

# Island Avenue Future Use Committee (Ad Hoc)

## *Final Report*

9 January 2021

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## 1. Overview

### 1.1. Executive Summary

The property containing the Island Avenue School was vacated by Madison Public Schools in June of 2019 with the closing of the school and re-alignment of the Madison Public School District. The property and building have been occupied via lease since the closure by the Our Lady of Mercy Preparatory School (OLM Prep). To facilitate the disposition of the property, the Board of Selectmen stood up this committee which first met on 25 February 2020.

The Ad-Hoc Island Avenue Future Use Committee (IAAC) was tasked via charge:

- “The Committee shall consider and recommend possible uses for and/or disposition of the Island Avenue School Building and associated land. Such use may include municipal use, sale, or leases of all or portion of the building or land, but exclude use as a public school in the Madison Public School District. The Committee should consider the financial impact to the Town including the potential costs, revenue opportunities, and overall economic benefits to the Town as part of its recommended possible uses.”

While the task that this committee was charged with has been completed, we unanimously believe that our job is not complete. *The models used for analysis of the various options are based on assumptions that still need to be validated with information that would be contained within submitted proposals. We desire to advise the Board of Selectmen based upon validated models that have been revised to reflect the submitted proposals.*

### 1.2. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Committee has reached the following conclusions and makes recommendations:

1. The fate of the Island Avenue School Building and Land is important to the residents of the town as the response to the survey was considered above average.
2. The land can support a new septic system that could service up to 25 Multi Family Dwellings or 6 single family dwellings
3. Town Council is resolving the deed restrictions. Resolution of the deed restrictions is not within the scope of this committee’s work.
4. The most immediately available of the options considered with the lowest risk available to the Town of Madison would be sale of the property to a user such as a private school with due consideration to timing and lease expiration.<sup>1</sup>
5. Concurrently, the Town of Madison should proceed with a public Request for Proposal (RFP) to those who would wish to develop the property for the limited uses of (1) Repurposing for a private educational institution, (2) Development of a Single-Family housing development, and (3) Development of a Multi-Family housing development.
6. Upon receipt of proposals, the Town of Madison should engage this committee for guidance in the evaluation of the proposals.

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<sup>1</sup> The current tenant has presented to our committee that they have interest in purchasing the property as soon as possible.

## **2. Responsibilities and Process**

### **2.1. Official Charge**

The Official Charge from the Board of Selectmen to the committee is as follows:

#### **Charge**

- The Committee shall consider and recommend possible uses for and/or disposition of the Island Avenue School Building and associated land. Such use may include municipal use, sale, or leases of all or portion of the building or land, but exclude use as a public school in the Madison Public School District. The Committee should consider the financial impact to the Town including the potential costs, revenue opportunities, and overall economic benefits to the Town as part of its recommended possible uses.
- As part of its deliberations, the Committee should consider the following:
  - Hold public workshops/input sessions to evaluate public opinion, develop feasible options, and determine the financial impact to the public
  - Conduct a public opinion poll to gauge community preferences
  - Consult with appropriate town employees, boards and commissions, governmental agencies, and outside consultants to assist in developing recommendations
  - Co-ordinate with any town strategic planning and or facility planning initiatives
  - Request the Board of Selectmen to solicit RFPs for possible development of building and/or land, if determined to be appropriate

#### **Committee Meetings**

- The Committee shall meet as required to fulfill their charge. Meetings will be noticed and include time for public comment as a standing agenda item.

#### **Committee Composition**

- The committee shall consist of seven members (a quorum will consist of four members) as determined by the Board of Selectmen.

#### **Committee Timeline**

- The committee shall provide a preliminary report to the Board of Selectmen by March 15, 2019 and a final recommendation to the Board of Selectmen by the first Board of Selectmen meeting in June 2020

#### **Membership**

Rich Bonnanzio  
93 Devonshire Lane  
Madison, CT 06443

Jason Brown  
531 Green Hill Road  
Madison, CT 06443

Phil Chamberlain\*  
362 Durham Road  
Madison, CT 06443

Graham Curtis – Chair  
60 Devonshire Lane  
Madison, CT 06443

Athena Nomikos  
104 Randi Drive  
Madison, CT 06443

Joe Paradiso  
25 Lenore Drive  
Madison, CT 06443

Barbara Resnick  
53 Old Farms Road  
Madison, CT 06443

*\*Note the Mr. Chamberlain attended two meetings and then resigned from the committee without replacement.*

## 2.2. *Description of Meetings*

This committee met a total of 17 times between 25 February 2020 and 6 January 2021 including two public information sessions. Most of the meetings were virtual due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There were no meetings from 10 March through 19 May. The meetings were sparsely attended by the public. Additionally, the committee made two presentations regarding our progress to the Board of Selectmen.

Our initial plan was to have a number of Public Input Workshops, similar to the Tri-Board School Facilities Working Group, to gather public input. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic we were unable to hold these public input sessions. In lieu of the public input sessions, and in consideration of the sparsely attended meetings, it was decided to issue an open-ended, not statistically significant public survey to gauge the town resident's desires for the Island Avenue Property. There was a public information Session held which presented the results of our findings.

In accordance with our Charge we systematically sought information from the public via the following sources

- Public comments at our meetings
- Public comments at our Public Information Session
- Results from the online survey
- Presentations to our Committee by invited local groups

Selectman Al Goldberg was the Board of Selectman liaison to our committee and was regularly present at meetings and public information sessions. Town Services Coordinator/Risk Manager Lauren Rhines was our staff facilitator and was present at meetings.

### **3. Method and Findings**

#### **3.1. *Method***

Per the charge, the Committee considered all uses of the property except as a public school. The public survey was used to inform our decision making and provide options which were acceptable to town residents. The survey was open-ended; asking residents what they would want done with the property and why. The committee also commissioned a septic feasibility study, performed by Thomas A. Stevens & Associates, Inc. of Madison. The purpose of the feasibility study was to give another decision-making data point. The survey and the results of the septic feasibility study were then combined to result in feasible options that were favored by town residents. Finally, a decision matrix was used so those feasible options would be ranked in order of most desirable to least desirable.

3.2. *Decision Matrix/Evaluation of Solutions*

Table 1 shows the results of the decision matrix. The four highest ranking choices are as follows:

- Sell the property to Our Lady of Mercy Preparatory School
- Sell the property to a developer for Multi-Family Community
- Sell the Property to a developer for a Single Family Community
- Lease the Property to Our Lady of Mercy Preparatory School

*Table 1: Decision Matrix Results<sup>2</sup>*

	<b>Sell to OLM</b>	<b>Sell to Developer for Multi-Family</b>	<b>Sell to Developer for Single Famil</b>	<b>Lease Property to OLM</b>	<b>Sell to Developer for Affordable Housing</b>	<b>Dog Park</b>	<b>Open Space</b>	<b>Public Facility</b>	<b>Commercial Use</b>
<b>Overall Rating</b>	3.22	2.10	2.53	2.67	1.58	1.94	2.14	1.78	1.26
<b>Resident Satisfaction</b>	3.83	2.50	3.67	3.33	1.50	1.67	1.50	1.83	0.67
<b>Risk</b>	1.33	3.17	2.67	1.83	3.00	1.67	1.17	2.67	4.00
<b>Reward</b>	3.50	3.33	3.17	2.67	2.00	0.83	0.67	1.67	2.67
<b>Public Safety Concerns</b>	1.00	2.50	1.50	1.67	2.83	1.50	1.00	2.17	3.67

<sup>2</sup> Results subject to change subject to information obtained from issues RFP