

Initial investigation into
MARKETING SPACE AT 18 JACOBS ROAD, SAWYER HALL AND COMMUNITY HALL
Report of the School Building Use Committee to the Select Board
December 1, 2020

On September 29, 2020, two members of the School Building Use Committee (SBUC), Mary Sumner and Pam Porter, met with the Select Board. At that meeting, at the Select Board’s request, the SBUC agreed to begin looking into marketing spaces in town buildings for rent or lease in order to generate revenue. This is a report of some initial findings and recommendations about how the Select Board and its committees might move forward.

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PROCESS

1. We sought information and advice from professional realtors, Timothy Grader of Cohn and Company and Phil Pless of Upton-Massamont Realtors. We followed up on their suggestions. Given the discussion at the Board meeting about marketing space at all of our buildings we asked the realtors to look 18 Jacobs Road, Sawyer and Community Hall.
2. We met with Randy Crouchier, Franklin Health Agent, FRCOG, onsite, to obtain information about marketing the kitchen at 18 Jacobs Road for commercial use.
3. We sought information from former building inspector, Jim Cerone about building codes and whether improvements were needed in order to market the buildings at the Center for rental. We got an update from Select Board member, Brian DeVriese about the codes for the former school buildings.
4. We also looked into online marketing possibilities.
5. We did an inventory of school building storage, kitchen equipment, and items remaining in the building that might be useful for the town to save, those that are not of use to the town but might be saleable and those which we would recommend discarding.

This is a very preliminary investigation. The recommendations we offer in this report are based on what we learned in the process of this research.

NOTES ON SBUC MARKETING INVESTIGATION

Timothy Grader, Cohn and Company

Pat McGahan and Pam Porter met with Timothy Grader on Thursday, October 15, 2020, and toured 18 Jacobs Road, Sawyer and the Community Hall. Mr. Grader is the owner of his firm and has a background in marketing commercial real estate. We asked Mr. Grader for his thoughts about marketing space in the buildings and his interest in helping the town do so.

Mr. Grader felt there was marketable space at 18 Jacobs Road. For example, he suggested that the cafeteria would make a nice café or restaurant or that the kitchen might be made available to a caterer. The front office suite might be attractive to a single business with multiple employees. He said that if it were not needed for Town Meetings the gym might also be attractive because of its access to the parking lot. Classrooms could be divided to accommodate shared office space.

At Sawyer Hall Mr. Grader was impressed with the elevator that gives access to the second floor. He suggested that the current town office could make a good yoga studio that could be shared by more than one renter. The assessors' office could be marketed as office space to a single user. He thought the building might accommodate a convenience store/news stand, especially with the presence of the post office which would help draw in business.

Mr. Grader suggested that the upstairs at the Community Hall might house a restaurant, especially given the kitchen downstairs, but that it would require considerable upgrades and remodeling. He was least impressed with the space downstairs at the Community Hall and wondered if the 18 Jacobs Road property might not be more suitable for a Senior Center. He said it is possible that a single developer might be interested in developing Sawyer and the Community Hall together in such a way as to give the town a small commercial center.

We discussed the possibility of the center being developed as a site for destination weddings and Mr. Grader said that there is a significant market for

such sites. The Heath Union Church and the Town might collaborate to offer a place for the wedding and for the reception.

After seeing all of the buildings Mr. Grader said that he felt that there is marketable space in all of the town buildings, especially at 18 Jacobs Road, but that the town needs to consider its own space needs. (See Town Functions Table, Page 14.) He said he felt the building at 18 Jacobs Road was in good shape and that in the long run it would cost the town least to put all its services there under one roof. He said he is aware of the politics in town that might make this difficult.

He said he would be happy to work with us on marketing any or all of our buildings for rent or long-term lease when we are ready to do so. Since this meeting Mr. Grader has followed up via email to see whether the Board would like to meet with him directly. Pam responded that we are still in the process of gathering information and would be reporting to the Select Board within the next few weeks.

Phil Pless Visit

On Oct. 22, 2020, real estate agent, Phil Pless toured 18 Jacobs Road, the Community Hall and Sawyer Hall with School Building Use Committee members, Pam Porter and Pat McGahan. Mr. Pless is a realtor with While he was clear he would have no interest in contracting to be an agent for the town, he said he was happy to consult, sharing his professional opinions and suggestions. He had many of both.

