

Cornish Library Exploratory Committee Minutes

25 January 2022

Members Present: Heidi Jaarsma, Laura Cousineau, Susan Chandler, Kathi Patterson, Larry Dingee

Members Absent: Caroline Storrs, Dillon Gallagher

Public Present: Bill Gallagher, David Aguilar

Public Present via Zoom: Chris Sarunus, Bill Caterino, Mary O'Connor, Keith Mullane

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

The minutes of 18 January 2022 were approved as written.

Laura recapped the events of the week. Jeremiah Goulet of Banwell Architects had been asked at last week's meeting to provide estimates of both the construction costs and the potential operating costs of the new library by this week's meeting. The operational costs were based on a free estimate given by Richard Parks of WV Engineers. The total renovation costs were received by Colleen O'Neill based on a free estimate prepared by Trumbull Nelson. That total of \$1,984,086. did not include the energy infrastructure.

Laura read Colleen's letter of 25 January (attached) in which she (Colleen) stated her desire to take the time needed to get the correct data to put before the town and the donors. The letter also stated that she (Colleen) had over \$500,000 in unsolicited pledges and reiterated her enthusiasm for and desire to continue the library and community center vision.

Kathi stated that she felt the Trumbull Nelson figure seemed high. Susan suggested consulting with local contractors. Larry noted that furnishings were not included in TN's figures. Susan noted that CCI had never intended to provide the interior furnishings just the complete renovation., but that certainly money would need to be raised by the Friends of the Library or others for those furnishings not coming from the Stowell Library. Heidi felt that in talking with Colleen, it was her understanding that Colleen knows that detailed cost estimates may not be available before this year's Town Meeting.

Kathi questioned our charge, saying that it not our charge to determine the feasibility of moving the library to the new building. She asked if we could do that without the detailed figures. Heidi reiterated that the donor wants to take a pause. Heidi further stated that as the town is going to assume maintenance of the building, the taxpayers need to know the figures.

Heidi presented the warrant as written by town counsel and Tom Donovan. (attached). The intent of the warrant was to protect both the interests of the town and the donor. It would be a binding agreement much like a purchase and sale agreement. The warrant would be more than a sense of the meeting: the vote would obligate the town to acquire the building. It would protect the donor and is not to be taken lightly.

The voters would need as much information as we could possibly give them to make an informed decision. Thus far, our information is incomplete. Much of our work has been on process (commercial space, residential space, terms of the Stowell library gift to the town, etc.) and preliminary building designs.

Heidi proposed the following motion:

Motion:

Whereas the proposed library acceptance warrant article, developed by Town Counsel with the advice of the Director of the Charitable Trusts Unit of the New Hampshire Department of Justice, authorizes the Selectmen to enter into a legally binding agreement with the Cornish Community Initiative; and

Whereas said legally binding agreement would be similar in nature to a purchase and sales agreement; and

Whereas said warrant article makes reference to the renovation and design plans presented at the 2022 town meeting; and

Whereas to date, the available phase one renovation and design plans are not in their final form; and

Whereas in light of the recent \$1.98M construction estimate, the Cornish Community Initiative has stated its intention “to step back and take more time to consider the plan for the Cornish Library and Community Center.”; and

Whereas in spite of the extensive work completed by the committee to date, more data is required to create a thorough report that will inform the voters in making their decision; and

Whereas in order to make an informed choice, the voters of Cornish deserve a comprehensive analysis of and plan for the relocation of the public library from its current location.

I move that the Selectboard be informed that the committee’s work remains in an information gathering phase, and at present time the committee does not have enough information to make a final report and recommendation regarding the feasibility of relocating the library. Without such a report available to the public, the committee does not recommend placing an article for library acceptance on the 2022 warrant and respectfully requests that the Selectboard charges the committee to continue its work.
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Heidi stated that our committee has made a good start, but that we are not ready to complete our charge. She presented the following list of data points that need to be finalized before the information/data gathering phase of our charge is complete.

Data Required for Final Report:

- Final building design and construction cost estimate.
 - Operation costs based on final building design.
 - Cost estimate to furnish building.
 - Comparative analysis of Stowell Library renovation vs. general store building renovation.
 - Construction costs and related tax impact.
 - Operating costs and related tax impact: physical plant, staffing, library operations.
 - Code compliance.
 - Outdoor space, parking.
 - Shelf space, program space, community space.
 - Community input: forum, survey, etc.
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Susan suggested that we do need more time, but that she would like to have a place for a presentation of our committee's work thus far at own Meeting—perhaps at the “Reports From Committees” segment.

Heidi reiterated that a Memorandum of Understanding is necessary as we go forward defining the respective roles of the Committee, the Library Trustees and the CCI.

Larry suggested gathering input from local people. David Aguilar suggested that the committee need to do much more communication with the community to keep them informed. He feels that a much more robust co campaign is needed to sell the idea of the new library and its importance to the townspeople.

Heidi's vision is that the final report will be completed this year and that there is need for a public forum sometime this summer to gather the thoughts and visions of the townspeople. Although amassing a good list of comments, the 2018 forum was conducted well before there was even an idea that a new library building might be an option. Much has changed and a new forum would reflect that.

