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Town of Shaftsbury

Municipal Offices at Cole Hall

Meeting Minutes

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Community Center Development Committee

Date of Meeting: August 15th, 2024

Members Present: Zoe Contros Kearn, Naomi Miller, Joan Dornhoefer, Marie Watson, and Town Administrator; Paula Iken

Meeting began at 5:00 PM

There were technical issues with Zoom audio for this meeting. Because of this, these meeting notes are a synopsis of what was discussed.

The meeting notes from the last meeting were reviewed and amended.

Action items were discussed with regard to the leaking and flooding on the first floor of Cole Hall. Ms. Iken provided updates that she had left messages with MSK Engineering and Mance Engineering, neither of which has called her back as yet. We discussed the electricity in the building. We're fairly certain the second floor is sound, but we are still not sure about the wiring on the first floor. Ms. Contros Kearn spoke about the electric panel, which seems to be in good shape and has additional room.

The committee discussed that the Assessor has already moved to the second floor and that the Town Clerk plans to come up after the smaller election on 9/10. We discussed all of the electronic and computer devices that will need to come up as well. Monument Electric will be working with Adam and our Web Master to move some wiring, as we move the work stations.

Ms. Iken communicated that, based on conversations she's had with employees who work at Cole Hall, plus community members, the wish is to "stop dumping money" into Cole Hall, as it is being used for a purpose it was not intended for. In building a community center, we should include municipal offices in it. We should also find a good use for Cole Hall. Seven offices are needed. It is less expensive to build up than out, and that will be considered when designing the space. Operationally, it would not be ideal for the municipal staff to be split up.

Ms. Iken brought up the idea of modular structures, since this would be more cost-efficient for the Town, but it would also be a faster build that we can design with our uses in mind. We created an action item for us to research modular building companies, for ideas and also to familiarize ourselves with the companies that provide this. We discussed possible square footage of the building, and came up with the rough number of 1500 square feet.

One possible design would be for the community space and ADA-compliant bathrooms on the first floor. The larger room would have accordion walls that allow us to break the space into at least three smaller rooms. If the municipal offices were put on the 2nd floor, we would need an elevator, and that is a big expense that we're not sure we want or need to incur. We discussed how it's no longer acceptable to make elderly people walk up the rickety external stairs at Cole Hall, to pay their water bill. Cole Hall does have a lift, but it does not seem to be used often and is in an awkward place.

The committee discussed that Cole Hall can become a secondary community space. People could have small events here, like baby showers and club meetings. Waterproofing the first floor should be a fairly easy task, given that basements are waterproofed all the time. We would find a beautiful way to honor the building, as it has been left to the Town in perpetuity.

We envision these community spaces to be used by the community on a regular basis, and the new structure also needs to be used as a warming and cooling center.

We discussed how the results of the Sewer Feasibility Study will determine where and when we can build. The Town should have those results by October. The barn and home on the campus are already torn down, so progress is being made.

The committee reviewed the action items and will meet again on Thursday, August 22nd.

The meeting ended at 6:06 PM