

**TIME TO TALK FUTURE OF HES PROPERTY
PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE AND DISCUSSION
FORMER HADDAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
272 SAYBROOK ROAD, HADDAM, CT 06438
THURSDAY, 8 JUNE 2023
Open House starts at 5:00 PM, Open Discussion at 6:30 PM.
Unapproved Minutes**

PRESENT: Bob McGarry, First Selectman, Kate Anderson, Selectwoman, and Bill Warner, Town Planner

An open house/tour of the facilities was conducted by town staff beginning at 5:00 p.m.

Mr. McGarry opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. in the multi-purpose room of the former Haddam Elementary School (HES) and thanked everyone for attending. Mr. McGarry explained, as advertised, the meeting is to obtain input as to what the townspeople would like to see done with HES. Mr. McGarry stated there are no firm plans or offers and everything is up for discussion. Mr. McGarry introduced himself as well as Mr. Warner.

Mr. McGarry briefly explained that the Town purchased the building from the school district in 2019. Part of the rationale for purchasing the building was: 1) control over what would happen to the property and the building and 2) the soil is very conducive to septic (will help with the development of Higganum Center) and propose having two community septic leaching fields on site (general area of the basketball court and across the street).

Mr. McGarry asked those in attendance to restrict their comments to what to do with the building and the grounds and offered to stay after the meeting to discuss other matters if time permitted.

Mr. McGarry reported in 2019, charrettes (visioning sessions) were conducted in October/November with a report provided in December. Approximately 250 people were in attendance to provide input on HES and the future of Higganum Center (ideas without a lot of concrete data of what costs would be as it was too early to talk about). The recommendations of that study were posted on the bulletin board. Despite COVID, the Town has completed 22 of the recommendations, eight are in progress, eight are pending or waiting for action, and one moved as matters have changed beyond it.

Mr. McGarry pointed out other items posted on the wall - layout of building (old section - saw tooth section was the original building and new section - the gym and some of the floor below was added later on). Mr. Warner stated the area where the principal's office and the kitchen are from the 1950's and the newest section is from 1989).

Regarding demographics, Mr. McGarry stated the Town does have an aging population - 55-65 growing group while we have a very small group of young families moving to town; therefore, a smaller group of children are moving to town.

Mr. McGarry pointed out that the next poster on the wall consisted of thoughts of what could be done on the grounds exclusive of the building for recreational purposes.

Mr. McGarry stated there needs to be definition on what's going to happen with the building and the grounds. The Town put together a bid package for reroofing the building and that was briefly reviewed. Mr. McGarry stated the Town has state grant and town monies to reroof the building and that an architect was spoken to who indicated it would cost over \$1 million to do all the rooves properly. Mr. McGarry stated the low bid of \$1,021,489 prompted the question of does the Town want to put that kind of money into a building that the Town does not know what they want to do with it. This is what prompted the session.

Mr. McGarry stated any final decision on the building and property would need to go to a town meeting; money to do any work on the building is budgetary and would also need to go to a town meeting; routine maintenance can be taken care of, but beyond that, anything done at the complex would require an approval at a town meeting.

Mr. McGarry stated there is a proposal, one potentially of many, and that the Town is not endorsing or selling any proposal at this time. The purpose of this meeting is to see what the townspeople are looking to have happen with the building.

Mr. McGarry stated the Town has applied twice for the Community Challenge Grants - an open grant that allows the Town to mix projects in the application, whereas most grants are single purposed. Mr. McGarry explained why the first two grants failed and that there was no intent to apply for the third grant when it opened up in the spring because there was nothing new to add to the proposal. Noted that one of the reasons the previous applications had failed was because the Town did not have a private partner working with them, but this time there is one and the State likes to see this. Mr. McGarry stated the developer who did the Brookes Court apartments came to the Town with a proposal (displayed on wall) - 33 affordable senior housing units (not low-income housing units; a family of four making \$75,000 would qualify for affordable housing). Mr. McGarry stated the grant application included the proposed affordable senior housing, renovations for a senior center in the saw tooth section, sidewalks, and a request for \$4.5 million. Mr. McGarry explained that limited timing was the reason for the special BOS meeting. Mr. McGarry stated the Town is not endorsing the proposal and if the Town is selected for the grant, the Town does not need to accept it and/or the proposal and it would all need to go to a town meeting for final approval. Mr. McGarry stated they are very open to any ideas on how to handle the building.

