

Library Exploratory Committee & George H. Stowell Trustees  
Minutes for the MA+KE Community Forum  
Cornish Town Hall  
October 04, 2022

Committee Members Present: Laura Cousineau (library trustee) Larry Dingee, Dillon Gallagher, Heidi Jaarsma, Kathi Patterson (library trustee), Caroline Storrs. Absent: Susan Chandler

Members of the community [see attached]

Meeting called to order at 6:35 pm

Caroline Storrs introduced this forum as a presentation by MA+KE Architects and told the group that they would be able to ask questions of the architects after their presentation but stressed that questions relating to subjects beyond the scope of the architects would be noted and answered in writing at a later date.

Caroline then read the following from prepared comments:

Welcome! Thank you for coming tonight. This is the second forum of two and will be the final forum. Tonight's forum will be a presentation by MA+KE Architects of Hanover, NH who have developed schematic drawings of a renovation of the present George H. Stowell Library in Cornish Flat. Coincidentally, and a fun fact, George Stowell, in a formal dedication, presented the completed library to the town on this exact date, October 4th in 1912, 110 years ago! We need to remember his incredible gift!

Some of what I will talk about tonight will be a repeat of the previous forum so just bear with me. First, there are a few announcements: the water is not potable here in the Town Hall so please do not drink the water. There is a refreshment table at the back of the room being manned by Sandy Guest and those from Friends of the Library if you need anything. The toilets do work though, so feel free to get up and use them at any time. Tonight's forum is being videotaped by Larissa and Billy Sharf, so if you know of anyone who was not able to come tonight, we will be putting it out to the public fairly soon. Both forums are being videotaped and the Library Exploratory Committee wishes to express their appreciation to Tamsin Orion and Larissa and Billy Sharf for their work.

Tonight's presentation will start with a short introduction by me, and then Heidi Jaarsma will give a short synopsis of how the completion of planning improvements to the current library came about before introducing the architects from MA+KE.

As I mentioned last Thursday, the journey of where we are today, began in the summer of 2019, when the trustees identified several deficits at the present George Stowell Library on School St. in Cornish Flat. The deficits are: only 1,240 square feet of space on the main floor, no handicap access, no running water, only a composting toilet in the

cellar space, no off-street parking, no designated meeting space, limited space for library programs, limited expansion space for books and physical outdoor space. The trustees held a forum in 2018 to get feedback from the community and in September of 2019, plans were developed by Chris Kennedy of MA+KE Architects to address some of these deficits. Because not all the needs that had been identified could be met on the small parcel of land that the library sits on, the trustees decided to open their investigation further. That investigation led them to the general store owned by Colleen O'Neill, who considered and accepted the vision of this new library. A Library Exploratory Committee was formed by the Selectboard in July of 2021. The committee was charged with conducting a feasibility study of relocating the library (George Stowell Library) to the Cornish General Store. Colleen O'Neill submitted a non-binding letter of intent and wrote that the "Town of Cornish will have NO cost to acquire the real estate and NO cost to renovate the building." At the March Town Meeting of 2022, an Article 17 was voted on which requested the Library Exploratory Committee to conduct a "feasibility study including, but not limited to, completion of the planning 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". This feasibility study was, and has been, to take another look at a renovation of the present George H Stowell Library as part of a comparative analysis. The article was voted on in the affirmative. The Selectboard chose MA+KE to develop schematic plans that would address the deficits identified by the Trustees and gather information of the financial and operational impacts, the practicality and expected benefits or liabilities to the Town.

Now, after much data collection, we are in the phase of presenting the schematic plans by MA+KE who will present their vision of a future renovated George H Stowell Library so that the voters, in order to make an informed choice, will have a comparative analysis of either moving the library to a new location in the general store in Cornish Flat or renovating the present library. The Library Exploratory is nearing the end of its data collection and will, in the very near future, have a concise and explicit summary of comparison. At town meeting in March of 2023, the choice being presented to the voters of Cornish, is whether to accept a gift of a building referred to as the Cornish general store, which will be renovated as a library designed to meet the needs of Cornish, or not. The renovation that we will see tonight of the current George H Stowell library provides a point of comparison.

