

Townsend Historical Society Visioning Committee

January 5, 2023, 6:00 PM

Reed Homestead & Virtually via Zoom

Present: Jock Snaith, Ryan D. Hayward, Bill Rideout, Taber Morrell, Clare Kauppi, Eino Kauppi, Maryjane Churchville, Jerrilyn Bozicas, Kathleen Spofford, Al Bartovics, Dana Blanchard, Maureen Blanchard, Laurie Christensen, Rebecca Thatcher, Patrick Raine, Nia Raine, John Barrett.

Called to order: 6:05PM

Committee chair Jock Snaith welcomed everyone and briefly went over the evening agenda.

We have received an offer from Gary Shepherd to fix our buildings contingent that the Society focus efforts to build their endowment to become sustainable. The purpose of our meeting is to toss all ideas onto the table. These ideas will be prioritized and presented to Gary for discussion. The final list will go to the Society membership with the Board of Directors for feedback and direction before publication. Committee members provided ample ideas, and these are summarized below:

A Vision for the Townsend Historical Society:

Tell our local history using an authentic New England village. The events that took place here mirror many places in the region. Our buildings represent industry, community, and family. The artifacts demonstrate material culture. The unified combination makes a great educational backdrop on which to build school visits, programs, and more. Bringing the organization under one central theme will help us grow into a notable attraction. This will help the Historical Society become self-sustaining.

The focus of the Discussion:

The ideas focused on five targeted areas:

- Unify the Museum Campus
- Provide for administration and collections.
- Restore and rehabilitate our existing buildings.
- Plan for growth and expansion.
- Contribute to the community by combining historical and commercial ventures.

Museum Campus:

Priority: Create a unified campus through landscape, hardscape paths, signage, lighting, and plantings.

- Squannacook Greenways as a central link between buildings. Improve the Harbor Village section to make it more useful.
 - Reset rails, perhaps among brick walk.
 - New walking path to meander among buildings to encourage their exploration.
 - Rehabilitate the railroad bridge over the canal at Spaulding Cooperage with a new deck and handrails for safety and to encourage use.
 - Restore the railroad bridge over the canal at the Grist Mill to maintain its appearance and make it safe. Add handrails if needed.
 - A small rock wall to divide the tracks from the Martin property.
- Sidewalks that link buildings and make it safe to travel alongside Main Street/Rt. 119.
 - Along Main Street from Harbor Church to South Street.
 - Works to guide bicycles around the walking paths.
- New signage for visibility and openair museum concept:

- Signages identifying all buildings owned by museum.
- Interpretive panels in strategic locations talking about history.
- Expand parking to meet the demands of the museum.
 - Increase available parking for museum to meet the demands of expansion. Our capacity for events is severely restricted by available parking.

Administration and Collections Building:

Priority: The Historical Society needs a new administration and collections storage building that considers all present and future needs.

- Some ideas that were tossed on the table:
 - Office space to house workers with adequate equipment.
 - Archival and Collections storage with climate control. We envisioned this could be what Historic Deerfield has, meaning storage that doubles as a walkthrough exhibit. Plymouth Plantation is building a similar facility, and its conservation labs will also be on display.
 - Possibly acquire the site next to Harbor Fire Station and infill it with historic-looking buildings to replace what burned down. Street-level buildings often slows traffic and encourages visitors.
 - Acquisition of other buildings was considered. The small bungalow next to the Harbor Church was one option. The Knight House on Spaulding Street was also tossed into the mix.
 - Acquire Sweetheart Ice Cream parcel as an alternative as it is on the same side of the street as the rest of the campus.
 - Utilize Hart Memorial Library as another option. It is connected to the Harbor via the rail trail. A new building may be quicker and cheaper to realize.

Restore and Rehabilitate Existing Buildings:

Each building was probed for its current use and future potential. This is not a complete list but a greatest-hits summary of all the ideas tossed around.

Copeland Cooper Shop:

Priority: Complete restoration with minor work so the Society can move its barrel collection into the building and use the structure for demonstrations.

