

LUNENBURG MUNICIPAL BUILDING DESIGN COMMITTEE



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Meeting Minutes February 2, 2026 5:30pm

Members Present: Brian Lehtinen, Tom Gray, David Blatt, Anthony Sculumbrine, Matthew Brenner, Laura Brzozoski

Members absent: Kristina Masaitis, Greg Roy

Town Employees: NA

Community Guests: NA

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by David Blatt.

Minutes from November 17, 2025, were reviewed.

Motion to Approve: Anthony Sculumbrine. Seconded by: Matthew Brenner. Unanimously approved.

Public Comments: None

Key Topics Discussed

1. Spreadsheet / Space-allocation spreadsheet review
 - Chris Ruth, Facilities Director, created the original spreadsheet listing current staff counts and departmental space.
 - Tony Sculumbrine presented a revised allocation using an industry standard of 165 square feet per person to generate required departmental square footage (this includes circulation/public access allowance, restrooms, etc.).
 - Tony color-coded spreadsheet: green = public-facing spaces; non-green = private/non-public staff spaces (e.g., payroll, benefits). Town Manager's office moved to private/non-public category (not public-facing), contrary to prior assumption.
2. Square-footage totals and rationale
 - Tony's totals: public-facing spaces $\approx$ 2,915 sq ft; non-public/private spaces $\approx$ 1,685 sq ft (total $\approx$ 4,600 sq ft before adjustments).
 - Tony argued his allocations are "mean and lean" compared to the Taylor & Burns design (which had much larger gross-square-foot allocations and many separate conference/waiting rooms).

- Tony noted the 165 sq ft/person figure typically includes support spaces (hallways, restrooms); he advocates using that as baseline to avoid “bloat.”
3. Ritter building vs. 1963 ('63) addition footprint discussion
 - Greg Roy's drawing / discussion: the 1963 addition's footprint $\approx$ 1,625 sq ft.
 - Doubling that footprint (by adding a second level, increasing footprint, or adding a basement) would yield $\approx$ 3,250 sq ft — enough to accommodate public functions based on Tony's 2,915 sq ft public total.
 - Original/old Ritter building footprint $\approx$ 1,400 sq ft per level ($\approx$ 2,800 sq ft total). Tony suggested placing non-public/private functions ($\approx$ 1,685 sq ft needed) in original Ritter, leaving public functions in the modified addition.
 - Tony proposed possibly filling in a dashed corridor on the plan to create a full rectangular addition; that would add approx. 210 sq ft per level and cost roughly \$150,000 per level ($\approx$ \$300,000 total for both levels).
 4. Cost estimates
 - New addition size modeled: $\approx$ 3,200–3,250 sq ft.
 - Unit cost assumption: \$650 per sq ft (Taylor & Burns estimate referenced).
 - New-construction cost estimate for 3,200 sq ft at \$650/sq ft: $\approx$ \$2.2 million.
 - Specialized demolition (to avoid damaging original Ritter): \$1,000,000 for “brick-by-brick” careful demolition of the 1963 addition.
 - Rehab of remaining Ritter building assumed at \$450 per sq ft (Tony Sculumbrine noted this may be higher than Taylor & Burns used).
 - Combined rough project total (special demolition + new construction + rehab): $\approx$ \$4.5 million.
 - Tony Sculumbrine emphasized this is a back-of-the-napkin estimate and not a retained/official document.
 5. Comparison to Taylor & Burns program
 - Taylor & Burns had much larger “usable” square footage for many departments, including numerous conference rooms, waiting areas, and record storage allocations.
 - Examples noted:
 - Taylor & Burns: Treasurer & Tax Collector proposed 974 sq ft; Tony Sculumbrine's allocation $\sim$ 830 sq ft ($\approx$ 150 sq ft difference).
 - Town Clerk (with vault/registry of voters/records): Taylor & Burns $\sim$ 1,000 sq ft; Tony Sculumbrine estimated $\sim$ 495 sq ft for staff plus $\sim$ 110–144 sq ft for vault — overall much smaller than Taylor & Burns.
 - Building Department: Taylor & Burns included waiting room and storage, more than Tony Sculumbrine's proposed $\sim$ 330 sq ft.
 - Committee observed Taylor & Burns numbers appear to be for “usable” departmental space and may not include (or may separately treat) hallways/restrooms; Tony Sculumbrine's numbers explicitly include circulation/restrooms in the per-person allocation. Committee noted apples-to-oranges comparisons and discussed whether to trim Taylor & Burns allocations or to adopt Tony's leaner approach.
 6. Programmatic decisions and design philosophy
 - Tony and others advocated for a “mean and lean” allocation (smaller, efficient departmental areas, centralized/shared conference/meeting spaces rather than dedicated rooms for each department).
 - Discussion of future-proofing: Matthew Brenner urged consideration of future town growth (e.g., planning for administrative needs of a town of 20,000 vs.