Mr. McGarry pointed out that under the roof bid, the building has 40 some thousand square feet total. Looking at what the Town currently uses for municipal space it's approximately 19,000 square feet and that includes space for the state troopers. It also includes space for Haddam-Killingworth Youth and Family Services (HKYFS) as their current location may not be available for much longer. Noted that H-K Rec may also be forced to relocate as well. Mr. McGarry stated with all that it would still leave approximately 24,000 square feet of unused space.

Mr. McGarry stated other groups that have expressed interest in the building are: HKYFS, pickle ball (currently use multi-purpose room and gym), horseshoe league, but there is no general interest in using space in the building.

A man, no name given, stated he doesn't like the term government and money as government doesn't make money the townspeople pay that money whether state or federal and it should be spent accordingly. Mr. McGarry agreed, but regardless of where the money comes from, it should be spent wisely; and if the Town can't, it shouldn't be spent.

Barbara Fernandez stated the building will need a lot of retro fitting to make the classrooms into livable apartments and asked what the developer will be willing to invest in order to make that happen.

Mr. Warner stated the developer would be putting in \$500,000 in equity (proposed in the State grant) and a \$2.5 million loan; therefore, he would be responsible for \$3 million and he's seeking almost \$3 million from the State (because it's affordable, at an affordable rent, he can't cover the debt). Mr. Warner stated the developer is looking to spend \$6 to \$6.5 million.

Ms. Fernandez asked how many units for \$6.5 million. Mr. Warner stated 33 units - approximately \$150 a unit for permanent senior affordable. In the grant, it also includes approximately \$1 million to the Town for renovations to the building. Ms. Fernandez asked if the developer would be putting in approximately 50 percent out of a \$6 million budget. Mr. Warner stated yes.

Erik Hesselberg asked Mr. McGarry what the Town paid for the building in 2019. Mr. McGarry stated \$450,000. Mr. Hesselberg asked Mr. McGarry the value of the nine acres and the building, on the field

card, presently. Mr. McGarry stated he could not answer the question. Mr. Hesselberg stated it's \$4.5 million, a 1,000 percent increase in value, and that this was the best purchase anyone could have made. One attendee stated nobody wants the building. Mr. Hesselberg stated whatever the Town does with the building, there is still a viable piece of property, and the Town should proceed cautiously.

Mr. Hesselberg asked how much the developer was willing to pay for the property. Mr. Warner stated for his section of the building, not the property, \$200,000. Mr. Hesselberg asked how much that would be in terms of the structure, approximately half. Mr. Warner stated approximately. To clarify, Mr. Hesselberg stated half of \$4.5 million is \$2.25 million thereby giving the developer a property worth \$2.25 million for \$200,000.

Mr. McGarry stated he is not pushing a proposal and if there is interest in developing senior housing, it can be pursued. Mr. McGarry stated regarding the value of the property, it is a very important piece of property for the Town, but it has been listed for two years with a sale price of \$2 million and there has been no interest at all. Mr. McGarry reported that two schools inquired about renting the facility - Adel Brook School (before COVID almost had signed a lease) and another special needs school (but they wanted a facility that was already air conditioned). Mr. McGarry noted that empty schools in Connecticut are a dime a dozen.

A man, no name given, asked at what point does the developer pay for the parcel that he's getting, and which parcel would he be getting as there is land the surrounding the building. Another point, assuming the developer puts up 33 units, approximate value of \$330,000 a piece, that's a total of \$10 million, the tax revenue from that, if there are no rebates or tax allowances, is \$250,000 total for the year. That being said, the Town is currently spending at least \$200,000 while it continues to think about what to do with the facility. It's time to make a decision – stop spending money because the roof is going to collapse if a decision isn't made, and the easy decision is make a park. Do an agreement with the developer (building and land portions), have it surveyed, and approve the building as it's going to take time and the taxpayers will be carrying the cost.

Mr. McGarry stated that one of the proposals that has been made is to knock down the building or at least part of it. Mr. McGarry stated they are open to anything.

