

Cornish Library Exploratory Committee Compilation of Comments from Cornish Citizens

Below are early comments received at Trustee meeting and/or sent to Trustees concerning ideas for or about the library building and/or library program in Cornish.

Comments received from the Library Trustee meeting held 13 July 2021

- We would want the building open outside “library” hours.
- Librarian probably wouldn’t run community room.
- Patterson found out who did shelving for library at the school [to estimate cost]
- Building size: 3200 square feet in new building; less than 1000 in current space.
- Use the kitchen
- Serve coffee
- The two apartments are some of the few affordable housing options in Cornish, and should remain for that reason.
- The old bank space is currently rented on month-to-month as an antique stove store.
- The chocolatier is on a month-to-month lease and would like to stay. He reports many people told him they are excited by having a community hub; his business will evolve to make it possible to serve community events.
- O’Neil will remove some of the equipment that is currently in the store.
- A renovation committee is needed
- A capital campaign will be needed. O’Neil is willing to help with that.
- Events can be held in the new space. The triangle green goes with the building and events or programs can be held there as well
- Exploratory Committee may decide to have subcommittees.
- We should hold a Cornish community forum
- Community forum should ask what people could contribute
- Kitchen could be rented out.
- A lot can happen with this new building
- Important for Cornish to have a community space
- Discussion and plans should be about more than the building; we also need program expansion.
- The Library needs to be open more hours.
- Some people are worried about the impact from the loss of taxes from the Cornish General Store, the financial impact that could result from taking the building off the tax rolls
- The new building could have more maintenance costs
- Renters could be an issue
- There are property management companies that could maintain the rental agreements
- The annual income from current rentals is \$26,000 compared to the \$9,000 in taxes
- The need for a meeting space in the Cornish Library exists now, as witnessed by the Cornish citizens who now use other libraries in the Upper Valley for meetings

- We need a comprehensive plan for expense and income projection. A Cornish citizen has professional experience in this and can be a resource.
- O'Neil can provide financial numbers; she has an energy audit includes a possible solar array.

Note. At this meeting, citizens discussed forming a Friends of the Library group. Colleen O'Neil volunteered to lead this group. The first meeting is scheduled for 19 July 2021.

Comments received from emails to the Trustees

- The store is just much user friendly & could host a lot of wonderful events that the library couldn't, even with improvements. I can see the lovely porch with folks sitting out there reading books, or children's story hour out there on nice days!
- [The new building] is a potential solution to the issues the library has been facing for the last several years - if not longer. I do hope there is a way to make this work.
- The region needs more low- and moderate-income housing, not less. I believe those two apartments need to stay in use and maintain the level of rent they currently have. (This does not mean rent cannot go up, but it needs to remain affordable.) ...maybe they can keep the housing options in that building by contracting with an agency of some sort to manage them? Twin Pines comes to mind.
- The Cornish General Store location offers one HUGE advantage for me personally...fewer steps to climb! The library staff has always been so accommodating but it would be nice to be able to get into the library space on my own.
- I am very interested in the project and very favorably disposed to its conclusion
- Although I love old buildings, I love books more, and I find the possibilities for a new library space an exciting opportunity for Cornish.
- My mother loves to tell a story about my six-year-old self: when I turned six, she took me to our local library so that I could get my own library card. Staring at the freshly minted card as I held it in both hands, I said very seriously, "This is the most important day of my whole life." The library has remained an important place to me through childhood into adulthood.
- ...as a mom of two small kids I was hoping that there might be room for a kids play area. We lived in Virginia Beach area before and all the libraries had play areas and we spent a lot of time in them and met many friends that way.
- The library could operate at a lower cost and better serve the community if it were relocated to the Cornish Elementary School. The students would have more ready access to the collections. The space could be combined with the existing collections space at the school, saving on utilities and maintenance. Given the very low volume of library patronage, the school and library staff could probably cooperate to extend library hours to school hours, plus some evening and weekend hours. The library portion of the school could be locked down from the rest of the school for safety. Obviously, this would require a lot of consideration as well, but the capital investment would likely be less than converting the general store to a library. In the event that the school is a more suitable location for the

library, the town could put together an alternative proposal for use of the existing library and general store.

