

Meeting minutes
July 1, 2024
Cotuit Fire District
Prudential Committee
Cotuit School ad hoc subcommittee

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM. In attendance were:

Mark Lynch
Stephen O'Connor
John Havel
Patty Daley
Patrick Lentell
Carol Zais

After confirming the subcommittee members' availability, Mark indicated that he would notice two additional meetings; one for Monday, July 8 and one for Monday, July 15 both at 7:30 PM at Freedom Hall.

Mark briefly reviewed the topic of the sub committee's work, which is to outline the specifics of the study mandated as a result of the vote on Article 2 of the May 4, 2024 Cotuit Fire District Special District Meeting. He read the pertinent language of that article:

(1) to study the feasibility and estimate the cost of restoring and rehabilitating all or a portion of the former elementary school at 140 Old Oyster Rd.(the school property) for the use of district residents; funding a professional analysis of the building for potential reuse and potential recreational and other uses of the grounds; and the authors of said study to present the findings of the completed study to the voters of the district at a public meeting; and
(2) to study the cost of demolition of the school property and the restoration of the site to a natural state.

There was a brief review of the materials at the Prudential Committee website, which would be of assistance to the subcommittee in its discussions.

Carol noted that, In addition to an architectural review to

determine the cost of various options for the building itself, the study might also determine costs for the use of the property in the event the building were to be demolished. Patty indicated that the contemplated study should focus on the costs of the physical rehabilitation of the school building under various use scenarios. She noted that a 501c(3) named "Cotuit Community Center" had been formed by some villagers who are interested in repurposing the building as a community center. This project would be funded by private donations. They hope the contemplated study can more accurately determine the costs of such a renovation. The "Habeb Study" determined rehab costs to return the building to a school.

Stephen and Pat both emphasized that "form follows function." Pat expressed skepticism that a study could determine the cost of renovation without a consensus on the contemplated use of the building. He noted that a list of possible uses of the building is important for architectural review. He also emphasized that the possible uses should include a business plan. Mark noted that there does not appear to be a consensus among villagers of the possible uses of the building. He emphasized that the genesis of the property acquisition was the protection of the nearby Cotuit water district wellhead. This remains a critical goal of any use of the property. Since the Prudential Committee has recommended demolition of the building, business plans for alternate uses would need to be developed by proponents of those uses. There was a discussion about when the Prudential Committee first concluded that demolition was the best alternative for the building. The group concluded that, regardless of the answer to that question, the group should proceed with the understanding that is the Prudential Committee recommendation.

Possible uses of the building appear to include a community center and/or a gym/recreational facility. Stephen indicated that the Cape Cod Baseball League may be interested in the space for a museum. Pat said that the Cotuit Center for the Arts may have some interest in renting part of the space. They indicated that they would follow up

with the principals of these organizations to determine interest. Mark noted that neither of the organizations had expressed interest in the building.

The group discussed possible options for the land and property. Among the options discussed were:

- 1) Complete demolition of the building and return of the area to nature;
- 2) Partial demolition of the building and renovation of the gym, stage, commercial kitchen and an entryway/foyer area to include restroom facilities. John and Carol both expressed interest in this option.
- 3) Partial demolition of the building including the gym and use of the remainder of the building as a community center.

Demolition of the 1970s era addition, which has a significant mold problem, seems likely under any scenario.

Mark asked the committee members to come to next Monday's meeting with a more developed list of potential options for building usage.

Some members of the committee indicated interest in a tour of the building. Mark indicated this was possible, but noted that there were significant health hazards in the building, including, but not limited to, asbestos and broken glass. Waivers may be required for such a tour.

Pat indicated that J. McMurray Landscaping has volunteered to mow the lawn around the building in advance of the Fourth of July festivities, on a one time basis, without charge. Mark emphasized that any maintenance relating to the building needed to be cleared by the full Prudential Committee but indicated he would attempt to obtain approval for this one instance. He promised to put maintenance on the agenda for the next Prudential committee meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9 pm.