

Minutes of Bethel Town Hall Finance Committee

January 29, 2009 ❧❧❧ At Bethel Public Library at 7 p.m.

Present were committee members Amy Bergamo, Mary Floyd, Chris Masters, Sheila Jacobs and Winslow Ayer. Also present were Geneva Gaiko, Davis Dimock, Victoria Weber, Selectman Joe De Freitas, and Chris Costanzo, reporting for the *Herald of Randolph*.

Amy called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

[**To document recent events:** *there were no meetings in October, November or December 2008. Instead of our October meeting, we held an "Apple Pie Information Social" meeting to share information with the public about the Town Hall Restoration Bond vote which took place on November 4, 2008. The Selectboard had held an information hearing on October 27th. The bond vote was for 'up to \$1,300,000' but hopefully, due to monies already in hand, \$944,000. It passed by 631 to 372 votes and the selectboard is now working on getting the actual work started.]*

1- The **minutes** of the September 2008 meeting were accepted by the committee members present.

2- Victoria will begin putting **Newsletter # 6** together in February. It will synopsize town hall events during 2008. The goal is to carry on the pattern of the newsletters to document events and share information, and to create an historical record.

3- Historic Preservation Grants. Amy announced that the town has been awarded a \$15,000 matching grant from the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation for the two half moon windows and the main door in the front of the hall. This requires taking out the two fire department garage doors and replacing them with replicas of the original door and windows. The grant will be matched by the bond vote monies.

Amy is also checking into possible future grants from the Vermont Council on the Arts. If money is available we could apply for a grant to help with the stage. Amy wrote the successful front windows and door grant and is willing to write an Arts grant.

4- **Work on the Hall.** Joe De Freitas explained that architect Laz Scangas is firming up the revision of his 2002 plans. He has been working with Champlain Engineering with special emphasis on the foundations. They want to make sure that water does not get into the building. The plans call for rebuilding and sealing the exterior of the foundation walls. They are creating plans for a worst case scenario for the foundations, so that contracts would not need to be amended depending on what is found when the foundations are exposed. The parking lot side of the building is of most concern as pipes and running water are very close to the building.

Lyssa Papazian has written a "Section 106 Review" on the historic preservation aspects of the building. This is required by Save America's Treasures which is an historic preservation grant. The review determined that the front half moon windows need to be restored in wood, but the large side windows are in bad enough condition that they can be replaced by clad windows, which should require less maintenance.

Overall the plans call for repairing foundations and brickwork, for bringing the building up to code, and for keeping historic elements. The basement will have electrical panels and a finished concrete floor, and will be partially divided. There will be an entry foyer directing traffic toward the staircase and the hall upstairs, a mechanical room, and the walls of the existing 'clogger's' room at the front left will have studding and drywall but the won't be finished off. A kitchen shall be installed in the 'green room' on the mezzanine level directly under the stage.

Review of the Plans The selectboard expects to receive the finalized plans in March and to make them available for review by citizens for about 10 days. Anyone who has an interest in what the hall restoration consists of and how it is done should take advantage of this short review period to offer their ideas and suggestions to the selectboard. In April the plans will be put out to bid. Several contractors have already contacted the town expressing interest.

5- **Superintendent or 'Clerk of the Works' of the job.** The selectboard plans to hire someone to look out for our best interests and to be sure the contractor oversees and organizes work among different tradesmen efficiently.

6- Victoria reported that Dell Cloud says all the necessary **permits are 'in motion'**. These include a construction permit from Vermont Department of Labor and Industry, as well as water/ wastewater, fire marshal, electrical inspector and Historic Preservation permits.

7- Draft Policies and Procedures for running the building. Dell Cloud and Joe De Freitas have asked the committee to create a draft management and maintenance procedure for the selectboard to respond to. Using the "Other Venues" chart that Victoria created last summer, the group will use the February meeting to make draft recommendations for things like user fees, alcohol and kitchen policies, cleaning deposits, scheduling procedures, etc.

It is understood that the selectboard will use this Draft Procedures to create their own initial Procedure for when the hall begins to be used, hopefully later this year. It is also understood that their set of Procedures will inevitably be adjusted and changed as the building is used.

8- Davis asked the group for **a question about the Hall to add to the Planners Survey** that the Bethel Planning Commission is hoping to do in early 2010. The Planners' goal is to send out a questionnaire to solicit opinions from the citizens and landowners of Bethel about a number of issues. The answers will help the Planners update the Town Plan every five years, and also gives the selectboard and others an idea of the issues that are important to townspeople. The first Survey, in 2006, asked how folks would like to use the Town Hall and about 300 responses were received. Ideally a Planners Survey will be done every 5 years to continue to determine issues of importance to townspeople. Davis asked for suggestions of a question to ask the citizenry about the Town Hall as it comes back into use as a community hall.

9- **Future Town Hall Committee.** Amy announced that she is going to step down as chair of this Town Hal Financial Committee very soon. She is still willing to write grants, but that is all. A general discussion about a future committee or board to advise the selectboard into the future ensued. Of special concern is the need to actively maintain the building and to not let it slip into 'benign neglect' again. Joe will talk with the selectboard about a future board.

10- Davis expressed a formal '**thank you**' to Amy for the work she has done to get us this far.

Joe recognized the whole group for their work, effort, time and fortitude.

The process that cumulated in the affirmative bond vote began about 16 years ago with the "Wall to the Hall" Downtown Planning effort, and Mary reminded us that she had spoken with Donna Nelson who remembered working to make the Hall a community space in the 1970's.

Meeting adjourned at 7:46 pm.