- The town should use this as an opportunity to do some big picture space planning, taking inventory of its space and its needs, doing a cost analysis on the various options and consolidating where it makes sense. Having multiple buildings scattered around can be more costly.
- In the event that the town does decide to use the general store, I suggest that it may be better as a multi-purpose space. It could be a library and community center, extending hours by using volunteer staff, hosting workshops and pop-up small business ventures such as restaurants and retailers, bringing services to town that could not be afforded on a full-time basis by collaborating with regional business, non-profits, etc.
- The fact that [O'Neill] had to develop new water service as well as additional septic/sewer arrangements when she opened the new store -- means that those issues are all taken care of.
- The fact that there is already a kitchen facility in the building will also provide needed facilities for future social activities in the library programming -- and possibly even a recollection of the historic function of the "Country Store" as a social and civic function -- which I know from discussions with both Colleen and others who inspired her to acquire the building and property -- was an important factor.
- Relinquishing the building built by the Town in the early 1900's with funds provided by George Stowell - need not be considered a loss -- as the Cornish Historical Society is in need of both exhibit space and space for his collections of books and journals and other research materials.
- I still hope that the Trustees of the Library will not overlook whatever funding might be available to achieve adequate accessibility and environmental controls that will be needed in a renovated structure of relatively recent vintage.
- Plan the use of the interior space for Children's Section, Fiction Section, Nonfiction Section, Periodicals, Reading Section, Cafe area, Librarian Space, and Tech Space.
- Plan Community Space separate from library space keeping in mind it may need to be available during non-library hours and have its own entrance and security. This may also need to be its own community group which runs and monitors its own rules and uses.
- To-do Ideas, immediate:
 - Sand and seal the floors
 - Plan to move entire library with a town-wide volunteer day in October
 - Explore energy efficiency strategies using grants available through the state and federal government in response to the pandemic
- To-do Ideas, long range
 - Plan and strategize for fund raising.
 - Plan renovation of the exterior so it "looks like a library"

Cornish Library Exploratory Committee Comments and Replies via email

Note: Here included are comments on substantive matters related to the Cornish Library Exploratory Committee's work. Those comments that were personal criticism of and/or personal attacks on members of the Committee, the Trustees, the CCI, or any others involved in the process are not represented here.

C. The Cornish General Store location offers one HUGE advantage for me personally...fewer steps to climb! The library staff has always been so accommodating but it would be nice to be able to get into the library space on my own.

R. Thank you for your comment! Making the Library more accessible is one of the main reasons to make this move.

C. I was thrilled to hear Caroline read Colleen's letter at the end of Town Meeting and think this is a potential solution to the issues the library has been facing for the last several years - if not longer. I do hope there is a way to make this work.

In that vein, I would agree with Colleen's concern about the fate of the apartments in the building. The region needs more low and moderate income housing, not less. I believe those two apartments need to stay in use and maintain the level of rent they currently have. (This does not mean rent cannot go up, but it needs to remain affordable.)

How does the town become a landlord? I am not sure they should, but maybe they can keep the housing options in that building by contracting with an agency of some sort to manage them? Twin Pines comes to mind. I do know someone in the business office at Twin Pines which is probably why I think of them, but there may well be other appropriate agencies.

R. thanks for your message and interest. It's been great to see all the community support.

Your comment about rentals was broached last week at the first meeting with the Selectboard. Heidi Jaarsma spoke up to say that the town does rent out the Town Hall and Trinity Church. An apartment is a different situation, but a municipality is able to have rentals. It is not prohibited. Lyle on the board said it might mean hiring someone to manage the apartments. As you said, I made it clear that the housing there is very important to me, and in my mind, to the community. Right now it provides housing for 5 people, five young people with ties to Cornish.

