

I came to a meeting of the previous version of this committee in March after the vote and then to a select board meeting where this was discussed with a list of questions. My questions were mostly related to why parts of the project were needed. I was told by members of the committee that they had answers to all of my questions but they all left the committee without answering them. Rather than asking them again now with no one here to answer them, I think it is more productive to make a plan to move forward with suggestions for changes based on these questions as a possibility to do things differently and see what we get for a response. This is my first cut at a plan. This is based upon what I think I know about the project and may change as we learn more. If nothing else writing this down has helped to focus my thoughts and I hope it will be helpful to the committee.

We need to find and make available to the committee and the public all of the documentation produced by the old committee and Blackrock. We are already working on this. Hopefully this will provide a more detailed cost breakdown that will be helpful in finding cost savings.

The first thing to be considered but maybe not the first to be decided is whether to refurbish the old building or to build new. The previous committee with Blackrock decided that it was most desirable and cost effective to refurbish the old building. I agree with that decision but I understand that some members of the public and members of this committee do not agree or are not sure. It seems obvious to me that if we have a structure with sound foundation, walls, roof, floors, and stairs it would be more cost effective to make only the upgrades that are needed. I personally believe that it is desirable for the town to retain the town center complex mostly as it is with historic buildings housing our town offices, library and post office all in one place. Other towns are spending money to create a town center like ours. It will be my focus to find the most cost-effective way to upgrade this building to meet our needs. This work will be needed if we proceed with the refurbishment but will also be needed to compare with any proposed new building. If others wish they may come up with an alternate plan with sufficient details that it may be costed for a comparison. Many years ago, the town voted to reuse the old buildings for town offices rather than build a new one. If we change from that I believe a new vote is called for.

Before we can decide what upgrades to include, we must agree on what we are trying to accomplish and set some priorities. This is my first take on this as a beginning of a discussion.

Must Haves

Provide a safe, healthy, comfortable, and reasonably efficient workplace for our town employees and visitors to the building.

Make changes to reduce the damage and cost caused by future flooding that seems inevitable.

Should Haves

It is desirable to keep providing space for our current tenants. The post office is an important part of our town center complex and the TV station provides an important community service. Both are paying market rent that helps provide funds to maintain our buildings. The historical society and the senior center have small office space. I am not too familiar with Radiate Art but I believe it provides an important activity for our young people.

Although we currently have no police officers the current plan is to restaff the department to previous levels and we should plan for adequate facilities.

We should make any mandated changes to the exterior property to comply with FEMA requirements.

Nice to Haves

We could make changes to reduce energy use and especially fossil fuels. This will result in some financial savings and will have environmental benefits.

We could make changes that would restore historic appearance of building. This would be desirable if it can be done with minimal financial cost.

We could redesign of the parking lot to provide better access to the library and improve appearance.

Where do we go from here?

Flood Mitigation.

To reduce damage by flooding the heating system, parts of the electrical system and the Radiate Art space must be moved out of the basement and above the flood level. This drives some of the other changes.

It is proposed that the post office be temporarily moved out of their space to tear up the floor and to fill a ditch that fills with water during floods through holes in the back concrete block wall, the floor in parts of the post office would be raised above the flood level, and other paths for water to enter in some instances, would be installed I believe to reduce water pressure on the foundation and floor.

Moving the post office out would be very disruptive. We should take another look at this to see if there are alternatives such as building a concrete wall outside the current foundation to block water from coming in, or allowing the post office to remain in reduced space while the work is being done.

Moving parts of the electrical system from the basement will require those parts of the system be brought up to current code standards. I am not sure how far into the building that requirement will extend.

Health and Safety Concerns

Health and safety concerns include lack of a sprinkler system, inadequate ventilation with no outside air intake effecting air quality with black soot coming from some vents in the present system, inadequate escape routes, possible inadequate fire alarm system.

A sprinkler system and any needed upgrades to the fire alarm should be installed.

