

Ad Hoc Stone Building Feasibility/Reuse Committee  
February 4, 2021 8:00 AM  
Town of Lexington, MA

Meeting held via webinar

<https://zoom.us/j/93442691749?pwd=VVRWTFNlcUU1QVBzZVNwZ1podUdRZz09>

Phone: +1 929 436 2866 Meeting ID: 934 4269 1749 Passcode: 678282

## AGENDA

The meeting began at 8:06 am, with a reading of statements on use of virtual meetings for fulfilling the Open Meeting requirement.

A roll call confirmed:

**Attending:** Jill Hai (Select Board Liaison), Cristina Burwell (Vice-Chair/Clerk), Devan Marks, Anne Grady, Melinda Nasardinov, Mark Manasas, Paul Smyke, Carolyn Goldstein, Jeff Howry (Chair), Meg Muckenhoupt (Appropriations Committee Liaison),

**Absent:** Lester Savage, Claire Feingold Thoryn (Cary Library Trustees Liaison)

Recording Secretary: Cristina Burwell

Community Observers: none

**Minutes** from the last meeting had a motion to approve by Mark, seconded by Melinda. Unanimous approval by roll call.

## OPEN ISSUES

### Topics and Titles for public engagement forums

Jeff introduced the topic of the three public forums and how to proceed. Cristina asked if we might back up to identify what our timeline is, and what tasks would be involved and if we might establish benchmarks. It was noted that the committee's charter is to be completed by September, but given what we learn and move forward with, the committee can come back to the Select Board to ask for extension.

Carolyn suggested that this committee look at the big picture and brainstorm ourselves before we got into logistics of timing b/c we haven't had that conversation yet.

She recommended that our committee has conversations about possibilities before we frame out a public meeting, and we aren't there yet.

Paul - understands that this committee's meetings solicit ideas, present some research on those ideas, propose final possible uses, and thinks it is not too early to solicit

meetings (stand alone meetings to this comm to d/w comm input). That seems reasonable to do March/April if 3 - but agree that we need a moment for this group to share visions and uses because that is what we are excited to do. We want to allow this group to coalesce to make sure we are on the same page and to share vision of where this might go; have preliminary conversations first.

Mark - If we have September as a target with 3 public forum events, that is roughly 45 days for each.

Jill - all committee members could individually be soliciting input from groups who we are connected to and use these committee meetings to share that input. Another option is to plan for two meetings toward the end - to test our final market theory. There is no rule on this. The Select Board hope is that this committee will be as broad and inclusive as possible in concepts and then get feedback so as to get buy-in viability from the general community. The committee's final report should have no final expenditures. Funds needed to implement will go through Town Meeting not through the committee.

Melinda - suggested that we have meetings AFTER soliciting input, and that we have two distinct stages to get through

Cristina - offered to put together social media to help gather public input, and to merge that with a list of local organizations.

Mark - We should try to get to a vision of what a well operating stone building looks like - business, porch w coffee, historical education?

Cristina - At the core it should serve the community first.

Carolyn - We should start as a think tank based on our connection to the community; our brainstorming isn't mutually exclusive , as Mark put ideas out. First would we like to see this as a community space, a business space, a hybrid?

Mark - We also have knowledge the community doesn't have. We should start by packaging what we know for the community before asking.

Jeff - Looked at the Macros database for Lyceum - 6 exist in the Commonwealth, but the Stone Building wasn't even listed. It appeared that very few were restored to original configurations. The key thing should be that people come to the building with a sense of time and space (read: no open floor plan, but how it originally was).

Anne - The Stone Building is the only lyceum in the Commonwealth that was not altered and adapted for reuse.

Paul - Imagining 3 years from now has to be where we collectively look for input. The purpose of renovation or modification is not germane at this moment.

Mark - Form follows function but exterior is sacrosanct. We need to look at function.

Devan - We should strive to create a sustainable model and imagine the second floor is sacred space - restore the upper floor lyceum experience and downstairs makes the place sustainable. The public's relationship with that space when they enter is important. This is a national structure not just a local concern.

We also need to be welcoming to wheelchair users, and we need to think about how we get people into the building, and get the building up to code.

Melinda - the report recommended the ell that was once at the rear of the building be used for access. Originally the main staircase went straight up before the building was used as the East Lexington branch of the library

Cristina - Anne's article spoke of the "progressive spirit" of the building and its usage, and I can see this as a place supporting social justice.

Jill - This group needs to wrap their heads around if this is to be a shrine or active space

Carolyn - As a response to Jill's question, form follows function. The building connects past and present. It can teach about lyceums and associated original discussions, but it also carries that spirit into today to be actively renewed. There is a strong presence to keep lyceum gathering space.

