

Ad Hoc Bedford Museum Study Committee

Minutes of January 13, 2015

Attending: members, Angelo Colao, Kara Kerwin, Selectmen William Moonan, chair, and Mike Rosenberg, Christopher Weisz and Francis Gicca, Bedford Historical Society representative. Also present were Carol Amick and Jan van Steenwijk of the Historical Society. The minutes of the December 17 meeting were approved as corrected by a vote of 5-0.

Bill explained the "pairwise" comparison process. In answer to Mike's question, he said the pairings should assume that funding is available. Frank said eventually the committee will have to consider financial limits. Chris said that meanwhile the potential sites can be ranked through other variables.

An addition to the police station was the first considered. Strengths include security, current location of archives and the Police Department's expansion needs. Concerns were expressed about space and architectural limits and utilities. Angelo advocated an addition to the north wing of Town Center. The committee acknowledged the strengths of the Town Hall multi-purpose room, but noted the lack of rest rooms and off-hours access. Discussion of Old Town Hall included concerns about space and parking limits, the presence of Bedford TV and lack of interior wall area. There were no advocates for the top floor of Town Center. Conversion of the fire station was a popular option. Small size was common to the options of the Bedford Depot, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Dougherty family's house and Joshua Page House. A new building at the Job Lane House property or Ken Larson's Railroad Avenue lot would be remote with limited parking. There was enthusiasm about Domine Manse as a site, but all acknowledged that the evaluation was hypothetical, as there is no indication the historic building will be available.

The results of the process were fire station, followed by Town Center new annex and Domine Manse (tied), then addition to police station, followed by Old Town Hall and multipurpose room (tied). The Elm Street (Dougherty) residence was next. Bill said the next step is to think about whether certain buildings should be eliminated. He noted that the top finishers in the pairings (excluding Domine Manse) probably have been the top prospects all along. Bill added that he plans to speak to Nathaniel Brown, owner of Domine Manse and other buildings not on the prospects list.

Frank asked if the plan is to look at what would work politically and financially. Bill said the final decision will be the selectmen's, and the committee needs to inform them on the rationale for the best prospects. There are tradeoffs for each, he said. Frank said the town has the opportunity to learn from others' mistakes, and to create a museum actively used by the town for a variety of functions.

Chris noted that some buildings might not be available immediately, so perhaps a follow-up evaluation should consider prospective sites over the next five years. Bill said those limits should preclude committee recommendations. Carol suggested an appeal to the public; perhaps other prospects that haven't been considered by the committee would result. Jan said there are historic houses on The Great Road that may become available for purchase.

Frank noted that he will be away until the end of March. The next meeting will be on February 3. The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.