Heidi will now give an introduction of the process that we took.

Heidi then read the following from her prepared comments:

Welcome.

Thank you all for coming tonight. We are here to review the preliminary design work done by Chris Kennedy of Mayer and Kennedy Architects of Hanover to renovate the G.H. Stowell Free Library. This work picks up where prior planned improvements to the Stowell Library left off and takes into account the possibilities opened up by the

recent acquisition of land for a well and a septic system at the Stowell. At this year's 2022 town meeting, the voters of the town voiced strong support for the completion of the 2019 planning of improvements for the Stowell Library, which will inform a comparative analysis of alternatives for our library system.

The G.H. Stowell Free Library was constructed by George H. Stowell at his own expense in 1912 on town-owned land. Upon his death in 1915, he bequeathed to the town a fund to support and maintain the Stowell Library. There were two conditions to Mr. Stowell's gift. First, the town had to provide a suitable lot of land, which we did in 1910, and second the town must raise money yearly to fund the library, which we have done since the building's completion in 1912. Beyond those two requirements, the town is free to run the Stowell Library as it sees fit.

The architects were given lists of goals for a new library generated by a 6-person subcommittee which included our librarian, three committee members and two members of the public. Informed by the subcommittee goals, Chris and his team designed an expansion of the present Stowell Library by connecting it to the old Selectmen's Office. You will see that the design meets the primary requirements of running water, at least one bathroom, handicapped access to all levels of both buildings, and increased space for books and programming. The design accommodates the needs of a modern library while preserving the iconic character and history of the Stowell building.

Like the proposed general store renovation, fundraising, in addition to grants and other non-tax revenues, could cover a significant portion of the cost of renovating the Stowell Library. Even though, at this moment, the Cornish Community Initiative has stated it will not be involved in fundraising for the Stowell Library, our town historically has been very generous when it comes to raising money for projects such as these. I am confident that at the appropriate time – after our next town meeting vote – a group will take on the fundraising needed for our library because that is what our town has always done.

Heidi M. Jaarsma  
Member, Cornish Exploratory Committee

Caroline then introduced Chris Kennedy and Evelyn Chambers of the Mayor Kennedy Architects firm who reviewed the proposed renovation designs including a new front entrance, a new circulation desk area, two ADA bathrooms, a multipurpose room, a wheelchair lift for access to the main floor and the basement of the current building, the removal of the cellar and attic stairs to gain more floor space, and an activity/craft space in the basement. He then outlined the anticipated construction costs of \$1,826,235 received from Trumbull-Nelson on 10/03/22.

After Chris's presentation, community members asked questions about the schematic designs. Questions beyond that scope were recorded by Laura Cousineau and will be responded to on the Library Exploratory web page and on ConnectCornish

The meeting ended at 7:45 pm

Community members who signed in:

Kimberly Patterson, Linda Gladu (Gladie), Alex Mitchell, John Dryfhout, Sandy Guest, Dale Lawrence, Lois Fitts, Marth Zoerheide, Jill Edson, George Edson, Bill Caterino, Betty Caterino, Leigh Callahan, Mariann Thompson, Keith Mullane, Stu Hodgeman, Donald Picard, Donna Tewksbury, Char Delabar, Peter Storrs, Bill Gallagher, Mary O'Connor, Jerri Cole, Wally Cole, Jody Schubert, Jim Schubert, Nancy Newbold, Susan Schad, Nelly Palmer, Will Palmer, Angela Bean, Dan Poor, Rickey Poor, Jim Neil, Susan Neil, Linda Coolidge, Deserai Scott, Elizabeth Gage, Deanna Fitch, Gladys Berry, Gwyn Gallagher, Heather Gallagher, Audrey Jacquier, Stephanie McAndrew, Ginny Gage = a total of 45 people