**Final Report**

**Gilford Butler School**

**Futures Committee**

**Submitted to the Selectboard**

**Town of South Thomaston**

**July 11, 2019**

New town website address:***souththomaston.me***

**Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Selectboard of the Town of South Thomaston (hereinafter the Town) with the Gilford Butler School Futures Committee’s (hereinafter the Committee) recommendations regarding the future of the Gilford Butler School property. The report also provides a detailed description of the Committee’s activities for the period July 19, 2018 to July 11, 2019 as well as additional background information.

**The Committee recommends that:**

1. **the Town retain ownership of the Gilford Butler School property once it is conveyed to the Town by RSU 13 and the State of Maine.**
2. **as soon as practical, and on a temporary basis, the Town library relocate to the existing Gilford Butler School building and that a classroom(s) be utilized for community space. This recommendation is contingent on the strict condition that except for building maintenance and other code compliant purposes, the basement floor not be utilized.**
3. **the Town retain and maintain the existing playground and skateboard park.**
4. **the Selectboard create a *Library and Community Center Facility Committee* to plan and fundraise for the construction of a new building, consisting of approximately 4,500 square feet, to house a Town owned library and community center.**
5. **the new building be an energy efficient “green” building, and designed in a manner that is flexible and easily expandable to meet the Town’s future long-term space needs.**
6. **the *Library and Community Center Facility Committee* consider incorporating a nonprofit membership corporation to secure donations, grants, and other funds to support construction of a new building and related infrastructure described in #4 above and that said non-profit corporation seek Section 501(c)3 tax exempt status from the U. S. Internal Revenue Service and the State of Maine. The Committee envisions that planning and fund raising could take up to five years.**
7. **no local property tax or other traditional municipal revenue be utilized to fund the capital costs of constructing the new building except for $75,000, which could serve as a catch match that many grants require. The Committee recommends that the Town establish a reserve account and fund it in the total amount of $75,000 over the next 5 years. The Committee envisions that these funds would be used for demolition of the existing building or be put towards renovation of the building if it ends up being renovated.**

**Background**

The Gilford Butler School was built in the early 1950s and opened in the fall of 1955. It replaced 5 one- or two-room neighborhood schools then operating in Town. Of which, interestingly enough, 4 still stand today, although their uses have been repurposed.

The school is located at 54 Spruce Head Road also known as Route 73. It is serviced by a sidewalk that leads to the Weskeag Village. The site contains approximately 2.5 acres. Located on the site is the existing school building of approximately 13,033, including the basement level floor, a drilled well, septic tank and leach field, a small playground, a skateboard park and a paved driveway and parking area.

In its early years the Town operated the Gilford Butler School. And for a few years it also housed the Town’s first ambulance and fire truck in the ground level entrance basement on one end of the building. In 1963 or 1964 the three municipalities of South Thomaston, Owls Head and Rockland formed MSAD 5, under the provisions of the Sinclair Act. Consequently the operation and ownership of Gilford Butler was transferred to MSAD 5. In 2009 MSAD 5 and MSAD 50 merged to form RSU 13. At that point operation and ownership of Gilford Butler was transferred to RSU 13.

In June 2018 RSU 13 closed the school. Because Gilford Butler was a “pre-SAD school”, under State law the RSU had to offer the school to the Town at no cost. At a meeting on August 2, 2018 the school was offered to the Town by a unanimous vote of the RSU 13 Board of Directors. Under the law, the Town had to vote to whether or not to accept the property. The Town did vote to accept it at special town meeting held on October 30, 2018.

**The Committee**

Anticipating that the Town, after more than a half century, might once again own the Gilford Butler School, in June 2018 the Selectboard created, and appointed members to serve on an ad hoc advisory committee. The Committee became known as the Gilford Butler School Futures Committee.

In brief the Committee’s “charter” was to discuss and evaluate possible options for the future of the Gilford Butler School including describing the pros and cons of each option, rank ordering the options and, if so inclined, offer a recommendation.

The Committee currently consists of the following members: John Spear, Chair, Jeff Northgraves, Vice Chair, Pennie Alley, Ervin Curtis, Sandy Reztlaff, Sandy Weisman and its newest member, Merle Rockwell who was appointed on March 12, 2019. Former members include Eileen Skarka and Bryan Calderwood who resigned effective October 31, 2018 and February 25, 2019, respectively.

