

Special Public meeting
Brookline Building Use Workgroup
August 18 2026 5:00pm

Location: Former Brookline School Building 624 Grassy Brook Rd, Brookline VT

Present in person

Stan Noga
Andrea Seaton
Fred Strasser
Emily Beer
Mike Desocio
Mary Hickey
Lyle Brooks
Jessica Guerrero

Members of the public present in person

Julie Roach
David Roach
Alyssa Schmitt
Barb Bourne
Carey Bourne
Margaret Carusona
Mike Seaton
Johnny Swing
Marnie Nicholson
Mark Bills
David Parker
Carol Martin
LeeAnn Jillson
Pat Noga
LeeAnn Parker
Danny Lazzarini
Dan Towler
Kerry Bourne
Leslie Zucker
Tim Carr
Fran Carr
Vanessa Ballou
Gary Lavorgna
Julie Lavorgna
Marjorie Ray
Laurie Nau-Martocci

1. Meeting started at 5:04 by Mary Hickey, chair

- a. The members of the BBUW were introduced to the public.
2. Approve minutes from last meeting: Andrea Seaton moves to approve, Lyle Brooks seconds. Stan Noga wants to amend line 6 of the minutes to reflect a more accurate account of his work, with those amendments the motion passes.
3. Motion was made to turn the meeting over to David Parker. Stan Noga makes the motion, Fred Strasser seconds the motion, the motion passes.
4. Presentation of work done by BBUW was done by Mary Hickey.
 - a. **Please see bottom of minutes for a copy of handout given to public*
5. Comments from the public:
 - a. Laurie Nau-Martocci asked about the easement attached to the town office and its specifics. Stan Noga explained that the easement functions to allow the Dole family to retain the right to access their 180 acres of mountain property which is behind the town office.
 - b. Alyssa Schmitt asked if we have a copy of the easement. Stan Noga offered to email her a copy and also stated where it can be found in the town office.
 - c. Mike Seaton asked what it costs to retain the school house without a tenant. Mike Desocio answered that we are currently figuring out those numbers and explained that diving too deep into those numbers may not benefit the meeting but that the estimate is around \$20,000 a year.
 - d. Margaret Carusona asked how many acres are attached to the school house. Stan Noga answered that it has 6.81 acres although he is diving into a discrepancy that he may have found involving easements and that it could end up being closer to 7.74 acres.
 - e. Barbera Bourne asked if that includes the ballfield. Stan answered that yes it does include the ballfield.
 - f. Gary Lavorgna states that he is confused regarding the easement attached to the school building. Stan Noga clarified that he should have said a lease, not easement, the lease which is originally from the church, expires in 2045, but now the town owns all of it so it can be dissolved.
 - g. Dan Towler states that the school shares a well with the meeting house and asked what sort of septic system the school building has. Stan Noga states that the septic was originally designed for 95 students, but with the addition of the kitchen in the building that number then dropped down to 55 students. Dan asked if the purpose of the school building changes then does that mean the septic needs would have to change. Stan answers that yes, if the school house is to have a different function then we will need to reapply to A&R to make sure it meets requirements. Stan gave examples of buildings in the area going through changes in use and what it meant for their septic systems.
 - h. Dan Towler asked if any of the school property is in the flood plain, Stan Noga answered that no it is not.
 - i. Alyssa Schmitt asked if the easement attached to the town office has ever been used. Stan Noga is not aware of it ever being used but that doesn't mean it hasn't been used.