The current proposal calls for an enclosed fire escape tower at a cost of \$372,416. This would be accessed by doors on the first and second floors. This would replace an open fire escape now in the same location with access only from the second floor by climbing through a window. Is a closed stair tower necessary? Could we replace the second-floor window with a door and add a first-floor door with steps or a ramp? The top level of the level of the current fire escape is above floor level of the second floor which would require a step up and make handicap access difficult and might require a modification to the current fire escape or some sort of ramp on the inside.

Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

The flood mitigation requires that we move the heating system from the basement. The current proposal calls for a new Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system. This would correct the air quality issues as well as providing heat and AC. I agree with that proposal but I still have concerns with the heat pump providing sufficient heat at very low temperatures. Could we ask for a presentation by a potential HVAC supplier to explain their products capabilities?

Windows

The cost of the new windows cannot be justified only by the energy cost savings. Town employees have however been covering windows with plastic to block drafts which is not acceptable. The drafty windows may also affect how well the new heating system will work or affect the size of the system required. I believe the windows do need to be replaced. The cost I have heard for the proposed new windows at about \$1M seems to be excessive. We should look at what is driving the high cost to see if less expensive versions would be acceptable. Is this something where we should get actual quotes from window suppliers? We could also look at replacing only part of the windows now and the others over time as we have the money. We do not we need to reinstall glass windows in the basement that will only be used for storage. We should look at possibly adding insulation to the blocked windows, and possibly blocking the remaining glass windows in the basement that are in need of repair.

Revised Floor Plan

A floor plan was produced with the current proposal that involves major changes to the interior of the building. Our town employees and most tenants now have space within the useable part of the building. Changes to the floor plan seem to be driven by these factors. To upgrade the facilities for the Police Dept. To create a room for the new HVAC system and other mechanicals from unneeded space in the post office. To make requested modifications to the Post Office layout. To create a new space for Radiate Art. A new floor plan should be produced that minimizes changes to the current layout. We should work with town employees and the police chief as we develop this.

We should plan for a Richmond police department staffed to the level of the past, but also determine if the requirements would be different if Richmond and Hinesburg departments were combined.

The current plan removes the dropped ceilings and restores the historic height of the rooms. I see no reason to do this. Drop ceilings help with noise reduction, reduce the volume of space to be heated, and would hide new piping for the HVAC and sprinkler system.

We should try to accommodate the requested changes to the post office. They are our most important tenant.

We should consider whether some of the proposed changes could be done later in phases as we have the money. A overall plan would be required however to prepare for the proper positioning of the HVAC and sprinkler systems

Post Office Roof

I have seen no evidence that the Post Office roof is not as good as it ever was. If it is structurally sound and is not leaking it seems that the only deficiency may be insufficient insulation. Could we consult with an insulation contractor to see if we could add blown in or foam insulation at a cost that would be paid for with savings in energy in a reasonable number of years. I see no need now to reconstruct the roof to prepare for future solar panels.

Sight Work

Changes to the exterior property outside the building have been proposed for \$1,162,413. I understand that about half of that is for changes required by FEMA, and the rest is to improve access to the library and to improve the appearance of the parking lot. We should take a close look at the FEMA requirements. Do they make sense if they were not required. Why are they required now but not in the past. I do not see a need for the other changes at this time. I understand that some of the library related changes might be funded through a grant to the library. Some additional lighting in the parking lot would be helpful.

New Lighting

It is proposed that all interior lights be replaced with LED lights to save energy. Any new lights should be LED. Replacement of other lights may be warranted if the energy savings are large enough.

Other Costs

In the current proposal of \$9,841,603, only \$5,967,840 is projected for the cost of the actual changes to the building and grounds. The other \$3,873,763 is for fixed costs, contingencies, and inflation. We should look at these estimates as well to see if they are reasonable.

The current proposal is based on a preliminary design with sufficient detail to produce a cost estimate. Where is the cost covered for producing the detail design documentation needed for the construction?