The Committee met 25 times between July 19, 2018 and July 11, 2019. Three of those meetings were public input solicitation meetings. Agendas for all Committee meetings were posted at the Town Office and at other public places within the Town. They were also published on the Town’s website until December 17, 2018 when the Town’s website failed to remain operational. The Town’s website became operational again on June 14, 2019. Meeting agendas that were not posted will hopefully soon be posted.

Minutes for all Committee meetings are on file at the Town Office and were posted on the Town’s website up until September 26, 2018. These omissions also result from the failure of the Town’s website and hopefully will soon be posted.

The Committee acknowledges that the Town’s website not being operational for over 5 months has hampered its ability to communicate with the public. The Committee apologizes for this, but it is a matter outside of the Committee’s control.

**Soliciting Public Input**

The Committee held two public input sessions at the Municipal Building. The first on September 26, 2018, the second April 4, 2019 and the last on July 7, 2019. Attendees numbered approximately 40,50 and 80, respectively.

The September 26, 2018 meeting was held early on in the process as several Committee members felt strongly that a public input meeting should be convened before any direction or consensus began to emerge at the Committee level. Notice of the meeting was published in the Town Newsletter that was issued in August 2018. Notice of the session was also in the local news media, the Town’s website, and on lawn signs at the library and Town Office.

A summary of the public comments received at the September 26 meeting is on file at the Town Office and posted on the Town’s website. The comments from this meeting were broad and wide ranging and many questions regarding the condition of the existing building were posed.

On April 4, 2019 a second public input meeting was held. By this date the Committee had collected much more information, and its collective thinking had begun to coalesce around the concept of recommending that the property be utilized for a community center/library. Notice of the meeting was published in the Free Press and Courier Gazette. A bulk mailed post card was sent to every address covered by the Weskeag (04858) and Spruce Head (04859) post office zip codes. Notice was posted on the Town’s website and on lawn signs at the library and Town Office.

A summary of the public comments received at the April 4th meeting is on file at the Town Office and will be posted on the Town’s website. The comments from this meeting were in general supportive of using the property for a community center/library. There was not, however, anything approaching a consensus on the question whether to renovate the existing building or to build new.

On July 7, 2019 a third public input meeting was held at the Gilford Butler School. The purpose of this meeting was to present and receive comments and questions on the Committee’s draft report. Notice of the meeting was published in the Pen Bay Pilot, Free Press and Courier Gazette. A bulk mailed post card was sent to every address covered by the Weskeag (04858) and Spruce Head (04859) post office zip codes. Notice was posted on the Town’s website and on lawn signs at the library, the Town Office and at the Gilford Butler School.

A summary of the public comments and questions received is on file at the Town Office and will be posted on the Town’s website. The comments from this meeting were in general supportive of using the property for a community center/library. Support for the Committee’s recommendation to use the property for a community center/library seemed very positive. The question whether to renovate the existing building or to build new continues to lack consensus. The question whether relocate the library into the existing building in the short term on a temporary basis also seemed to lack consensus. There were several questions concerning the recommendation to create a non-profit cooperation to assist in fundraising, particularly as it relates to distribution of assets should it fail in its fund raising goals.

The Committee also developed a one-page survey and comment solicitation sheet that was initially distributed at the October 30, 2018 special town meeting. Subsequent to that date it had been available at the Town Office, the library, and local stores. A smaller version was created and was included in the Town Report mailing in March. As of July 11, 2019, sixty-four surveys have been received and are summarized as follows:

1. Sell the property = 14
2. Sell the property with restrictions = 1
3. Demolish the building and use the property as a park = 7
4. Demolish the building and use the property for parking = 2
5. Demolish the building and build new = 8
6. Reuse the existing building = 37

Committee meetings were open to the public and included a public comment item on the agenda. Members of the public were invited to comment during the course of the meetings as well, as public attendance was sparse and the practice did not prove disruptive. Generally there was no member of the public present. On a handful of occasions there were one or two people present; at the June 3rd meeting 6 members of the public were present.

**Assessing the Facilities’ Condition**

At its August 9, 2018 meeting the Committee initially convened at the Gilford Butler School and spent approximately 1½ hours touring and inspecting the building and the grounds.

