

LUNENBURG MUNICIPAL BUILDING DESIGN COMMITTEE



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Meeting Minutes

October 16, 2023 6:30pm

Members Present: Kristina Masaitis, Michael-Ray Jeffreys, Greg Roy, Tom Gray, David Blatt, Matthew Allison

Members absent: Brian Lehtinen

Town Employees: Town Manager Heather Lemieux

Community Guests: School Committee Chair Carol Archambault, School Committee members Laura Brzozoski, Peter Beardmore, APDC representative Anthony Sculimbrene

Meeting called to order at 6:31pm.

The School Committee met with the Lunenburg Municipal Building Design Committee to talk about the plan for municipal building design. The current thought process is for phase one to be the renovation of Ritter building that would become the new permanent home for the school offices.

Town Hall will be renovated into a meeting space in phase two. School administration will leave the TC Passios building, and Town Hall will be consolidated into the Ritter Town Hall complex.

The current plan is to turn TC Passios into a community center.

Long-term disposition of TC Passios would be food pantry, community kitchen area, storage for the town, PACC studio, and some remaining offices. After school, before school, programs would need to come back into the schools, and there would not be expansion potential for the Boys and Girls Club.

We haven't shored up phase three, but Turkey Hill is a much more attractive building for many reasons, including the ability to accommodate the Boys and Girls Club expansion, the before school after school program, and the community kitchen. The school committee will discuss future needs for Turkey Hill School. Limitations of that building include the furnace. As far as keeping this building up, there are some things that can be done before the ADA stuff gets triggered, but the reimbursement from the state can only happen if the building remains a school for 10 years.

The School Committee hasn't gone into major discussion about a new school yet, because they want to see what this committee comes up with. If a major system goes down at Turkey Hill and we can't run the building, which would be a bigger problem than any other problem that any other board in Lunenburg has tried to solve in the last year.

The school committee has been working on a plan to maintain Turkey Hill as a school for the next 10 to 15 years. This plan involves spending \$14 million inside the next several years to cover everything from

roof to windows to HVAC to electric to plumbing to ADA. If you are going to spend half of what you would spend on the replacement value of the building, it should live past its 15-year time horizon. Laura asked if there is plan to abandoning TC Passios down the line. The plan is investing at Turkey Hill and keeping TC Passios largely the same, so they could make it 10 more years to get where they needed to be. If we can rehabilitate Turkey Hill and make it a future community center, we can reduce the cost of TC Passios and in 10 years we will be able to step into Turkey Hill as this community center and use TC Passios land for something else. If we embark on this phased plan and it takes five, six, or seven years to get to phase three, we can still adapt it to fit our needs. If we are in the four to five year window with phases one and two, and we will finish phase one before we do go on to the next phase so we can stagger the cost implications to the town. By the time we get around to phase three, we're talking about something in the four to five year time frame. This could be optimistic. The school committee hasn't made a decision yet, but most people feel that we need a new building. The current building was made to be a middle school, and it's not a vibrant place for young learners, but the school committee understands that we need to work with the town. We did the asbest mitigation without needing to close the school, and we built an elevator without needing to close the school. It's harder to do when you're doing a full scale change to the HVAC distribution system. The school committee isn't sure if a renovation to Turkey Hill will make it a school conducive for the purpose of the age group it's intended for.

Mr. Gray: It seems pretty clear that the school committee does not see Turkey Hill as a long-term viable school. I think the money is better spent building a new school rather than putting the money into Turkey Hill.

After phase two, the town needs to figure out what happens to Turkey Hill. The school committee is here to help, but the town doesn't have the money to turn Turkey Hill into a community center.

The biggest buildings in town are the school buildings, which drive the major portions of what we borrow in this town. We need to think critically about how we move forward and get together as a town to figure out how we are going to get these projects done.

We need to start thinking about phasing as a town and put together a financial road map and a plan that gets us there. The town will look different in 2038 if we renovate Town Hall, build a new Town Hall, and build a Turkey Hill. We will also have some form of a community center. When we left the primary school it needed a new roof, new electrical work, new plumbing work, and it needed all those things when the new school got built. So we needed to spend a lot of money to turn those buildings into something else. If Turkey Hill is turned over to the town, the building needs to be in a better position to be converted to a future use. The town is considering spending \$15 million on renovations.

