

Van Gyzen Hall Study Committee Meeting
Thursday, August 20, 2015
Dighton Town Hall, 979 Somerset Avenue, Dighton, MA 02715

Starting time: 6:35pm
Ending time: 7:55pm
Total meeting minutes: 82 minutes

The Van Gyzen Hall Study Committee held its first meeting in order to organize, to generate ideas, and to set forth a plan of action in order to give residents detailed facts, which the Committee believes will help them in deciding the future of this historic building.

Committee members Ms. Myrna Santos, Mr. Brett Zografos, Mr. Robert Mullen, Mr. Donald Hirschy, Mr. James Ready, and Mr. James Aguiar were all in attendance. Mr. Jack Taylor was in absentia.

A motion was made to nominate a Clerk. Ms. Santos nominates Mr. Zografos. The nomination was seconded. Mr. Zografos was elected Clerk.

A motion was made to nominate a Chairman. Mr. Mullen was nominated. The nomination was seconded. Mr. Mullen was elected Chairman.

Selectman Cronin advised the committee to explore the usage, advantages, estimates for renovation totals, pros and cons, as well to heavily consider public input in regards to the future of the hall and to do what is best for the town.

The Committee decided to meet biweekly on Thursday evenings at 6:00pm. The next meeting is scheduled to be held at Town Hall on Thursday, September 3, 2015.

Mr. Mullen asked the Committee their ideas for the hall. Mr. Zografos stated that he does not have an opinion on what to do with the hall, but that he plans to be mindful of the taxpayers throughout the process.

Ms. Santos stated that she is opposed to selling Van Gyzen Hall for two reasons: the historical nature of the building and the history behind the structure and she would like to see it as a meeting place for residents.

Ms. Santos opened discussion with the idea of renovating Van Gyzen Hall into a Town Annex, which could house some similar departments and free up space at Town Hall. She advised the Committee to consult with the Town of Swansea, which has a functional Annex separate from their Town Hall. She stated that this is not uncommon in towns and that similar departments could be moved to the Annex together.

Mr. Mullen stated that if no action is taken and the hall remains unused, then it will likely be destroyed within 12-24 months. He added that if the hall were to be sold in its current state, it would not be worth much and the town would lose money on the sale based upon the original

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value of the land and the structure. He stated that it would cost \$10-15,000 just to clean the inside of the hall.

Mr. Hirschy stated that he does not know what will be decided for the hall. He adds that, if the hall is not to be sold, then there should be a place within the building for veterans to meet. The Committee discussed the possibility of having the office for the Veteran's Agent moved there, where a room could be designated for them to openly and freely express their thoughts together.

Mr. Aguiar stated that the downstairs of Town Hall is underutilized. He said he would look into reconfiguring and optimizing space downstairs.

The Committee took public input from the general public. Melissa StLaurent, resident of Dighton, raised concerns as to whether or not voters will agree to fund the renovations for Van Gyzen Hall if the Committee does not present a thorough, coherent plan to the public before the Town Meeting on September 21, 2015. Ms. Santos and Mr. Mullen both responded that the Committee does intend to present the public with detailed recommendations in order to help them make an informed decision before voting takes place at the Town Meeting.

Mr. Woods, another resident of Dighton, suggested that the money allocated to renovate Van Gyzen Hall, which was put in the current warrant that will be voted on by the town at the annual Town Meeting, was politically motivated. Mr. Zografos reminded Mr. Woods that the Committee was not involved in the warrant procedure.

Mr. Mullen asked the public what they would like to see done with the hall. Mr. Woods stated that he would like to see the hall be used as an animal shelter.

Mr. Mullen then asked the Committee members what they would like to see done with the hall. Mr. Ready suggested that Van Gyzen Hall be used as an animal shelter. Mr. Zografos stated that he has no personal opinion on whether the hall is to be sold or made into an Annex. Ms. Santos stated that she would like to see the hall converted into an Annex. Mr. Mullen seconded Ms. Santos' statement.

Mr. Mullen made a motion to no longer discuss utilizing the hall for private functions as a viable option. All Committee members in attendance seconded the motion.

The Committee appoints Dighton resident Melissa StLaurent to take Facebook polls of town residents on whether or not they would like to see Van Gyzen Hall sold or converted into a Town Annex. It is agreed that this shall be done after the Committee has done sufficient research according to the plan of action described below.

The Committee agrees to a plan of action comprised of four immediate goals:

1. To obtain a professional appraisal of Van Gyzen Hall in its current state.
2. To explore the expansion capabilities of our current Town Hall structure.
3. To visit Town Annexes in nearby towns in order to generate estimates and to gain firsthand insight into the logistics of moving departments and maintaining them in a structure separate from Town Hall.

4. To research the cost of renovating the interior of Van Gyzen Hall in order to make it suitable and equipped to handle Town departments.

Mr. Mullen adjourned the meeting.