Ms. Anderson asked Mr. McGarry to clarify what the developer would be acquiring. Mr. McGarry stated the proposal is for the building, parking for the building, and he gets to use the septic and the land would retain common (public) use. Joe Rizzo asked which part of the parking lot. Mr. McGarry stated it would probably be between the gym and the new area. Liz Bazazi asked if it would be 33 or 66 spaces. Mr. Warner stated 33 parking spaces would work noting that the state statute was just changed so that towns could not require more than one parking space per unit.

Pablo Arroyo stated anyone moving into a unit would have the expectation of a parking space; however, not know what mobility issues an individual may have, handicapped parking also needs to be considered. Mr. Arroyo asked how the 33 parking spaces as well as handicapped parking would fit in the proposed area. Mr. Arroyo stated air conditioning and heating will also be required and asked if the town would be providing that, would it be subsidized. Mr. Arroyo stated the area should be turned into an amusement park or housing; however, if seniors are placed in the middle of an amusement park, good luck with the real estate venture. Mr. Arroyo asked if the units would be strictly for seniors and if so why. Why not housing for anyone who needs it. Mr. Arroyo also asked why it was being limited.

Mr. Warner stated the zone for the school property is R-1 (allows for multi-family and senior housing); however, P&Z could change the zoning. The utilities would be individual units (their own responsibility). Mr. Warner stated at this time there are no details regarding the utilities.

Ms. Bazazi asked for clarification regarding the zoning. Mr. Warner stated R-1 allows for single family residential as well as multi-family and senior housing via special permit.

Tim Teran stated the options are still vague but believes it is important to ferret out the details that are available. Mr. Teran asked for a clarification regarding some of the numbers – local money \$515,000, but in the application says there is \$528,000. Mr. Teran suggested it would be good to show the costs for the basics – getting the roof done, relocating the senior center and the town annex, and the money at hand - \$480,000 from the State plus \$250,000 (assuming the senior center can be sold for that). Mr. Teran stated what will be discovered once the cost of the roof (as of today) is included and \$100,000 for relocation is there will be a surplus of \$230,000. Mr. Teran stated he isn't saying the current proposal is a great one, but the \$230,000 could be used to start the park while allowing additional time to figure out what to do with the rest of the building. Mr. Teran stated working with the developer is a great idea and his risk is \$3 million (\$2.5 million loan, \$500,000 equity), putting in \$200,000 to purchase one portion of the building, and investing \$500,000 while attempting to obtain \$3 million from the State. Mr. Teran asked what happens if the developer doesn't get the \$3 million. Mr. Teran stated the Town need options on the off chance that the proposal doesn't work and noted that there aren't sufficient numbers yet. Mr. Teran suggested the conversation be continued.

Mr. McGarry agreed that all the numbers are not yet available, and he is not looking for those in attendance to say they like the proposal that was put forward for senior housing because it is not detailed enough. Mr. McGarry stated if the Town wants to go that route, then a more serious detailed proposal will need to be presented and a town meeting held. Mr. McGarry asked that those in attendance to try to look at the proposal as a general proposal of splitting the building and would it be something that the Town should endorse. Mr. McGarry asked how much of the roof should be replaced and how much of the building should be protected. Mr. McGarry stated the Town can delay some of it, but not all of it; however, if the general consensus is to level the structure and turn the property into a park, then there is no sense in putting money into a roof. On the other hand, if the thought is to use a portion or all of the building, the Town can proceed on that.

Mr. Warner stated that the state grant should be put into perspective – there are 26 applications throughout the whole state, there's only \$22 million to give out, and the Town of Haddam is asking for \$4.5 million. Mr. Warner stated he writes a good grant, but it would have to be a very good grant for the State to provide the entire request. Mr. Warner stated the best direction the Town needs is what direction to go in if the funding is not approved.

Mr. Warner spoke in regard to the senior center. Current senior center is 2,000 square feet and if the Town were to consider enlarging it to 4,000 square feet, they could turn a portion of HES into a new senior center. Mr. Warner stated George Fellner, Architect, who designed the East Haddam senior center, had provided a price of \$220 per square foot at the height of inflation. Mr. Warner stated perhaps now it would be \$200 per square foot costing \$800,000 to build out a senior center in the space that was just walked through. In terms of the senior housing, Mr. Warner stated there are no numbers at this time. Mr. Warner stated the Town currently pays \$115,000 per year to retain the building.

