

RHS Repurposing Committee Status Report

The following update is submitted by co-chairs Kathryn Schenkman and Vic Ribaudo for Sept 2022

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

Hazardous Materials Review: Sarah Wraight from Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) reports that TRORC spent some time working with Grace Vinson, Environmental Officer, Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD), to figure out exactly what's needed for the hazardous building materials assessment in order to fulfill NEPA requirements. TRORC now has plan of action and submitted a formal start work order. Sarah states that she expects the contractor and their subcontractor will need to do a site visit in mid-October. Kathryn alerted Lindy Stetson and put both parties in touch via email to coordinate the site visit.

Historical and Archeological Review: The Rochester Select Board approved the submission of the Preliminary Review Form that was submitted to ACCD Historical Preservation. If the project is not determined to be exempt, Mike Teetsel states that he has colleagues in the business who he can tap for pointers on how we can best manage this process. Evelyn Peebles from Historical Preservation and Grace contacted Kathryn requesting additional information re potential site ground disturbance.

Kathryn responded that there is a potential for ground disturbance during the brownfield assessment process (digging soil and water test pits, and removing an underground storage tank if needed), but testing does not happen until Phase 2 of NEPA. Sarah Wraight of TRORC states that it will be a few months down the road before the Phase I is completed and approved, and if necessary the development of a work plan for Phase II testing, which will include maps of exactly where test pits will be dug. There is no plan to alter the footprint of the building, which is less than 50 years old, or any plan to demolish any part of the building, nor build any new structures on the site.

FLOODWAY ISSUE: Dick Robson reports that Dubois & King completed the HS property elevation survey; their invoice was received and submitted to Kristen LaPell and Nathan Cleveland. Dick reports difficulty in having direct conversations with Randy Otis, head surveyor at Dubois & King, which should clarify our position with regard to floodway and floodplain issues. He will reach out to Grace Vinson for guidance in communicating our specific information needs with regard to Federal funding requirements.

PROJECT MANAGER: Nathan Cleveland approved using the balance of our CBD planning grant funds towards funding a project manager. Vic had a meeting with Mariah Noth from the Vermont Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) re applying for additional grant writing funds. We expect to issue a Request For Proposals to project managers to be issued in October. The goal is to have a pre-construction project manager in place before the end of 2022. Their focus will be on obtaining capital improvement grants, recruiting committed tenants, securing a project architect, and advising on overall project development.

SENATOR SANDERS' SUPPORT/USDA CF f/u: Will Stevens from Senator Sanders' office followed up with an e-introduction of Kathryn to Eric Law, Community Program Director at the NH-VT Rural Development office of the USDA, who responded that he anticipates having future conversations re the Rochester project, and plans on a site visit to Rochester in either the first or second week in Oct.

2022-23 HS BLDG HEAT: Vic, Kathryn and Pat attended a Special RSUD meeting on Tuesday 9/6, by request of RSUD for a project update. The presentation was received with enthusiasm and a motion made and unanimously passed to support the work of the Repurposing Committee.

Heating of the HS was key focus of discussion, as the acquisition vote is delayed until March. Some members of the RSUD suggested using the building now since it's being heated— 30 families stated their immediate need of childcare.

Jamie tabled that discussion for their next meeting, saying there are concerns re the non-functioning backup systems for heat that would put a childcare center at risk for disruption should something go wrong with the current heat system.

The board was happy to learn of the committee's fundraising effort launched at Harvest Fair on 9/10— a copy of the Fundraising Appeal created by Jeanie and Kathryn given to them, and fully support our desire to work together.

Vic attended the Sept. 12 RSUD meeting and reported that the Board created a task force, to consist of 2 of its members, Amy Wildt and Bill Egerton, plus representation from the Repurposing Committee and the Stockbridge and Rochester Select Boards, to meet and propose to the RSUD Board at its October 3rd meeting a plan for how to pay for heating the High School building during the 2022/23 school year. Due to the greatly increased cost of fuel, the projected cost of heating the building this year is approximately \$66,000.

The task force met on September 20th and our committee members included Vic, Kathryn, and Lesley Straus, and Pat Harvey was representing the SB. Bill Egerton proposed a 3-legged strategy that would divide responsibility for the funding sources into thirds to the following 3 groups: the RSUD, the Trustees of Public funds for Supervisory Union, and the Repurposing Committee's fundraising drive re charitable donations across the Quintown Community, which includes approaching the Rochester Trustee of Public Funds, who contributed \$15,000 toward heating the building last year. Since Harvest Fair, the Repurposing Committee has raised \$2,000 in community donations.