



TOWN OF WAITSFIELD

Town of Waitsfield TOWN OFFICE TASK FORCE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Waitsfield Selectboard appointed a Waitsfield Town Office Task Force (TOTF) in 2010 to assess space needs, evaluate site options, solicit public input and make recommendations to the Selectboard regarding the expansion or relocation of the Town Office; and,

WHEREAS, the TOTF met regularly beginning October, 2010 and established the following guiding principles:

1. The town's future office needs should be coordinated with planning to meet the future needs of the library.
2. The town office should remain in one of the two designated village centers (Waitsfield Village and Irasville) to reinforce the town's longstanding land use, transportation and infrastructure policies.
3. New or expanded town offices should meet the town's long term needs (e.g., serve the town for 50+ years) either through initial construction or a potential for future expansion.
4. The town office should enhance Waitsfield's built environment and sense of civic pride through quality design and construction, and should serve as a model for energy efficiency.
5. The decision to expand or relocate the town office should be based on a realistic understanding of the Town's fiscal outlook and the impact on taxpayers.
6. The decision to expand or relocate the town office is ultimately a decision of the voters, and any proposals made by the Town Office Task Force should be the result of an inclusive public outreach effort that provides meaningful opportunities for Waitsfield's citizens to weigh in.

And,

WHEREAS, the TOTF hired Maclay Architects to evaluate suitable town office sites and then held public meetings on February 3rd 2011, February 9th, March 6th, April 30th, December 20th, 2012 and January 16th, 2013 to present information, discuss options, and hear citizens' thoughts, ideas, concerns, and other considerations. In these public meetings, it was found that the residents of Waitsfield strongly support the relocation of the Town Office and prefer that it be located outside of the flood area, on Route 100 (Main Street), and in the Historic Waitsfield Village. The TOTF also heard many concerns and questions about the cost of the new town office project; and,



WHEREAS, several residents voiced support for the purchase and restoration of the former Methodist Church as an additional site option. The historical value of the church and the positive impact its restoration would have on the Waitsfield Village District provided strong motivation to pursue that option. The TOTF responded to the public support for the Church option with owner contacts, an engineering report, two project cost estimates, a septic capacity test and a real estate appraisal. Consequently, the TOTF determined that the Methodist Church site would be substantially more expensive to the Waitsfield property tax payers than the Farm Stand site (\$770,000 more costly; \$1,000,000 more when we factor in loan interest expense). Surveys were conducted at the December 20th, 2012 and January 16th, 2013 public forums to provide information and determine relative support for the Farm Stand and Methodist Church sites. While the December 20 survey showed strong preference for the Church site, there was a great deal of uncertainty regarding the project's cost at that time. The January 16th survey results showed a small (4 votes out of 86) preference for the Church site over the Farm Stand site; and,

WHEREAS, the TOTF returned to its guiding principles (see above) to make the choice between the Church and the Farm Stand site. The Farm Stand site was found to be the more fiscally prudent option (with less risk of unexpected costs), including lower annual energy costs. In addition, the TOTF is sensitive to concerns raised regarding the displacement of a long-time commercial tenant and several residential dwellings that would result from pursuing the Church option. The TOTF acknowledges that the restoration of the church is important but believes that the project is better suited to a private investor who, unlike the municipality, could qualify for federal historic preservation tax credits and state downtown and village center tax credits. Additionally, the Farm Stand site provides a "gateway" to the Flemer fields, adding public amenities that will greatly enhance the use and enjoyment of that facility by town residents.

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved that after numerous site evaluations with multiple public meetings, and extensive (preliminary) design review and cost estimates, the TOTF recommends by a majority vote that the Waitsfield voters be asked to authorize borrowing the funds necessary to relocate a new town office to the Farm Stand Site. **The TOTF requests that the Selectboard place an article on the March 5th, 2013 Town Meeting warning to authorize the borrowing of \$1,600,000 to purchase property and construct a new town office building on the Flemer/Compere Lot 5 (Farm Stand site).**

Approved and adopted at a regular meeting of the Waitsfield Town Office Task Force held on the 17th day of January, 2013.

ATTEST:



Town Clerk