

## **Housatonic Improvement Committee Minutes of March 11 2021**

### **Members Present:**

**Dan Bailly  
Eric Gabrial  
Angela Lomanto  
Patrick Barrett  
Bev Nourse**

**I.Meeting called to order at 6:33 by motion from EG and 2nd by AL  
Vote: 5-0**

### **II.**

**DRAFT**

**Goals of Charette**

**Housatonic School Building**

1. Increase the number of design options for the building or determine it should be demolished.
2. Improve the Town's ability to promote choices for the building.
3. Encourage community engagement and "buy-in" around the proposed use or uses for the building or site.
4. Strengthen the HICs ability to promote choices for the building.

### **AL Reviewed Draft Goals**

**EG suggested it be clear that the Charrette could be used as a marketing tool. AL would amend #4 to reflect those thoughts**

**AL Discussed #3 at greater length**

**PB has spoken with Kerry Bartini. She suggested that the HIC do the legwork for the Charette and Facilitate the Charette**

**AL discussed and described Asset Mapping**

**PB will create a Project Brief and had put an information packet together for KB**

**PB discussed the AIA Continuing Ed. credits which would need a 6 week lead time to get in place before the Charette**

**The Charette will produce a deliverable Floor and Site Plan**

III. AL gave an update on the School roof. An engineer has not looked at it  
DB gave an update from the SB Meeting also discussing the School Roof with  
DPW Superintendent Sean Van Duesen

#### IV. Citizen Speak

Ellen Lahr (of Pine St. Housatonic) Encouraged an Alternative Evaluation of the  
Site in the School is Demolished

Sarah Blehrud (Director of Waldorf High School) mentioned that they may have a  
potential use for the School if they were able to purchase it

Suzie Fowle (Kirk St) Asked that the HIC Info be put on the Town website. She  
also advocated for the Demolition of the School for a Village Center

DB Read the Following email from Carol Baumann (Hart St) in to the minutes

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Date: March 11, 2021

To: Housatonic Village Improvement Committee

From: Carol Bosco Baumann

Dear Committee members,

Thank you for volunteering. For about 15 years, I led or participated in various civic and private village improvement efforts. There were several task forces that were convened to make recommendations on what to do with the former school. The land on which this building sits has always had a public purpose. It is situated between a park and a recreation/community center. I have always believed that the parcel should remain as accessible to as many people as possible, in perpetuity. *Replace the building with a pavilion and create one large public park that includes the park itself, the former school parcel, and the Housy Dome.*

There have been many great ideas, but the prospects for development of the building are limited or nil—we know this because the opportunity existed for YEARS and nothing viable materialized. The town has had YEARS to explore redevelopment of the school, but they have not found a solution. We have the looming possibility of dealing with our water supply. We need a new high school. I think we're still paying for our \$12M fire station. We've had a nice influx of tax revenue from the cannabis shops, but it's not enough and it won't last.

I believe that Great Barrington needs to diversify its tax revenue base so our ever-increasing real estate taxes do not continue to climb. We need businesses that will bring better-paying jobs to our region, with opportunities for growth, *so our young people have a reason to stay.* Good schools, green space, playgrounds, walkability... these are all elements of an attractive town and we have a good start. An attractive, safe village center, with plenty of greenspace for all ages to use, is a good start toward luring those startups.

When people used their feet to get around more than cars, a school building with almost NO parking served the community—now, there would not be adequate parking for a community center or businesses or anything else to occupy that building. Besides, the HousyDome could use more parking to make it safer on that busy corner.

The mills are a huge opportunity for development (and they have ample parking). There have been attempts to kickstart efforts around that, but nothing stuck. There is an artesian well under Cook's Mill that surely must be of some potential use. The town

should *finally* do whatever it can to explore options with the mill owners to redevelop them sustainably. Or at least help save them from further degradation and possibly further polluting the river.

It's time to stop spinning our wheels and take steps that will benefit future generations. To an entire generation of children now, that building is nothing more than an eyesore, and a danger. Take down the building, create a pavilion, make the park even better so people of all ages use it, and turn our attention to the bigger issues we face. Thank you for reading.

**Next meeting Set for April 1**

**V. Meeting Closed at 7:47 on a motion by EG 2nd by PB  
Vote 5-0**

End Of Minutes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dan Bailly