to provide information to the community.

M. Le Doux agreed, stating that was the purpose of this evening's public hearing was to raise awareness. The next thing for the board to do is to authorize reinvigorating the committee, look at the reports, obtain costs and consider the financial obligations. The board should consider including a warrant article to allow the tax payers to decide to set aside funding for the process. It is also important to have a dialogue with the SAU to determine if there is a better use than reconstructing the current farmhouse and barn.

The SAU may want to postpone the warrant article for the bond. However, if they decide to process with a warrant article, they may miss the opportunity to utilize the Farley building. D. Petry felt the timing is very important and the committee would need to have a specific change and timeline.

When asked, D. Sullivan stated the timeline for the 2011 committee was approximately 9 months. He felt that was adequate time, adding that by the end of the assessment, the majority of the committee felt the building was worth saving.

Bob Desrosiers (Cameron Dr) asked if the SAU was able to secure bonds.

M. Le Doux didn't think so, but offered that the town could ask legal counsel. He added that a long term commitment from the SAU Board would be needed with an appropriate lease payment for the use of the building.

P. Armstrong was approached from this Historical Society about the need to increase the size of the museum. He prefers the Farley building be rebuilt into the same configuration as one of the previous buildings. He would also like to see a museum on a portion of the building.

P. Band would prefer the SAU postpone the bond article. Additionally, the Farley building will consist of a combination of both private and public funds. According to previous reports, he thought the costs were more like 3MM to tear down the building and build a replica and between 4MM-4.5MM to restore the building. However, he felt the board could start to construct a financial analysis, including anticipated lease/rent and proposed costs.

The Board agreed to reconstitute the committee. It was suggested that Doug Cleveland, Dave Sullivan and Dick Stahl be involved with the committee along with anyone else who may be interested in participating. All interested individuals should contact Lori Radke, Town Administrator at administration@hollisnh.org.

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191 **ADJOURNMENT**

192 *MOVED by David Petry seconded by Paul Armstrong that the Select Board adjourn the meeting.*
193 *Voting in favor of the motion were Le Doux, Petry, Benz, Band and Armstrong. No one was opposed.*
194 *The motion PASSED 5-0-0.*

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196 The Board adjourned at 8:00PM.

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198 Respectfully Submitted,
199 Christine Herrera, Assistant Town Administrator/HR Coordinator