current ~12,000). He recommended using a prioritized requirements approach (MoSCoW: Must have / Should have / Could have / Won't have) when engaging staff.

- Several committee members agreed to gather employee input (must/should/could/won't) rather than presenting a rigid pre-determined plan.
- Committee concern that building reuse should not be shoehorned; some members voiced strong reservations that Ritter is the proper building to retrofit described as "square peg in a round hole." Other members countered that Ritter and Town Hall are historically and sentimentally important and the charter of the committee is to find uses for existing buildings rather than build a new facility.

7. Accessibility and meeting spaces

- Relocating selectboard/public meetings to Town Hall first floor (improves accessibility vs. current meeting location in Ritter which requires using a chairlift for handicapped access). The suggestion: PAC (Public Access Channel) remains on second floor of town hall; selectboard and other public meetings on first floor to improve accessibility.
- Discussion of keeping meeting spaces centralized and accessible to seniors and people with mobility challenges.

8. Storage concerns

- Committee members expressed concern about reducing departmental storage (records, registry of voters, archive space). Several departments historically required significant storage; others noted move toward digital storage could reduce physical footprint needs, but employee feedback required.

9. Site and geotechnical constraints / addition location

- Question raised whether the addition must be built on the 1963 annex side of Ritter or could be on the opposite (School Street) side; issues include subsurface conditions and ledge on the non-annex side, complicating excavation. Using the existing 1963 side has known subsurface conditions and may be less risky/costly.
- Committee discussed the option to salvage portions of the 1963 edition and build up (two-story addition) rather than full demolition; potential to save costs.

10. Fiscal/contextual constraints and town appetite for debt-excluded projects

- Based on master-plan steering-committee work, the town will do at most three debt-excluded capital projects over the next 10–15 years (e.g., Marshall Park, Turkey Hill, administrative facilities). A very large \$22M+ town-admin building project likely would not pass.
- A combined solution for Ritter + Town Hall that comes in "around eight figures" (i.e., roughly mid- to high single-digit millions), not \$20M+. A ~\$4–8M project has higher chance of town approval.
- Importance of a fiscally responsible plan that addresses uses for existing historic buildings while improving employee work environments.

Decisions / Actions / Next Steps

- Committee consensus: proceed to engage town employees for input (clarify whether to present a pre-set allocation number or start blank).
 - Committee agreed employees should be consulted.
 - Subcommittee (staff-engagement) to form and meet to prepare questions: members Laura, Matt, and Dave (Greg Roy as alternate/technical advisor).
- Subcommittee meeting scheduled:

- Date/time: Tuesday the 10th at 1:00 PM
- Purpose: prepare questions for staff and gather must/should/could/won't requirements.
- Note: Greg will be an alternate to avoid quorum posting issues; the three primary members are Laura, Matt, Dave.
- Full committee next meeting: March 2 (committee to meet again).
- Committee agreed to avoid presenting a \$20M+ option to the public and to aim for a more modest cost solution.

Public Comments: None.

Motion to Adjourn: Anthony Sculumbrine. Seconded by: Tom Gray. Unanimously approved.

Adjourned: 6:39 PM