

Castleton-Hubbardton *ad hoc* Committee on the Future of CVS  
April 21, 2022, meeting

Minutes

Committee member attendees: Bob Gibbs, Rick Grabowski, Mary Lee Harris, Joe Mark

Other attendees: Martha Clifford, Mary Droege, Dianne Gray-Spangenburg, Gretiena Johnson, Stephen Johnson, Nancy LaFrancois, Andrea MacLaughlin, Nancy Mark, JoAnn Riley, Jeff Schroeder, Pat Schroeder, David Woolpy

1. Joe Mark (JTM) opened the meeting and asked members of the Ad Hoc Committee (AHC) to introduce themselves.
2. JTM nominated Mary Lee Harris to be chairperson of the committee. Rick Grabowski (RG) (?) seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. All members voted for MLH.
3. JTM suggested it would be desirable to have one of the Hubbardton members serve as vice-chair. RG offered to take that role. All were in favor.
4. MLH assumed the chair's role and seat and offered a few introductory remarks. Then she invited comments from those in attendance.
5. Martha Clifford spoke, saying that the Rec Commission has never had a "home" since its establishment in the 1970s. She saw great opportunity if CVS could become a community center:
  - a. It could give Rec a home.
  - b. It could provide space for programming.
  - c. She explained that since the pandemic, Rec has been denied access to school facilities and therefore has not has spaces for recreational programming.
6. Mary Droege asked about the AHC process.
  - a. MLH described the committee's plans, including for two meetings per month and the desire for community input.
  - b. JTM added that the AHC had no authority to make decisions but would be submitting its recommendations to the two select boards.
  - c. He also mentioned that, while not speaking for the AHC, he would be interested in putting a non-binding article on the November ballot to gain a sense of where the voters stood on some of the choices being contemplated.
7. JoAnn Riley suggested that each meeting have a different focus, e.g., one on programming, another on possible sources of revenue, etc.
8. Pat Schroeder asked whether the planning process had to result in a balanced budget or it would fail.
  - a. RG indicated that that was what he was hoping for.
  - b. JTM mentioned that he would be open to a plan that required partial taxpayer support but would prefer to see most, if not all, of the center's expenses covered by anticipated revenue.
  - c. He said he and others have heard citizens urging that the building be sold or leased.
  - d. He also indicated that he thought community members advocating for a particular use for the school should develop a business plan detailing, among other elements, anticipated costs and anticipated revenue.
9. Dianne Gray-Spangenburg asked whether the towns were willing to take care of the facility.
  - a. MLH indicated that we do not know the answer to that question yet. That would be a decision to be made by the two select boards.
10. JoAnn Riley mentioned Rutland's Godnick Center and Poultney's Young At Heart program. She said that both facilities were owned by their respective towns and offered that it might be helpful to know how the financial obligations of each facility are managed.
  - a. She also contrasted those two programs with the Castleton Community Center, which is not owned by the town and for which, except for the article on the annual Town Meeting ballot,

- CCC is responsible for the Center's finances, which they address principally through fund-raising.
- b. JTM mentioned that Pittsford has recently acquired a house and former farm, which the town is hoping to develop as a type of community center.
  - c. Pat Schroeder reported that discussions on how to support the Pittsford project are still underway.
11. Nancy Mark said that proposals should be supported by a business plan.
  12. David Woolpy introduced himself as the director of the Boys and Girls Club of Rutland County.
    - a. He indicated that B&GCRC would be interested in using part of the building but not all of it.
    - b. He mentioned that many B&GCs have partnered with other community organizations.
    - c. The B&GCRC currently has a long-term agreement with SVUUSD. They have had a club in Fair Haven. Now they have four clubs: Benson, Castleton, Fair Haven, and Orwell.
    - d. They recently received a five-year grant.
    - e. He explained that B&GCRC wants to keep costs to families down to ensure that price is not a barrier to participation.
  13. Pat Schroeder said a group has been meeting that thinks that shared use of CVS by B&GCRC and the Rec Commission is a good idea.
  14. Mary Droege reported that the town (of Castleton) was applying for a grant to support a feasibility study of use of CVS.
    - a. This might permit the hiring of professionals who could contribute their expertise to the discussion.
    - b. She mentioned that the RRPC might be able to help.
    - c. Finally, she said that a consultant might be available from the Vermont Council on Rural Development.
  15. Nancy Mark asked how the decision between selling the building or making it a community center will be made.
  16. Dianne Gray-Spangenburg asked David Woolpy when B&GCRC would like to be able to use the CVS building.
    - a. David said they were flexible. It could be as early as next fall, but later would be an option too.
  17. Stephen Johnson asked whether the decision to sell the building needed voter approval.
    - a. JTM said that, as far as he was aware, the answer was no. The select boards could decide to sell town property without voter approval, but they could not make a decision about how funds realized from a sale could be used without voter approval.
  18. Mary Droege suggested that future meetings be held in CVS.
  19. RG brought up Article 8, which says that, if the towns sell the school before five years after transfer, the towns will be responsible for the costs of improvements the district made to the school during its ownership.
    - a. He also added that SVUUSD wants to finalize the transfer by June 30, 2022.
    - b. Dianne Gray-Spangenburg said that the district made no improvements to the school during their ownership.
    - c. That is what the district has said to the Castleton select board too, but we have not received a written statement to that effect.
  20. Mary Droege asked whether we should expect programs run by the town to be revenue-neutral.
    - a. David Woolpy described how, in a former job, a B&GC facility allowed free use of their space by town groups but charged a fee to non-town groups, e.g., family parties, that wanted to use the space.
  21. Nancy Mark asked what the agenda of the 5/4 meeting would be.
    - a. MLH said we didn't know yet.
    - b. JTM indicated that he hoped the committee would use that time to process what they had heard at the 4/21 meeting.

22. David Woolpy mentioned that B&GCRC charges \$50 per child per year.
  - a. The B&GCRC is an after-school program that operates until 6:30 pm Monday through Friday.
  - b. SVUUSD doesn't charge for use of its facilities.
  - c. Rather, the district contributes to the program's costs.
23. JTM moved the approval of the minutes of the 4/12/22 meeting. RG seconded the motion. There were no changes proposed. All were in favor of the motion.
24. Bob Spaulding asked when will the committee know how much it would cost to operate the former school as a community center.
  - a. MLH mentioned that the district has been spending approximately \$170,000 annually on the support and maintenance of the school but added that this includes a full-time custodian and other personnel costs that would likely not be necessary. The expenses that still might be necessary total about \$80,000.
  - b. JTM said he assumed that the committee would have a better estimate of costs in October.
25. BG made a motion to adjourn. RG seconded the motion. All approved.

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