He felt the former school building offered the most useable space. In particular, he said the kitchen was a gem and said that there is a real need in the county for commercial kitchen space. He saw some potential for renting out space at Sawyer Hall, should the town decide to move any of its functions out of that building. He felt that the Community Hall presented the biggest challenges in terms of marketing space. He suggested that fundraising through community events rather than rentals would be a good way to address the needs for improving and preserving the building. (Note: This is the way it was done in previous generations. Many of us still remember the fund-raising dinners that helped pay for Community Hall improvements.)

Mr. Pless said that according to Mike McCusker, the market for shared office space is struggling right now in Shelburne Falls but again stressed the potential value of the kitchen at 18 Jacobs Road, which he saw as low hanging fruit. He recommended contacting Franklin CDC to learn about what they are seeing and what equipment would be needed in order for them to offer the kitchen to their overflow customers. He also suggested contacting Rural Commonwealth to see whether they had any funds that might be available to help Heath.

Mr. Pless further recommended asking Jim Hawkins or Jim Cerone to assess what would need to be done to bring the center buildings up to code for private or commercial rental. He said that buildings tend to be grandfathered in for town use, but that would likely not be the case if we want to market portions of Sawyer and the Community Hall for nonmunicipal use.

Summary of Phil Pless' Recommendations. **Red Type** indicates how we followed up.

1. Contact John Waite or Amy Shapiro at Franklin CDC to find out about the market for commercial kitchen space. **Done. CDC would be happy to list the kitchen when and if the Board decides to offer it for commercial rental. See report below.**
2. Contact Jim Hawkins or Jim Cerone about what it would take to bring the center buildings up to code. **Done. See report below.**
3. Conduct a community and business needs assessment to ascertain whether there is an in-town market for office space or other business needs. **Needs to be done. See Addendum, pg 18.**
4. Talk to Mr. Krunal at Keystone about the feasibility of locating a convenience store in the town center. **Needs to be done. Pam spoke with David Kong who owns the Avery's building. He felt a convenience store in Sawyer was very much worth considering. He said the first thing would be to do a business analysis and survey of the community and its needs.**
5. Contact Beth Bandy of Commonwealth Rural Connections to see whether there is information or funding to help us market our town buildings. **Done. Rural Commonwealth is defunct and its funds redistributed to other west county organizations.**

Franklin CDC

Pam spoke with Kate Ninify at Franklin CDC to get information about the need for commercial kitchen space. Kate felt that there would be overflow from their operation and that they would be willing to list us once we are up and running. She said they would need a list of available equipment and that we should develop policy and pricing. She suggested looking at the Guiding Star Grange website to see what they offer and what their pricing is. The going price is \$55/hour for a fully equipped and staffed FDA certified facility. We would not be likely to offer that level of service and our prices would be lower. For example, we might ask users to be SERV Safe certified. Especially in the beginning we might ask the user to provide some of their own equipment such as sharp knives and cutting boards. Kate recommended talking to Health Agent Randy Crouchier.

BUILDING CODES

Sawyer and Community Hall

On Phil Pless' advice, Pam followed up with Jim Cerone on what improvements would need to be made to Sawyer and Community Hall in order to be able to offer them for commercial rental. He said he didn't think any improvements would be required other than those required for municipal use. He said that the Community Hall has an "A" designation which means it can be used for a restaurant or any other purpose with lower designation. Sawyer Hall has a "B" rating which is what you would need for a yoga studio or private office space. Even a convenience store would be okay at Sawyer. It requires an "M" rating (Mercantile) which is on the same level as "B".

Jim also said that it isn't true that towns get grandfathered in with less strict enforcement of building codes. The same rules apply to municipal and to commercial users. There are accessibility modifications that have to be made at both buildings whether we continue to use them exclusively for municipal and community use or make them available for private and commercial use.

Aside from building code compliance, the SBUC is concerned about the water issues that have plagued Sawyer and Community Hall over the years. We are aware that from time to time Sawyer has been without running water because of a disruption in the water lines. The question remains whether these issues have been (or can be) fully resolved.

18 Jacobs Road

According to Brian DeVriese, the Gym, Cafeteria, and Atrium at the former school all have an “A” designation. The classrooms and offices have a “B” designation. This means that, like Community and Sawyer Halls, the building may be used for municipal, business and commercial use, including a commercial kitchen.

ONLINE MARKETING

Online marketing research was begun by Mary Sumner from the approach of how we can start doing this for free. To that end we have looked at sites where you can list office and kitchen space for free. Several sites have been identified as possible selections and two of these were shared with the Select Board in a previous update (Craigs List, Kitchen Door).

We also looked at where current office spaces available for rent list themselves, (i.e., Bridge of Flowers Business Center). In that process it was discovered that several local business-promoting sites, like the Greater Shelburne Falls Business Association and the MA Small Business Development Center, have a link on their web pages to the Town of Heath web page.

