Street elevation showing context

Front Elevation Concept 4

What sites were looked at?

Many sites were evaluated, including the following:

- Existing buildings and sites in Waitsfield Village and Irasville were first considered that met the initial threshold for size. Locating the office in one of the Town's two villages has been a policy of the Town Plan for the past twenty years.
- Several existing buildings were initially considered, although most were considered unfeasible due to size and limited expansion potential and the challenge of retrofitting them for a vault and the associated office configuration needed to accommodate vault access under the oversight of the Town Clerk.
- Sites given serious consideration included expanding the Library, three parcels in Irasville, land next to the Wait House, and two parcels adjacent to the Town-owned Flemer field Community Green. The Town Office suffered flood damage by Tropical Storm Irene in August 2011 and remained in disarray until late October 2011. That event, combined with lack of septic capacity and increased pressure for parking, effectively eliminated the Library as a practical option for Town Office expansion.
- Following considerable study and public input, and after the Library was eliminated as an option, the Farm Stand site was selected as the preferred option and Maclay Architects was hired after another competitive bid process to develop the next level of site and building design to bring to voters for a bond vote. Citizens urged that the Old Methodist Church building be reconsidered, and the task force agreed that, unlike the other historic buildings considered, it was a feasible alternative, and the Selectboard authorized funds for a more thorough study of both sites.

Front Elevation Concept 1

Why was the Wait House not selected?

Use of the Wait House property was very seriously considered, but was eliminated for the following reasons:

- Renovation of the existing building would not meet the functional space needs of the Town Clerk and the installation of a new vault.
- Historic preservation covenants restrict the alterations that could be made to the ex isting building, including the interior layout, and grant conditions require that a portion of existing building be maintained as a welcome center.
- A new building off of the green was also considered, but it was determined that it would require relocation of the septic system and a shift of the Fire Department drive way toward the Old High School condominiums. Because of these changes, the cost of a new building on this site would be comparable or higher to a new building on an other parcel. Concerns were also expressed that the historic cemetery would be further blocked from view.

Why was the Flemer Farm Stand site selected over the Methodist Church?

The TOTF recommended that the Flemer Farm Stand option be placed on the ballot after extensive analysis, and two public forums at which the Farm Stand option and the Old Methodist Church option were discussed in detail. To ensure that the decision to make a recommendation was informed by factual information after receiving public input at a public forum in December, 2012, the TOTF commissioned detailed construction cost estimates for each option, negotiated a purchase price and fair market appraisal for the Church, conducted further research on the availability of grant funds, and redesigned both options to reduce the costs of both.

Based on their evaluation of this information, other considerations and information that had been gathered over the past two years, the TOTF recommended that the Farm Stand be placed on the ballot for several reasons, including:

- The significant difference in development costs between the two options (approximately $1,000,000 when borrowing costs are added in)
- The significant difference in operations and maintenance costs between the two options ($4200/year)
- The opportunity to provide public amenities and improved access to the Flemer Field Community Green, which is restricted from future development. A direct connection to Village sidewalks, 22 parking spaces to be shared by town office and community green visitors, and public restrooms on the Farm Stand Parcel, which will enhance the use and enjoyment of the Community Green
- The fact that developing the Church would have eliminated three apartment units and retail space that would displace existing tenants and added additional expense and complications for any federal grants that might be used in the project
- The availability of historic preservation assistance programs for private owners of the Church that are not available to the Town.

Why should the town purchase the Flemer Farm Stand parcel?

The property's owner gave the Town an option to purchase the property at a generous, below market price out of a desire to see a public use on the parcel. The parcel is located on Main Street, in the Village Residential Zoning District, which allows a wide range of possible uses (commercial and residential) at relatively high density. A municipal office building at this location would be a permitted use under the Waitsfield Zoning Bylaws.

Was there opportunity for public input?

At least six public forums were held in 2011, 2012, and 2013, including a spirited discussion at the March 2012 Town Meeting. All of the Town Office Task Force meetings were open to the public. Numerous articles were published in The Valley Reporter. Three preference surveys (or "straw polls") were conducted at public forums. The forums were filmed and broadcast on MRVTV-Channel 45. Several presentations were made to the Selectboard, which were also broadcast on the local access cable channel. Information was made available on Waitsfield's Web site at: *www.waitsfieldvt.us/townoffice*

Front Elevation Concept 2

Front Elevation Concept 3

What will be the impact to taxpayers?

Estimated increase in tax bill (assumes a 20-year loan at 3%):

Property Value	$200,000	$250,000	$300,000	$350,000	$400,000
First Year of Bond (Interest only) .4 cents	$8	$10	$12	$14	$16
Second Year of Bond (Highest Year) 3.3 cents	$66	$83	$99	$116	$132

In the first year of the bond, the impact will be less, because only interest is due. The second year is the highest year, with interest and principal due. There will be declining annual payments over the next 18 years as interest costs are reduced.

How much will a new Town Office cost?

The bond request is for $1,600,000. The total cost to local taxpayers will be based on the competitive bidding process for building construction, and be offset by any grants that are received. As the town will be requesting up to $750,000 in grand funding, It is conceivable that the project will cost local taxpayers considerably less; the "worst case" scenario is $1,600,000.

A $1,600,000 bond loan, over a twenty year period, would cost $525,000 in interest payments beyond the principal amount.

It is estimated that the cost of heating, operating and maintaining the building will add an additional $12,500 to the annual budget.

Are there any grants available to help with the project?

Grant funds through the Vermont Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program will be sought early in 2013 for relocation of the Town Office out of the flood zone. These are Federal Housing and Urban Development grant funds administered through the Vermont Community Development Program specifically to assist unmet needs following Tropical Storm Irene. Funds are awarded on a first come first served basis. Traditional CDBG funds are not available to the Town for municipal offices. The Town anticipates requesting $750,000.

How can I get more information?

The Selectboard will be hosting an informational public meeting on Monday, February 25, 2013, 7:00pm, at the Waitsfield Elementary School. A public hearing will also be held on Monday, March 4, 7:00pm, at the Waitsfield Town Office to review the proposed CDBG-DR grant application. We urge citizens to attend to obtain current and accurate information and share your thoughts. Copies of reports, preliminary plans, minutes, and other information is available at the Town Office. Information is also posted on-line at:

www.waitsfieldvt.us/townoffice

This bulletin has been reviewed & approved by the Waitsfield Select Board