Debbie, last name not given, stated she would like to see planning that would draw families to the town. Debbie stated as a grandmother she has to go to other towns to have anything for her grandchildren to entertain themselves. Debbie spoke in regard to the town not having paid police and fire departments, no pavilion, and there being nothing for the kids. She said it's not time to think about the elderly, we need to think about the kids. Let's build the town. She also said before deciding whether to replace a roof or tear something down, who do we as a town focus on – the elderly or bring in families. Believes the Town's focus is wrong and wants to see something for the kids.

Mr. McGarry stated if Haddam can attract young families, he's all for it. The aging population is a Connecticut problem as young families are not coming to the state. Illena Douglas stated the average age for Haddam is 43 and the 5-17 bracket is 20 percent. Mr. McGarry asked the trends noting that the aging population is growing. Mr. McGarry stated attracting younger people to Haddam is laudable but will take a longer-term effort. Mr. McGarry stated part of money for the roof and site improvements can be spent on site improvements (recreational are aimed at a younger audience). Using one of the graphics, Mr. McGarry talked about decisions needing to be made such as reroofing the brown section (base bid) and not

the rest of the structure, using the \$400,000 in local funding as well as the \$468,000 in state funding to cover the base bid as well as funding a multi-generational park. Again, Mr. McGarry stated he's looking for a feel of what the audience would like.

Sarah, no last name given, stated she didn't agree with the statistic that young people are not coming to town as there is no parking out at Burr Elementary School (BES) for school functions and additional teachers are needed as classes are getting bigger. As a parent of a 4th grader and 6th grader, they moved from Middletown and a lot of people are leaving the cities to live in rural towns. Sarah stated the town needs something for the kids – park and/or a pool and doesn't believe senior housing is needed. Believes a whole plan needs to be developed first rather than a piece meal plan.

Sue Costa stated she cares deeply about the future of the school and talked about the various conversations/workshops that were previously conducted. Mrs. Costa stated HES is a very pleasing to the eye building that needs some love as it has had in the past. She would like to see the front used for children – skate park, dog park – while utilizing the building for a modern senior center. The seniors deserve a location for meals, crafts, and conversation in a central location. HES could also be used as a pickup spot for 9 Town Transit. It would create a sense of pride and place. Mrs. Costa stated the building should also house centralized offices for Park & Rec, HKYFS, and the resident trooper (believes police presence is lacking). Would also like to see the town offices moved to HES and perhaps rent or sell the Town Office Building (TOB) and/or Senior Center. Believes it would be beneficial to have a community gymnasium and meeting rooms as it's difficult for community groups to find meeting locations. Mrs. Costa suggested the building be call a Multi-Generational Town Center. No objection to some apartments on site so long as they have their own septic facility.

Mary Hickish stated there is a pressing need for renovations at all three RSD17 schools and RDS17 is in the process of doing a master plan. Ms. Hickish stated if RSD17 goes through with renovations, there will be a need for the children to be schooled in another location while this work is being done and suggested HES be used for that purpose if needed.

Mr. McGarry stated RSD17 has conducted one planning session and will be conducting three more sessions and recommended everyone attend at least one session to provide input.

A man, no name given, stated he felt RSD17 would not use the school as a temporary location, but believes something should be done with the building – senior center and Club 60. Spoke in regard to senior housing being available and that it would allow individuals to walk to the Center for groceries, mail, drug store, etc. Noted that if repairs are not made soon, the problems will only get worse as time goes on.

Curtis Browne asked what some of the feedback was as to why HES couldn't sell. Mr. Warner stated there was no interest – Adel Brook changed their plans after COVID; St. John's School in Deep River wanted to fence off the entire front and capital improvements were a factor; and a couple of churches looked at the building. Mr. Warner stated LoopNet, a national broker, couldn't get interest.

A man, no name given, stated he knows the property was on the market, but to turn the property into a commercial property is hard. Mr. Browne asked why it would be hard to turn the property into commercial – zoning issue, infrastructure. Mr. Warner stated it's zoning, but the bigger problem is code issues. The man stated he was interested in purchasing the property but backed out. Mr. Curtis stated it appears that a number of issues are the root cause for not being able to sell the property either commercially or residentially.