- j. Marnie Nicholson asked if we have a septic system that is meant for 55 students does that mean we could potentially end up with 55 apartment units? Stan answered that determining what or who moves into the school house will be up to the town and the selectboard.
- k. Leslie asked what kind of restrictions could be put on the school building for its use and who makes those restrictions. Her other question is why are we thinking the town office is insufficient. Mike states that no one is saying that the town office is insufficient, but rather the town office is a more marketable building and it could be useful to have extra room for town office plus something else if the town office were to be moved to the school house, and to answer the first question, the seller puts restrictions on the building being sold.
- l. Johnny Swing states that the town office should be called the town office not the town hall or town building. Johnny also wanted to clarify if the current school house septic system is meant to handle just 55 students then it is negating the adults/teachers in the building. Stan Noga said that he should have used the word individuals, not students when addressing the septic system capacity.
- m. Marnie Nicholson asks what is physically possible for the septic system at the school house.
- n. Laurie Nau-Martocci asked about the meeting house and school sharing a well and if they can each get their own. Mike Desocio answers yes they can, it is just a matter of time and money.
- o. Timothy Carr told of a property in Pennsylvania where the township was held responsible for a property that failed to upkeep their septic system.
- p. Danny Lazzarini asked for clarification about putting stipulations on the buyer of the school house. Stan Noga understands that a seller can put covenants on a property, hiring an attorney to actually make sure of that could be wise. Emily Beer says that generally you can put a restrictive covenant on a deed but it may lead to lower sale price.
- q. Dan Tolwer asked about what options we have to decide what/who would occupy the school house next and how it would affect affiliated properties.
- r. Marjorie Ray asked if the older portion of the school house is registered as a historic building. Mary Hickey says the answer is no.
- s. Bruce Mello verified that the school house is not registered as historic. He also states that to his knowledge the easement at the town office has not not been used to his knowledge.
- t. Gary Lavorgna asked about the value of school according to realtors that the BBUW has spoken to. Andrea Seaton answered that according to Robert Doyle the school building is not very desirable because of a glut of local commercial properties. Stan Noga talked about meeting with Chris Lewis who came up with the number of \$200,000 for the town office if it was sold as a residence. Mary Hickey talked about the town-owned church in South Nefane that sold for an amount significantly under the asking price.
- u. Danny Lazzarini has a disagreement regarding the easements making the town office less desirable, they see it as not that that big of a negative impact.

- v. Bruce Mello asked if there were several realtors the BBUW were talking to and wants a report of their individual opinions. Andrea states Robert Doyle was the first, he saw the town office becoming a nice home, he thought it was very marketable, that a builder could buy it for \$100,000 build it out then sell it as a home for \$200,000, but the con of having the town office become a home is that parking for the round school would be gone. Robert Doyle's opinion is that the easement does negatively impact the salability of the town office. Stan Noga states that Chris Lewis would not give a value for the school house.
- w. Dan Towler wonders if talking to developers for their opinion could be warranted to see if we should renovate or demolish school house. Mary Hickey states we have been in contact with small developers as well as Vermont Office of Housing and Homes for All.
- x. Margret Carusona asks where we would meet if we end up getting rid of the school house. Mary Hickey says that the meeting house is a possibility as well as renting a space nearby. Margret would like to see the school house turned into affordable housing. She also thinks comparing our school house to the South Newfane church is moot because they are so different. Mary Hickey spoke about Rural Edge which has converted old school houses and churches into small rental units.
- y. Johnny Swing states that he sees "junky" houses selling for lots of money and thinks that the school house should have more value. He suggests going on the market with the property as is with stipulations. Mike Desocio states that Johnny may be right but that the committee is only reporting on what they have found. Mike says that with the numbers he's crunched so far, the most expensive thing to do with the school house, by a very large margin, is to do nothing, Mike's financial models cover the span of 10 years, he states that selling the school house is the cheapest option for the town.
- z. Gary Lavorgna asks if Sally Fagley has been talked to, Sally has offered to look at the market and make a report. He also states that housing seems to be the way to go and that we shouldn't bother with commercial use for the school building.
- aa. Pat Noga asked what assumptions are being made about property lines of the school building if it were to be sold would the sale include the playground and the soccer field. Stan Noga stated that it isn't that refined yet and that we would sell what we need to sell.
- bb. Barbera Bourne asked if we can advertise the school house as rental property to see if anyone wants it. Johnny Swing advocates for selling the school property. Johnny asked if the school building sells, does the money go into town coffers or does it get amortized over 10, 50, 100 years. Mike Desocio states that it would likely go to offset other expenses.
- cc. Julie Lavorgna thinks it would be a terrible waste of the school house to move town office into the school house.