The top floor of the existing building contains 5 classrooms approximately 24 feet by 36 feet. Additionally, it contains a teacher’s room, office space, two restrooms, a janitor’s closet, a front entry way leading to the main door and a corridor that runs the length of the long axis of the building terminating at exterior entry doors at each end of the building. It totals approximately 6,488 square feet.

A basement level bottom floor contains a storage area, boiler room, kitchen, three small classrooms and a multipurpose area that served as a library and cafeteria. It totals approximately 6,545 square feet. There are no toilets in the basement.

The Committee engaged Architect John Hansen to conduct an initial preliminary non-invasive assessment of the facility. Mr. Hansen issued his report on September 26, 2018. Mr. Hansen’s report describes the facility in great detail and hence will only be briefly summarized here. A complete copy of the report is on file and is posted on the Town’s website.

While the report indicated that the school was “a substantial building with exterior walls of brick and concrete block…” the report also listed many deficiencies and raised several concerns. A few of the more significant items are as follows:

1. Access to the building is not compliant with the American With Disabilities Act (ADA).
2. The bathrooms are not compliant with ADA.
3. The EDPM rubber roof is 18 years old and has a life expectancy of 20 years.
4. The general condition of the waste water disposal system is unknown, other than the fact that the leech field is quite old.
5. There are a minimal number of electrical outlets and the entrance service is undersized. Subsequent to the issue of Mr. Hansen’s report, the electrician (Alley Electric and Electronics) who has serviced the building for many years, advised that many of the circuits are not grounded and that the entire building should be rewired.
6. The exterior windows and vinyl siding are in poor condition.
7. There is no insulation in the exterior walls and there is no easy way to rectify this.
8. The heating system is steam and the piping and controls are old and appear to be in poor condition. Subsequent to Mr. Hansen’s report being issued, the Siemens HVAC technician who has serviced the building for many years, advised that the system has been quite reliable for its age, but being a steam system, it does generate uneven heating and is difficult to control.
9. The main stairway to the basement and the “doghouse” exit from the basement is not code compliant with the governing Life Safety Code.

On May 21, 2019 Mr. Hansen issued a second report titled Alternatives for South Thomaston Community Center and Library. A portion of that report discusses structural observations that Mr. Hansen made subsequent to his first report of September 26, 2018. This second report indicates that an examination above the suspended ceiling and insulation layer revealed a roof framing system with a structural capacity of 35 lbs per square foot, which is about 50% of the current code requirements. This led Mr. Hansen to recommend if renovation of the facility is the eventual chosen option, then a structural analysis of the entire structure, including the first-floor framing, should be conducted.

**Code Compliance**

Heretofore, the building has been pre-existing non-conforming, or “grandfathered,” under the Life Safety Code as Education Occupancy on the first floor and as Education, Assembly Occupancy and Storage in the basement. A change of use will cause the building to lose its grandfathered status and will require that the building fully comply with whatever current Life Safety Code requirements apply to the new use**. As unintuitive as this may seem, this requirement creates a significant financial impediment to renovating the existing building and should not be dismissed or ignored.**

As noted above, the building is not ADA compliant. Access to the building and the existing bathrooms are both deficient. Also, there is no elevator between the two floors and, if the building remains in municipal ownership, it is not eligible for an “elevator exemption”. Basically, if over $600,000 is spent renovating the building, installation of an elevator would be required. And while it may not technically be an ADA compliance violation, having no accessible route between floors is problematic as is having no bathrooms in the basement, absent an elevator.

**Space Needs Assessment**

Early in its process the Committee heard testimony from several Town officials regarding space needs. Those officials included Pennie Alley, Librarian, Terri Baines, former Town Administrator, Bryan Calderwood, Fire Chief, Amy Dyer, Ambulance Director, Betty Thomas, EMA Director, and John Snow, former CEO.

Needs mentioned by these officials were a larger library, more Town Office space, more storage (particularly fire department and Town Office), training areas for EMS/Fire Department, EMS Directors office, EMS bunk room.

Some Committee members and members of the public have also mentioned a place to hold town meetings, larger library, senior/youth/community center, emergency shelter, parking, indoor physical recreation (exercise classes, yoga, etc.) outdoor recreational areas as well as meeting spaces for service organizations (e.g. Lions Club, Scouts etc.), group knitting and card and other game activities and relocating the Weskeag Post Office.