A woman, no name given, asked Mr. Warner how much the property would have been rented to St. John's. Mr. Warner stated Adel Brook, and the Town was \$8 a square foot and Adel Brook was \$3 a square foot. Someone asked how many square feet. Mr. Warner stated 44,000 square feet. Mr. McGarry stated there would be some carve outs and that they wouldn't be paying for the boiler or mechanical spaces. Mr. Warner stated Adel Brook had talked about being cooperative and working with the Town, but believes they wanted exclusive use.

Mr. Curtis stated he has been reading a number of documents and asked if it was worth tearing the building down and how it would work with the rest of the strategy. Mr. Curtis stated he did see the community as being an artisan eco-vacation type of community and asked how the Town might be able to tie it into bringing more people in and making it a commercial endeavor.

David Law stated the property is not dormant but under-utilized. Noted that there is a stage company that uses the building, the relocation of the Shad Museum will happen soon, the basketball court could be rented almost every day of the year, and that there's funding for a new playground. A woman asked what happened to the previous playground. Mr. Law stated it was condemned. Mr. Law stated he just wanted to point out that the building isn't dead, it just needs more uses. Mr. McGarry stated the playground equipment was inspected as all the playgrounds are every year and it was deemed not economically feasible to repair the existing equipment.

A woman, no name given, asked if there was any known asbestos, lead paint, or any other hazardous material in the building. Mr. Warner stated yes that the school had to conduct an annual inventory and in the old section there is asbestos which is all contained. The woman asked if there has been any planning feasibility study for the property as a whole. Mr. Warner stated no, COVID put everything on hold. The woman stated she works in consulting, but not in this field, and recommended a consultant be hired. She stated she had read that there is \$115,000 for upkeep for the upcoming fiscal year; and asked if this included the roof. Mr. McGarry and Mr. Warner stated no. Mr. Warner stated the capital budget has \$400,000 for a roof for this fiscal year, a state grant for \$480,000 for a roof and playground, and \$115,000 for maintenance and oil. The woman voiced support for the kid and family focus but having some offices for Park & Rec or other family community things would be a good fit.

Marge DeBold, former HES teacher and resident, stated the seniors will be moving out in due time with the young people coming in, and suggested that it would be nice to keep the seniors happy because they would like to stay in Haddam.

Joanne, no last name given, stated she moved back to town and that she would like to see a mixed-use space. Joanne stated the boys' basketball team was traveling to Wallingford to use their rec center to play games to get them into shape. The only good basketball court that is not indoors is located at Sheldon Park, Killingworth. The building and property could be made into a nice multi-generational space. Stated she did not like splash pads and that she would like to have a town hall that's accessible and can be seen as you come into town rather than being buried like it currently is. If the property is turned into housing, it will be for only one particular segment. Mr. McGarry asked if the courts were indoor or outdoor. Joanne stated they were two indoor courts, and they were charge a lot of money to use the courts.

A woman, no name given, asked if BES and KES were at capacity at this point or close to it. Members of the audience stated BES is beyond capacity. The woman asked if it would be possible, as a temporary solution and to bring in some money for this building, to rent classrooms to the Board of Education (BOE). She also asked if the building would have to be to code to rent. Audience members stated yes. Mr. McGarry stated the building could be used as a school as it would be a continuing use; however, when the use is changed, that's what triggers code upgrades. Mr. McGarry stated every dollar in rent will cost Haddam 60 cents with 40 cents coming from Killingworth. Discussion followed regarding the rental fees/costs and that the BOE has indicated they have space at the former middle school.

Claude stated he's heard that Haddam has never had a town center and we've never suffered from an excess of vision. Claude stated the Town now has an opportunity to make the school a center of community life for all generations. Suggested moving the town hall and the senior center and creating recreational opportunities as the building has great facilities – gym, cafeteria, auditorium, meeting space. He also stated if the roof is not fixed, the building will need to be destroyed. Suggested a plan be developed for the building that contributes with other potential development that will create a center for all the people of the community, inject some energy into the place, and opportunities and enjoyment for people.

