



Since 2019 when the Select Board formed the Hebron Space Needs Committee, the members of the Committee have been hard at work. This article provides an update on the status of the Committee's work and discusses the results of the recent survey that the Committee conducted.

**The Survey.** In connection with the most recent Town Meeting, the Committee prepared and circulated a survey asking the town's residents their opinions on two questions. The response from the town was robust – we had 145 responses. The Committee is thankful for this strong response and to each of you who took the time to complete and return a survey.

The survey's first question asked whether you preferred (a) a library, (b) a community meeting hall, (c) a library and community hall combination, or (d) no new construction. The results were quite telling and quite encouraging. Over 68% of the responses supported either a library, a community center, or a library/community center combination. This is a strong acknowledgement that something needs to be done. Of those who voted in favor of a new building, 64% were in favor of the library/community center combination. While not determinative, this is important input for the Committee.

Also, many of those who voted for no new construction indicated, in their accompanying comments, that they were opposed to a new building because they favored the rehabilitation of the two buildings on Church Lane – the library building and the former town clerk and tax collector building (the "Existing Buildings"). This preference is understandable. Nonetheless, in an article in the December issue of this newsletter, the Committee indicated that it had reluctantly concluded that the Existing Buildings are not suitable for rehabilitation, replacement, or relocation. A recap of the principal challenges that were identified by the Committee in the earlier newsletter article are set forth at the end of this article.

The second question in the survey asked -- if there is to be a new building -- would you prefer that it be located (a) at the location of the Old Fire Station, (b) at the town side of the Public Safety Building, or (c) at the least expensive location. Not surprisingly, approximately 42% of the responses supported the least expensive location. As to the other responses, 36% favored the Old Fire Station and 22% favored the Public Safety Building; meaning that if cost is not a factor, 62% of the respondents favor the Old Fire Station location. If that location can be made to work, it would be consistent with a frequently expressed preference of townspeople that most town functions occur in the center of the town.

But cost is a factor -- as demonstrated by the 42% of responses that supported the least expensive location -- so the next step for the Committee is to attempt to determine the cost differential between the two locations. While it is too early to express a view relative to costs associated with the two sites, we wanted to apprise you of the results of the survey and to let you know that we will provide you with an update when the cost analysis has been completed.

In addition, one of the recurring comments to the survey was a concern that any new building not result in an increase to the tax rate. We are in the process of analyzing the current debt obligations of the town, including their maturities, and will write another article for this newsletter as soon as that analysis has been completed.

Thank you once again for your responses to the Committee's survey and for your support of our Town.

Hebron Space Needs Committee

**The Existing Buildings.** A brief description of the principal challenges that were identified by the Committee relative to rehabilitating, replacing, or relocating the Existing Buildings is as follows:

- **Issues Relative to Rehabilitation of the Existing Buildings.**
  - The access to the Existing Buildings does not include ramps or railings and otherwise is not compliant with state and federal law (including the Americans with Disabilities Act (the "ADA")). There were questions raised as to whether the modifications to the Existing Buildings needed to comply with the ADA and its regulations. Without resolving the issue, the Committee felt that it was important, even if ADA compliance is not a requirement (which it might well be), that any rehabilitation should be done -- to the extent architecturally and economically feasible -- to make the space accessible and useable by those who are either elderly or disabled.
  - The lot on which the Existing Buildings stand has a very small footprint (approximately 1/10 of an acre). In the rear there is no room at all to expand towards the cemetery. On the sides the space that does exist is less than a few feet on either side.
  - The foundations of the buildings are composed of unreinforced field stone and are unequal in height.
  - The floor framing is out of level and pitches and rolls excessively indicating either deficient floor framing or foundation.
  - There is only one bathroom (in the former town clerk building) and it is not ADA compliant.

- The roof needs to be repaired (the roof rafters are undersized and do not meet current code required for snow loads and there are at least two locations where there are holes in the roof, possibly from a fallen branch) and there are signs that the roof has leaked.
  - There is no obvious way to create parking, including handicapped parking spaces.
- **Issues Relative to Replacement of the Existing Buildings**
    - It would be extremely challenging to attempt to construct a new replacement structure that is ADA compliant given the small footprint of the lot. Not only does the small footprint limit the size of any replacement building, the small size of the lot means that there is no room for the construction equipment and crews to work (in the absence of a consent from the abutting property owners).
    - There would still be no obvious way to create parking, including handicapped parking spaces.
  - **Issues Relative to Relocation of the Existing Buildings**
    - The framing of the Existing Buildings may not be stable enough to make movement feasible.
    - Even if relocation is feasible, almost all of the identified rehabilitation issues would still need to be addressed.
    - A suitable location would need to be identified, including one that provided for parking, including handicapped parking spaces.
    - If relocated, a determination would need to be made as to what should be done with the land on which the buildings are located after their removal.

As mentioned above, after assessing the above options relative to the Existing Buildings, the Committee concluded – albeit reluctantly – that those options are not practical. Accordingly, the Committee proceeded with a review of alternative sites for a new building for the library.