

Select Board Sidelines, December 29, 2021

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in the Sidelines are the individual thoughts of the Select Board member.

Submitted by Bill Lombardi

Most are aware that the current organization running the Thompson Community Center has told the Town that they “will be peacefully leaving the building on December 31, 2021”. Your Select Board, given the overwhelming input at a community meeting a few years ago to keep the building as a Community Center, has decided to take action. A number of folks from the Future of the Thompson Community Center and others are working diligently to create a new organization. More details are expected to be discussed at our next meeting on January 4. We have made a decision to look at what is possible to create regarding this town owned property. The following is an excellent summary.

Submitted by Adam Fuller (written Wednesday 12/22)

I just wanted to give an update to folks on what came of this issue at our select board meeting last night. Our main issue was that as a town we take over the building in 12 days and it has active tenants, and will have near empty oil tanks and the town did not have anything in the budget for this year for the building. The select board all feel that the long term future of this building should be decided by voters and not dictated by the select board. For that purpose our goal is to get the building to the June town meeting when we can present solid options to the voters on what to do with the building long term. How to reach that point was a large discussion. Some in attendance wanted to try and drain the building, a cost estimate was given by the town manager of 7 to 8 thousand to do so. However that would also include booting out the tenants and having to buy out their lease and expose the town to a potential lawsuit. It would also mean an accelerated decline of the building. Instead the selectboard choose to put into place a new non profit that reports to the town with the purpose of managing the building and fundraising for it for the time period until the town meeting when voters can have a say on the long term future. This option will have costs, however the board feels it is the best option to give the taxpayers all options come town meeting. It also gives the non profit the ability to honor the existing tenants and hold events to raise money to offset costs to the town over the winter. The building will cost around 4k a month to heat and about 1k a month to insure, current tenants generate about 1k with the potential to bring new tenants on, and events that were once held to come back. For this purpose, and because no money was in the current budget for the building the town will be holding a special town meeting in February to ask the voters to allow the select board to borrow the funds to operate the building through the winter so that we can get the building through to the June town meeting. We have some options for what to do with it long term that have been worked on by the towns TCC committee. However, they will need to be finalized more now that we have the building as some details before especially third party options were limited in cost details as we did not at the time have control of the building. The next few months will give time for the board to collect real costs on different options on what to do with the building long term. It will be the voters decision on what to do with the building and if they want to keep it. I know it is an emotional issue for some, I ask that everyone make the

effort to give us some feedback on your thoughts on the building, preferably by our town emails. I also ask for understanding that this is a very awkward situation that has been more than a decade in the making, while the current board did not create this problem we are trying our best to navigate the situation and give the voters all options and the final word on the building. There are a lot of sticky issues to work out such as insurance and leases and unforeseen costs as we do not yet have control of the building. But that is where we are today.

Submitted by Bill Lombardi

Discussion on Purchasing Property: The Pullen Committee will be meeting on Thursday, January 6. Please note the link on the Town web site calendar. We look forward to learning more about this property and the possibility of creating an area for future recreational space. See the Sidelines of December 15 for additional information.

We wish a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year to all!