Vote on the Motion that the Select Board be notified that Committee work remains in an information gathering stage:

Aye: Jaarsma, Cousineau, Chandler, Dingee

Abstention: Patterson

A discussion ensued about what further information is needed.

Larry feels that the future operational costs will be predicated on the number of staff hours. He further suggested that a new look be given to the renovation of the Stowell Library. Kathi stated that no matter how it is renovated, there would still be great limitations. A comparative analysis of the taxpayer burden for Stowell renovations and the Store renovation and the improvements realized from each needs to be completed. The data from the comparative analysis will be an important piece of information for a future warrant article.

Heidi suggested that for the Committee to continue, funding needs to be available. She presented to following warrant article for this year's town meeting:

Warrant Article:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$12,000 for the purpose of the Cornish Library Exploratory Committee's feasibility study including, but not limited to, completion of the planning and design of improvements to the current library authorized at the 2019 Town Meeting and any other such studies or investigations of the current or proposed library that may be deemed necessary by the committee. Said amount to come from the unassigned fund balance. This appropriation will have no impact on the tax rate. The report of the committee will be due on or before the 2023 Town Meeting.

Heidi reiterated the stipulations of the donor's letter: That the library be open at least 15 hours a week; that the building also serve as a community center; and, that Aging in Place be allowed the use of the basement for storage of its equipment.

Heidi moved, Larry seconded. All voted in favor of the motion.

Other business: The Committee needs to meet with the Library Trustees and CCI.

A report of the Committee needs to be prepared for the Town Report and for the Select Board.

A table needs to be set up for Town Meeting to inform the public of our progress.

A memorandum of Understanding between the Committee, the Trustees and CCI needs to be written .

Laura stated that she was pleased with our new marching orders and that we were moving forward.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, February 8, 2022 at 6:00 in the Town Offices with CCI and the Trustees.

Heidi stated that group email is tricky, and reiterated that email communication with all members represents a quorum. Therefore, and emails with all members are part of the official record and should be send to the town offices for archiving.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 pm

Attachments:

Colleen O'Neill's letter 1/25/22

Proposed Warrant Article

1/25/2022

Dear Members of the Cornish Library Exploratory Committee and others present,

I am very sorry to miss this meeting tonight. We were here last week with very positive and optimistic news of progress. We had a great plan. It is hard to convey the amount of time and effort everyone has put in to see the new Library and Community Center come together for Cornish.

In light of the recent projected costs presented, I suggest that more detailed and accurate information about the operating and maintenance costs be made available to fully inform the community of the impact this new building will have on Cornish. It is important to take the time needed to get this data. It will also be important for the Cornish Community Initiative to have detailed figures to assist donors and the capital campaign.

I made a call to the architect Monday morning to ask about demolition and rebuild and the feedback was that this would cost even more. The store building itself is solid and in good condition. All three of the interviewed architects felt the same way. It makes sense to keep the current design as our main option. It's in line with the character of the Flat, it serves the needs of the library in the most desirable location, and it creates community space to be available for a wide variety of programming.

I hope you are willing to continue the exploration process. I am still optimistic that we can create a town library and community center that will serve us all well into the future. In terms of fund raising by the Cornish Community Initiative, I can report that we have already, without any formal fund raising, pledges of over \$500,000. These include a \$100K anonymous pledge, another at \$32,250, and an incredibly generous pledge of \$375K from Laird Klingler, in the form of appreciated stock. We are over 25% of the way there.

In 20 years, people will wonder how we ever managed without the new library and community center. And in 50 and 100 years, the people will know that a group of committed citizens bettered the world in Cornish and greatly enhanced the quality of life here.

I want to be part of that betterment and legacy. We can get there together as a community.

With respect and admiration for all your efforts,

Colleen O'Neill

Proposed Warrant Article to Accept Library

To see if the Town will vote to **authorize the Selectmen, on behalf of the Town, to enter into a binding agreement with the Cornish Community Initiative** (“CCI”) to accept as a gift under RSA 31:19 the future donation by CCI to the Town of Cornish of certain real property located at 226 Route 120 in the Cornish Flat, a/k/a Tax Map 18, Lots 6 and 38, a/k/a the Cornish General Store, on the conditions of the donor, including that the Town shall indefinitely use such property as the “Cornish Library and Community Center” and the library shall be open to the public for a minimum of 15 hours per week, with the exception of weeks including federal holidays and during emergencies. The agreement, to be executed as soon as practicable, shall provide that upon substantial completion of renovations, the Selectmen shall exercise their discretionary authority granted to them by the 1996 town meeting vote pursuant to RSA 31:19, II and III to accept without further action by the Town, and take title to, the gift of real estate for use as a public library and community center on the conditions that (1) the premises are in move-in ready condition, the **renovations are substantially consistent with renovation and design plans presented at the 2022 town meeting**, and the building is considered fit for use as a public library and community center by the Library Board of Trustees, (2) the property is not subject to any mortgages, liens, leases or encumbrances of any kind, (3) the condition of the building and property is compliant with all applicable local, state and federal laws and requirements, and (4) the Town’s acquisition of ownership of the property shall not subject the Town to any pre-existing liabilities related to the property.