The Committee began to evaluate some of these space ‘needs, wants and desires’ and even started to establish some very rough square footage numbers for different options and permutations.  The Committee also discussed which of these needs/desires could potentially be served by common multi-use spaces.

Additionally, in the middle of this process, the Fire Chief and new Town Administrator indicated that they both felt that in the near term they could work with the current space in the municipal building by using it in a more efficient manner.

It was decided that this type of assessment was beyond the scope of the Committee’s charter and expertise.  The Town probably could make good use of a comprehensive ‘Space Needs Assessment’, but it should be part of a broader strategic planning effort.

As a result of these factors the Committee did not further pursue a comprehensive space needs analysis but began to focus exclusively on what the space needs of a community center/library might entail. It should be noted, however, that the Committee did not conclude that no other Town space needs exist or will exist in the future, which is one of the reasons why an easily expandable new building is recommended.

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**Options for Future Use of the Property**

The Committee’s “charter” from the Selectboard requested that the Committee list and rank the various options it considered. **T**he Committee did discuss and evaluate many options, some much more extensively than others. There are literally dozens, if not hundreds, of sub options and permutations. What follows is a list of the basic options, **in addition to the recommended option,** thatwere given serious consideration by the Committee. It is in rank order with the Committee second preference listed as number 2 and its least preferred option listed as number 11.

1. Demolish the existing building in the near term and fund raise to construct new building to house a community center/library.
2. Demolish the existing building but retain ownership of the property with no immediate development plans.
3. Mothball the existing building and retain ownership of property and the existing building with no immediate development plans.
4. Mothball the existing building and fund raise to renovate the building to house a community center/library.
5. Move the library into the existing building in the near term on a temporary basis (up to five years) and use a classroom(s) for community functions and fund raise to renovate a portion of the top floor of the existing building to house a community center/library.
6. Sell property with conditions and contingencies including a possible public/private partnership.
7. Retain ownership of the property but lease a portion of the existing building and utilize a portion of the building in a public/private partnership.
8. Move the library into the existing building in the near term on a permanent basis and use a classroom(s) for community functions and incrementally renovate the building to house a community center/library.
9. Retain ownership of the property but lease the entire existing building.
10. Sell the property with no conditions or contingencies.

Please note that all options, except 7, 10 and 11, contemplate maintaining the playground and skate board park.

From its inception the Committee dedicated a portion of each meeting conducting “visioning” discussions regarding possible future use options for the facility. The discussion was informal and free flowing, but quite productive. The first question was whether the Town should **sell the property or retain ownership** for some sort of public purpose.

The idea of selling the property immediately led to a “fork in the road” second question. That is, should the property be sold outright with no strings attached or should it be sold through some sort of controlled request for proposal (RFP) process.

Initially there was some interest in trying to determine if a bona fide and realistic private redevelopment plan, by a financially capable buyer/developer, was feasible. Consequently the Committee contemplated soliciting “letters of interest” or “intent” for possible private development concepts from private for profit as well as private nonprofit entities.

This was never followed up on as it was felt that if interest did exist, it would result in little or no value the Town. Rather quickly a majority of Committee members rejected the option of selling the property for different and various reasons, including:

1. that the “village” location of the property, with its visibility and accessibility, is ideal for public use purposes.
2. that the location of the property is ideal for a public use purpose, and the land should be retained in Town ownership for future development as a “municipal center” or similar purpose, perhaps incrementally over time based on a master plan.
3. that a sale will bring little or no value to the Town.
4. that even if a sale is finalized through a controlled RFP process any “guarantees” would be expensive and difficult, if not impossible, to enforce.

The Committee dismissed the option of retaining ownership and leasing all or part of the building due to the extent of renovations required, and the belief that the Town does not have the administrative capacity to be in the property management business and should not be in that business. In particular there was considerable public interest and committee discussion regarding leasing part of the building to the US Postal Service. It quickly became clear that such an arrangement would be extremely difficult to organize due to the postal services’ space procurement process and requirements.

The Committee asked for an appraisal of the property that the Selectboard attempted to obtain. But when the appraisal never materialized the Committee decided to move forward without it and voted the recommend that the sale option not be pursued.

