



Minutes of Bethel Town Hall Finance Committee

July 31, 2008 ☸☸☸ At Bethel Public Library at 7 p.m.

Present were committee members Amy Bergamo, Mary Floyd, Janet Burnham, Chris Masters and Winslow Ayer. Also present were Geneva Gaiko, Davis Dimock, Victoria Weber and Joe De Freitas.

The meeting began at 7:08. The committee members present approved the minutes of the June 26, 2008 meeting.

1- **Users.** Amy reported on contacting potential users who we had been in contact with before, beginning in 2002. Folks like the Green Mountain Cloggers would love to begin using the hall this fall – they would book a performance in October 2008 if they could. Overall Amy learned that groups are having trouble envisioning the hall as a working building. It has been unused for so long that it has passed out of living, or at least working, memory. We wish there were some way we could open the building so that people – even small chaperoned groups – could see and feel the space.

Dell Cloud has told Amy that once fixed, the hall will also be an emergency shelter for disasters, especially since there is no such center on the north side of the White River.

2- **Site visit by Laz Scangas, several engineers from Champlain Engineering Lyssa Papazian** This is one of the steps needed to clarify cost estimates for the Save Americas Treasures grant and for the bond vote. Amy, Winslow, Joe and Dell attended. Architect Scangas and the engineers working with him had needed to be sure there was not significant deterioration (and therefore more work to do) since his cost estimates about 6 years ago.

Lyssa Papazian has been hired by the Town to perform an **Historic Preservation Review**. This is required for the Save American's Treasures \$301,000 grant, because the building must be restored in a manner that is historically accurate and stays within the federal "Section 106 Historic Preservation Guidelines" in order for us to receive the Leahy grant money, as well as other grants.

3- One of the main issues is the **windows** as they are one of (if not the) major historic elements of the building. If they are in good enough condition, they must be fixed with the same materials, i.e. wood. If they are deteriorated enough they can be replaced with windows with metal 'cladding' on the outside sashes. The prices of the 2 types are close, about \$11,000 each. The wooden ones would require more regular maintenance. It is not known if one would last longer than the other or if one would actually be more energy efficient. Winslow



explained how in even the most efficient windows, the glass has an R value of R-2, while a 2" x 4" wall has an R-value of R-16. To increase the efficiency, we would like to have window quilts, as does Vergennes. These are made in Brattleboro, VT and have tracks along the sides, seals at top and bottom and reflective quilting material.

Lyssa's report will tell us which type of window we will use, based on the condition of the present windows, which is not good. Both her and Laz's reports will take 'a few weeks'. There are 6 windows on each side and 3 large and 2 small ones in front.

4- Winslow pointed out that most of the existing window panes are **hand-cast glass** and the panes are pushing the limits of how large a pane can be. We could use the glass for making new windows OR sell the sash as an artifact with the glass in it. People pay for this at a rate of perhaps \$500 per sash. Joe asked Winslow to get him the specs on these sashes and Joe will see how we might advertise them and what we might get for selling them.

5- **Business Plan / Communication Plan.** We need to write up a simple document that sets out how the hall will be run. Among the things to be decided and set down are : rental fees, clean-up plan, staffing needs and costs, including any fringes, and long-term plans and expectations, such as what we expect at the beginning of use, after 3 years, 5 years, and longer. Also who the customers/users are, as well as overhead needs, like heat, electric, phone, insurance, and service contracts and state inspection schedules for things like lifts, sprinkler system, and fire alarms. Also what the kitchen will consist of and how it will be used. Laz' original plans do include a kitchen.

To the end of helping the select board make these decisions, Victoria has been phoning other halls and asking how they do a number of things. This information is being added to the in-depth information we compiled when Peg Trombly and Mary Demar of the Royalton Academy Building attended our meeting in June. The halls that most interest to us are those owned by towns, but the halls that are owned and operated by organizations with boards, like Rochester Pierce Community Center, Haverhill Alumni Hall and Sharon Seven Star Center are interesting as they have well-thought-out policies and procedures.

Of 7 other town-owner halls, only Royalton is self-sustaining, and it has 5 rental spaces plus the hall. Most towns spend \$8,000 - \$21,000 /year for maintenance.

Victoria is gathering 'user contracts' and is compiling the information from about 13 other halls into an "Other Venues" chart. She will email it to the select board and committee members within a few weeks.

After some discussion it was agreed that we do not need an actual Business Plan. What we need, as Joe said, is answers to questions. That is, information to share with Bethel voters in anticipation of a bond vote. Amy pointed out that a number of people say "if you build it, they will come". This 'Field of Dreams' attitude has been confirmed in Victoria's conversations with people involved with other halls. However, Amy pointed out that "we are trying to get people to vote for the bond, so that we can build it. Then they will come. "

Amy reiterated that the reconstruction of the Hall needs to be economical, historically accurate and safe. The safe aspect relates to the need to bring the building up to code in a number of ways. Since it will be used by and for the public it is considered to be 'commercial' and therefore the building code requirements are fairly stringent.

Switching gears from a Business Plan to a Communications Plan was confirmed by Joe who suggested we ask Jamal Kheiry to help. Joe said that as a communications professional, Jamal knows the questions to ask and how to present the information. Amy will contact him.

6- Vermont Division of Historic Preservation grant. Amy is working on a grant for \$15,000 which is due in October. It must be matched, so it is for \$30,000 worth of work reconstructing the front windows, double doors and some brick work on the front of the building. The attached old photo shows how the hall looked before the garage doors were installed.

Amy is also writing a preliminary letter to the 1772 Foundation to inquire whether we are eligible to apply for their grant. Ann Cousins told Amy about this group and they are related to the Freeman Foundation. Ann has told Amy in the past that one is lucky to get 10% of the cost of restoration from grants, and with the Save America's Treasures grant, and previous planning grants for \$29,000, Bethel is very fortunate.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50.

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