

**Notes from North Country Council Presentation
To Discuss Survey Results
About the Former Jefferson Elementary School Building**

**January 31, 2019
7:00 p.m.**

Cindy Silver, on behalf of the Select Board, welcomed those who had come to the school building to hear a presentation of the results of survey which had been mailed to 725 registered voters in the town. She introduced Michelle Morin-Grey and Danica Melone from North Country Council, of which the town of Jefferson is a member, and who have assisted in the preparation of the survey and summary of the results.

Ms. Morin-Grey began by saying the survey response rate was excellent with 51% of surveys sent being returned. A very common response rate is usually in the 10-15% range and this high rate is indicative that the survey data collected is both very significant and reflective of the community.

She said almost 80% of respondents indicated that the school property should be used as a place to increase and strengthen community connections with neighbors and friends with 61% responding the school shouldn't be sold. This appears to be the central goals of the community.

In order to meet these apparent goals respondents indicated which town organizations or departments should be housed in the building. The top three choices were the library at 88.4%, the town offices at 64.85%, and a senior center at 60.7%. There was a question raised about the focus being more on the older population of the town rather than its youth. Ms. Morin-Grey said this is because there are more older members in the community. This is a demographic seen across our state which indicates an aging population. But that doesn't mean younger generation activities will be precluded.

Survey respondents were asked if they would like to see the building spaces leased or rented. The majority indicated they were neutral saying they are not sure of what opportunities may be out there and how they would mesh with the primary goals as outlined above. Select Board members said there were already some groups in Jefferson and other communities asking about using the space. Meeting attendees seemed to feel it important that such potential use of the building generate income to help offset the cost to taxpayers of having to maintain such a facility. Ms. Morin-Grey said the picture becomes clearer after a primary use is identified. It is too early to determine answers to the questions raised until the primary uses are agreed upon. A word diagram was shown, the larger the word appeared the more times the word was used in survey responses. The largest word was "library", followed in order of size by "town", "feasibility", "offices", "cost", "center", and "taxes". Many other words in smaller letters completed the diagram.

As to what the next step in the process should be, a majority of respondents agreed or were neutral about the Select Board preparing a warrant article for Town Meeting to look at the feasibility of program costs, is there a market for the use, and to develop a business plan. Will money for this study be in the budget? Some renovations and building have been done by the town in the past but nothing to compare to the scope of this project. Should the town confer with other towns of similar demographics to see what was done and what problems were

encountered? Dalton was mentioned as one of those towns. How does moving the library or offices from current spaces affect other areas of the town? The library capital reserve fund (CRF) for a new library building could be repurposed. The cost of a feasibility study would probably run \$12,000. or more but outside funding sources might become available. A warrant article would be needed to sell the property slated for siting a library building, but the town isn't at the point to ask such a question as yet. Parking at the school was brought up. Some people felt it needed to be improved to accommodate the numbers expected to use the school. Members of the Select Board updated meeting attendees on repairs and upgrades made to the heating system, including the 5- year old pellet boiler, thermostats, and alarms as well as how the building is being monitored and currently maintained. The assistant Fire Marshall has visited the building and said it should be fine to use the building for whatever use is contemplated.

When asked about the costs associated with maintaining the building and site or making changes, the Select Board indicated they are still working on the budget ahead of Town Meeting and said they aren't going to rush in to any decisions. This is going to be a long process.

Ms. Morin-Grey thanked those who had come out to the meeting and said they would try to answer any questions any individual still wanted to ask. People were invited to tour the building if they hadn't already done so. The meeting was adjourned about 8 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted
Charlene Wheeler

Saturday February 2, 2018 9:00 am North Country Council Survey Results Presentation

In addition to the information that was presented and discussed at the Thursday presentation the following also was brought up.

One issue that was brought up on Saturday was looking for an anchor business that would complement the primary town uses of the building(library, town officers and library) to help defer the cost of operating and maintaining the building.

It was asked if when considering having a senior center would the local seniors be canvased to determine what type of programs they would want and use, or would they even use a facility.

Ms. Morin-Grey said that a feasibility study could be geared to finding a suitable anchor partner and to make personal contact with the local seniors to find out what their needs/wants of a center would be.

Submitted by
Linda Cushman