

**Town of Wheelock**  
**Town Hall Accessibility Project Committee**  
**March 25, 2021, 1:00 pm, via Zoom**  
**Minutes: Unapproved**

**Meeting Purpose:** The Project Committee was appointed by the Selectboard on Jan. 4, 2021. Its purpose is to assist the Selectboard in managing a grants-funded project providing funds for community outreach and architectural concepts to help solve the Town Hall accessibility issues.

This meeting was in addition to the regular schedule and was called to review a draft mailer to be sent to the Wheelock community.

**Present:** Selectboard: Ann Lawless, chair. Town Clerk: Vanessa Seguin. Project Committee Members: Steve Amos, Enid Ellis, Liz Muckerman, Eileen Boland, scribe. Not in attendance: Marc Brown, Project Committee member.

Project consultants: Brandy Saxton: Place Sense, outreach in collaboration with VIS, MAKE  
Paul Simon: VISCC LLC, project manager (via audio)

**Meeting called to order 1:00 pm with introductions initiated by Ann Lawless.** Special welcome to Liz Muckerman, new South Wheelock resident and newest member of the Project Committee. There were no changes to the agenda.

**Review Draft March Mailer:** Brandy opened the discussion explaining the purpose of the mailing: to advise Wheelock residents regarding the history, issues, progress, and deadline facing the town in addressing our Town Hall handicap access violations and the DOJ agreement to address them. (A draft of the mailer was included in the meeting packet posted on the town website.)

Enid asked that Eileen explain the chart that she drafted representing her understanding of the various Town Hall and the town garage proposals (the chart is include at the end of the minutes). The Facilities Taskforce (FTF) was asked to consider all the town's facilities with a special focus on the Town Hall (because of the DOJ deadline) so their recommendations included options for a new town garage.

A garage to be constructed on the town campus was the preferred option (eliminating the need to purchase land), but the FTF did not suggest a specific site because there was insufficient information about the placement of a mound septic system. Steve shared that he located and forwarded documentation that shed light on the results of prior soil testing and the optimum location for the septic. It suggests that there will not be sufficient room on the site for a town garage, so the "Option C" on the chart might not be possible.

Paul commented that those soil samples might need to be redone, but he has an engineer on staff who can take a look at this issue. He also shared that it is his understanding that a combined town garage and municipal offices facility would need a firewall separating the two functions, and possibly a sprinkler system. Steve shared a FTF understanding that the Sutton property (owned by the town, sits above the Town Hall) would not be large enough for a town garage (and may be a brownfield).

Brandy pointed out that the Project Committee needs to hear from Wheelock voters about their values and preferences rather than stating a preferred option at this point in the project, and we need sufficient information to file a plan with DOJ by the end of the calendar year. Paul observed that given the Town Hall project deadline, there is not enough time to also research and purchase alternative sites for a new town garage.

Vanessa said it is wise for voters to consider both projects at the same time. Ann pointed out that the funding for each would be separate and a new garage can be constructed fairly quickly.

Committee members shared recommendations with Brandy regarding the draft, which was praised for its professional appearance and comprehensiveness. There are more materials and links to documentation that supports statements in the flyer; they are available at the newly established project webpage: [www.placesense.com/wheelock](http://www.placesense.com/wheelock)

More details about the handicap accessibility issues will be added (especially helpful for new community members). “DOJ settlement” sounds like the problem is solved, so using the word “agreement” was generally preferred. The three options will be reworked to include a fourth. If the town is not compliant with the agreement or fails to have a plan, the DOJ will take the town to court. The DOJ does not have authority to levy fines. Upgrading “facilities” is a broad catchall word the encompasses elements that might be part of the two concepts before voters, such as a kitchen, vault, smaller meeting spaces, etc., which would allow the building to be used for more activities.

“Where We Have Been” timeline (Side 2) will note the Town Hall was constructed in 1871, add some details, and collapse/eliminate some of the less notable entries for the print version (gives more space, perhaps allows a larger font), but keep all these details in the on-line version. The word “proposal” rather than “plan” in some places is preferred.

Brandy will be sending the mailer in envelopes with mailing labels affixed (~350 recipients). Various ideas were offered to alert recipients that the contents are important and not junk mail. She encouraged committee members to email her directly with any other comments or additional information for the mailer.

Eileen will forward an email from the fire marshal assigned to Wheelock who stated that the building fire code was for a maximum of 109 people. He did not know if that figure included using the stage, but he offered to visit and confirm how the space capacity was determined.

**Adopt Minutes of the Prior Meeting:** Steve moved, and Enid seconded adopting the minutes for the meeting of 3/8/21 as written with unanimous agreement.

**Other Business:** None

**Adjourn:** Consultants left the meeting at 2:20 PM. By unanimous consent the project committee members adjourned at 2:24 PM.

**Next Meeting**  
**Monday April 12, 2021**  
**6:00 PM via Zoom**

Meetings are scheduled for the second Monday of the month

|                 | CURRENT TOWN HALL MEETING SPACE  | MUNICIPAL OFFICE                    | NEW TOWN HALL & MUNICIPAL OFFICES COMBINED | GARAGE SEPARATE | GARAGE COMBINED |
|-----------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>PLAN A</b>   | MAKE CURRENT TOWN HALL AND MUNICIPAL OFFICE ACCESSIBLE<br><br><b>48% PREFER RESTORING</b><br>52% PREFER BUILD NEW<br>ADD COMMUNITY KITCHEN: Y74%. N26% |                                     |  | X               |                 |
| <b>PLAN B.1</b> | 52% PREFER BUILD NEW<br>48% PREFER RESTORING<br><br>CURRENT TOWN HALL?<br>39% SELL<br>27% MAINTAIN<br>17% RENTAL<br>11% OTHER                          | X                                   |  | X               |                 |
| <b>PLAN B.2</b> |  | X                                   |  |                 | X               |
| <b>PLAN C</b>   | <b>RESTORES &amp; BUILDS NEW</b><br><br>REMOVE BASEMENT<br>REPLACE WITH FROST WALL<br>ADD 2 BATHROOMS  | BUILD NEW MUNICIPAL OFFICE IN ANNEX |  | X               |                 |

**Selectboard:**

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