- dd. Carey Bourne agrees with Julie Lavorgna but thinks it would be short sighted to sell any of our properties because projected values are only going up, renting the school house is preferable in his opinion.
- ee. Dan Towler feels that considering the size of the school building it could be used for multiple things at once, like if someone wanted to have it be several studios or workspaces, something like that. He says it would be helpful if the town somehow held on to the use of the downstairs of the school it would be greatly advantageous.
- ff. Dave Roach asks if the school house is going to be looked at as a rental, who is actually going to be talking with the potential renters or buyers of the school house? Mike states that is out of the scope of this committee, that it would be up to the select board, perhaps a sub-committee, if and when we decide that renting the building is what the town wants to do.
- gg. Marjorie Ray is glad to hear there has been interest in the school building.
- hh. Gary Lavorgna was offended when he heard that WWHT wouldn't work with us because we don't run on municipal services when we have the best road crew and a lot of stuff going on here that is good.
- ii. Barb Bourne told of a few folks who may have interest but nothing came of it. Grace Cottage is in her mind because they are looking for a place for a co-op daycare for hospital workers.
- jj. Stan Noga states that the numbers that they got from realtors do not reflect his personal idea of what the school is worth. In regard to easements, in his 26 years of experience as an appraiser the easement is going to very negatively affect the salability of town office.
- kk. Mary Hickey wants to hear what the folks want to be done with the school house:
 - i. Barb Bourne thinks it should be a daycare center.
 - ii. Johnny Swing asks about investigating the cost of turning the school house into rental units.
 - iii. Laurie Nau-Martocci is torn about what to do with school building, eldercare or day care sounds good, a space for community meeting, senior meals, a place to store the Brookline history artifacts all sound good. But at the same time we could use the revenue if sold or rented. The bottom line is numbers.
 - iv. Fran Carr is thinking along the lines of housing or apartments, she asks if the town wants to be a landlord. She asks if we could get funding from the state to help with finances. Mary Hickey states that the committee is looking into grants and that the grant process is long and tedious, it's not a quick fix, in addition, a lot of grants are just seed money.
 - v. Marnie Nicholson is wondering how as a citizen one can access who is being contacted and parties that display interest in building. Maybe there can be a specific website akin to wikipedia containing all of this information. Jess Guerrero states that most of this information is on the minutes of each meeting which are all available to the public.

- vi. Danny Lazzarini thanks the whole committee for the job they are doing. They think we are doing a great job of listening to the townsfolk and making good progress.
 - vii. Bruce Mello wants to see the process of the committee keep going. As for daycare, Kindle Farm was contacted but nothing came of it, Pumpkin Patch was contacted but nothing came of it, he sees daycare occupying the school house as not a viable option.
 - viii. Carey Bourne wants to point out that it isn't typical for a township to manage a housing rental property.
 - ix. Mark Bills says if we sell the school house and keep the meeting house, the meeting house would need improvements in it's septic system and would need a well dug in order to be usable. Whatever we do we shouldn't give it away, these buildings are great assets.
 - x. Dan Towler worries that there is a need for affordable housing but that what gets built is what will make them the most money for the developer, not necessarily what the town needs, if we sell it to a developer it may not end up being the kind of housing we as a community are hoping for.
 - xi. Bruce Mello agrees with Dan because we have no zoning in Brookline.
 - xii. Mike Desocio agrees with Bruce about there being no zoning and that a buyer of the school building could do whatever they want.
 - ll. Alyssa Schmitt says that the Newfane church is different from our school house because Newfane has more town-owned buildings and because our school has much more land and a larger property so it doesn't seem right to compare them.
 - mm. Pat Noga is worried that November 2 is too soon to make a vote, it lets the townsfolk think on what they want as well as gives more time for potential buyers to appear. She wants to move the vote to March simultaneous with the town meeting.
 - nn. LeeAnne Jillson wonders if someone from the BBUW committee has spoken with folks in Dummerston because they've got a new community center and it might be useful to speak with someone about the process.
 - oo. Bruce Mello wants to keep the September vote. He wants townsfolk to think not about what's best for them, but what is good for Brookline 100 years from now. David Parker tells the group that the Australian ballot voting may not be held in the same building as the town meeting, so the voting would need to be set up at the town office.
 - pp. Julie Roach doesn't have an opinion on what exactly should be done but wonders if we can have more parking at the meeting house if we are going to be using it more, is trying to figure out what to do for the future of the town and wishes more younger people would get involved.
 - qq. Mark Bills wonders if there is a way to come up with an average rental price for commercial use of the school building if we were to go that route. Stan Noga has done research on residential prices and it, Stan states that the average monthly rent for a one bedroom unit is \$1,000 to \$1,300.
- 6.Meeting adjourned at 7:00pm by David Parker