Ms. Bazazi stated it was an overwhelming vote to purchase HES and that charrettes were conducted where people indicated they wanted to preserve the building for civic uses. Ms. Bazazi suggested selling

the TOB and the current Senior Center and move them into the school and in that way, there is only one building to maintain. Ms. Bazazi also suggested Park & Rec and Club 60 be allowed to use the building. Ms. Bazazi felt the auditorium and gym are great assets and should be retained. Ms. Bazazi talked about the farmers' market using the site, consolidating uses to lower maintenance costs, and helping to create a walkable village. Also discussed the number of towns who have used schools for their town offices. Ms. Anderson asked Ms. Bazazi if she had any costs associated with those developments. Ms. Bazazi stated she did. Ms. Bazazi stated the Town desperately needs housing that is obtainable for recent graduates, seniors, single people, etc. Multi-generational housing has been shown to be the healthiest type of housing rather than segregating by age or income.

A man, no name given, stated a quality school brings people to town. He also spoke regarding the state codes that will be triggered when renovations are done.

Mr. Rizzo stated no one likes taxes, but he believes if a referendum were conducted every year regarding the retention of HES, it would pass all the time. Mr. Rizzo stated as a town it has always been said that the building should be retained for town use. Mr. Rizzo stated he didn't believe housing and community use could be combined. Mr. Rizzo also stated it will cost money to knock a building down.

A woman, no name given, asked if it was known how much it would cost to knock the building down. Mr. Warner stated a demolition company quoted \$20 per square foot plus additional costs if hazardous material were found. Mr. McGarry stated it would be over \$1 million to take the building down. Members of the audience stated put the money into the roof.

A woman, no name given, stated it appears as if the consensus of those at the meeting want to retain the building and property and use it for community purposes. She asked if it was allowable for the Town to conduct capital campaigns (fund raising). Mr. Warner stated it would be allowable; however, people are hesitant to give money to a town because they pay taxes. The woman stated there are a number of people who volunteer their money and/or time for a number of purposes and proposed conducting a capital campaign to help with some of the renovations that need to be done.

A man, no name given, stated it appears that a number of people want to retain the building and property for multi-generational things and that he would like to see a breakdown of costs for roof and renovations vs. knocking it down and building from scratch. It appears as if there is more property than needed. The man stated he agreed about creating a community center and playground.

Dorothy Gillespie talked about various towns/cities that have retained their old buildings and woven them into the history of the town. Mrs. Gillespie stated if there's enough character in the building that it should be retained as it's the face of the town. Mrs. Gillespie asked if the entire roof needs to be repaired at once (no); and does the town need the entire building (potentially tear some of it down and reutilize it). Mrs. Gillespie stated there is a need for housing for young people, young families, and seniors. Mrs. Gillespie also stated having athletic facilities available for children is important and should be integrated into a plan.

Tim Lucas stated he and his wife moved to town because of the school system, but they miss HES. Mr. Lucas stated the most emotional part of the tour was walking into the gym and not hearing or seeing any activity and believes the kids need to be brought back to the property as well as the whole community. Mr. Lucas stated he believes what he's heard is: 1) that no one wants to sell or tear down the building (should consider it, brainstorm), 2) make the building/property a community gathering place (bring back vibrancy to the property), and 3) getting a lot of activity back to the building. Mr. Lucas stated bringing the town offices to the building is a good idea as well as the senior center. Mr. Lucas asked the town to engage some design consultants to guide us as to what can be done with the building and property. Mr. Lucas stated he believes that everyone will leave tonight knowing that the building and property will not be abandoned as this is the heart and soul in the center of the town and the town residents need to make sure it stays vibrate.

Doug Downing stated he believes the building should be razed and a playscape constructed; and if the town needs more buildings, build an energy efficient structure.

A man, no name given, stated although the place has been for sale for two years with no interest, its currently filled with people who are interested in it. He suggested making the current town hall more attractive to a buyer rather than the school and that HES being used as a community center.

A man, no name given, asked if revitalizing the property itself had been looked at and owning some of the field and grass spaces as our own parks and fields. He stated Killingworth Recreation Park (KRP) is not owned by the town and that they have to go to the board to ask for acceptance for lacrosse, football, soccer, and HK Rec. Having additional space would be helpful for Haddam.

Mr. Law asked if an overall plan is developed, could other departments that need to be moved be included such as Public Works being moved to the TOB property thereby opening up the current Public Works property for another use. Mr. McGarry stated five acres is need for a new Public Works facility. Ms. Bazazi asked how many acres the TOB sits on. Mr. Warner stated the topography is a challenge and there is only 1.5 acres with a church sitting below the parcel and Field Park above.