The options of demolishing or mothballing the existing building but retaining ownership of the property with no immediate development plans never seemed to garner much support from committee members. The general consensus seemed to be that while one of these options may end up being a fall back option, to plan for it fails to seize upon the opportunity that the turn back of the property represents.

As the Committee’s deliberations progressed the membership began to coalesce around the concept of using the property for a community center/library. This concept was reinforced by the comments voiced at the public input meeting held on April 4, 2019. It was also reinforced by several letters and emails the Committee received as well as by comments voiced to individual Committee members. The concept was also somewhat reinforced by the 64 completed surveys submitted to the Committee.

Consequently, at its meeting of April 22, 2019 the Committee decided that henceforth it would operate under the assumption that its draft recommendation would be that the property would be utilized as a Town-owned library, community center, and playground/skate park,

The Committee did not at that time address the questions of whether to recommend:

1. renovating the existing building or constructing a new building.
2. relocating the library to the existing building in the near term on a permanent basis and incrementally renovating the building.
3. relocating the library to the existing build in the near term on a temporary basis.

At that point the Committee requested that Mr. Hansen evaluate if it would be more cost effective in the long term to rehab the existing facility or demolish it and build new. At first the Committee requested the evaluation be conducted on a square foot assumption equal to the first floor of the existing building, or approximately 6,488 square feet. The Committee subsequently amended that request based on an assumption of 4,500 square feet. The downsized square footage was requested when it was realized that neither renovating or building new 6,488 square feet reflected the immediate space needs, created a larger than necessary community room and was simply cost prohibitive.

At the Committee meeting of May 15, 2019, the Committee briefly revisited the option of moving the library into the existing building in the near term on a permanent basis and incrementally renovating the existing building to house a community center/library. One Committee member stated that in her opinion this was the only financially viable option and was the option of choice for most townspeople. The counter arguments to this option was that while some work could be accomplished on an incremental basis a significant amount work would need to be completed up front.

**Evaluating Similar Projects in Nearby Towns**

As the Committee began to coalesce around the idea of utilizing the property as a community center and library two Committee members, Sandy Retzlaff and Sandy Weisman, volunteered to gather information regarding similar projects undertaken in nearby communities. They ended up reporting back to the Committee information gathered from the towns of Appleton, Cushing, Lincolnville, Searsmont and St. George. Their final report was presented at the public input meeting of April 4, 2019. All of the projects they evaluated were similar in that a building was renovated or newly constructed to house a library and other community activities, and that the project had been completed in the last 20 years. Another commonality was that planning and fund raising took 4 to 5 years.

The projects were all also very different from one another. For example, governance structures varied greatly, ranging from strictly town owned, operated and funded to strictly privately owned, operated and funded.

Another fact of note was that four of the five projects were undertaken or assisted by a nonprofit corporation with a tax deductable exemption status under section 501 (c) (3) of the IRS tax code. The one exception to this was Cushing, where funds to incrementally renovate the old Cushing Community School were exclusively local municipal revenues and no associated nonprofit corporation was involved.

**Renovate or Build New?**

At the Committee’s meeting of May 15th Mr. Hansen reviewed a draft of his second report. This report was titled Alternatives for South Thomaston Community Center and Library. A final version dated May 21, 2019 is on file at the Town Office and will be posted on the Town’s website.

This report addressed the Committee’s amended request to estimate the cost to renovate 4,500 square feet, including 1750 square feet for a community center (10 sq/ft/person for 175 people), 2,000 square feet for a library (approximately twice the current library size) and 750 square feet for toilets, kitchen, entryway, etc.

Mr. Hansen estimates that the cost to renovate 4,500 square feet on the first floor of the existing building would be **$1,145,300**. In actuality under the renovation scenario the 4,500 square would likely end up being nearer to 5,300 square feet due to the room arrangements and the configuration and structural nature of the corridor walls in the existing building.

Highlights of what the $1,145,300 includes are:

1. ADA compliance deficiencies including building access, bathrooms and an elevator.
2. Life safety code deficiencies on both the first floor and in the basement including reconstructing and enclosing the main stairway and renovating the “doghouse” exit from the basement.
3. mechanical upgrades including converting the heating system from steam to hot water with new radiation units and multiple zones.
4. upgrading/expanding the electrical system
5. installing a new roof, replacing windows and conducting other exterior envelope repairs
6. removing some structural walls and modifying the structural system to enable the creation of a large community room

It should be noted that for cost comparison purpose the renovation estimate purposely does not include remodeling the basement floor, except for remediating the Life Safety Code deficiencies, and also does not include about 1000 square feet on the first floor.