The Brookline Building Use Workgroup

Lyle Brooks	Stan Noga
Jessica Guerrero	Andrea Seaton
Mary Hickey	Fred Strasser
Emily Beer and Michael DeSoccio – Selectboard	

OUR MISSION

- Garner community input on the future use and funding of The School Building and The Town Office.
- Develop possible scenarios for use of The School Building and The Town Office, making note of the impact/implications on the Historic Meeting House and any other public building that may be available for the Town of Brookline's use.
- Provide financial impact models for each viable scenario developed.
- Host two townwide discussions on viable scenarios and financial impacts. Summarize community input.
- Report to the Selectboard on the results of its work, including analysis of potential scenarios for the management and use of the buildings.

The Selectboard will present the various options to Brookline residents for a vote.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Does the town need/want a larger Town Office facility?
- How easy/difficult will it be to sell/rent any town building?
- What are the costs and benefits (monetary, logistical) of retaining each/both building(s)?
- What would be gained/lost by selling either building?
- What alternative-use for either building is acceptable to residents?
- What alternative-use is practical/feasible?
- What are the costs (monetary/logistical) and financial impact on town?

OUR WORK SO FAR

- Pulled together all the basic data on town office and school building. (Size, building capacity, easements, property lines, infrastructure, etc.)
- Performed an analysis of town office space in other Vermont towns and concluded that the current town office is comparable to other towns of the size of Brookline and larger.
- Attended a meeting with representatives from Athens, Marlboro, Windham, Jamaica and other nearby towns who are dealing with similar situations with vacant buildings. None has arrived at a solution.
- Looked at how towns in other areas of the state have successfully dealt with similar building vacancies. Among the solutions were:

- A group of citizens in Wilmington formed a nonprofit to turn the former high school into a community center. Rochester did something similar, with the community center planning to offer an adult daycare center. Bridgewater and Belvedere also did this, offering childcare. None of these were done by the town, but rather by a nonprofit formed by citizens.
- Middlebury converted an old school into a mixed-use facility housing small businesses, local non-profits, and shared office spaces.
- Barre repurposed school buildings to serve as centers for local artisans, small enterprises, and non-profit groups.
- Several northern towns worked with Rural Edge, a nonprofit developer that converted old buildings into affordable housing.
- Connected with the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust (the southern Vermont counterpart to Rural Edge) to ask about their work: They focus on larger properties that have access to municipal services.
- Met with two realtors to assess if there is a market for either of building and to get a sense of possible sale price.
- Talked to Little Susie's operations manager to understand the challenges of operating daycare in a rural location like Brookline.
- Talked to builders, contractors to get a sense of costs of various options of such projects as moving the town vault, renovating the School Building to make it appropriate for town offices, and work necessary to put the Town Office on the market.
- Talked to family that owned building and learned that they are not willing to relinquish the easement.
- Explored various grant options that might be available.
- Talked to residents about their preferences, concerns.
- Began to develop financial models that will show the cost of the various options and impact on town revenue/taxes.

NOTE: We are still in the information-gathering phase of our work. We will issue a full report when our work is concluded.

THE OPTIONS WE ARE CONTINUING TO RESEARCH

We are examining the feasibility of each of these options and assessing the cost and impact on town taxes

- **Leave the status quo for now**
- **Move town office to school building and sell town office**
- **Seek a preferred tenant or tenants for school building and leave town office as is**
- **Sell school building to an acceptable buyer**