

Minutes of Bethel Town Hall Finance Committee **August 30, 2007 ☺☺☺ At Bethel Public Library at 7 p.m.**

Present: Chair Amy Bergamo, Janet Burnham, Rick Benson, Mary Floyd, Paul Feeney. Also Victoria Weber, Davis Dimock, Geneva Gaiko,

1- Amy called the meeting to order at 7:02.

2- The minutes of July 26, 2007 were accepted with the following change: In # 4 "time of construction" was changed to "time of application".

3- Amy announced she will resign as chair in 6 months at Town Meeting, at which time she will have served as chair of the town hall committee for 3 years. She will continue to help but won't have the responsibilities of chair. The group offered their deep appreciation for her work and perseverance.

4- Amy is continuing her efforts to get cell phone repeaters installed in the Hall, thereby generating rental income for the building, and conceivably even helping with repairs. She and Davis have spoken with Charlie Kremer of the new Vermont Wireless Infrastructure Authority, formed to carry out Gov. Douglas' edict about all of Vermont getting wired. It is unclear how much space repeaters would take. Ann Cousins of the Div. of Historical Preservation is very much in favor of historic buildings housing cell repeaters. Kremer will come and do a site visit. We are on a list which will take about a year to get action. Kremer is aware there is a hole in cell phone coverage between the police barracks on Rt. 107 and downtown Bethel.

5- Users. Mary Floyd reported that Sheila Jacobs, who is in charge of users, lost her list of users due to a computer problem. She will recreate it from paper copies. Mary and Sheila will contact the potential users and find out if they would be willing to pay for the use of the Hall.

6- Fund raising. **Scaffolding is going up on the Hall !!!!!**

All available funds are being used for the roof work, so now our main task is fundraising, which must take place and be substantial before we can begin the next phase of work. Following our vote on June 28th, the Selectboard discussed the next phase. According to the minutes of their July 9, 2007 meeting, the Selectboard "agreed that any work remaining in the "Prospectus, Phase I" should be addressed, particularly if any foundation/drainage work is found to be needed."

According to the Prospectus, Phase I includes:

- Secure building against further water damage with drains
- Stabilize foundations and brick façade
- Strengthen roof structure & replace metal roofing
- Restore historic entry way.

So, the next construction project will be the 3 parts of this aside from the roof.

Davis announced that Chris Costanzo is planning on writing an article with photo of the roof work, an historical outline and a 'what's next' on how we are going to try to raise the money for the next phase of work. This will kick off our campaign.

Mary suggested we begin with the "1892 campaign" which Dave Eddy had first articulated, where in everyone can take part, giving small amounts, but getting involved. Any increment of 1892 would be appropriate, thus, \$1.89, \$18.92, \$189.20, \$1,892.00, \$18,920.00, \$189,200.00, etc. Victoria suggested that we utilize the 1,892 number in another way, by having a goal of getting donations from 1,892 people. This was agreed to. At this point, the numbers of people giving is almost more important than the amount of money given. For some grants it is especially useful to have many

different people donate something. Ideally individuals will give and also go out to their families and get them to give donations too, and school kids may take up the challenge as well.

We will need to have someone to keep track of donations as they come into the town and to create a membership mailing list. Rick said that if money is coming in to the town, then the town has a responsibility to keep good track of it. The auditors will want to check these records. Quite likely Delta or Abbie could do it. Amy will check with Dell Cloud on this and find out what is needed. Perhaps a volunteer could help Delta or Abbie with this task, and could create mailing labels, etc.

It was agreed that by giving, everyone will become a Friend of the Bethel Town Hall. Amy has a list of people who have given before and are Friends, although some lack addresses. Mary also has lists of people who signed in at the open houses we held in the hall in the late 1990's.

We discussed going to Whitcomb alumni. Christy Bollman has a list for their annual newsletter which goes out in the spring. It is not clear how many names there are on the alumni list, or if we have the money to do a mailing.

Janet wants another dog image, like the dog on the 2007 newsletter who said "Roof, roof, roof!!". Perhaps a digging dog would best represent the next phase of work. Paul volunteered to ask his son, Jacob, to draw a digging dog for us to use.

Amy will add information on the '1892 Club' to the Town Hall web page. She will see if people could donate using PayPal. *[The answer later was no.]* Rick said the town does not accept money through VISA or MasterCard either, so checks or cash will be necessary. Donations are tax deductible, which is another reason good record keeping and receipts are necessary. We need to clarify with Dell what sort of receipts or letters of thanks and acknowledgement will be sent to donors, and if these should go to every donor, or just those above a certain amount.