- Restoration work that needs to be completed:
 - New asphalt shingle roof (could be wood, but preference is no because of below).
 - Install brick hearth using bricks from the cooper shop site (at Harbor Church).
 - Install a wood stove (either using existing or new) with stove pipe through the roof.
 - Install rat wire on the underside of the floor and relay floor. Volunteers willing to help.
 - Paint the remaining side of the building. Volunteers willing to help.
 - Lattice skirt to hide foundation.
 - Portable steps so visitors can access the building.
 - Restore the workbench.
- Rehabilitation of the Structure:
 - Building needs electrical outlets and a light. Electric can come from the Reed House via a conduit.
 - Building needs an alarm to protect the exhibit.
 - Install the exhibit materials – Jock is working on a tool chest, and we will need a way to display barrels, signage, etc. Purchase tools for the “hands-on” programs.

- Storm windows to protect the wooden windows. Style can match the Reed House or open to ideas.

Completing this building is a high priority as it will free up space in the Reed Homestead and deliver on a decades-old promise to restore the building. Volunteers have undertaken much of the work but there are a load of finishing details before it is considered done.

Spaulding Cooperage:

Priority: Complete the exterior restoration of the building to create a watertight envelope. Work is being completed in the spring and there is ample work left out of this scope to assist with.

- Restoration work that needs to be completed:
 - Paint the entire structure.
 - All the windows need to be reglazed.
 - All the window screens need to be entirely rebuilt.
 - The moss growth on the chimney needs to be removed.
 - The building needs a new roof (chimneys have been flashed within the last year) as it is approaching the end of life.
- Rehabilitation of the Structure:
 - Fix spongy floors at various locations on the first floor.
 - New security system.
 - Repoint the chimney footer and repair loose brick.
 - Upgrade electrical and lighting (for example, lights at front and back door, interior new LED lighting).
 - New thermal envelope (floor, walls, and roof insulated).
 - Whole building HVAC (existing furnace inadequate and rear one non-functional).
 - Finish wood wall on second floor half story.
 - Exterior staircase to the second floor.
 - ADA bathroom to replace existing.
 - Explore the feasibility of restoring the lower façade on the river side of the building that was destroyed during floods.
 - Explore the feasibility of installing a turbine in the building.
- Site considerations:
 - Grade the parking lot and provide a durable surface that lessens impacts of erosion and channels water away from building and site appropriately.

The building is the organization's only income-generating property. The short term is to maintain the property and begin to plan for the future of the building.

Secondary ideas for the building:

- Secondary ideas for the building:
 - Restore the building as an operating cooperage.
 - Restore the building as a fulling mill and machinery.
 - Educational space or classroom.
 - Orientation center.
 - Boutique restaurant/lounge/cocktail bar.
 - Tea room
 - Exhibit room.

Harbor Church:

Priority: Restoration of the main structure with an addition that provides the amenities that support an income-generating structure. This is the next logical building in the progression of construction.

- Restoration needs:
 - Historically appropriate ADA access into the building.
 - Treatment of the powder post beetles.
 - Trap and remove any animals.
 - Repair trim and details.
 - Repair the steeple.
 - Reglaze and repair windows.
 - Repair/recreate shutters and restore them to functional condition (protect the windows when the building is not in use)
 - Interior storm windows and insect screens.
 - Fix all doors and hardware.
 - Storm doors to protect restored doors.
 - Scraping and painting the exterior.
 - Better water management in the basement.
 - Alarm to protect the building.
- Building addition/rehabilitation:
 - Remove trash marked for disposal.
 - New septic system to accommodate maximum occupancy and best use.
 - ADA bathrooms
 - Kitchen that supports a function hall use.
 - Storage for tables/chairs.
 - An office for the management of the building.
 - Solar panels on the roof.
 - New electric outlets throughout.
 - New lighting throughout.
 - New heating and cooling throughout.
 - Insulation (if necessary; walls are 8” thick and might not add anything).
 - Life safety/fire alarm and suppression that is sensitive to use but meets code.
 - Need new archival exhibit cases to store artifacts.
 - Relocate organs/artifacts within (either in the building or to another location on campus).
- Site considerations:
 - Parking lot to support the restoration and rehabilitation.
 - A walkway to the front of the building (if not an ADA walk).
 - Trim all the vegetation.
 - Fence the property to separate the parcel from the neighbors.
 - Site lighting.
 - Possible acquisition of Sweetheart Ice Cream parcel for additional parking.