Ed Munster state additional senior housing is needed noting that the current senior housing complex, High Meadow, has a long waiting list for 20 apartments. Mr. Munster stated something needs to be proposed and come before a town meeting.

Ms. Anderson stated it appears as if the consensus is to retain the building for community use, potentially for town use, all viable options. Ms. Anderson asked if people are dead set on keeping the building and renovating it as it stands or are they totally opposed to demolishing the building and starting new. Ms. Anderson stated there have been a lot of great ideas as to what people would like to see on the site, but there are costs associated with all of that. Members of the audience stated they would like a referendum to keep the school. Ms. Anderson asked if people want to retain the actual, original, physical structure. The audience indicated yes.

Ms. Bazazi stated she believes the building should be retained for its historic value and cultural continuity (sentimental as well). Ms. Bazazi also stated she thought she heard people say they would like to see costs for the various options and the possibility of conducting a spatialization plan.

Ron Matulevich thanked Mr. McGarry for sending out the green cards as it appeared to work. Mr. Matulevich stated that he's not opposed to retaining the building; however, the saw tooth portion of the structure is on a slab and isn't worth very much. Mr. Matulevich stated people should be wary of that; and that the developer would be getting the better part of the building. Mr. McGarry clarified that the senior center would be in the saw tooth section and the proposed senior housing in the new section.

Ms. Douglas stated that she and Mr. Matulevich have been to the town hall numerous times to get a mailing that would announce the open house/discussion and asked for a show of hands of those who got the card. Ms. Douglas stated there is so much talent in the room and there's a lot of hope. Ms. Douglas stated in the past HES was a gathering place and that the Higganum Center Study indicates that HES should be retained as a school, but nothing happened. Ms. Douglas asked Mr. McGarry and Mr. Warner if the residents could have their assurance that the town officials and the residents will continue to work together.

Mr. Matulevich stated he toured the East Haddam facility and that it's very nice, but there is no housing associated with it. Mr. Matulevich suggested people go to see it.

Janie, no last name given, asked where the money will be coming from. Mr. McGarry stated the town would apply for every grant it can and taxes would help to pay for things. Mr. McGarry stated the state statutes and the Town's Charter require a town meeting to sell the building (aware that there is no support

for that) or to do major renovations (to fund it). Mr. McGarry stated the residents will have more say in the matter and pointed out that the Higganum Center Study, on display, outlines what the Town has accomplished thus far.

Ms. Bazazi asked that a referendum be conducted rather than a town meeting. Mr. McGarry stated if the town can get to a point where it can be narrowed down to something that makes sense to put out for a vote, a referendum is doable. Mr. McGarry stated at least during a public hearing or town meeting, it allows for discussion and factual information to be put out and the residents can act on it there. Ms. Bazazi stated when additional information is available, another session such as this would be nice.

A woman, no name given, asked if the town can move forward with a consultant. Mr. McGarry stated he can look into the cost of it. Mr. McGarry asked what people want him to move forward with such as the whole building being done or only a portion of it. Mr. McGarry stated if the thought is to move the TOB, all the municipal functions, the senior center, and HKYFS office space to the old section that would protect that portion of the building and it would buy time to see what people would like to do with the new section (renovate, demolish, etc.). In that way, a full \$1 million is not being put into a roof, but rather \$600,000 to \$700,000. Ms. Bazazi asked where the roof is leaking. Mr. McGarry stated they fixed the leaks as they have come up, but all sections have problems – the old section is drainage, the back section is more leaks. If anything is going to be done on the roof, they'd have to do the base bid and that would be the brown area on the plan. Ms. Bazazi stated she would like additional information. Mr. McGarry stated the ultimate use would affect how much the Town would want to do with the roof. If the Town is going to use the whole building, then the whole roof should be done.

Lisa Malloy asked when the Town would be notified about the third grant application. Mr. McGarry stated it should be mid-July and that would add another dimension to the process (to accept the grant at a meeting is required).

