

Johnson Public Library
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Johnson VT 05656

Draft Meeting Minutes

February 29th, 2024

Special meeting re: US Treasury Capital Project Funds Grant Application and Library Repair/Flood Mitigation

Present: Library Director – Jeanne Engel. Library Trustees – Kelly Vandorn (virtually), Jessica Bickford, Sabrina Rossi, Stacey Waterman, Jasmine Yuris. Community – Duncan Hastings (Selectboard), Seth Jenson (Lamoille County Planning Commission)

1. Call to order 6:00 pm
2. Adjustments or Additions to the Agenda – None
3. Introduction of those present.
4. Discussion of Library Repair and Flood Mitigation Options
 - a. History for purposes of this meeting: The US Treasury Capital Projects Fund is a grant that has a due date by March 12th and is aiming to award grants between \$300,000 and \$1.5 million. It does not require a match. At the last library trustee meeting, the library trustees had intended to apply for the grant to button up the basement with a dry proof flood model and had received subsequent approval from the Selectboard to move forward with a grant application. However, seeking guidance from Dr. Richard Downer, a FEMA and engineering consultant, Dr. Downer strongly advised against the dry flood proofing the basement due to the history of the library in the floodplain and potential hydrostatic lift due to the depth of the basement, the potential for serious and increased flooding due to the landscape, and he stated “It is time to step out of the box and think of new ways to solve flood problems.”
 - b. Kelly Vandorn and Jeanne presented that since the email from Doctor Downer, the consideration for alternative solutions were being explored particularly due to approaching grant opportunities. Currently three alternative options have been considered to apply by March 12th for the US Treasury Capital Project Funds Grant. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss those options and the feasibility of working toward the March 12th deadline.
 - c. Three alternative options to repairing in place include:
 - i. Raise the library in its current location and repair the library.
 1. Board discussed that this may be unreasonable because it would have to be raised significantly, the basement abandoned, access changed, and the risk to the building would still be evident. Additionally, Jeanne noted that her understanding of FEMA funds is that they may be utilized twice, and this will be the second time FEMA funds are used to repair the building, therefore making it ineligible if there were future disasters and the library was at its current location. Discussions included looking at the flood levels and diagrams from the 2017 Steven and Associates Assessment with the 1927 (to the roofline), 1995, 2011, and 2023 worst floods. Other minor flooding events and ice jams have also required water mitigation and attention.
 - ii. Build an entirely new library at a different location.

1. There are not any considerations or evaluations in place to start this process in time for the March 12th deadline.
 - iii. Move the library by physically lifting the library and relocating it elsewhere in the town.
 - iv. Locations around town have been explored by Jeanne, Kelly, and supports and the most promising locations are two spots on Legion Field:
 1. Near the parking lot owned by Lamoille North Supervisory District
 2. Between Vermont Studio Center and the Community Oven.
 - v. Duncan noted there was also the potential for the location of the old alumni house as well as a small triangle of land the college owned that may be a potential for discussion and had been in prior years between the college and town but nothing had never come of it. The triangle may not be a great location, but worth considering as additional space to back up to.
- d. Kelly and Jeanne explained that in the interest of maintaining the historic building and grant timeframes, the idea of moving the building has been the primary point of exploration. Move would include lifting the building, moving the building down Railroad street, down Route 15 to Pearl Street, down Pearl Street across the bridge, and down School Street to a new location.
- i. Moving the library and putting it on a new basement with a pad could potentially increase the usable public library space in the main level as the current bathroom and stairs would become YA space.
 - ii. Having the library located off of School Street had the potential to increase parking space, create a symbiotic relationship between the library and elementary school, and be safer for community members to visit than the current temporary location of the Masonic lodge.
 - iii. Moving the library also has the added benefit of not only protecting the building from major floods, but the multiple microevents that happen between major floods including minor floods that require attention to the basement, constant monitoring of flood potential, and ice jams.
 - iv. The location would be maintained in the village for accessibility and could consider outdoor toilets as part of the plan for community events/gatherings on Legion field.
- e. Kelly presented that both her and Jeanne have been talking to building movers. Kelly has been discussing moving the library with Messier House Moving and Construction out of Montpelier and has had the most forward progress with discussions, measurements, and evaluation. Jeanne has been discussing with Geddes Building Movers out of Bow NH. Moving the library would entail excavation and digging at the new site, development of a new foundation with an 8 ft basement at the new location, a 20 x 40 foot slab for an addition for community space, bathrooms, and utilities; and the actual detachment, lifting, and movement of the library to the new location. Movement would require additional costs such as temporarily pulling power poles and light poles. Kelly noted it was estimated by Messier that the cost for this process including the entire move of the building would amount to about \$1.5 million.
- f. Major considerations presented and/or questioned:
- i. Is Legion Field completely out of the floodplain? Seth Jensen can look into the new FEMA maps and send for evaluation if Legion Field is in the 100 year floodplain or not. It is not reasonable to move the building into a different floodplain.
 - ii. Can the streets be navigated? Each area must be measured and evaluated for plans to transport the building around corners and between other existing structures. Brian R. has been assisting with this process, but the board agrees that Messier or Geddes need to do an onsite evaluation to determine feasibility.
 - iii. Initial measurements note that power poles and light poles will have to be temporarily moved and included as part of the cost of moving the library.