Janet and Amy will work on a letter about the 1892 Club.

Janet offered another fundraising idea which Kevin Flynn had suggested. That would be to hold a showing of Jay Craven's new Vermont film, *Disappearances* written by Howard Frank Moeser, and have it be a fundraiser. The showing would not be in the hall, but would benefit the hall. Janet will pursue this.

Janet asked about a woman who wants to donate an old coke cooler to the hall. After considerable discussion it was concluded there is no place to store it now, and no funds to refurbish it to make it useable. Also use of the downstairs is not yet known at all. Mary Floyd said she would like to see the soda fountain from her store be preserved, ideally in Bethel where it has been since at least the 1930's. The Brick Store is its third home in Bethel so far. It has been appraised at about \$10,000. Do we want to raise money to purchase it? Janet has asked Christine Hadsel if a Vermont Cultural Facilities grant might be obtained to pay for it, although Amy and Davis pointed out that we can only get a Cultural Facilities grant or a historic preservation grant. Mary wants to keep her options open about the fountain.

After discussion, including appreciation of the sentiment of keeping this historical element of the town intact and available to people, Rick said that right now we have got all we can do to raise money for the building itself and the building and its foundations needs it be our focus now. Amy said that the building is not ready for it yet – we must do the bricks and mortar work now and also decide how to use the lower floor from a basis of community needs.

Surety creates security. Victoria mentioned that In order to feel secure about the project that potential donors may be giving to, they need surety and certainty. This means that we need to get ourselves together in a number of areas. Presently the Prospectus is our official game plan and we need to stick with what it says in so far as it does say. However, there are other areas where decisions need to be made. We need to know what the next phase will cost and how we intend to pay for it. We need to have a written plan of how we expect to fund the rest of the restoration project. We need to know how we intend to maintain the building and what-all that entails. These things need to be down on paper and we need to stick to them. We also need to identify uses (and therefore configuration) of the downstairs of the hall, which will involve planning and involving folks beyond the committee and the Selectboard. So, we need to stick with what we have already decided and continue to focus and press forward with the main goals. This clarity and certainty and surety will give potential donors the security to know their money will be used and the building will be secured and restored.

7- Business Plan. This should answer many of the above questions. Who will maintain the building? Who will clean-up after uses? Will use of the building include paying for a janitor? Davis read from documents Greg Hughes had provided us with 3-4 years ago on the 3 elements of a business plan:

1. What are we going to use the building for? Community uses, the school, a brief paragraph on each user.
2. How will it be managed? The selectboard has told us that the town and the current town workers will manage it – it will not be a separate corporation. So we need to expand on that and identify what needs to be done and who and how will it be done.
3. Sustainability. Taxes, insurance, utilities, maintenance, debt service for a bond or whatever, certificate of liability.

Could the Friends be volunteers who would help with the physical maintenance? If so, the Business Plan needs to spell out just how this would happen. These are the kinds of specifics and decisions that need to be made.

Amy will talk with Dell about how the building is being maintained now, including costs for utilities, insurance, etc., and ask for his advice on the business plan.

8- Capacity of Hall. Currently the state fire marshal lists a fairly low level of potential occupancy due to narrow or insufficient fire doors, etc. We would like the hall to hold at least 200 people and so need to know what physical adaptations are needed to make that possible. Blueprints need to reflect these needs. Rick will check on this.

9- Documentation. Following instructions in the cultural facilities grant application Victoria had taken 150 pictures of the outside of the hall 3 weeks ago on a sunny Sunday. She documented each side, spots where brick work is needed, as well as the building in its context in town. This coming weekend she and Chris Costanzo will take photographs inside on all levels to capture the 'before restoration' condition and also historical elements and details we may want to preserve.

10- School involvement. Victoria said she had contacted the Bethel schools looking for help to document the building in its 'before state' and had been directed to Marie Kittel who teaches a 7th grade course in Community Involvement to 9-10 kids. Ms. Kittel plans to have the students take photographs and interview people involved in the roof re-construction and also family and friends about their experiences in our hall and their feelings about it.

Victoria also plans to contact the media department at the Randolph Tech Training Center to see if they might help with a video.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Victoria Weber