

Beaux Arts Village Hall Committee
Report to Town Council
February 14, 2017

COMMITTEE:

Cynthia Hudson (Town Council), Tom Stowe (Town Council), Susan Bogert (WABA), Paula Dix (Planning Commission) and Melissa Fulton (citizens).

GOAL:

To assess the need and support for a community building and recommend to Council whether and how to proceed.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Determine the need and uses for a community center building (“Village Hall”)
2. Assess the level of community support for a community building
3. Consider options for a community building and its alternatives
4. Recommend next steps, including whether to proceed further and which options and/or alternatives to evaluate

METHODOLOGY:

1. Researched past “Town Hall” proposals and outcomes
2. Reviewed size/configuration options and possible locations
3. Conducted 3 small group community meetings with 42 people over 4 months – brainstorming & input gathering rather than presenting proposals
4. Solicited feedback and ideas via phone, email and flyers from those who could not attend
5. Assessed options and locations against need and support identified from community

FINDINGS:

1. Past Proposals

In 1981-2, 50+ residents proposed that a Town Hall be built on Water Tower lot. Contributions were pledged, sketch prepared. Proposal tabled due to lot ownership issues and pressure from smaller dissenting group. Council voted ‘no.’ Needs, concerns and alternatives were very similar to findings of this committee. *(see Appendices)*

2. Needs/Uses

Town and public meetings are the primary driver for considering a community building. Others may use, if it is built. Residents see possibilities, but are not yet convinced of the need and want to see more definition on uses and design before supporting. *(see Chart)*

Town Meetings

- Town Council meetings – 11/year, 10-12 people average
- Planning Commission meetings – 11/year, 6-10 people average
- Hearings & other public meetings – 1-2/year, 20-50, cost/benefit questionable
- Town staff meetings – 15-20/year, 2-4 people (eg planner, engineer, etc)
- Building Dept permits – 20-30/year, 2-4 people (clerk prefers to meet at home)

WABA Meetings

- WABA Board meetings – 11/year, 7-10 people; may use building, but meeting in homes or at beach working fine
- Winter Dinner – 80+ people (possibly building too small)
- Arts & Craft Festival?

Village Records Storage

- Town records – currently store at water tower
- WABA records – currently stored at paid storage, would use to save rental costs and increase access/usability, if secure/safe
- Records together and with place to use them
- Note: clerks still prefer to keep records they use regularly at home

Private Meetings

- Boy Scouts? Book clubs?
- Will need to set rules and fees for access, use and reserving

Activities & Classes

- Yoga
- Kid friendly
- Arts activities

Other Ideas

- Gathering place
- Attractive central point for Town
- Rental income source
- Picnic/beach covered shelter

3. Constraints

Two important constraints emerged in committee’s research:

State Law

- Town Council cannot take action at meetings held outside BAV.

WABA

- WABA By Laws requires 2/3 vote of members to sell/lease WABA property.
- WABA Beach is designated as “Open Space.”

4. Concerns

Cost

Cost was a primary concern in all group and individual discussions.

- Initial capital expense & cost of financing/debt risk
- Operating expenses (insurance, utilities, etc.)
- Maintenance expenses
- Cost will drain funding needed elsewhere in Town/Village

Location

Strong concerns expressed about locations, very controversial.

- Trees – preference to not cut down trees
- Green/open space – concern over loss of green space to a building
- WABA property – concerns with public using private property, parking for members, non-villagers discovering beach
- Nuisance/Noise– not want building or meetings next door
- Parking – where will users park and how impacts neighbors

Other Concerns

- Overutilization
- Underutilization
- Complexity grows with scale
- ‘Basic’ = no character or ambiance
- Residents want uses defined/listed
- Loss of community – spirit of BAV community is meeting in/sharing our homes
- ADA compliance
- Theft and security
- Who maintains and cleans?

5. Options & Locations

Committee identified several options and locations:

Options

New building options:

- Storage only
- Office (for 1-4) with storage and 1 restroom
- Conference room (for 8-12) with storage, 1 restroom, and kitchenette
- Small meeting hall (for up to 20-25) with storage, 1-2 restrooms, kitchenette
- Large meeting/hearings space (up to 50)
- Covered picnic building with 2 restrooms, fireplace/grill and roll up sides
- Boat house/dock house

Existing building options:

- Historic house – purchased (or donated)
- House – to purchase and renovate
- Rent in BAV – a home or space in a home
- Pre-fabricated building/school module
- Move a historic ‘cottage’ from elsewhere

Alternatives:

- Rental space outside village – church, school, library (not option for Town vote)
- Homes of non-Council residents – several families with large homes volunteered to host meetings, or require all residents to host a meeting (rotating schedule)

- Temporary space – tent, trailer, RV, houseboat
- Test need – rent space in Village home, before decide to build new
- Electronic records – less storage, access via cloud
- Online meetings – reduce size of physical presence needed

Locations

- Water Tower lot
- WABA property at beach
- WABA Lot 1 (ie easement site for future well)
- House in Village – for sale or rent
- Vacant lot – to build or bring in building

CONCLUSIONS:

1. Residents do not see a NEED, but they see POSSIBILITIES.

- Many people would not be opposed, many would support (if they liked proposal), but few would drive it.
- “Nice to have, but not a must have.”
- Temperature is ‘tepid’ – not strong support to do anything, no appearance of strong opposition, but no active support.
- Overall sentiment now – if do, then something basic or something awesome.

2. Most people want to see a proposal for specific size & location before deciding whether to support.

- Most are polarized against certain options & have strong sentiments about locations (especially, not close to their house).

3. Town Council will have to drive this.

- This won’t happen unless Council wants this and drives it.
- Council has to decide if they want this, and then put forward a proposal for residents to discuss/review.
- Council needs to convince residents of the need.
- Village has to see need and agree with proposal before vote will succeed.
- Does the Town Council feel a strong enough NEED to drive this?
- Does Council want to put the energy into making this happen?

RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS:

1. Change name to “Village Hall.”

- ‘Town Hall’ carries statutory requirements (eg must be staffed)
- ‘Community Center’ conveys too grand vision (eg athletics, multiple rooms)

2. Town Council should find a 'Meeting Location Facilitator' and test the idea of volunteer hosts, to see if it is viable.
3. Council has to decide if they want to pursue a 'Village Hall' (ie community building).
4. If so, develop and fund a budget for a 'concept design.'
5. If Council wants to proceed, then 'concept design' proposed should be for a 'right-sized' building to test with residents.
 - Define specifications building would need to address (eg would it have space for up to ## people to meet, restroom(s), kitchen, storage for all records/historical information in one place, what else?)
 - Develop concept based on specifications/needs to address
 - Research costs of that 'right-size' building
 - Put together concept proposal to test waters with residents on cost, design, use, public support, etc – people want something to react to!
6. Gather public feedback on the 'concept design' proposal and revise.
7. Depending on the outcome of #6, determine location.
8. If proposal has sufficient public support, develop more detailed plan and then, put on ballot.
9. Be alert to opportunities that may arise for other options.
 - eg 'benevolent billionaire', historic house for sale, donated house, etc