

**WHITE CLIFFS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES – February 5, 2020**

3:00 p.m. – Selectmen’s Meeting Room, 63 Main Street, Northborough, MA

MEMBERS PRESENT: Todd Helwig, Committee Chairman - CPC Representative
Norm Corbin, Committee Vice Chair - Historical District
Commission Liaison
Julianne Hirsh, Board of Selectmen Liaison
Diana Nicklaus, At-Large Member

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tom Reardon, At-Large Member

OTHERS PRESENT : John Coderre, Town Administrator
Kathy Joubert, Town Planner
Martha Werenfels, Principal, DVBW Architects
Nealia Morrison, Project Manager, DBVW Architects
Eric Busch, Real Estate Advisor

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 13, 2019 MEETING MINUTES

Ms. Hirsh moved to approve the meeting minutes of November 13, 2019 as presented;
Mr. Corbin seconded the motion; the vote was 4-0 in favor.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 8, 2020 MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Corbin moved to approve the meeting minutes of January 8, 2020 as presented; Ms.
Hirsh seconded the motion; the vote was 4-0 in favor.

**DBVW ARCHITECTS – DISCUSSION REGARDING MARKET ANALYSIS
DATA AND REUSE OPTIONS**

Martha Werenfels, Nealia Morrison and Eric Bush presented.

Ms. Werenfels began by saying that based on the discussion at the last meeting the team needed to expand on all uses for the facility and evaluate each one. She deferred to Ms. Morrison. Ms. Morrison reviewed the power point presentation and provided a handout, “White Cliffs Reuse Analysis” for Committee members and the audience.

Residential – Condominiums/Apartments/Affordable Housing/Senior Housing
Financing considerations: Potential for partial market financing/Large financial investment/Assumed need for density to make financially viable may require significant new construction on site
Pros: Capitalize on historic exterior/Compatible with residential neighborhood
Cons: Moderate to major architectural impact on interior/Limited site for development/House not available to public
Evaluation: Do not pursue (due to site constraints)

Cultural – House Museum/Arts Center

Financing considerations: Large financial investment/Potential for tax credits and grants/Reliance on donor support/Limited to no opportunity for market financing

Pros: Capitalize on historic exterior and interior/Minor impact on existing building/Community benefit/House becomes available to public

Cons: Contingent on owner/operator/organization that will drive the process; or clear operating/fundraising affiliation/Limited identified need in area/House museums within the region are challenged with economic sustainability

Evaluation: Do not pursue (due to owner/operator concerns)

Municipal – Town Hall/Community Center/Municipal Offices

Financing considerations: Significant financial investment/Limited market financing solution

Pros: Capitalize on historic exterior and interior/Community benefit/ House becomes available to public/Ample parking/Could combine with other uses (i.e. event)/Building already owned by Town

Cons: Modern impact on interior/Large addition required

Evaluation: Pursue (due to ownership by Town and need for improved administrative/municipal space)

Hospitality/Event Use – Restaurant/Hotel/Bed & Breakfast/Conference Center/Event

Financing consideration: Potential for partial market financing/Medium to large financial investment/Phased approach may help financial viability by deferring portion of capital raise until after demand is proven/established

Pros: Capitalize on historic exterior and interior/House becomes somewhat available to public/Ample parking/History of restaurant and event use/Variety of different size spaces already exist/Potential for phasing construction

Cons: Modern impact on interior/Addition likely to be required/Owner/Operator structure to be determined based on various models/Limited need in area/Commercial kitchen likely to be required/Use may impact surrounding residential use via noise, traffic in evenings/weekends

Evaluation: Pursue (due to history of similar use)

Educational/Institutional – Conference Center/Event/Classroom/Office

Financing consideration: Potential for partial market financing/Medium to large financial investment/Phased approach may help financial viability by deferring portion of capital raise until after demand is proven/established

Pros: Capitalize on historic exterior and interior/House becomes somewhat available to public/Ample parking/History of restaurant and event use/Variety of different size spaces already exist/Potential for phasing construction

Cons: Difficult to find owner, requires commitment by local institution

Evaluation: Pursue only in combination with another use

Commercial – Office/Medical/Retail/Funeral Home

Financing considerations: Potential for market financing/Large financial investment/Market financing may be largely dependent on identified/credit-worthy lease or identified user

Pros: Ample parking/Proximity to town center (under 1 mile)

Cons: Moderate to major impact on interior/Availability of lower cost commercial space in Northborough/No foot traffic/Potentially difficult to find owner
Evaluation: Do not pursue (due to lack of need in local market)

The Committee discussed the evaluations and made comments.

Ms. Nicklaus asked if we opted for municipal use, do we need to include an elevator with the addition? Ms. Werenfels replied that since there is limited space on the second floor, it would not be worth the cost to install.

Mr. Corbin felt that it was premature to eliminate the residential option. He noted that we could still have condos there without senior housing.

Mr. Busch and Ms. Werenfels stated that it might be worth exploring to demonstrate the pros and cons.

Ms. Joubert added that if the Town wanted to pursue construction of housing, the White Cliffs house itself does not have to be part of the development.

Mr. Busch responded that if there was the opportunity to build around the White Cliffs house, he would support it, if there were no constraints with the house used as public space.

Ms. Joubert asked if we were to go with the event space option, would they need the elevator? Ms. Werenfels replied only if the second floor was to be used.

Mr. Busch referred to the power point presentation where it listed key comparables for illustration. Many of the examples are town-owned and have maintained successful use of space.

Mr. Coderre stated that if we went with this option, we would have to hire a management company to program the space as the Town cannot directly oversee a business using a Town-issued liquor license.

Next Steps

After discussion, Ms. Werenfels and Mr. Busch reviewed the next steps:

- Put the residential option back on the table – figure out the number of units in the main house and in new construction
- Create conceptual economic models with budgets including construction plan and revenue/expense component
- Develop a critical path timeline
- Further refine the 3 remaining use options on the table: Municipal, Event and Condo/housing

The DBVW team will prepare this for the Committee's next meeting.

REVIEW OF DRAFT PROJECT UPDATE TO TOWN BOARDS AND COMMITTEE

The Committee reviewed the draft update provided by Mr. Corbin.

Comments were heard from the members. Ms. Hirsh stated that since the town saved on the cost for the roof repairs, could the Committee have a breakdown of expenses?

Mr. Coderre replied that the last update they received included the most current information. He added that the mason is working on the Town Hall façade and when he

is finished, he will take a look at the chimney at White Cliffs and provide a quote (we already have the specs, it will be handled in the same manner the roof was). Mr. Coderre also noted that he talked with Ms. Werenfels and Ms. Nicklaus and they will contact Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School to see if the students can build the crates, based on specs provided.

By consensus, the Committee approved the February 5, 2020 Update to Town Boards and Committees as presented.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for March 25th at 3:00 p.m.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Corbin moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:30 p.m.; Ms. Hirsh seconded the motion; Vote: 4-0 in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lynda LePoer
Executive Assistant

Documents used during meeting:

1. February 5, 2020 Meeting Agenda
2. Meeting Minutes from November 13, 2019 and January 8, 2020
3. DBVW White Cliffs: Phase III Feasibility and Reuse Power-Point Presentation dated February 5, 2020 and handout titled "White Cliffs Reuse Analysis"
4. White Cliffs Committee February 5, 2020 Update