

Ad-Hoc Academy Investigation Committee
Academy School
Public Meeting – September 25, 2012, 7:00 pm
Meeting Minutes

October 12, 2012

1. Meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm September 25, 2012. In attendance were David Kadamus, Joe Beerbower, Matt Callahan and Jon Pardo.
2. David Kadamus gave a brief introduction to those in attendance about the work of the Academy School building committee. Those remarks were followed by a presentation by DK that began with a history of the Town Green and the role of Academy School building in it. The historical record demonstrates that the Town Green and environs was intended to be center of civic life in town. The work of the committee raises the fundamental question facing the Town; that being whether to retain ownership of Academy building or sell it. The balance of the presentation was devoted to outlining the various options that the committee has identified as likely viable outcomes regarding the Academy School building under the "retained ownership" and "transferred ownership" scenarios.
3. The presentation was followed by a period of public discussion and comment by the committee and those in attendance:

A question was asked of the committee if traffic issues/patterns on Academy Street had been investigated to potentially provide more parking for building and ease congestion.

The issue regarding the Town's ownership and ability to sell building based on stipulations in Daniel Hand's gift to town.

First Selectman Filmore McPherson answered question saying that Town legal counsel has determined that Town of Madison has fulfilled responsibility of Daniel Hand's will and is free to develop or sell property as it sees fit.

Several comments were made regarding the desire to maintain the exterior facade of the building for its historical character and importance to Town history.

A comment was made that the decision to keep or sell the building should be made expeditiously so that the Town does not incur unnecessary costs keeping the building mothballed. As time continues, wear and tear could cause irreparable damage to structure and significantly increase repair costs.

A comment was made expressing desire for the building's first third to remain and the structure to be converted into affordable senior housing.

A question was asked about relocating Town offices to the Academy Building and the resultant effect to existing Town Campus property and its potential for development. DK answered for committee that development plan needed to be undertaken for existing Town Campus property to determine its highest and best use.

A question was asked of the Committee regarding the methodology of the various repair estimates that were part of the presentation. DK answered that the estimates were from prior studies performed on building adjusted for inflation to current prices. Each repair is priced as a "stand alone" project and that economies of scale could perhaps reduce actual prices if a single contractor bid entire project.

A letter was read to the committee from an Academy School graduate who would like to see the building preserved as an important element of Town history and symbol to all who attended school there.

Board of Selectmen member Joan Walker asked committee about status and benefits of enhanced use leases. Matt Callahan answered that any lease granted for an enhanced use lease where tenant, such as Arts Alliance, would pay for repairs to building would naturally require a long term (such as 20 to 50 year term) to make economic sense to justify cost. However, the Town would have the long term benefit of any lease hold improvements if tenant were to vacate space.

A comment was made by resident that they did not care about the physical structure of building but that they wanted the Town to retain an important, centrally located piece of property for future Town use.

Additional comments were made in support of the Town retaining ownership of building with future use to be determined by needs as they arise.

A comment was made regarding declining school populations and aging demographics of town supporting use of property for senior housing.

First Selectman Filmore McPherson thanked all in attendance for comments and encouraged additional input from citizens to committee members.

4. Closing Remarks and Comments. David Kadamus asked those in attendance for any final comments. He stated that all reports would be posted and made available on Committee's section on Town website. He also encouraged those who could not be in attendance to watch taped proceedings on Madison Public Cable TV.

5. Meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.