That is good news! It might be possible to update our Town of Heath web page to have a better presence and clearer tab/link to the spaces we have available. We should also be able to link our Town of Heath web page to other existing web sites and Facebook pages to ‘market’ not only the spaces for rent, but also the amenities offered in ALL of Heath. For example, maybe Western Mass Scenic Byways could list the Cook State Forest, Fort Shirley or the new public Crowingshield Conservation Area.

Recommendation: Find someone with a greater web knowledge, maybe ask FRCOG in economic development, to explore and update Heath's existing web presence. Then as funds allow, pay to list our offerings on more web sites.

RENTING THE KITCHEN FOR COMMERCIAL USE

Randy Crouchier, visited the kitchen at 18 Jacobs Road on Nov. 4, 2020 to assess what would have to be done to be able to offer it for commercial use. He thought both caterers and local farmers wanting to make value added products would be interested in the kitchen and that there would not be much expense in making it ready to rent.

Here is a summary of what Randy felt would need to be done. Details follow.

1. Thorough cleaning
2. Repair oven hood (already planned), service refrigerators—but not until we are ready to roll so they don't sit idle or run up unnecessary electric bills.
3. Develop policy and pricing for Select Board approval.
4. Develop equipment notebooks and signage on proper use of equipment
5. Seek certification and permits
6. Develop cleaning policy, process and instructions.
7. List with CDC, including the list of available equipment and what renters would need to provide. Develop page for the Town Web site. Consider other ways of promoting the facility with caterers and local farmers.

We already have in place a process for applying to rent, gaining access to the building, and collecting fees and deposits, etc., but it would be a good time to review and update it.

Maintenance and Repairs:

The Hood—required before any use can take place

Refrigerators—need to be serviced

Freezer -when and if we have a renter who is ready to pay for the use of it. An online estimate for operating a freezer of the type we have is about \$300/month.

In order to afford running it we would probably need to have multiple renters who want to share it. This is what the CDC does.

Dishwasher: The Dishwasher was repaired last year and is in good working order. It is in need of de-liming and Randy recommended this should be done as soon as possible to arrest some pocking from rust. Tim says this used to be done yearly. He will look into getting the necessary chemicals.

Convection oven—Randy says it is not necessary to have the convection oven up and running in order to offer the kitchen for rent. Tim says the repair could be expensive, partly because the oven is an older model, no longer in production. Randy doesn't feel that should deter us. He thinks it is worth repairing.

Certifications

In order to offer the kitchen, it would need to be certified and permitted. Randy felt that this was something that could happen easily.

ServSafe Certification

For any commercial operation there has to be a person with SERV Safe certification on site. This could either be the renter or a person we provide. Requiring the renter to be certified would obviously be easier for us to manage. On the other hand, having a SERV Safe certified person on the Building Use Committee would be to our advantage in terms of inspecting the kitchen after use and making sure it is brought back up to SERV Safe standards. This would be especially so if we wanted to make the kitchen available for both commercial use and community use. Pam has had this certification in the past and could renew it with a little work. Others might be interested. There is a cost involved in getting this license.

Another possibility to explore for having a SERV Safe certified person on site would be asking the renter to hire someone. The cost of rental for some of the commercial kitchens in the valley includes paying a SERV Safe certified staff person to be on site. Rather than us hiring such staff, we could possibly make available a list of local SERV Safe certified people willing to be hired by the renter.

In any case, there is not a need for us to immediately have a SERV Safe certified person for the kitchen. We can start out by requiring renters to have the certification and charging lower prices.

Policy

Randy recommended consulting with Leyden on developing policy that allows for both commercial and community use of the kitchen. Michelle Giarusso is the contact person. Part of the policy involves what is required for cleaning and bringing the kitchen back up to SERV Safe standards after each use.

Done. Pam spoke with Michele on Nov. 16. She has emailed policy and photos of signage.

Signage

Randy recommended signage for both SERV Safe requirements and for the use of equipment. The mixer, for example, has a weight limit that should be posted. Directions for operating and cleaning the dishwasher and steamer after use should be posted. The wooden table is for bakery only and should be posted as such so it is not used for chopping vegetables or meat. A tour of the Leyden kitchen or the Guiding Star Grange kitchen might be helpful. Randy also recommended creating an equipment notebook with instructions for use and maintenance. **(A tour of the Leyden Kitchen is not possible right now because it is closed to the public.)**

Cleaning

The kitchen has sat idle for quite a while and needs to be thoroughly cleaned before renting.