The $1,145,300 does not include funds to:

1. upgrade the roof framing system, the need for which was confirmed after the issue of the report.
2. upgrade the basement and first floor structural framing system if it is determined that deficiencies exist. Please note that at the Committee meeting of June 3, 2019 a motion was made to procure a structural analysis but died for lack of a second. The recommendation of Mr. Hansen, as well as the majority of the Committee, was that it was not needed if the Committee’s recommendation to build new was pursued. Additionally no funds were budgeted to pay for the analysis estimated to $2,000 cost.
3. Insulate the exterior walls. This is not included as there is no good method to accomplish this and all methods would include covering up the exterior brick.

The $1,145,300 also does not include a 26% add on for so called soft costs, mainly architectural, engineering and other fees (16%) and a contingency (10%). Inclusion of the 26% would add another $297,778 for a grand total of **$1,443,078.**

Mr. Hansen estimates that new construction would cost $225 per square foot, assuming that the existing well and the waste water disposal system is in place and remains serviceable and that a significant portion of the driveway and parking area can be maintained. This results in a base cost $1,012,500 plus $75,000 for demolition of the existing building for a total of **$**1,087,500.

It is contemplated that the new building would be a single story and designed to be flexible and easily expandable in the future. It would have a pitched roof compatible with the village area, which would also facilitate solar panel installation in the future. The goal would be to reduce energy consumption by 80% compared to the existing building current consumption.

The $1,087,500 does not include a 16% add on for so called soft costs, mainly architectural, engineering and other fees (11%) and a contingency (5%). Inclusion of the 16% would add another $174,000 for a grand total of **$1,261,500.**

Bear in mind that all of the above dollar amounts are rough estimates generated for planning purposes to comparatively evaluate the cost of renovation versus new construction. For more details please refer directly to Mr. Hansen’s report.

The difference between renovating at $1,443,078 and building new at $1,261,500 is $181,578, or 14.39%. While this is not a major difference it is over 10% percentage points, a difference that many people would consider as the point of statistical significance at this stage in the planning process.

At its May 15th meeting the Committee decided, by a 5-1 vote, that its Draft Report recommend the construction of a new building consisting of approximately 4,500 square feet to house a community center and library

Comments voiced in support of constructing a new building as opposed to renovating the existing building were as follows.

1. The existing building is simply too big for the Town’s current needs.

whereas a new building would be appropriately sized.

1. Due to the layout of the existing building, renovation will require 5,300 square feet to accomplish what can be accomplished with 4,500 square feet in new construction.
2. A new building would be configured in a manner that is flexible and easily expandable to meet future needs.
3. The existing building does not currently have an optimal space for a community room, and renovation to create an optimal space is extremely costly.
4. A new building would be a “green” energy efficient building with significantly lower operating costs, whereas it will be extremely difficult and expensive to renovate the existing building to a comparable level of energy efficiency.
5. Construction of a new building is estimated to be slightly less expensive and that gap widens if funds to remediate the roof framing system, and possibly even other structural elements were to be included. The renovation estimate also does not include insulating the walls of the existing building as there is no practical method to accomplish that without completely remodeling the exterior of the building.
6. It typically is easier to fund raise and procure grants for new construction as opposed to renovation.

Comments voiced in support of renovating the existing building as opposed to constructing a new building were as follows.

1. The existing building is of historical significance to the Town, particularly to the many residents who attended the school or whose children and even grandchildren attended the school, and hence it is important to keep it.
2. The estimated costs are overstated in that with a renovation project a significant portion of the labor could be performed by volunteers or by local tradesmen at reduced rates, material donations or reduced procurements are more likely and the level of finishes do not need to be at new construction standards.
3. Fundraising and grant procurement will be facilitated, particularly if the building is up and running on a temporary basis.

