

Castleton-Hubbardton *ad hoc* Committee on the Future of CVS
May 4, 2022, meeting

Minutes

Committee member attendees: Mary Lee Harris (Chairperson), Bob Gibbs, Rick Grabowski, Joe Mark (notetaker)

Other attendees: Tearsa Brannock, Mary Droege, Gretiena Johnson, Stephen Johnson, Nancy LaFrancois, Mary McIntyre, Beth Murphy, Ann Niklasson, Caitlin Perry, JoAnn Riley, Jeff Schroeder, Pat Schroeder

1. The ad hoc committee had hoped to provide Zoom access to the meeting for remote participants, but technical difficulties prevented that.
2. Mary Lee Harris (MLH) began the meeting at 6:10 pm.
3. Bob Gibbs (BG) made a motion to approve the minutes of the 4/21/22 meeting. Rick Grabowski (RG) seconded the motion. All approved.
4. MLH asked about the costs of running the building.
 - a. Joe Mark (JTM) mentioned that the school district reported that in the last year they spent \$170,200 on building costs, approximately \$87,000 on personnel and approximately \$83,000 on other expenses (insurance, utilities, etc.). He assumed that it would cost the towns something less than that second figure (\$83K) if the towns “mothballed” the building for a year.
 - b. RG mentioned that it might be desirable to “green” the building.
 - c. Stephen Johnson asked to be able to see the building.
 - d. Mary Droege assumed there would be lots of grant opportunities.
 - e. Mary McIntyre didn’t like the idea of mothballing the building. She urged that the gym be opened and start being used, even if it has to be run by volunteers.
 - f. Ann Niklasson suggested that perhaps there should be a membership fee.
 - g. RG said use of the building should as self-sufficient as possible.
 - h. Jo Ann Riley said we should look into the Rutland Recreation Department.
 - i. Mary Droege said their group would need time to put together a business plan.
5. Pat Schroeder passed out a one-page prospectus that described a possible non-profit called Castleton Common Ground. It presented an organization based on a partnership between Castleton’s Recreation Department and Boys and Girls Club of Rutland County (B&GCRC). Proposed details include:
 - a. Programming that served children, teens, and adults
 - b. After-school and summer programs
 - c. Resident and non-resident memberships
 - d. Fees for classes
 - e. Rentals for private events (birthday parties, anniversaries, etc.)
 - f. Free community events, e.g., movies, harvest dinners, family game nights, etc.
 - g. Health-related programs like weight loss programs and support groups
6. Tearsa Brannock spoke about the childcare programs she runs in two facilities currently and about her interest in building/opening a new facility on Sand Hill Road. She recently got a capital investment grant, but it was only 25% of what she had requested. She is looking for space, and a Castleton location would be ideal because she has developed a strong connection to the university’s early childhood education program. She is looking for space for 50 to 70 children.
 - a. MLH asked if she could share the CVS building with other programs.
 - b. Tearsa said she would likely need 6 to 8 classrooms and access to a kitchen.
 - c. MLH asked about hours of operation.
 - d. Tearsa said 7:00 am to 5:30 pm.

7. JTM explained that he sees the committee as having four options: sell the building, lease it to a business, lease it to a non-profit committed to turning it into a community center, use it for a community center run by the two towns.
8. Ann Niklasson asked what if the two towns can't agree on what to do with the building.
 - a. JTM said that one possibility in that case might be that one town could buy the other town out of its share.
9. JTM talked about The Arlington Common, where he spent the day on Saturday. It is non-profit organization that has purchased a former church and its two outbuildings to create a type of community center. He was extremely impressed by the very large group of volunteers they had recruited to run the 3+ day event he attended.
10. Mary McIntyre suggested that perhaps the 89%-11% split in ownership should be reflected in fees charged for programming and membership.
11. Mary Droege said that, if they get it, the earmark they requested would be available in October. She added that consultation from the Council on Rural Development extends over a few months and would likely not be available until the fall.
12. Tearsa Brannock indicated that she would need a decision in June or July.
13. JTM said that of the four options he sees, he favors leasing the building to a non-profit committed to making it a community center. He does not believe the towns have the capacity to organize and run a community center. Both select boards are also very conscious of property tax levels and don't believe taxpayers would support a sizeable increase in local tax rates.
14. RG expressed interest in the planning process Mary Droege mentioned.
15. Jo Ann Riley said we should look into the Godnick Center in Rutland and Young At Heart in Poultney to see how they are financed.
16. Caitlin Perry, of B&GCRC, repeated that organization's interest in using the CVS for its programming in western Rutland County. She confirmed that at present they are given free space by the school district and that the district contributes to their programming costs. She added that, if space were available for them at CVS, they might relocate their headquarters from Rutland to Castleton. That might permit them to pay rent for some space at CVS.
17. Ann Niklasson said she thinks the voters saw the two Town Meeting Day decisions, about buying CVS and the creation of a FT recreation director position, as linked and that, by voting for both, they assumed that the recreation director would begin offering programs at the school.
18. Pat Schroeder said that she was feeling more hopeful after this meeting.
19. Ann Niklasson asked if CVS would be available for programming.
 - a. JTM said probably yes once a recreation director is hired.
20. MLH asked JTM to read the MOU he had drafted about the joint ownership and management of CVS by the towns of Castleton and Hubbardton.
 - a. He did so.
 - b. Even though there seemed to be no objection to its content, JTM suggested that no action on the MOU be taken at this meeting since it was not on the agenda.
21. The next meeting of the *ad hoc* committee will be on May 19 at the school.
22. BG made a motion to adjourn at 7:20 pm. RG seconded the motion. All approved