

TO: Board of Selectmen
Appropriations Committee
Financial Planning Committee
Community Preservation Committee
Northborough Historic District Committee

FROM: White Cliffs Committee

RE: February 5, 2020 Update

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this document is to provide the various Town Boards and Committees with an update regarding recent progress on the White Cliffs project. As a reminder, meeting minutes and ongoing updates are also available on the White Cliffs website located at : <https://www.town.northborough.ma.us/white-cliffs-committee>.

BACKGROUND:

The last formal update was from former Committee Chair Kathleen Polanowicz around this time last year. She reviewed the project from funding authorization at the April 2016 Town Meeting, up through the first meeting with DBVW Architects (<http://dbvw.com/>) on February 22, 2019. As you know, the funding request at Town Meeting included not only the purchase of the property, but also limited funds to help secure the building envelop, conduct a conditions assessment and investigate potential reuse options.

A key observation from the February 22, 2019 meeting was that DBVW Architects expressed their opinion that the building is in *"much better condition than anticipated"* and that the historic portion of the building is holding up *"with relatively few problems"*.

The summary below contains information from the White Cliffs Committee Meetings held April 2, 2019, July 31, 2019, September 25, 2019, October 16, 2019 and January 8th, 2020.

SECURING THE BUILDING:

WEATHER INFILTRATION:

As identified in the February 2019 update, there were several water leaks in the mansion that needed to be addressed. The 1960's additions have more significant moisture issues, so the plan is to isolate the additions from the main historic mansion temporarily before eventually demolishing these sections.

DBVW Architects provided bid documents for envelop repairs, exterior protection, and isolation of the additions on April 4, 2019. However, a viable bid could not be secured through the DCAMM bidding process due to budgetary restraints and lack of bidders. DBVW then provided revised bid documents on August 7, 2019 with limited scope. Again, a viable bid could not be secured. In September of 2019 the Town of Northborough applied for an Emergency Waiver to procure a limited emergency repair project without being subject to DCAMM bidding regulations.

At the September 25, 2019 meeting the Committee was informed that the Emergency Waiver was granted by DCAMM for repairing the active roof leaks at the historic portion of the building only. At the January 8, 2020 meeting the Committee was informed that a new roof on the historic portion of the mansion has been installed with punch list items to be completed by the end of February 2020.

SECURITY UPGRADES:

Working with the Northborough Police Department, security has been enhanced. There are regular police patrols on the property, several windows have been boarded up to reduce access into the building and cameras are now connected directly to the Police Station. In addition, signs have been posted that trespassers will be prosecuted. Since the security upgrades there have been no vandalism issues at the site.

CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT:

DRAWINGS:

Drawings of the existing building were completed using laser scans and BIM (Building Information Modeling) software. The new drawings include floor plans (basement, all floors and roof plan), reflected ceiling plans and exterior elevations. A 3D computer model with accurate dimensional measurements was also created. This will be very useful for documenting existing conditions and exploring future design modifications. Laser scanning data are complete and now the property of the Town. The attached images show drawings for the first floor and the south elevation along with a laser image of the second floor. Note the accuracy of the laser image of the second floor showing details in the woodwork, flooring and wall coverings.

STRUCTURAL INVESTIGATIONS:

As noted above, the detailed walkthroughs of the building show the historical mansion to be in good shape with the exception of some localized water leaks and prior fire damage of some roof sheathing and framing. With the help of the Northborough Historical Society, it was found that a fire occurred on the evening of August 8, 1931. This explains some of the relatively modern repairs on the top floor and the removal of the conical roof on the front turret. A structural engineer's evaluation revealed that the charred wood is no longer structurally sound. Structural reinforcement was installed with the completion of the roofing scope.

STORED ITEMS:

A complete assessment was done by DBVW of items placed in storage. Both Ms. Werenfels and Ms. Morrison noted that the stain glass is extraordinary and seems to be in overall good condition.

CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS:

Identifying character-defining elements of a historical property is a key first step in any restoration/preservation project. At the January 8, 2020 meeting, DBVW noted that the White Cliffs original mansion section retains many character-defining elements, including: the overall shape of the building, its materials, craftsmanship, decorative details, interior spaces, windows, as well as the various aspects of its site. DBVW is documenting and describing specific character defining features.

FEASIBILITY & REUSE:

At the October 16, 2019 meeting DBVW was authorized to start the "Feasibility and Re-Use" study. They are working with the PEREGRINE Group, LLC to accomplish this task. See: <https://www.peregrinegrp.com/>. At the January 8, 2020 meeting very preliminary ideas regarding various reuse options were discussed. Most recently, at the February 5, 2020 meeting the attached White Cliffs Reuse Chart was discussed, as the Committee starts to narrow down potentially viable options.

WEBSITE:

Working with the MIS/GIS Department a website was created for the White Cliffs Project. It contains reports, current and old photographs, links to videos and news articles and all meeting agendas and minutes.

The website is: <https://www.town.northborough.ma.us/white-cliffs-committee>

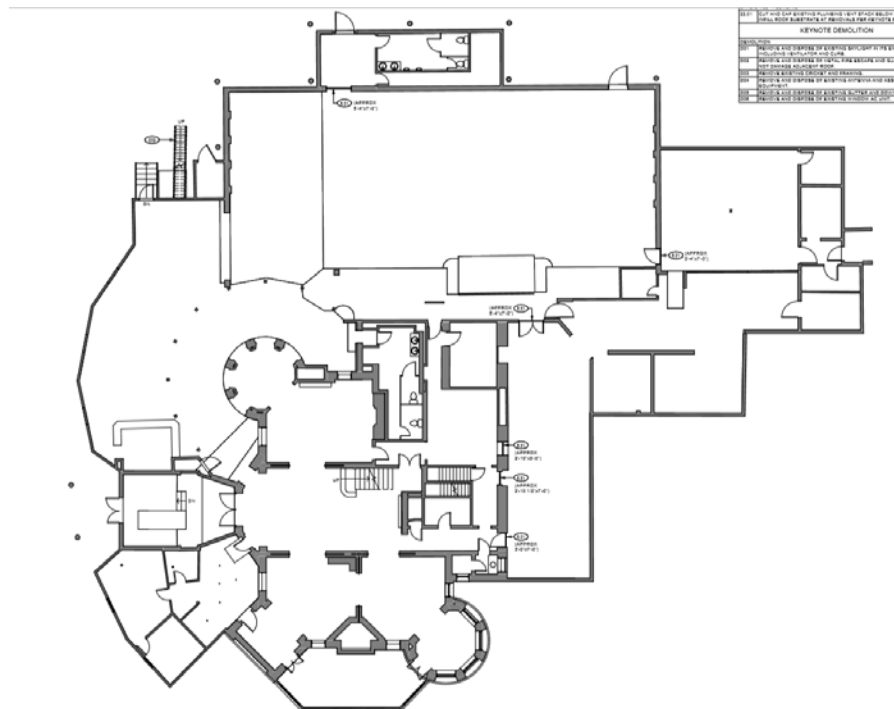
NEXT MEETING/PUBLIC INPUT:

The White Cliffs Committee most recently met on February 5, 2020 at 3:00 and approved this update. Committee meetings are legally posted and open to the public. Although the meetings are not Public Hearings, the Chairman has welcomed public comment at the conclusion of the meetings as a way to engage the residents of Northborough in this important project.

It is anticipated that as the Committee proceeds through this process there will be other, more broad reaching opportunities for the residents to provide input and receive updates that will be planned in conjunction with the consultants.



SOUTH ELEVATION DRAWING



FIRST FLOOR DRAWING



SECOND FLOOR LASER IMAGE