**Temporarily Using the Existing Building in the Near Term**

At its May 15th meeting the Committee decided, by a 5-1 vote, that its draft report recommend that assoon as practical, and on a temporary basis, that the library relocate to existing Gilford Butler School and that a classroom(s) on the first floor be used for a community room(s). This recommendation is contingent on the strict condition that except for building maintenance and other code compliant purposes, the basement floor not be utilized due to existing Life Safety Code deficiencies***.***

Initially Mr. Hansen roughly estimated that it could cost anywhere between $50,000 to $200,000 to prepare the building to use it in the near term and on a temporary basis (4/5 years).

Subsequent to providing that estimate, Mr. Hansen met with one of the Plan Reviewers at the State Fire Marshal's Office. They discussed the change of use requirements of the Life Safety Code as it would apply to new Business use. Mr. Hansen explained the desire of the committee to use a portion of the upper floor without having to correct the deficiencies associated with the lower level, for a period of 4 to 5 years while raising funds for a new building.

After a review of the available exits on the upper level, handicapped accessibility, the existence of a sprinkler system and a fire alarm of some sort, the Plan Reviewer stated that if the interior door to the lower level was sealed so that it would take more than a simple key to open the door, and that it was understood that the lower level could not be used as an occupied space, the Town would not have to correct the egress deficiencies. This would be for the temporary use period only.

Another condition was that the Town provide handicapped access to 2 of the existing 3 upper level exits and that both the "boys" and "girls" toilet rooms be made ADA accessible.

Mr. Hansen points out that this was a non-binding preliminary review so there is nothing from the Fire Marshal in writing to confirm these conditions. But Mr. Hansen stated that if the Town made a formal application as described within 6 months, that a permit would most likely be issued.

As a result of this meeting with the Fire Marshal’s office, Mr. Hansen revised his estimate regarding the cost to temporarily move into the existing building and use a portion of the first floor down to a low end of $26,000 and a high end of $75,000.

Mr. Hansen did remind the committee that the building has a roof that could fail anytime but may be able to be patched to get 5 more years out of it and the piping for the heating system could also fail at any time and need repairs.

Comments voiced in support of temporarily moving into to the building in the near term were that it:

1. would enable the townspeople to utilize the resource in the near term.
2. would assist the Town to assess the cost to operate and maintain the building.
3. could potentially generate momentum and enthusiasm surrounding the larger fundraising effort.
4. would ensure that the building was maintained and available for possible backup alternative options should the fundraising efforts for construction of a new building not succeed.

Comments voiced in opposition to temporarily moving into to the building in the near term were that it:

1. could potentially dampen momentum and enthusiasm surrounding the larger fundraising effort.
2. would spend funds to repair and maintain the building when those funds could be used towards supporting the new construction project.
3. could potentially result in competition in fund raising and grant solicitation efforts between supporting the temporary move and the new construction project.
4. would mean the library would need to vacate the premises and relocate during the new construction project.

**Future Planning and Fundraising**

The Committee is recommending:

1. that the Selectboard establish a Library and Community Center Facility Committee to develop a plan for the construction of the new building.
2. that no local property tax or other traditional municipal revenue be utilized to fund the capital costs of constructing the new building except for the cost of asbestos removal from and demolishing of the existing building. This is recommended as it is believed that it would be difficult to fund raise or procure a grant for these costs. Additionally many grants require some level of a cash “match” and these funds could potentially serve that purpose.
3. paying for the construction of the new building by fundraising for donations and procuring grants. Based on the experiences of the five similar projects in nearby municipalities described above, it is anticipated that this process could take four to five years.
4. that Library and Community Center Facility Committee consider creating an associated nonprofit corporation which would seek tax exemption status under section 501 (C) 3 of the IRS code.

The purpose of the non-profit organization would be to assist in the solicitation of donations and procuring of grants for the capital project, but not to assume ownership and/or operational control of the property and the Community center.

Several members believe that creation of such an organization is critical to the success of the fund raising efforts as many potential donors and grant makers will not contribute or grant funds directly to a municipality. They also point out that four of five of the comparative projects evaluated created such an organization.

Some Committee members expressed concerns that creation of such an organization could potentially lead to the erosion of voter control of the project and even to the divergent interests between the organization and the Town.