- iv. Measurements of the Vermont Studio Center buildings and the bridge may impact the area crossing Pearl street. The library building is wider than the bridge so the building would have to be raised on the trailers to navigate across the bridge.
 - v. Weight distribution on the bridge and whether it can handle the transfer of the building and trucks across. Duncan noted that VTRANS helped design the bridge and would likely have the specifications for the bridge, even though the town owns the bridge. It would also depend on the span of the weight across axles.
 - vi. Jessica asked if they cannot do the full building would they be able to separate the original part of the library from the addition and complete it in a multi stage process?
 - vii. Kelly and Jeanne will continue to work on these questions.
5. Additional major questions as part of this process and follow up:
- a. Jeanne: Asked Duncan and Seth if the moving of the library would count as flood mitigation and the FEMA money would still apply? Seth will investigate, but notes that FEMA does fund relocations, but his understanding is that there has never been a FEMA relocation completed in the state of Vermont and this would be a first for Vermont. It is an option to explore.
 - b. Duncan asked if the funding would have to fall under a different FEMA category and if moving the building would put the current RFP in jeopardy? Seth will investigate if moving the building counts as flood mitigation or puts the current RFP in jeopardy.
 - c. Jeanne addressed that the historic preservation perspective has been a need on the current RFP and would the current RFP completed close before this grant was even known/identified? Also, would moving affect the historic preservation perspective? Duncan and Seth will look into.
 - d. Effect on Legion field. Duncan stated that in the past there has been conversations at Selectboard about developing a comprehensive plan for Legion field a Master plan for development instead of continuing to add items/structures to the location without a full strategic plan. This may be part of the consideration for carrying forth on Legion field. However, he recognizes that there are major positive benefits for being off School Street including:
 - i. School and library symbiotic relationship – kids easily go to library after school.
 - ii. Safety of community members being located on a different street.
 - iii. Potential for increased parking. – discussion that Lamoille North Supervisory District owns the parking lot on the one end and one potential site. Jessica will reach out to superintendent Catherine Gallagher and discuss letter of support as well as consideration of movement.
 - iv. Letter of support from Selectboard – Duncan asked for library to be on agenda at March 4th selectboard meeting. Jasmine will draft letter of support for grant application and send to selectboard members. Selectboard did originally authorize to submit grant, but now the parameters have changed, so definitely need to present to the selectboard the new considerations for the grant.
6. Questions for Seth
- a. Environmental Concerns and Permitting. Seth noted that as part of the budget should plan for NEPA evaluations, and these are generally done by a private firm. He estimated to include approximately \$10,000 in budget for this process.
 - b. Archeological Resource Assessment (ARA) tests prior to new construction. Duncan noted this would be a benefit of the old Alumni site as the ground had already been disturbed. Seth noted when planning for budget estimates, need to plan for ARA tests costs. UVM usually does these assessments and Seth has John Hart as a contact. Seth will gather the information for this process and send contact information to Jeanne.

