Notes from the Gilford Butler School input meeting, held April 4th, 7pm in South Thomaston Municipal Building

John Spear opened the meeting at 7pm and provided opening remarks. Jeff Northgraves then went over aspects related to the physical building and what the Gilford Butler School Futures Committee had done over its time. Sandy Retzlaff then presented her slideshow.

Meeting then went to gathering input, feedback and questions from those in attendance. There were roughly 70 South Thomaston residents in attendance.

The following are remarks from citizens. It was somewhat difficult to gather everyone’s name that spoke so a good faith effort is made in matching a speaker with their remarks. Residents who spoke a second time often did not state their name again so were recorded as “prior speaker”.

**Audrey**- The old Grange Hall in town was used for everything in the community. Improvements to the Gilford Butler plot could be the new Grange Hall and be the new community space.

**Steve Jarret**- Keep the building for the community.

**Mrs. Connell**- Keep the GBS if it is reasonable to renovate. Asked why the playground hasn’t been addressed yet.

**Ruth (a Spruce Head Island resident)-** Inquired about the condition of the building. Also stated that she believed the valuation of the land was low and that the land held additional value beyond what the town assessed it at. Stated they she felt the slideshow was a “sell” for a new library. Committee members stated that locating the library in the building was only one option.

**Sally Burges**- Tear down the building so we can have something we can be proud of. We need a proper community building for the 21st Century.

**Alan Hall**- Old buildings are problematic, tear it down. Also inquired about ownership and the RSU- explanation was given on ownership.

**Skip Connell-** Tear it down.

**Individual from Hayden Point Road**- Figure out what we want to do THEN figure out if that can be down with the GBS. John Spear explained some of the space needs assessment work already done.

**Larry Sabitini**- What is the zoning? Answer, village. Asked about the post office going in. Discussion about complex logistics of that move was had.

**Margaret Anderson**- Reminded the group that there was, supposedly, a time capsule buried by the flagpole in 1976.

**Ed Model**- Inquired as to what other ideas were in the 42 surveys turned in. Bowling alley etc were brought up. Additionally inquired as to the possibility of a “virtual survey” where more specific (as opposed to general) questions were asked.

**Rebecca Taylor**- Asked the question “When people say they are going to town, what do they mean?” The answer appeared to be Rockland. Mrs. Taylor then stressed that we should be thinking bigger on building “community”.

**Joanne Miller**- Wanted to build on Mrs. Taylor’s statement on community. In St. George the library is now the “heart” of the community. Mrs. Miller discussed that we are an aging population and promoted the ability to “age in place”. Stated that we are losing our community and again brought up the success of St. George. Further stated that we needed a community center, not a money maker.

**Marsha Whitten**- Longtime local who felt she was raised by a village (fond positive memory) and that the loss of the Grange Hall from fire hurt our community. It was just a Grange Hall but we were all there (a reference to community).

**Margaret Anderson**- Reminded the group that the GBS WAS built by the community where all pitched in to help. She ran the school for roughly 40 years.

**Ryan Minikis-** Moved here from a nice neighborhood in another state but stated that we still have a good community here, but we could lose it. Challenged the group to think not only “where is town” but also “what do you go to town for?” (this appeared to be a question intended to have folks think about common needs, theoretically to produce ideas on what could go in the building). This was followed by referencing that firms hired to help with these projects can only have outputs as good as the inputs they get. Encouraged the creation of 501 (c) 3. Also stated that he was impressed that the towns on the slideshow built their projects with little/ no tax impact.

**Mrs. Brown**- Keep all land. Wanted a town “water spigot”.

**Prior Speaker (Ruth)-** Clarified that she was not encouraging selling of land but that she felt the land was under valuated by the town.

**Prior Speaker**- Asked what exactly the GBS Committee is charged with. One option? Answer-no. Stated that we needed more input from those in town who were not at the meeting/ surveyed.

**Christine Curtis**- Was on the school board when the determination to close GBS was made. Decision was made because the building was expensive to maintain.

**Vivian Newman**- Stated their appreciation that environmental issues were part of the focus. Meaning solar and community garden etc. Also liked the emphasis on community.

**Alan Hall-** Did not want rental rooms to make money. Stated that libraries draw people and we need a room for the community.

**Someone**- Stated they were worried that they didn’t know most folks at the meeting. Misses/ try to keep the “small town family feel”.

**Prior Speaker**- Disagreed with Mr. Hall that rental spaces would be a bad idea, referenced yoga and other activities that people rent space to do. Committee needs to research better.

**Kathy Florence**- From away but raised her children here. Stated that because there is no place to meet, there is no place to build our community. She was excited about building a community and that a project/ activity like this will build back community feel.

**Ryan Minikis**- Have we thought about ongoing operational expenses? Sandy R. discussed 501 C3 in other communities, annual and ongoing fundraising, new energy efficiencies and volunteers help defray operational costs, however eventually the town helps with costs. Penny Alley brought up Randall Hopkins Will funds.

**Someone**- Question about how we (town folk) could spread this info to the remainder of the town? Thoughts were daytime meetings, possibly weekends, meetings with food and facebook.

**Sally**- Stated she doesn’t like that we need to go to Owls Head for large community meetings.

**Prior Speaker**- Stated that because she is from away, she felt bad she wasn’t being a part of the community. Stated she would be going to meet her neighbors to discuss this meeting.

**Elizabeth-** Volunteered to go and knock doors to get people informed/ involved.

**Camille Minikis**- Wanted clarity on who currently owned the property. Is this ownership a problem? Answer, not really, just need to finalize some items. Camille suggested we consider a dog park and improvements to the Skate Park and playground.

**Walter Reitz**- Clarified ownership by reminding about special town meeting that accepted the school and we are just waiting for clean title.

**Vivian Newman**- Get information to young people.

**Wes Brat**- He moved around New England, likes Maine and supported that we needed a 21st Century Grange Hall.

Meeting Closed.