

Josiah Smith Tavern and Old Library Working Group

**Recommendation to the
Board of Selectmen**

December 22, 2015



Status Update

BACKGROUND:

- We have been meeting approximately bi-weekly since December 2013
- We received 7 Statements of Interest (SOIs) in August 2015
- We discussed the SOIs in a public forum on October 17

We want to thank the sponsors who have put significant energy and thought into the SOIs that were presented.

Since our last update to the Board of Selectmen on October 20, we have:

1. Held meetings with each of the SOI sponsors and the WCL/WHS
2. Met and discussed the SOIs in a separate meeting
3. Come to unanimous consensus on recommendation to the Selectmen

Recommendation for the Old Library

Work with the Weston Public Library to further develop their idea for a Weston Arts & Innovation Center (WAIC)

Vision:

An art & technology learning center with creative maker space in upper stacks area, open program/learning space in the Reading Room. Weston Media Center in the lower level

Rationale:

- Sponsored by a municipal entity with strong, established network in town
- Represents “Arts & Cultural” reuse desired by residents
- Preserves open, public access to Old Library
- Minimal impact on interior and exterior – important for WHC and consistent with prior CPC investment in exterior
- Sponsor is open to an opportunity to work with other organizations to develop programming
- Continued Town ownership
- Control and flexibility for future reuse

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Recommendation for the Old Library (continued)

Considerations:

- \$2.5 - \$3.0 estimated cost within current CPC funding availability
- Construction & startup costs supplemented at some level TBD by private fundraising
- Will be important to quantify incremental operating cost to municipal budget, if any
- Approval of project potentially a simple majority vote at Town Meeting given current zoning and available CPC funds

Recommendation for the JST

Work with Friends of the JST (FoJST) for reuse of the JST Complex

Vision:

Create an 80-100 seat restaurant in the Barn in partnership with an educational institution, coffee shop in the woodshed, office space for community non-profits in the main building, with ballroom to be available as multi-purpose space

Rationale:

- Sponsoring entity is extremely familiar with the property and history
- Proposed reuse of small restaurant and light office use particularly for town-oriented NFPs is consistent with resident surveys and recent Town Meeting advisory vote
- We believe proposed light usage and minimal alterations will be acceptable to HNE
- Uses as proposed in line with donor (Jones sisters) intent
- Educational partnership as proposed adds an additional layer of expertise, offers and supports fundraising, and may help with zoning requirements

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Recommendation for the JST (continued)

Considerations:

- Likely requires RFP
- Several questions need to be addressed:
 - Specifics of the restaurant concept given culinary school aspect, and does this meet resident expectations
 - Agreement with Historic New England on specific renovations
 - Potential conflict of interest between JST Corp and FoJST will need to be resolved
 - Assessment of the willingness of residents to invest \$4 million for stated reuse/programming
 - Identify alternative funding sources for rehabilitation, particularly if OL taps CPC first
 - The viability of financial model given it's a private entity without municipal backstop
- We recognize opposition may be an issue given the impact on existing tenants and abutters
- Given all the above, may be on a different timetable than OL, and would not want fate of OL tied to JST – hence a dual track
- Possibly a simple majority vote given zoning and CPA funds available

Further Considerations

1. Pursue a dual track the Old Library (OL) and Josiah Smith Tavern Complex (JST)
 - The properties have issues unique to each (cost, historical restrictions, zoning and licensing)
 - Timing of development may be different
 - Discrete approval process allows for better feedback
2. Actively manage overlapping infrastructure (traffic, parking) and funding (CPC) requirements/needs/concerns
3. Provide a unified, compelling vision to residents
4. Presume continued Town ownership, though flexibility with JST may be required to support sponsor's fundraising needs
5. Minimize impact for intended uses for historic preservation, particularly so with JST for HNE
6. Minimize cost (both up front and operating) to address financial concerns of residents
7. Complex approval process may necessitate creativity and flexibility (RFP requirements, HNE negotiation, shared infrastructure, etc.)

Appreciation of other SOIs

We sincerely appreciate the other interested parties' participation in exploring options for reuse

All SOIs offered certain strengths

A constructive debate has made each of the SOI's better by their participation, and increased our confidence in the recommended path forward

Our hope is the other Sponsors continue to participate going forward and help build the strongest proposals possible to achieve as wide as possible community support for recommended reuse

Next Steps

1. Write a comprehensive report supporting our recommendation; include executive summary in Annual Town Report
2. Following publication of report, update the Town on progress using available media (including Town Crier)
3. Continue to work with two sponsoring organizations to refine their proposals, create the best possible business plans, quantify upfront capital costs as well as any upfront and ongoing fundraising potential
4. Review process with Town Counsel
5. Review need and process for RFP
6. Support sponsors' requests for CPC funding (due January 11, 2016)
7. Host public forum(s) to gain additional input, and build public awareness and support
8. Sponsor the two organizations through meetings with relevant town boards and committees, including;

Community Preservation Committee	Permanent Building Committee
Planning Board	Zoning Board
Historical Commission	Town Center Planning Committee
Traffic & Sidewalk Committee	Finance Committee
Cultural Council	Others...
9. Engage Historic New England in process
10. Investigate designation of OL and JST properties as surplus/ non-surplus
11. Provide support to sponsors related to any warrant articles in May Town Meeting

Thanks to our Working Group members

Dianne Butt (at-large)

Chris Houston (Selectmen)

John McDonald (Finance Committee Liaison)

Marisa Morra (Historical Commission)

Tom Palmer (at-large, co-chair)

John Sallay (at-large)

Clint Schuckel (Traffic & Sidewalk Committee)

Jay Valenta (at-large, co-chair)

Steve Wagner (CPC)