If we get 30-40 years out of that building currently with it sitting with the schools, we can get a certain percentage of that reimbursed or paid for once it leaves school hands. In 10 years, we will no longer need to resolve any more building issues and we can tear down TC Passios, take over Turkey Hill and build a new school, and we fully resolve. And when we take over Turkey Hill, it won't need immediate renovation.

The prioritization process that was done a year ago included replacing Turkey Hill Elementary School, as well as managing longstanding issues around town offices and municipal use, as well as dealing with a school department issue around Municipal Administrative Office Space. The school committee has committed themselves to working with the town and with this committee and that they are doing what they can to shore up the building so that we don't have another Primary School on our hands.

David Blatt mentioned the green committee and nobody shows up to our meetings since John Londa left. There is free money available for everything you talked about, you just need to use it.

The school committee has its own budget, but the maintenance costs for the buildings get turned over to the town, so they switch from being on the school budget to being on the town budget.

Carol said she had never been contacted by Green Communities, and Peter said he would go to Green Communities. The schools have a new facilities manager. Matthew Allison said a long time ago that if we had a master plan, these discussions would be in that master plan. We haven't added the cost of bringing a building to future use into the cost model when we built new schools, which is why we have a municipal building design committee. Replacing any one of these major systems is very likely going to trip an ADA requirement. We don't actually know what the ADA implications are, and they may require some substantial work. Turkey Hill needs to be considered in the financial equation, and a reserve should be set up in case of a critical failure. But I'm not sure that keeping Turkey Hill going is as feasible as you may have conveyed. Turkey Hill may be a higher priority than finding a place for the town manager and Ritter, but temporary boiler facilities is a possibility. Turkey Hill was not included in the Tappe study, and the current use of the building is not in accordance with the requirements of Zoning for building use. The building is still a 55 acre school campus, and that's important to people. When we look at working conditions in the Town of Lunenburg, we are down, including the finance director, the assistant Finance director, the principal assessor, the land use director, and the conservation agent. These are critical roles that the town needs to perform its basic functions. When we talk to all of our staff, we find out that the TC Passios has 40 holes in the roof and 40 active leaks. If we want to provide an attractive work environment for people to work in, we have to look at our buildings.

The current approach is to do phase one and phase two, and then phase three is tied into both phase one and phase two. The plan is to take over Turkey Hill and provide a home for the boys and girls club. Anna Lockwood said that she appreciated everyone's points and where everyone stood, but that the committee needed to get going and get an idea of how much Turkey Hill would cost.

Nathan served on the building committee for the new high school, and he and Mr. Roy were the first ones to talk about upgrading Turkey Hill. The school committee needs to make it a priority to get a good handle on Turkey Hill's needs.

Phase one and phase two make sense, but we need to get the ball rolling on Turkey Hill so that we can make a decision sooner rather than later. A capital request for engineering studies should be done to have the data we need to decide what to do with Turkey Hill.

The school committee is generally in agreement with the current kind of outline that we have, and they would like to proceed with advancing phase one and phase two, and then phase three be involved with how Turkey Hill falls in with the phase three of this plan.

We have \$225,000 set up for architectural engineering costs. We need to get Turkey Hill numbers nailed down for renovation. We need to think about other buildings that might need to be renovated in the next 10 or 15 years.

Mr. Allison thinks phase one and two would complete the charter of the committee, and that phase three should be looked at by a different group. He also thinks that phase one and two might take a little bit longer than four or five years.

I would be surprised if phase one and phase two got completed within six years, but we can look forward to having our voices heard and having our input added to the master plan.

The next meeting is on November 6th.

Tom Gray, made a motion to adjourn, seconded by David Blatt at 8:38pm. Roll call vote: Tom Gray, aye, Greg Roy, aye, David Blatt, aye, Matthew Allison aye, Kristina Masaitis aye, Michael-Ray Jeffreys, aye.