- c. Historic Preservation Review – By moving the library have we lost the historic preservation component of the library? Or do we need to move and “keep in historic context” and for documentation agree to document at the current sight photographically for the historic preservation component. Recognize potentially won’t have the historic building if maintain current location. Duncan notes this may be a hurdle.
 - d. Duncan asked about ACT250. Seth didn’t believe so as it was less than 10 acres, so unless there was an existing permit, Jeanne could check “no” on the grant application if that question was present.
 - e. Building Requirements: Fire, electrical, safety inspection. If use the basement as active public space must be ADA compliant. Duncan noted all these approvals will require architectural designs and/or blueprints. Jeanne and trustees didn’t believe basement would be used for anything other than storage and utilities and public would not be granted access, especially with an addition of library space with new layout.
 - f. The grant application, because it is federal money, would require proper procurement processes for all bids. Duncan suggested looking to see if additional moving companies were out there to talk to for bids. Additionally, if the move couldn’t occur and alternative option of building new or lifting the building, these considerations must happen.
 - g. Jeanne asked if we cannot move the building, what should we do. Duncan noted he was interested in hearing what the Messier moving company might have to say regarding lifting the building versus moving the building.
 - i. First establish with Messier/Geddes to do an onsite and see if there is the real probability of moving the building. If not, then could the building be moved in two pieces?
 - ii. If building either cannot be moved and alternative needs to be explored or the grant not received, there is another opportunity through the VT Department of Libraries in the fall for another large grant. Would give more time to prepare.
 - h. Discussed other areas in Johnson and most have no access, limited access, limited parking, or are in a floodplain still. After these discussions, agreed Legion field area/former alumni building location best choices.
 - i. Can the library move and do the buyout for the land on Railroad to return it to Greenspace for remediation? Seth will look into. This could be costly and may have to be included in estimates if buyout cannot happen for the space.
 - j. Grant reimbursement:
 - i. Who would administer grant responsibilities if awarded?
 - ii. Will the grant allow pay for grant administrative costs? Is there a 10% de minimus allowed?
 - iii. Who would the recipient be? Jeanne understands it would be the town administrator and Tom should ultimately be the submitter of the application.
 - iv. Would the grant reimbursement plan create cash flow problems for the town? Duncan noted there should be a plan in place if there is a reimbursement process that requires the town to need a bank note to cover these extensive costs if grant awarded and town had to front money before invoices paid.
 - v. Frequency of reimbursement: By invoice, quarterly, or monthly?
 - vi. Who has the capacity in the town to administer the grant process? Would any current town employees have the time to administer the grant?
7. Grant application completion:
- a. Need rough estimates of requirements to move the building, new foundation costs, and addition costs. Seth, Duncan, and board discussed additional considerations for inclusion in the costs:

- i. Include the NEPA costs
 - ii. Include the ARA costs
 - iii. Include grant administration costs.
 - b. Letters of support if the building can be moved. Jasmine will draft and distribute to the selectboard and trustees will attend the scheduled March 4th meeting to provide input and seek signatures. Jess will talk to Catherine Gallagher and seek letter of support if possible from school district. Seth offered to write a letter of support.
 - c. Drawing of the building such as an architectural drawing or blueprints. Jeanne had spoken with Howard Romero and he tentatively agreed to complete a drawing before the March 12th deadline if the library trustees received a go ahead for a planning process for the building.
 - d. Randall from Community and Economic Development has agreed to review and wordsmith the grant if the trustees complete the basics. He will complete the follow up with Jeanne.
 - e. Historic preservation process ensured.
 - f. Remember primary purpose of the grant is to provide access to high speed internet and considering the building was down for two months entirely, people were cut off from access to the internet during a highly critical period after the flooding when they desperately needed access to resources.
8. Jessica began a motion regarding the grant application, but the wording was difficult and the trustees felt that the options for seeking a new build or lifting the library still needed to be options in case the building move didn't materialize. Kelly will continue to investigate other options as she pursues the building move including a site visit from Messier, more concrete quote from Messier or Geddes, potentially building new elsewhere, or keep building knowing future repairs may be difficult.
9. After discussion Jessica motioned that the library submits the grant application with the preferred option for the grant application to move the building out of the floodplain, but leaving other options open. Stacey seconded, all board members in favor.
10. Adjourn: 8:06 pm. Stacey motioned to adjourn, Jessica seconded, all board members in favor.