

Butler School Futures Committee South Thomaston Public Input Meeting

September 26, 2018

Approximately 40 citizens were present and 8 committee members including Ervin Curtis, Eileen Skarka, Sandy Weisman, Sandy Retzlaff, John Spear, Bryan Calderwood, Pennie Alley, and Jeff Northgraves.

Presenter and Moderator Cliff Retzlaff opened the meeting by welcoming citizens and outlining the evening. Chair John Spear introduced the Butler Futures Committee, as well as members of the Selectboard present, Jan Gaudio and Cheryl Waterman.

John gave a brief summary of the Butler school closure, RSU 13's offer to give the school back to the town of South Thomaston, and the option the town has to accept or reject the building and site. A Town Meeting will be held on October 30 for that purpose. John related that the Futures Committee unanimously voted that our advice to the Selectboard was to accept the building.

John reiterated that the subject of this evening's Public Input Meeting was to solicit ideas from everyone, hoping that a wide variety of creative thoughts and suggestions would help the Futures Committee to focus its efforts and make recommendations to the town, with a potential deadline for reporting being Town Meeting in March 2019.

John reiterated that the Futures Committee wants to hear all voices and that communication back to the community will be through the town's website, and emails to those who provide them. He also encouraged the public to come to the Futures Committee meetings throughout the coming months.

John Hansen next presented his Condition Analysis Report, which is a one-page summary of his findings. **Public comments** included questions about insulation, the acreage of the property, what ADA compliancy would be required in renovations, costs of 'mothballing' the building over the next year and whether that money is in the town budget, and whether the committee has some idea of the costs of renovation. Answers were provided by John Hansen and John Spear as far as we know to date.

Jeff Northgraves discussed zoning – Village 2 – which means no multi-family dwelling, campgrounds, junkyard, outpatient treatment facilities, and some other restrictions.

Jeff then outlined the three basic directions as the Futures Committee sees it:

1. Renovate the building for town use.
2. Demolish the building and use the site for new purposes; sell the land; or develop and RFP process for the sale of the property.
3. Sell the property “as is” either in an auction process, or through an RFP process.

Public Comments included questions about what happens if the town doesn’t accept the property (if RSU 13 sells they can sell to anyone and RSU 13 is in control).

Questions about the skate park were asked – Jan clarified that the town currently has an obligation to maintain the park, and RSU 13’s insurance obligation would transfer to the town.

Cliff Retzlaff then proceeded to elicit ideas for the Butler School, which were recorded by Sandy Retzlaff as following;

School Building Becomes a Community Center

1. Senior Center
2. Community Rooms
3. Youth Areas

Other Public Uses of a Community Center

1. Shelter Space
2. Community Clinic
3. Civic Center (lyceum) lectures, etc.

New Public Uses of School Building

1. Move the Library into the School
2. Move the Post Office into the School
3. Move the Town Offices into the School
4. Move Post Office to Library-Library to School
5. Public Education / Lyceum

Mixed Use Space

1. Public/Commercial Space
 - a. Artist Studios
 - b. Other Commercial Renters

New Use of School Building

1. Bowling Alley

Demolish Building

1. Keep Lot-Turn it into a Ballpark
2. Sell Lots
3. Keep Lot-Evaluate for Future Use

Public Comment-Uses People Don't Want

1. Town as a manager for Commercial Uses of the Building

Other Public Comments. Additional public comments and questions include: market value of the land, market value of the building, ideas about private/public ventures that would bring income, asbestos removal. Many ideas were about community space and provided the most interest among the group. Ideas about mixed usage suggested that the building should provide income, but that the town should not be the management company for that.

Jeff asked for a show of hands as to how many people were attached to the building per se. Two or three people raised their hands, one who had attended the Butler School and one who felt the school was landmark in town. Jeff read three other citizen letters, two in favor of the development of community space for programs, and one for razing the building immediately.

John Spear thanked the group and the meeting was adjourned.