**Miscellaneous Notes**

1. All estimates included in this report assume “arms length transactions”, and do not consider volunteer or reduced rate labor, donations or reduced rate materials or equipment charges. Which is not to say that such arrangements are not endorsed by the Committee.
2. The cost estimate to remove the asbestos containing materials identified by the RSU 13 AHERA reports as present in the building is approximately $26,600. A “budget number”, (not a formal price quote) to demolish the existing building and fill the cellar hole was $48,000.
3. If the Library vacates the “Little Red School House”, which is town property obviously something will need to be done with that building. Based on informal anecdotal information the Committee assumes that the Historical Society would be interested in amending its current lease with the town to assume occupancy, operation and maintenance of that facility. The Committee has not however researched that matter and makes no recommendation in that regard as it believes it is outside the scope of its work. It is mentioned here simply to bring it to the attention of the Selectboard.

**Motions and Dispositions**

The following lists the date of the Committee meetings at which a motion was made, the precise motions and their dispositions.

At its August 9, 2018 meeting the Committee voted 7-0, with one member absent, to **“*recommend to the Selectboard and the town’s people, barring significant catastrophic environmental hazards, to accept the Gilford Butler School property*.”**

At its August 9, 2018 meeting the Committee voted 7-0, with one member absent, that **“*the Committee recommends the Selectboard go forward with a condition assessment of the GBS property prior to the September 26 public input meeting if possible, if not no later than the special town meeting.*”**

At its November 1, 2018 meeting the Committee voted 6-0, with one member absent, that **“*the Committee recommends that the “Private*” *option not be explored or pursued at this point.”***

At its November 1, 2018 meeting the Committee voted 6-0, with one member absent, that **“*the Committee recommends that the Selectboard “moth ball” the Gilford Butler school and budget funds in 2019 for that purpose, for administrative costs for the Committee to conduct further public input solicitations and to hire professional assistance to help the Committee to develop cost estimates for different possible options.*”**

At its April 22, 2019 meeting the Committee voted 6-0, with one member absent, ***“that until if and when this motion is rescinded by a subsequent vote of this Committee, that henceforth this Committee shall operate under the assumption that it will be this Committee recommendation that the Gilford Butler School property be utilized as the site of a Town-owned Community Center, Library, and Playground/Skate park with related appurtenances such as parking, restrooms, kitchen and utility/custodial room, and I further move that approval of this motion does not presuppose that the existing structure will or will not be utilized to house the aforementioned facilities.”***

At its May 15, 2019 meeting the Committee voted 5-1, with one member absent, **“*that the Committee's draft report recommend that as soon as practical, and on a temporary basis, that the library relocate to, and utilize classrooms, the teachers, room and principal’s office at the existing Gilford Butler School and another classroom(s) be utilized for a community room and that one bathroom be utilized as a gender neutral restroom, and I further move that this recommendation is contingent on the strict condition that except for building maintenance and other code compliant purposes, the basement floor not be utilized”.***

At its May 15, 2019 meeting the Committee voted 5-1, with one member absent, ***“that the Committee’s Draft Report recommend that the Select Board establish a Library and Community Centers Facility Committee to plan and fund raise for the construction of a new building to house a library and community center consisting of approximately 4,500 square feet and that when sufficient non-municipal funds have been secured, the town construct such a facility on the school property”.***

At its June 3, 2019 meeting the Committee voted 3-3. The motion failed, with one member absent, “***that the committee reconsider the vote taken at the May 15 the meeting recommending that the library be located to the Gilford Butler School in the near term, and on a temporary basis***.”

At its June 3, 2019 meeting the Committee heard a motion ***“that a structural analysis be completed on the GBS”***. The motion died for lack of a second

At its June 3, 2019 meeting the Committee voted 5-1, with one member absent, ***“that the committee’s draft report recommend that the Selectboard appointed committee (planning committee) consider incorporating a nonprofit membership corporation under the Maine Nonprofit Corporation Act, (Title 13B) for the primary purpose of securing donations, grants, and other funds to provide financial assistant to support infrastructure improvements for a Community Center and Library at the Gilford Butler School, and I further move the Committee’s draft report recommend that said non-profit corporation seek Section 501(c )3 tax exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service and also seek tax exempt status under applicable Maine law and regulations”.***

At its June 24, 2019 meeting the Committee voted 6-1, ***“that the committee’s draft report recommend that the Town establish a reserve account and fund it in the total amount of $75,000 over 5 years.  Funds to be used for demolition of the building or for seed money for renovation if the building is not demolished.”***

End of Report

Respectively Submitted

The Gilford Butler Futures Committee

July 11, 2019