



**Town of Beacon Falls
Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting Minutes
December 4, 2023
10 Maple Avenue
Beacon Falls, CT 06403
C/O Town Clerk
(Subject to Revision)**

Members Present: Gerard Smith (**GS**), Peter Betkoski (**PB**) and Michael Krenesky (**MK**- *via Teams*)

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Finance Manager Natasha Nau (**NN**), Senior Center Director Arthur Daigle (**AD**) Elizabeth Setaro-Posick (**EP**), 30 members of the public

1. Call to Order /Pledge of Allegiance:

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. Community/Senior Center/Library Presentation – Public Discussion:

- a. Presentation by Architects Aidan (**AM**) and Joseph Migani (**JM**)- O'Riordan Migani Architects LLC:

JM: The proposed new community center, library, and senior center will feature an interactive and welcoming entrance and front courtyard. The basement will be dedicated to storage. A community garden will be located at the backside of the building, alongside a bocce court and outdoor cafe seating. The building offers tremendous potential for synergy and intergenerational activities, such as collaborations between the library and senior center for programs involving children and seniors. Flexible spaces will adapt to accommodate various community needs, becoming a true home for all. Libraries are evolving into coworking spaces, further expanding their functionality. The building will be designed to be intergenerational, providing opportunities for people of all ages to connect, interact, and engage with each other. The design team is ready to listen to your preferences and accommodate your needs. Please articulate your goals, dreams, and visions for this building to create a truly meaningful space for our community.

GS: This project grew from a shared vision for our community. We see it as an extension of our green space, seamlessly connecting the hill section to Main Street through Burton Road. By leveraging grant funding, we can create a walkable path from Main Street to the community center, allowing residents to enjoy the entire area on foot.

The hill section holds a rich history, originally home to workers from the Bronson and Uniroyal factories. Designed by the Olmsted brothers, the surrounding landscape reflects this heritage. Our current library has simply outgrown its capacity and lacks adequate storage space. This new building will address these critical needs while also providing a vibrant hub for the community.

NN: This project would be undertaken through a Community Investment Fund grant from DCED (Department of Economic and Community Development), has the potential to be fully funded by DCED, although a 20% match is encouraged. We are also pursuing a state library grant specifically for the library portion. In total, the building is estimated to cost approximately \$5.589 million, with the library portion at just over \$1 million as of today.



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Back in 2009-2010, the town purchased the Tracy Lewis House with the vision of transforming it into a library. Our architect's current three-floor design maximizes space utilization, with each floor measuring 6,000 square feet (18,000 square feet total). We've allocated one-third of the space to each designated use: library, senior center and community.

Currently, our library suffers from a severe lack of storage. Additionally, the building will be ADA compliant and incorporate eco-friendly LEED energy elements like EV stations, rain gardens, and accessible parking spots.

As part of the state library grant application, a committee of various town stakeholders met approximately six to ten times to discuss desired features for the site. When we say community space, we want to address adult, adolescent, and child recreation as a part of this. We don't have a recreation department; this space provides an opportunity to make space for this. Keep kids out of trouble.

GS: This is a working design. Many different tweaks and tune ups. Liz (Setaro-Posick), Dave Dlugos, Mike Krenesky, and Art (Daigle)- worked with architects to get us where we are. These are competitive grants- I want us to go all in. The town has money in this – we bought the lot, took down the home. We have skin in the game. We want community input. **NN:** We have a survey online; we are actively seeking community feedback on this.

PB: Would we consider creating stairs from main street? **AM:** This is something we considered. **NN:** This area is a part of our Plan of Conservation and Development "Town Center." Cost and safety are a concern. We think that once we finish the sidewalks and make the full connection via the sidewalks, we would consider.

GS: We are going to move to open the discussion to the public.

Susan Paternoster – 26 North Circle: We built the high school, and we have leaks. Are we looking to use green energy? **AM:** Yes, the structure will be super insulated and utilize a heat pump VRF heating system. We also plan to install solar panels on the roof to offset energy costs and pursue LEED certification.

Bob Uhl - 187 Burton Road: I like the design, but I think we can do more to incorporate the character of the neighborhood, which was designed by the Olmsted brothers. I see a lot of concrete and parking,

GS: The community garden can be relocated to a new location that receives more sunlight. **Bob Uhl:** It feels like an afterthought.