Thanks again for reaching out. The Trustees are driving this process and the community has been invited to participate. I'm sure the word will go out when other needs arise. I am imagining, farther down the road, a book moving event that really gets the community together.....[reply by Colleen O'Neill]

C. I don't use the Library very much because I'm not much of a book reader, but I support it 110%. In fact I've used it more in the last 6 months!

I can see a red EXIT sign with my name on it in the future, but I don't know how far away it is. Whatever is done regarding the Library, the younger generations are going to have to support it, not me or my generation. I've lived in Cornish for 50 years, but know I don't have another 50 years ahead of me. The demographics of the Town are changing with younger, more affluent people & families moving in. Colleen's idea of a 'gathering place' may work for them.

I believe the present Library building could be a 'Research Library' for State, Town, Genealogy, and even National information, in conjunction with the Historical Society. I want to see this beautiful building, that we cannot afford to replicate if we could find the craftsmen to do so, go to wrack and ruin. We have a gem here, and it should be treasured.

As for a Community Center, we already have one~~the Town Hall! A birthday party was held there over the weekend, and that could not happen anywhere else in Town. We need to put some money into the Town Hall as it's falling down around our ears. It already has bathroom, kitchen, parking, and is in the center of Town. This should not be instead of Library, but with the Library.

I'm sure there are grants available for both projects. Anyone who has lived in Town for even a short time, has been to something at the Town Hall, so fund raisings should be successful~~~

R. Thank you, Appreciate your sharing your thoughts on this with us.

C. I just realized today that the library doesn't have any parking spaces currently. We all have to park on the lawn--either ours or someone else's. You can tell this by looking at the area near the library. No grass is growing. This is true on both sides of the road. The Library is the only town-owned building that has zero parking places. The 8-place plan presented at the last meeting is 100% impossible. You can't call a lawn a public parking place. Someone should check this out with the library association or the NH municipal association.

R. Thanks for your comments on parking, I am adding this to our comments sheet. Parking is one of the big issues with the current building.

C. So many ... that want to renovate the old library do not have a clue about the limitations of the space due to the fact that they don't use the library. The committee that is working on another plan to renovate the old library needs to see how limited the building and parking spaces are currently. It should be eye opening to have them try to attend one meeting and park. As always, the public will be invited. They will also have to find a parking place.

C. I am appreciative of your efforts to provide the community with options to be presented at the 2023 Town Meeting.

Democracy is a wonderful thing! Article 17 of this year's town warrant, which was voted on in the affirmative, made it clear that the direction of the committee was to provide both the option of renovating the current George H. Stowell Library, which would allow for handicapped accessibility and more space, as well as plans for the possible acquisition of the Cornish General Store/apartment building as the town's library.

I look forward to seeing the results of your fair and informative efforts so that our community can have a voice in which option we feel works best for all of us.

19 August 2021 – Early Questions answered by the Committee

Town Building Issues and Question		
Issue	Answer	Answered by
Is town meeting approval necessary for the Library Trustees to accept the donation of a building?	No. However, the Select Board can put a warrant on the question.	Heidi & Dillon, 3 Aug. report
To whom is the deed transferred	The Town of Cornish	Heidi & Dillon, 3 Aug. report
Who approves renovations to the building?	The Trustees and the Select Board	Heidi & Dillon, 3 Aug. report
Who oversees the renovations?	The Select Board turns over the building to the Trustees, who manage renovations and any future issues with the building.	
What is necessary to de-commission the current library?	Trustees submit a "cy pres" petition to the probate court . Criteria: the gift has become impossible or impracticable to fulfill	
What if the cy pres petition is denied, or the trustees choose not to submit it?	It can be used for other library functions, such as an annex or off-site stacks	
Can the building continue to house two low-rent apartments?	Yes. However: 1. leases for more than one year are not currently allowed; 2. since current liability coverage is not insurance, tenants must have their own insurance to limit liability.	
Would this cause the town's liability coverage to increase?	Likely annual increase from \$50 to \$2,000	

