

Ad Hoc Bedford Museum Study Committee Minutes of September 29, 2014

Attending: members, Gaye Carpenter, Linda Christen, Angelo Colao, Kara Kerwin, Selectmen William Moonan, chair, and Mike Rosenberg, and Francis Gicca, Bedford Historical Society representative. Also present was Jan van Steenwijk of the Historical Society. Absent: member Christopher Weisz. The minutes of the Sept. 11 meeting were approved, 5-0.

Mr. Moonan said a delegation from the committee is on the library trustees' Oct. 14 agenda. He said he emphasized to the library director that this discussion is part of a process. Plans call for introducing the concept of a museum in the library and gauging the trustees' reaction. Mr. Moonan and Ms. Christen plan to present. Mr. Gicca said the Historical Society has the capacity to make the museum a success, as a living museum with people actively involved.

Mr. Moonan asked members how the committee can focus the process. The panel's job is to identify and prioritize spaces. He added that it is important to continue to think outside the box. For instance, there's a house coming on the market that is loaded with Rufus Porter murals, which could serve as one of multiple museum sites. Another example would be the Veterans of Foreign Wars post. Mr. Colao said any realistic site would need storage space. Ms. Kerwin agreed; she said the society archives are overflowing. She said storage needs proper climate control. In answer to a question, Ms. Kerwin said she now staffs the society space between 3 and 6 p.m. and occasionally on a weekend.

Mr. Christen said she thinks it is premature to talk about specific needs like staffing and storage. The committee should generate a list of possibilities and visit and rank them, she said. Mr. Gicca said most neighboring local museums are old with limited space. Ms. Christen replied that it is important to avoid preconceptions. She said the list she compiled does not overlap with local museums investigated by the Historical Society. She also noted that the interior of a house can be gutted and rebuilt.

Ms. Kerwin said a successful museum can't be run strictly by volunteers. Ultimately it is going to require a personnel investment. She added that the display doesn't have to be linked to a particular era. The key is creating a story. Mr. Gicca said he envisions display cases filling space, but the structure must allow exhibits to change. Ms. Carpenter said comparative factors should include space for events and office work, parking and "green resources."

Mr. Gicca said the Historical Society met with the architects involved with the Bedford Depot project and were not enthusiastic about the potential for a museum. Mr. Moonan summarized plans for the proposed renovation of mechanical and electrical systems in Town Hall, and emphasized that the multi-purpose room will not be part of the project other than access and acoustical. Mr. Colao noted that there are no bathrooms off the multi-purpose room.

In answer to a question, Mr. Kerwin said separating the museum and its archives is not the best arrangement. A combination would encourage research and display of documents.

Mr. van Steenwijk said the committee should also consider Old Town Hall, large houses along The Great Road, or an addition to the police station. Mr. Rosenberg asked if it would be worth considering surplus space at the VA Hospital. There was some skepticism about location, but some advantages were acknowledged. Mr. Rosenberg said he would contact the administration. Mr. Moonan plans to call the VFW.

The next meeting was scheduled for Oct. 26 at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Moonan said the focus could be on criteria.