For after use clean up, we would need to provide renters with:

Brooms, dust pans, trash barrels and liners, sanitizing materials, dishwasher soap and rinse, spot sink soap and sanitizer, mop and mop bucket, access to a slop sink.

(The building has two of them, one in the custodian's room and one in one of the closets off the Atrium.)

We would need to decide in consultation with Tim whether we would want the renter to leave the kitchen broom clean and have Tim mop it or whether we would want the renter to sweep and mop.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Move forward with offering the Kitchen at 18 Jacobs Road for Commercial Rental. Vote of the Board requested.
2. Decide what spaces we need for town use and which we can offer without the disruption of our ability to function as a town now and into the future. Objective analysis of the spaces that are essential to our functioning as a town will help the town make a realistic plan about what we can offer for lease or rent and what we need to reserve for town use unless or until an alternative location can be developed. (See Table, page 15.)

For example, if the Board determines, that the gymnasium is the only space in town that can accommodate Town Meeting, then that space would only be available for occasional rental and not for a permanent long- term lease. The Post Office is an example of a function we could lose if we tried to move it from its current location so that is a space we would not want to offer under any circumstance. The Library on the other hand, could exist in either space. Therefore, we could market the library space at 18 Jacobs Road and still be able to have library space at Sawyer. The reverse alternative is also true. This kind of analysis could be done on all our town services and functions to help us decide what spaces we can offer for development and lease and which we need to retain until an alternative plan is created. The table on page 15 is offered as a preliminary analysis of town functions and the space they might or must use.

3. Consider engaging Timothy Grader or another professional realtor to work with the town on developing and marketing its buildings and promoting the town.
4. Promote Heath! and market rental spaces and more by developing our online presence. We live in a wonderful town with attractions we should be sharing through the many links to our web site that already exist. With the help from community members with web skills and/or the economic

development expertise of FRCOG or CDC or others, appoint or authorize someone to explore and update Heath's web presence. Then as funds allow, pay to list our offerings on more web sites.

5. Move forward with using grant money to address accessibility issues at Sawyer and Community Hall. Ensure that the water issues are fully and finally addressed.
6. In accordance with Town Policy, authorize members of the Building Use Committee to continue the work of organizing storage at the former school, retaining and/or selling or disposing of remaining furniture and equipment not needed by other town committees and departments and to deposit any revenue realized from sales in the 18 Jacobs Road Revolving Account. Vote requested.
7. Conduct a Community needs assessment to ascertain ways that town buildings might be used to support business and commercial as well as community interests of town residents. **Following the completion of this report, Pam spoke with Amy Shapiro of Franklin CDC who recommended working with herself and Jessica Atwood of FRCOG to create and tabulate such a survey. She also said that because Heath is in a food desert, a new CDC grant might be available to help an interested party or parties establish a healthy food store in one of Heath's buildings.**

APPENDIX

TABLE OF TOWN FUNCTIONS

- This table is a preliminary attempt to follow up on Timothy Graders recommendation that the Town consider which spaces it needs to preserve for town use and which may be offered for rent or lease. Cells highlighted in yellow are those that currently have only one viable location in our town buildings.
- Any plan to lease or rent these spaces would require the development of a realistic and cost-effective alternative location, if possible. In the case of the Post Office it may not be.

Functions	Building Where These Functions Can Take Place		
	Community Hall	Sawyer Hall	18 Jacobs Road
Post Office		X	
Library		X	X
Town Coordinator		X	X
Town Clerk		X	X
Assessors		X	X
Tax Collector		X	X
Town Treasurer		X	X
Town Accountant		X	X
BOH Clerk		X	X
Town Records Storage		X	X
Building Manager Office			X
Senior Center	X		X
Foot Clinic	X		X
Police Chief	X		X
Nurse	X		X
Fire Fighters			X
Emergency Operations			X
Emergency Dispensing Storage			X
Annual Town Meetings			X
Special Town Meetings	X		X
Select Board Meetings	X		X
Financial Committee Meetings	X	X	X
Other Committees	X	X	X
Elections	X		X
During COVID-19			
Elections			X
Foot Clinic			X
Flu Clinic			X

Note: Town Records are currently stored at both Sawyer Hall and 18 Jacobs Rd. Without 18 Jacobs Road the town would not have adequate storage space for its records.

KITCHEN INVENTORY

Note: The kitchen has a raised loading dock and separate entrance from the parking area.

