Hooksett Town Hall Preservation Committee

Minutes - June 12th, 2019

In attendance: John Giotas (arrived approx. 5:30), James Sullivan,

Attending Staff: André Garron, Town Administrator; Earl Labonte, DPW Director; Nick Germain, Project Coordinator; Bruce Thomas, Town Engineer

Meeting began approximately at 5:00PM

Summary of Topics

Project Status Update for New Town Administrator:

Staff and the committee membership updated the Town Administrator as to the status of the Old Town Hall Project. Mr. Garron was provided a broad overview of the building’s cultural significance, its history of use, and the ongoing building restoration work. Special attention was given to the project decisions approved; future intended use of the building, grants received and their requirements, and what work/cost estimates were believed essential to bring the building up to code. Attendees also described the general course of the project and recent years, up to the warrant article voted down. Staff emphasized that the town’s attorney held a firm legal opinion that no funds aside from what was necessary to maintain and secure the building at a basic level could be done for now as a result of the warrant article failure.

Update from the Town’s Legal Counsel

In regards to the status of standing grant moneys, staff also noted an additional opinion was offered by the town’s attorney:

“…While there is an argument that the donation could be used pursuant to RSA 31:95-b (appropriation of unanticipated money), I caution that there is an argument that because the Town Meeting voted no to appropriating any money for the project, accepting a donation and appropriating the money for the project would violate the will of the voters. Given the climate in town recently, I do not think it is worth the risk…”

Discussing next steps

Personnel in attendance had a dialogue as to future planning for the Old Town Hall. André described his familiarity with similar projects, and how they’re quite common in the communities he’s worked or resided in, and emphasized that a common theme for success was to have a clear plan for its intended future use to “sell” to weary voters. Staff pointed out that while the Existing Conditions Report was helpful, it didn’t
represent actual architectural plans, and nascent work quotes were all design-build. It was also noted that the council’s composition was going to be quite different with a total of three new members in attendance or incoming, and it would be important to forge a consensus going forward. As the election results preclude major work for an extended period of time, it was thought that the time could be spent continuing to increasing the detail of project planning.

Approval of Minutes;

James Sullivan noted some minor changes to be added to the April 10th minutes for clarity.

Committee then looked over and unanimously approved the following outstanding meeting minutes:

- June 4th, 2018
- September 12th, 2018
- October 10th, 2018
- January 23, 2019

Project Coordinator will ensure processing.

Meeting adjourned approximately 5:45PM – Voted unanimously.

Submitted respectfully,
Nick Germain
Project Coordinator