It is imagined that the building will be utilized as an exhibit and function hall. The front half of the building can be closed off, which lends nicely to an area for a small commercial business. This could be a café and bookshop, an artisan shop specializing in goods made by locals, or something that plays on the historic nature of the building. It should be compatible with the neighborhood.

Secondary ideas for the building (which are all possible with the above):

- Theater or performance hall.
- Music venue.
- Wedding venue.
- Church or educational space.
- Artisan and craft show space.
- Lyceum (presentation/lectures).

The Reed Homestead

Priority: Convert the building into a museum capable of presenting our local history, preserving artifacts, and supporting our educational programs.

- Restoration needs:
 - Exterior clapboard and trim repairs.
 - Repairs to the elaborate door surrounds.
 - Rebuild front storm door.
 - Create a rear storm door.
 - Reglazing all the windows and restored to operability.
 - Recreation of the wood trim at the front and rear soffits.
 - Reset granite steps to proper heights.
 - Repaint the entire building with historic colors.
 - Repoint chimney(s).
 - Restore kitchen hearth.
 - Explore the feasibility of opening other fireplaces.
 - Office windows and carpet (if staying).
- Rehabilitation of the structure:
 - HVAC to the whole building.
 - ADA-compliant bathroom.
 - New septic system.
 - New plumbing to support programs.
 - Relocate office/vault to a new facility to free space for the museum.
 - Relocate collections storage to a new facility to free space for the museum.
 - Add classroom/educational space to support the museum. Possibly recreate the former carriage house in place of the current structure.
 - Upgrade security system.
 - Upgrade electrical.
 - New electricity and lighting throughout.
 - Determine the feasibility of restoring the parlor mural.
 - Conservation of the colorful mural on the second floor.
 - Restoration of the remaining rooms.
 - New appropriate furnishings to replace delicate/worn originals (for example, the rugs).
- Site considerations:
 - Level the side yard to prevent puddling and protect archaeological assets.
 - Clear brush and overgrowth.
 - Trim trees and replant dead trees with new variety.
 - Restore historic planted features (flowers, kitchen garden, orchard).
 - Restore historic landscape features (define the circular drive, parking lot, paths, etc).
 - Add the missing fence and gates.
 - Site lighting.

The building is a well-preserved time capsule that is capable of being a great backdrop for the wealth of artifacts in our collection. Our current use is a house museum with a thematic tour of local history as seen through the former owners. It is possible to convert the building over into a learning laboratory that will provide educational opportunities for all ages.

Secondary ideas for the building:

- Support space for the function hall (for example, a historic prep space for a wedding).
- Temporary gallery.
- Small meeting space.

Spaulding Grist Mill

Priority: A complete restoration of the existing building into a functioning grist mill complete with operable equipment.

- Restoration needs:
 - Roof is approaching the end of its life.
 - Remove any critters that have moved into the structure.
 - Repair rotten lap siding.
 - Repair all windows.
 - Replace all screens.
 - Reinsulate interior.
 - Replace heaters in rooms.
 - Install new power source.
 - Restore belting and pullies.
 - Fix all equipment to operation.
 - Add electrical and lighting (for example, indoor lights and outdoor lights for entrance).
- Rehabilitation of the structure:
 - Addition for a power plant or additional space that replicates former additions.
 - Covering for raceway.
 - Walkway over water to access basement.
 - Security system.
- Site considerations:
 - Push back the retaining wall in front of building providing clear space.
 - Provide steps down to river for water users.
 - Provide pull-off area for 1-2 vehicles.