Anne - vision is that the space might become a museum or discuss slavery in Lexington (110 slaves in town in 18th century).

Paul - This is an alive space - perhaps school kids visiting or something else. We should be thinking about what is happening right now and 5 years if it is purely analog - you have to set foot in it to appreciate it. That implies things like - fire code for the maximum occupancy, but if we think digitally, the conversation expands to what building could host. It could have a much larger impact and we could amplify its message. Building bridges right now costs money, but pie in the sky vision should include debate and dialogue about making connections.

Mark - There seem to be 3 themes that stand out in the building's history slavery/abolition, strong women, and a lyceum.

Devin - Perhaps it is useful having someone on this committee involved in the TED talk movement (Devin) and international speaking cum World Economic Forum (Paul). There are intellectual and digital draws - the heritage and potency of surviving lyceum, the passions of this moment. What more this building could be than dry historical stop for out of towners, but an intellectual heartbeat of community and nation.

Jeff - This hosts 50 people but reach might be millions to share ideas that we want to share with the world.

Meg - Lets not dismiss meeting local needs and balance unmet needs such as the limited spaces for community meetings and intercultural groups in the community.

Cristina - To Marks' point about groups and themes, Follen talked about "oppressed" groups including "blacks, native americans, and women"

Mark - Noted the assembly of faces in this committee as all white, and the need to reach out to other in the community. Jill noted that there was an active attempt to bring in more diverse voices to apply to this committee.

Meg - LHS has a majority of non-white students now.

Jill - Suggested getting someone from the Association of Black Citizens of Lexington on a future agenda, as well as someone from LexSeeHer (working on a statue of a Lexington woman) to talk about the history of the building, and ask for input in its reuse. Second to that is assigning a committee member, or sending out a note asking thoughts and suggestions.

Jeff - Recommended pushing that out to a Google doc, which Mark will send.

Melinda - There is some concern with representation on committee and avenues to reach out to the community. It is right and appropriate to carry on with ideals surrounded by the lyceum, but we shouldn't cherry pick from history what we like/don't like. We should see history for what it is and be curious about it. That is our responsibility - we have a lot to be famous for but want to see balance from a historian's vision.

Carolyn - Appreciates raising representation of community residents, and asked if this committee can build a more representative group? Jill noted that the committee can request to amend its charge as appropriate.

The lyceum was a place for exchange of ideas and a place to bring people together. Its history contains so much, all current issues and perspectives on those issues.

Devin - suggested a video introduction for public outreach. He offered to do an overview and asked committee members to reach out with ideas in shaping that.

Devin asked if we can streamline the beginnings of our meetings to get down to 5 minutes. Jill - observed that it is possible to quickly read through the required introduction, which can speed things up.

Cristina - At some future date would like to understand the Town's intended relationship to the building. Specifically, who locks the building each day; who provides custodial?

In response to Mark's list of local organizations for outreach, can committee members-associate our names with what groups we are connected with so that we can divide the workload of outreach to different groups? Jill noted that Google docs are a violation of Open Meeting Law. Mark will send the document individually to committee members.

It was discussed to get a video and write up so that we have an introduction to local organizations.

Carolyn & Cristina will draft something for the committee's next meeting for our message and ask to send to groups.

It was decided that this committee will meet on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month, at 8am. No one voiced a problem with the next meeting happening during school vacation week.

Jeff - We need hard information about our ideas, which will need hard numbers. He would like a letter of interest to be generated for a grant to the Community Endowment of Lexington for funds to contribute to that. He can see someone specialized in rehab and restoration. Jill advised that this committee does not have authority to do that and that it is outside what we are allowed to do. Our job is an advisory recommendation, with the next step for a Facilities budget or Town Meeting expenditure, as needed.

Jeff noted that this would add a year to the charge, with Jill noting that this committee's charge is just a recommendation, not doing physical facilities work.

Anne - Suggested bringing in Lynne Spenser who led the 2009 report. She runs a firm that does historic preservation - has done work for Buckman Tavern, etc.

Mark - We haven't talked about how the building would pay for itself

Anne - Noted that she has seen six examples of public private collaboration in a preservation listserv, and would bring that forward for the group at a future meeting.

Carolyn - asked if sustainability might be on the agenda next time, including existing models for how other town properties are managed.

Jill - recommended talking with Mike Cronin (Facilities), as well as Sandya and Casey in Economic Development Office to see what are they seeing and hearing

Paul had to leave at 9:15

Motion to Adjourn motioned by Mark, seconded by Anne. Roll call for unanimous approval.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 am