

Meeting Minutes: Ad Hoc 1934 Building Committee

Date: July 28, 2026

Time: 6 PM

Location: Jordan Conference Room

Notice: These minutes were created with Google Gemini AI during the recording of this meeting.

Attendees:

Jonathan Sahrbeck (Chair)

Penny Jordan (Vice Chair)

Laura Briggs

Cameron Brown

Kevin Guimond

Brian Harris

Andy Patten

Jim Rowe

Pat Fox - Town Manager

Susana Measelle Hubbs (Staff)

Absent:

Amit Oza

Call to Order

Public Comment: None

Approval of Previous Minutes

The committee reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting. One amendment was proposed for page four under the "Next Steps" section: removing the word "narrow" when describing a 6% margin of error, as 6% is typically not considered narrow in statistical measurements. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes as amended. The motion passed unanimously with a 6-0 roll call vote.

Historical Background

The Chair publicly thanked Jim Rowe for providing comprehensive historical background on the 1934 building and the town hall. The committee agreed that documenting the history, architectural background, and previous uses of these structures is an important step. This research demonstrates that the committee is performing thorough due diligence and properly appreciating the community's historical and sentimental connections to the buildings.

Sale and Lease of the 1934 Building

The committee conducted a review of the pros and cons of either selling or leasing the 1934 building. Members debated the financial, logistical, and municipal impacts of transferring control of the property versus retaining it.

- **Arguments in Favor of Leasing:** Leasing provides ongoing revenue and buys the town time to consider future long-term municipal needs. It allows the town to dictate terms, while retaining municipal ownership of the land. It offers flexibility for single or multi-tenant uses, such as daycares, retail, or affordable housing.
- **Arguments Against Leasing:** Leasing imposes significant risk if no tenants are found or if tenants fail. It forces the town to act as a landlord, potentially requiring additional staff or a property management company. It necessitates substantial initial capital to make the building leasable and may subject the building to property taxes if leased for non-municipal uses.
- **Arguments in Favor of Selling:** Selling provides a one-time cash infusion to the town, estimated at a market value of \$1.5 million. It places the property back on the tax rolls to generate annual tax revenue and eliminates the town's ongoing capital improvement and maintenance costs for the structure.
- **Arguments Against Selling:** Selling results in a permanent loss of control over how the site is developed. Disposing of a property that is part of a larger, contiguous municipal and school parcel can be short-sighted. The estimated \$1.5 million sale value is considered relatively small compared to the strategic value of the land. It also introduces the risk of conflicting land uses directly adjacent to the school campus.

Removal and Demolition of the 1934 Building

Following the real estate discussion, the committee explored the advantages and disadvantages of removing the building entirely. Costs to remove are not yet available.

- **Arguments for Removal:** Demolition eliminates an aging structure that requires capital investment to renovate. It ensures the town retains ownership of the underlying land, securing contiguous space for future school fields, parking, or municipal expansion. Aligning the demolition with the current middle school removal could yield cost savings on equipment and labor. It avoids the ongoing quagmire of debating expensive reuses and allows for the salvaging of historic brick materials.
- **Arguments Against Removal:** Tearing down the building destroys an iconic and structurally sound piece of local history. It is irreversible and would likely spark community controversy. Because the town lacks a surplus of available commercial buildings, destroying this asset removes a prime space that could eventually house municipal services.

Brainstorming Future Uses

To prepare for the next meeting, the committee brainstormed a wide variety of potential uses for the 1934 building. The goal is to evaluate these concepts and narrow them down into a few highly viable options for further public discussion. Suggestions included non-public educational spaces such as parochial schools, charter schools, special needs adult learning centers, and vocational or entrepreneurial training facilities. Members also suggested commercial applications like retail shops, remote office spaces, and business incubators.

Additionally, the committee explored the concept of a multi-purpose community hub. This hub could feature an emergency warming center, senior citizen programming, a community kitchen, an extra gymnasium, and performing arts spaces. Town staff will eventually assist in evaluating these narrowed-down options through a matrix that scores them based on cost, market viability, and municipal feasibility.

Community Survey Strategy

The committee discussed the upcoming FlashVote community survey. Members agreed the initial survey must focus on gauging the community's core values regarding the building, rather than introducing specific dollar amounts or proposing definitive solutions prematurely. Understanding whether residents prioritize historical preservation, fiscal responsibility, or community services will help guide the committee's ultimate recommendations. A suggestion was made to include in the survey the length of time respondents have lived in the town, as this demographic filter may provide valuable context for differing community priorities.

Next Steps and Adjournment

The Chair will draft a high-level progress report and presentation regarding the committee's work to deliver to the Town Council. The next meeting of the 1934 Building Committee is scheduled for Monday, August 17, 2026. A motion was made to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded and unanimously approved.