

Board of Selectmen Informational Forum

MOTT HOUSE

Minutes

Preliminary

Newington Town Hall

April 25, 2006

Present: Chairman O'Reilly, Selectman Stuart, Selectman Iocovozzi, Town Administrative Assistant Beatrice Marconi, and various members of the public-approx 40.

Chairman O'Reilly gave a brief overview on the history of the Mott House. Four years ago there a Capital Reserve fund that was established and now there is a total of approximately \$100,000.00 in it to be used for the Mott House and or Fox Point.

Laura Coleman spoke of the Fox Point/Mott House Committee. Laura offered three suggestions for renovations for the building.

- A. The floor should be lowered due to the height
- B. Raise the building to give it more height.
- C. The 2nd floor should be removed.

Contractors have looked at the building and the have stated that the structure is good.

Dennis Hebert asked if the town was going to keep the building or demolish it. Dennis asked if the court mandated the town to hold a public hearing prior to destroying the building.

Chairman O'Reilly then read the court order aloud from the case in the early 90's. (attached)

Laura stated yes and that in 2003 there was a vote to save the building (and also in 2001) which she amended from the floor to change the motion. (See attached excerpt from March 2003 Town Meeting).

Al Thompson asked about the historical value to the Town. Barbara Meyers answered that it was part of the Langdon estate constructed in 1923 but was not built to be a home as it was built to be a guest home. It has no historical value to the town.

Selectman Stuart spoke of the Garvin Report, which states, "Prior to the burning, the building was structurally sound".

Laura asked if we could save portions by taking the 2nd floor out. She went on to say that character is important to save.

Both Selectman Stuart and Laura Coleman expressed concern about the money that could be spent on a feasibility study.

A gentleman (Matt Morton ?) added that he liked the idea of a three season pavilion he also stated that the Mott House needs a septic system, new wiring, electrical and plumbing.

Gail Pare wanted to get a sense on how everyone felt about the Mott House. Should the town keep it/demo, do renovations, or just build a new building.

Ellen Salsa asked why the focus is on just the Mott House and why not look at the entire property. Chairman O'Reilly stated that the Carriage Shed is used for storage presently. The windows need to be glazed etc. Tonight the meeting is to focus on the Mott House issue without spending \$1 million.

Nancy Clavette is concerned on saving a portion of the Mott House and spending a lot of money. She stated that she is also worried about opening up a place for 'unexpected' visitors if not enclosed.

Laura says 10 years ago Stratham paid \$85,000.00 for their picnic pavilion.

Ted Connors suggested a preliminary study should be conducted with estimates as to what could be done, he figures that it would cost around \$12,000.00.

Chris Cross stated that he disagrees with Laura. He stated that this is an opportunity to see if there is a use for the building, not necessarily save it. He added that he has not heard any discussion in the past to see if this building holds any significant value. Chris continued to say that there are several buildings on the town's inventory and he would like to see this one removed.

Robert Simms stated that he feels any building should be driven by need/use and this building will command large maintenance fees putting aside the renovation costs. He is a builder and considering what you will gain vs. the cost, it is just not worth it in his eyes.

Dot Watson went through the house a few years ago and Garvin told her in 1990 it was solid.

Selectman Stuart asked how many are into saving/renovation vs. tearing the building down with:

- A. Preserve all three floors-0
- B. Renovate part-9
- C. Teardown and construct a gazebo or three season pavilion-20
- D. Teardown and replace it with nothing-4

Chairman O'Reilly stated that with \$100,000.00 studies could be done but not much more.

Selectman Stuart stated that she wanted a decision and action to be taken as she was concerned with liability.

Dennis Hebert added that the Planning Board has asked several committees in the past for costs and potential use and they have not received any answers. Dennis feels as if it should be torn down and the land be left as open space.

Barbara McDonald stated that she would like to see more information and town wide plans for the use of all buildings. She also added that she would like to see a conservation easement on Fox Point and feels the Town shouldn't rush into anything.