Plan for Growth and Expansion:

Financial:

The Society shall be responsible for undertaking a campaign to build its financial resources. These shall be invested in order to generate enough revenue to sustain the organization permanently.

- Grow a sustaining endowment.
- Increase grant applications.
- Increase membership.
- Develop revenue streams:
 - Rental properties.
 - Solar and hydropower.
 - Programs and events.
 - Fundraisers (for example, more than one Arts and Craft Fair)
- Plan for expenses:
 - Donations above 500K/year require a financial statement audit from an accountant (cost - \$10K+).
 - Donations above 1M/year require a full audit from an accountant (cost – 15K+)

Personnel:

The organization understands there will need to be some key personnel and new volunteers necessary to undertake such work. The Society is committed to exploring new positions to assist with our growth. These might include:

- Administrative Staff:

- Executive Director
- Programs/Educational Director
- Grant Writer
- Publicity and Social Media Content Creator
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Collections Staff:
 - Experts in management.
- Membership Development
- Maintenance:
 - Director
 - Groundskeeper
- Legal Expert:
 - Attorney
- Financial Team:
 - Accountant and Bookkeeper
- Paid docents.

Increase Visibility:

Work can begin immediately by increasing our visibility within our local audience. Some of the ideas included:

- Self-guided tours using downloadable maps and QR codes.
- Advertising (including on social media).
- Provide regular website updates.
- Capture pedestrian traffic on the Rail Trail.
- Connect with area historical societies and partner with them.
- Connect with larger museums (OSV, Historic New England, Strawberry Banke) and learn from them.
- Build connections with colleges through intern programs.
- Build connection with the schools through community service opportunities.
- Create welcome materials for Town Clerk office and realtors.
- Put our publications in local stores.

Expand our Educational and Public Programs:

The Society can rebuild its offerings and develop a robust set of offerings to make the community realize we are active and want their participation.

- Host the Spaulding Elementary School third graders once again.
- Seek out a home-school family and work with them to make the site friendly to this flexible form of education.
- Expand communication with neighboring district schools and develop interest.
- Expand regular programs by establishing a programs committee to find more offerings.
- Expand the number of times the museum is open to the public.
- Increase monthly hours of site administrator.
- Develop an Antiques Show, Quilt Show, second Arts and Craft Fair or similar engaging event.

Contribute to Community:

This organization is committed to being a key community player. This offer will start by putting individuals to work. It will create new jobs in the future. It will allow the Society to focus on its mission and to provide back to the community. Some ideas that were tossed out there include:

- Providing traditional maker's space. Rotating workshops centered on traditional skills that could be taught. This is preserving crafts, and the organization becomes a resource.
- Host businesses that incorporate a historical feel into their general vibe.
- Create opportunities for repeat, multiple visits. This encourages additional patronage to area shops and eateries.
- Work to build together. The Society is interested in collaborating with many organizations to rise up together. We are already aligned with Squannacook Greenways. We could also partner with the Townsend Conservation Land Trust.

The Society could be an advocate for historic preservation. This means:

- Supporting the recommendation to establish Community Preservation Funding. This would establish funding for preservation, recreation, open space, and public housing. Our organization would be eligible to apply for funds for projects.
- Support the Historic District Commission in their quest to maintain the definition of place. The Society is in a local historic district.

An expansion could also be on the horizon. If all the projects are accomplished, additional buildings might be acquired to expand offerings.

- The Conant House is one of the oldest houses in the Harbor. It is subject to a preservation restriction by Historical New England, limiting its residential use. It is a prime candidate for a second house museum that could be altogether different than the tour at the Reed Homestead. It also closely relates to our two mill properties.

Action Items:

The Society will undertake the following to kick-start this process:

- Morph the vision into a strategic plan that lays out short- and long-term goals.
- Form an endowment committee.
- Form relationships with other museums.
- Build membership and volunteers
- Work on the educational programs.

Adjourned: 8:35PM

Respectfully submitted

Ryan D. Hayward
Secretary pro tempore.