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AM: The bocce court currently receives the most sunlight, but we can explore moving it if necessary. There is other land outside the area close to the building, but this may require regarding the mountain.

JM: We could consider using pavers with grass growing through them. This takes a year to fully establish but is more sustainable than asphalt.

Lisa Piccioli - 63 Stoddard Lane: How many parking spaces are planned for the project? Currently, there are not enough spaces for events, and street parking is limited and poorly lit. **JM:** The plan includes 50 regular spaces, 5 handicap spaces, and 3 EV charging stations. We will need to optimize parking to find the right balance. Too much parking can destroy the site plan, but too little can be inconvenient. **GS:** We follow the regulations for the required number of spaces for this size facility. Street parking is available for overflow.

AM: We aimed for a New England colonial design. We spent time driving through the neighborhood to ensure the building feels like it has always been there.

Carol Slajda - 10 North Circle: I would rather see a garden than a bocce court in that area. What is the size of each floor? **NN:** Each floor is 6,000 square feet. **EP:** The current library is 1,250 square feet. The average size for libraries in towns with similar populations is over 7,000 square feet.

GS: This project will enhance property values. Libraries are seen as a reflection of a town's commitment to its residents. Let's make this a reality so everyone can benefit.

Tom Green - 45 Cook Lane: My 9-year-old and I enjoy the library, but we often use neighboring libraries like Woodbridge. This looks like a wonderful building. We are in the process of moving due to my wife's new job and when we have been looking at other towns, we consider schools and libraries.

Nisha Uhl - 187 Burton Road: Is there enough light for the community garden? The current garden is well-utilized and not an eyesore.

Ken Priestley - 49 Cook Lane: Will there be a utility room separate from the bathrooms for when people are doing crafts?

EP: The art room will have a separate sink area for clean-up. Unfortunately, there is no separate bathroom upstairs. However, this is a significant improvement from the current library.

JM: The entire building will be 100% ADA accessible. We designed it to accommodate anyone's needs. The children's art studio is something we are very excited about. Introducing young people to art is important for their development.



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NN: Social isolation is a growing concern, especially among seniors. Art programs are a great way to keep them active and engaged. Seniors want to be involved, but they often lack the space to do so. Currently at the senior center, we cannot hold a yoga class in the same room as a card game because it's disruptive. Liz and Art have many ideas for additional activities they want to offer, and having additional spaces would make collaboration easier. **AM:** Sound isolation will be incorporated into the building design. **PB:** This project is long overdue.

AD: Having a facility like this where all members of the community can come together - children, seniors, everyone - would be incredibly beneficial. Beacon Falls is ready for this. We are currently embarrassed by our facilities compared to other towns our size. We have so much we want to do, but we lack the space to do it. We would be thrilled to have this facility.

EP: We have completely outgrown our current space. This new facility would allow us to offer so much more to the community.

David Dlugos- 756 Burton Road: I enjoyed hearing the comments from others and am excited to be on the committee for this project.

JM: We recently conducted a study for Bethany and identified that one of their buildings could be used as an emergency shelter. This facility has the potential to serve the same purpose as Beacon Falls.

Cody Muth- 229 Burton: I think the building is great. I would like to see if the town can partner with the Board of Education to offer after-school help programs and a larger community garden. **NN:** We are working with the YMCA to provide space and opportunities for children and families.

Joann Delenick - 243 Bethany Road: I am disappointed with the current situation with the library elevator. How many elevators will be in this new building? **AM:** There will be one elevator. **Joanne Delenick:** Is there auxiliary power in case of an emergency? **AM:** Yes, there will be a generator. **Joann Delenick:** Do you think one elevator is enough? **AM:** Yes, the square footage of the building dictates the number of elevators required. **GS:** This will be a new elevator, with improved reliability and functionality compared to the current library elevator.

3. 24-2 WWTP/WPCF Electrical Upgrade – Contract Award:

- a. **PB:** Motion to award Wastewater Treatment Plant electrical upgrade contact to Tucker Mechanical for the base bid and all bid add alternates in bid tabulation in the amount of \$1,477,741. **GS** Seconded. No discussion. All ayes.



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4. Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:56 PM. **PB/GS**, all ayes.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Daigle

Substitute Clerk, Board of Selectmen