A woman, no name given, asked why the \$800,000 isn't being split up to do the roof because at the end of the day it will cost more money in the long run. Mr. McGarry stated the advantage of not doing the whole roof immediately is: 1) why spend money to reroof a portion of the building that won't be used, 2) with the \$480,000 state funds if not all tied up in the roof some of the funding could go to starting the playground in the front or other site improvements. She asked if the Shad Museum had already been started in the northern front corner of the property. Mr. McGarry stated yes, and they have laid their foundations. She asked if it had been voted on. Mr. McGarry stated town funding is not involved, that the Historical Society, owner of the Shad Museum, must relocate the structure, and the Town made space for them. She asked when that was voted on. Mr. McGarry stated there is no rent or sale. She said it is still the town's property and asked who made that decision. Mr. McGarry stated he made the decision.

Mr. Rizzo stated it was his understanding that the relocation of the Shad Museum is temporary. Mr. McGarry stated no, the Historical Society was looking for a place to move it, the footprint isn't that great, and part of the intent is to bring people to the center and that museum will have a draw; therefore, it fits in with the intent.

A woman, no name given, stated a young woman had previously spoken about capital fund raising (campaign) and asked if it could be explored further. Mr. McGarry stated the town can explore capital campaign; whereas capital funding is what the town provides and that is what's budgeted.

Ms. Bazazi stated the town needs septic for the village if the town is ever going to get walkable dense infill development in the village. One thing she would like investigated is whether septic could be put under the playground which would provide enough capacity to do infill development along Route 81 and create a real main street.

A woman, no name given, stated when the BOE was looking to sell HES, the town spent money to get ideas from developers and there were several town halls as to what potentially could be done with the property and in the Center. She suggested before additional funding is spent, perhaps those studies should be revisited. Mr. McGarry stated he believes that was the Higganum Center Study previously mentioned. Mr. McGarry stated he and Mr. Warner will go back and look at the study.

A man, no name given, stated before a decision is made, he believes there's a need for a greater vision for the property and suggested a consultant be hired to develop some concepts and ideas.

Dan Luisi stated there can't be a village without population density and senior housing would provide that. Mr. Luisi noted that 30 years ago there were 300 people employed in Higganum Center and that's what created the population density. A senior center would be a good push to start getting the population into the center of town. As for the rest of the building, the town needs to know what the heating system is going to cost as well as the rest of the building (foundation, roof issues). Mr. Luisi stated the school system is also looking for \$120 million and asked where all the money is going to come from. Mr. Luisi stated to move the town hall from a usable building to another usable building isn't practical. Mr. Luisi noted taxes could double in 10 years just on the BOE's proposal as well as other projects.

A man, no name given, asked if the town had looked into state and federal funding if a solar project were incorporated into the plan. Mr. McGarry stated more than half the money for the roof is state money; and no, the town has not explored solar. The man stated a solar array could help defray costs and may even take the building off the grid.

Mike DeStefano stated he retired as director of facilities for RSD17 and knows a lot about the building. Mr. DeStefano stated structurally the building is great and yes, a roof is needed. People need to stop talking about reroofing the structure and move on it as it will probably take a year to two years to get a new roof. Mr. DeStefano stated there have been a lot of great ideas, that there's a need to do something for the kids, that he would not like to see the building demolished, and that the building is a great asset. Mr. DeStefano stated the roof should be done to save the town's asset.

A man, no name given, stated he agreed with Mr. DeStefano and that he's an engineer who did the last renovation on the building. He stated he's currently converting an elementary school in Manchester to apartments for the elderly. He said he agreed with a lot of what people were saying, however, the town needs to get costs and until the town has those numbers a decision cannot be made. The man stated it's a beautiful building and suggested time be taken to analyze the ideas and their associated costs and then come back to the people to show them what it will cost.

Sue Bement stated she believed there had been enough discussion regarding what people would like and asked Mr. McGarry to call an end to the meeting. Mrs. Bement stated she believes Mr. McGarry has enough information to work with.

A woman, no name given, asked what is going to happen if the town does need another school especially since BES is so overcrowded. Mr. McGarry stated that's what the RSD17 master planning meetings are for. Mr. McGarry encouraged everyone to go to all the sessions. Mr. Curtis suggested people review the information that's available from RSD17.

Prior to closing the discussion, Mr. McGarry reported there were approximately 40 people in attendance at the first meeting conduct by RSD17 and strongly recommended that those in attendance at tonight's meeting, participate in the balance of RSD17's meetings.

Mr. McGarry closed the discussion at 8:44 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bunny Hall Batzner
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Recording Clerk