Griddle

Proofing cupboard

Gas range and oven

Convection Oven—in need of repair

Hood—requires repair

Hobart Dishwasher

Refrigerator in kitchen

Three door refrigerator-needs servicing

Walk in freezer-needs servicing

Small refrigerator, under counter-needs servicing

Steamer

Steam table with trays

Mixer

Meat slicer

Counter mounted can opener

Bunn Coffee maker

Coffee urn

1 small toaster oven

2 microwave ovens

8 large pots

2 large sauce pans

2 colanders

Assorted utensils

Mixing bowls, small, medium, and large

Assorted lunch trays

Several serving bowls

STORAGE AT 18 JACOBS ROAD

Attic

- Music stands – check for possible need with Mohawk, Hawlemont, PV Symphony
- Sell or dispose of
 - kiln
 - sewing machine
 - fish tanks & accessories
 - electric typewriters (2)
 - light table
- Designate storage space for
 - maintenance
 - town records
 - Jacobs Road needs

Gym closet

- Have Parks & Rec go through the equipment to see what should be saved for their use. Set aside space in gym closet for the items Parks & Rec wants to preserve for their use
- Distribute, sell, make use of new bike helmets, sizes Small and Med
- Dispose of old baseball equipment
- Make a determination regarding white panels that belong to the art group

Large Storage closet off atrium

- Town Clerk storage

Stage

- More music stands to make available to others
- A-V stands, overhead projectors
- Call Greenfield Transfer Station to ask about older model TVs

Current classroom being used as storage

- Not addressed at the time of walk through, but has several child sized chairs to be disposed of

**POLICY SET BY BOARD OF SELECTMEN
AT BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
August 23, 2016**

PROCESS FOR DISPOSITION OF SURPLUS PROPERTY (Under \$10,000):

Relative to the Sale, Alienation or Disposal of Personal Property

From time to time, the Town of Heath finds it necessary to dispose of surplus property. The following procedure outlines the instructions to be followed in the disposition of items with an estimate net value of less than \$10,000, in order to optimize the return revenues. It is the intent of this procedure to require the establishment of reasonable control over handling, sale and disposal. This policy shall not apply to real property, or surplus property \$10,000 or over in value.

“Surplus” property included in this section is defined as items no longer useful to the governmental body but having resale value.

Equipment shall be declared scrap or surplus by the functional department head. No tangible personal property owned by the Town of Heath, whether the same be controlled by any department, board or otherwise shall be sold, alienated or otherwise disposed of, except upon the written recommendation of the Department Head having charge of matters concerning such department, board or otherwise, and with the approval and written or verbal consent of the Board of Selectmen.

Surplus equipment

1. Items with value over \$50 will be offered to other departments within the Town of Heath, and if not of interest to any, will then be offered for sale.
2. Put equipment in best possible condition.
3. Advertise one time in a newspaper of general circulation, post on website, and seek three quotes from dealers or prospective purchasers.
4. Dispose of equipment to highest responsive bidder in accordance with terms and conditions of sale.

The Town reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids. All sales shall be made on an “as is” basis. All property sold shall be paid for by Cashier’s Check, Certified Check or Money Order payable to the Town of Heath. The Town will furnish the successful bidder(s) a completely executed form which will detail the description of the item purchased, the price bid and terms of sale. Purchaser must indicate agreement by signing and returning it to the Town Coordinator.

Timothy Grader <tim@cohnandcompany.com>

To: Pamela Porter

Cc: Patricia McGahan

Tue, Oct 20 at 5:25 PM

Hi Pam:

You did a great job summarizing our discussion.

Should the Select Board have further questions, I would be more than happy to speak with them.

Be well,

Emails sent or received shall neither constitute acceptance of conducting transactions via electronic means nor shall create a binding contract in the absence of a fully signed written contract.

Timothy Grader

Cohn & Company Real Estate Agency

Proudly serving our community for 70 years!

Wire fraud alert: If you receive an email from me or this office requesting you wire or transfer funds, you must confirm by telephone before you do anything. Hackers are targeting professional offices including attorneys and real estate agents. Treat any email requests as fraud. Any requests for wire transfer will be made and/or confirmed in person by me or my office.

Hide original message

On Oct 19, 2020, at 1:45 PM, Pamela Porter <pam_porter@verizon.net> wrote:

Hi Timothy,

Thank you for meeting with us this past week. It was helpful to get your views on the marketability of our town buildings. I've tried to write up the gist of the conversation and attached it to this message. Would you have a look at it and let me know if it faithfully captures what you had to say? I'd like to share with the Select Board when we report to them. Thanks.

And thanks again for making the trip up the hill.

Pam

<Timothy Grader Cohn and Company.doc>