

**MINUTES of the FREEDOM TOWN OFFICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING FOR 1/3/2024 (Final)**

Anne Cunningham called the January 3, 2024 meeting of the Town Office Advisory Committee (TOAC) to order at 10:00 am at the Freedom Town Hall. Denny Anderson, Karrie Buttrick, Mark McKinley, and Ernie Day (BOS) were in attendance. Six members of the public were also in attendance.

Review the Agenda & Discussion

Minutes from the meeting on December 18, 2023 were reviewed. There was one correction. Ernie made a motion to accept the minutes with one correction made. It was seconded by Denny and approved by all.

The committee discussed the information that they plan to post on the Town of Freedom website regarding the two cost estimates. Anne had sent out prior to this meeting, possible presentation materials to be discussed. Denny presented a spreadsheet with side-by-side cost comparisons of the two options using the dollar amounts given by both Bergeron Technical Services (BTS) and Turnstone. Denny also included on the spreadsheet, other items needed and possible cost estimates to help determine a truer cost of both options. Denny went through the spreadsheet line-by-line. The committee discussed the cost differences between the two options. Denny mentioned the projected costs of the two options were somewhat similar and the cost would be more accurate when the work was bid out. Anne is concerned that these cost estimates that the committee will be presenting at Town Meeting will be good estimates for the projects. Denny shared Anne's concern, but added that this would depend upon the comfort-level the committee has with BTS and Turnstone, so we will have to trust their designs for our own piece of mind. Anne went over some additional "soft costs" that were sent to her by Rob Turpin that may have not been listed on Denny's spreadsheet. Denny explained what was already included in the cost estimate, and items that were not. Anne wants to see any additional items that might be needed for one building but not in the other building included in the cost comparisons.

After discussing the comparison spreadsheet, it was decided that the spreadsheet be sent to BTS, Rob Turpin and Turnstone for their input before the January 11, 2024 public presentation. Anne asked that before she reached out to BTS and Rob Turpin, if there were any additional questions that the committee had on the cost estimates? Ernie asked if the committee could get a more detailed description of the electrical costs since both estimates seemed high to him. Mark asked if the fire alarm and security systems could be separated from the other electrical work.

The committee reviewed the presentation material that Anne plans to post to the Town's website and to the Freedom Bulletin Board. The presentation materials included the elevation and floor plans for both options, the cost estimates from BTS and Turnstone, and a cost comparison summary. Mark commented that the elevation design for the existing Town Office building does not include the correct placement of the front entry door, as well as a need for a handicapped fire escape on the second-floor plans. Anne said she would look into these questions. Ernie asked that when Anne posts the information on the Town websites, to please put a note in the post to ask the public to withhold their comments or questions until the presentation on January 11th and to not call the Town Offices since the Town's staff would be unable to answer their questions. Having no further questions on the presentation material, Anne opened the meeting to public comment.

Scott Brooks asked if the committee had more information about the \$5,000 cost estimate for foundation and concrete from BTS for the existing Town Office building. Karrie read from BTS cost estimate proposal regarding the foundation, and it states that the reference for the foundation was for resetting a few pieces of granite foundation blocks and bracing in place. Scott said he believed that the existing building will need an entire new concrete foundation. He went on to say that once the building is raised, he believes that you will find powder post beetle damage and rot to the sill which all of this will need to be replaced. Scott does not believe that the contingency line listed will cover the additional foundation and carpentry costs. Scott also questioned the amount of \$10,000 for sitework for the existing building. Scott asked if the amount included costs for repairing and repaving the parking lot at the existing building. Denny replied that it did not, it just covered the existing building. Scott mentioned that he would expect the repair and paving costs would be in excess of \$25,000. Scott commented on the septic system at the existing building. The septic system is 40+ years old with pine trees growing in the leech field. The septic system will need to be replaced. Scott asked if on the sitework costs, did it cover the cost of disposing the old buried oil tank that would no longer be needed when the new heating system is installed in the renovated building. Scott also asked if the sills and floor joists on the first floor would be replaced. Scott does not believe that the cost estimate under carpentry would cover the replacement of the first floor. Scott believes to preserve the building, it starts with a good foundation and to make it energy efficient, it has to be a concrete foundation and to preserve the historical look, the existing granite could be shelved into the concrete.

Darwin Moulton said that he believes that there are many hidden costs that are not listed: the foundation, the paving and the cost associated with the temporary move of the Town Offices. This would push the cost estimate for renovation of the existing building from the proposed cost of \$1,350,000 to \$2,000,000. If the town offices are moved temporarily to the Town Hall during the renovation, parking in front of the Town Hall will also be an issue.

Paul Elie asked Denny what he meant when he spoke about compaction. Denny replied that it had to do with the compacted soil under the building footing. Paul also commented and highly suggested that the abutters and the folks who live in the neighborhood are kept apprised of any work that is foreseen and planned. Anne agreed but that would be decision for the Board of Selectman (BOS).

There were no further comments from the public. Anne spoke about the TOAC attending the BOS meeting on January 8, 2024 to discuss if the Town's plans for additional employees, thus requiring more office space, which has been brought up during past meetings and during the last public presentation by members of the public. Anne hopes the Selectmen can give an update on this issue since neither of the building designs account for any additional office space. Ernie mentioned that he would have Stacy post that the BOS meeting for January 8, 2024 be held at the Town Hall due to the expected attendance.

The committee reviewed the agenda for the public presentation on January 11, 2024. Both BTS and Rob Turpin will give a summary of their plans, go over the cost estimates with a 15-minute question and answer period between each presentation. It was agreed that before the presentation, Anne would forward the cost comparison spreadsheet to both BTS and Rob Turpin and ask them for their input.

The committee agreed to meet again after the January 11, 2024 public presentation but before January 31st to discuss any additional costs that need to be put into the bond issue.

Anne asked if there were additional comments from the public. Bonnie Elie asked if BTS would be made aware of the concerns regarding the foundation to the existing building. Anne said she would let me know about the discussion today.

Robert Goss asked about the location of the proposed new building. He said he believes that the existing building will be more problematic than compared to a new building. He asked why we are pushing to spend the money on an old building and not on a new building. Anne told him that the proposed new building would be at 50 Eaton Road. At the Town Meeting in March 2020, it was proposed to have two cost estimates, one to renovate the existing historic building and one for a new building. The town's people at that meeting voted to only get the cost estimate to renovate the existing building. This committee was then formed. COVID hit and it delayed the process. In March 2023, the committee believed without a comparison cost of a new building, the bond issue for renovating the existing building would be voted down. It is the committee's hope that at Town Meeting on March 12, 2024 that one of the bond issues, either renovating existing building or building a new Town Office building will pass.

With no further business. Mark made a motion to end the meeting. It was seconded by Ernie and approved by all. The meeting adjourned at 11:20am.