Selectman Stuart referred once again to the Garvin report, which stated that it is a liability as it sits.

Selectman Iocovozzi referred to the Capital Improvement Plan stated that this should be demolished or renovated immediately to create a place for Social and Recreational functions.

Dennis Acton stated that is he surprised at just how few people use Fox Point and he feels that if the Mott House comes down and something else build, more people will use it as an informal summer use. The property does need running water and restrooms.

Sharon Brown wanted to know if the historical opinion on the building is written down anywhere so people could research.

Laura spoke again about the history and how it was moved from across the lawn and the Mott was a guesthouse out of the Langdon Estate.

Selectman Stuart spoke of Marjorie Mott and how Bill died and it was sold to the town.

Gail Pare spoke of the Carriage House style and architecture vs the Mott House and Chicken Coop.

Matthew Morton asked why the Mott House was being saved. He stated that the emotional attachment should be taken out of the equation and suggested that the town start taking the building down – perhaps leave timbers. He added that now is the time to act, he feels that rehabilitation would be too costly and building a new facility would be more feasible.

Dennis Acton said that corporate use for retreats could partly fund the costs for renovations.

Chairman O'Reilly and Selectman Stuart both said no that the rental of the property and that it is for residents only.

Laura Coleman stated that no decision should be made with out the knowing the actual cost to utilize the building or construct something new.

Robert Simms says there are people who may be interesting in the beams. Jack Pare concurred mentioning the name Aaron Sturgis.

Laura Coleman goes on to say lets put an RFP out to discover costs and feasibility.

Selectman Stuart says that she senses that the majority of the people are calling for demo rather than sinking money into a study. Laura says you really can't make a decision without knowing the actual costs. We should get costs to utilize / costs to build.

Nancy Clavette wanted to know the consensus and if the Selectmen had the power to decide.

Sharon Brown asked if it was the people's will to have bathroom facilities at Fox Point. Another consideration would be the Carriage House. Perhaps that is the place to provide utilities. She thinks a study should be conducted to recognize costs but wonders how much money it will take for the study.

Lorna Watson asked of the architecture of this pavilion – the character – and if it would be modeled after the Carriage House. Jack O'Reilly said the design is the next phase. He is looking tonight for a straw pole to renovate or demo the Mott.

Discussion on the development of a conceptual plan came up with Lorna Watson stating that we had many people in our own community who could develop one vs. paying for one.

Selectman Iocovozzi said that we need engineers to determine truly what is needed.

Alan Thompson asked what do we want to do with Fox Point in general? Do we want a recreational facility?

Selectman Stuart responded by saying she felt the town was calling for a recreational-summer activity place.

Gail Klanchesser said that she thought the people want a building that can be used and wondered if a feasibility study would give up options and costs.

Peg Lamson stated that we should go to the people for a vote to tear down if that is what they want as there is an RSA that states so.

Selectman Stuart says if we wait til town meeting we do have to put money into it now to secure the bldg as people are getting in and it is a liability for the Town.

Vannie Brawn stated she felt we should have a feasibility study done, then call for a special town meeting – get legal opinions on the correct process.

Gail Klanchesser suggested once we get more information on costs and options, we should put out a news letter and have an actual public hearing.

Lorna Watson said we are fortunate to have this property here as it is like having our own State Park. It is nice open space for people to enjoy.

Dennis Hebert was opposed to the costs of a study. He felt we needed a modern facility based on the character of the Carriage House. We need a low maintenance modern facility.

Matt Morton agreed with Dennis as a study would be a waste. The Carriage House has more possibilities than the Mott House.

Selectman O'Reilly said that this would be placed on the next Selectmen's Agenda for a vote.

Jan Stuart moved to adjourn at 8:20pm. (est.) Seconded by Cosmas Iocovozzi. Motion passed 3-0.

Respectively Submitted,

Beatrice Marconi
Administrative Assistant