

**Addendum: June 7, 2022 Joint Public Meeting of  
the Heath Select Board and Library Trustees**

**At 7:11 p.m., on June 7, 2022 the Joint Public Meeting of the Select Board and the Library Board of Trustees was Called to Order** by Deb Porter, Chair, with Don Freeman present, and Emily Cross absent.

It was noted that this was a public information meeting. Information was to be presented, with an opportunity for questions at the end.

Robyn said that the topic of concern was accessibility in the entrance to, the hall in front of, and the library, itself. The Select Board reached out to the MA Office on Disabilities seeking information on the accessibility as delineated in the Americans with Disabilities Act of the above-mentioned areas of Sawyer Hall. Robyn read a statement from the Select Board, including the vote to support the recommendation of Board of Library Trustees to act out of the Jacobs Road Municipal Building library while reviewing their program needs. The Select Board plans to evaluate all town buildings in the same manner.

Deb read a statement indicating that a timeline for information gathering and the actual move is being formed. Updates will be on the library web page. Helpers are welcomed. Contact Kate Barrows for details.

Robyn asked the Select Board for comments. Sue indicated that she would wait until after public comments. Brian noted that the facilities study cited many of these same issues two years ago, so this information did not out of the blue.

The floor was opened for public comment:

*[Note: The following is a synopsis of the interaction, not a literal translation. For a full translation, listen to the recorded version of this meeting on the town web site. Public comments are in regular font, Select Board comments are in italics.]*

**Bob Gruen:** Was Jeff Dugan's evaluation virtual? *Yes, photos were provided.* When did town ever ask the office for disabilities for input? Was this input previously requested by the town? *Probably last requested 15 years ago.* Are they inspecting other town buildings? *The Office of Disabilities does not inspect anything. Many boards come in with information requests. Under the ADA, if there is a complaint, then there is an intervention.* Did you call in ADA? *No.* Were you involved at a time when any plans were developed for buildings before? **Brian** *was on the Select Board when the house in the Center then owned by Helen Mackie was considered, but not Sawyer Hall.*

**Deb Porter:** *Further review would be needed of Sawyer Hall, as this doesn't address fire issues or outside of the building.*

**Bill Fontes:** If issues are not a new thing, was money for repairs raised, then? *No money was raised to deal with the issues presented in current report. Elevator and ramp were done with BLOC grant. This work is not eligible for the current grant cycle.*

**Robyn Provost-Carlson:** *The Select Board will do a full cost analysis over this next year.*

**Deb:** *Issues in the library are not just related to the ADA. The town has, in the past, applied for an overall construction grant but Heath was unable to pay our share. There is raised money in Trustees and Friend's accounts but don't know how far it would go. When looking at the house in the Center then owned by Helen Mackie, it was clear that due to finances, we would need to do 50% less than desired. We waited for time to talk about all of this, which is why the Library Board of Trustees is doing a strategic plan.*

**Amy Krane:** What is the grant potential? If there is more work to be done, can townspeople help? Are you assessing all town buildings for ADA compliance? **Robyn:** *yes. Amy appreciates attempts to get facts and outside counsel.*

**Devon Clark:** Remembers when Charlene (Churchill) was librarian; there was talk about building a new library back then. It is not a new concept to say we want new space. But can we make do because our librarians are so helpful?

**Jack Estees:** There are concerns regarding the location of the Post Office, as well. **Robyn** *is talking with Council about that. Can we use upstairs, and other rooms for library? Robyn: All options are on table.*

**Nina Marshall:** Thanks to Devon Clark for her words. How can we better use the space in the library? It doesn't all need to be accessible to everyone; librarians can bring books to people, instead. In a survey of library patrons, you need to ask; "Where might you go?" Evaluate new spaces and don't make premature decisions. Jacobs Road is a remote site and not safe for my 13-year-old daughter to be alone. **Deb:** *Part of strategic plan is to contact everyone. Not making final decisions, yet.*

**Bob Gruen:** When he and a few others attended the May Library Board meeting, it was mentioned that there might be Fire Code compliance needs at Jacobs Road? **Deb:** *Fire chief suggested fire egress out back (convert window into door), but it has not yet been researched. We might find grants.*

**Jean Gran:** What initiated the ADA inspection? **Robyn:** *conversations among different groups in town discussing accessibility issues prompted the Select Board to reach out for assistance. It is the intent to do the same for Jacobs Road. After feedback on Sawyer Hall, you made the decision to move to Jacobs Road, but there was no evaluation of Jacobs Road? Robyn: After they received ADA information, the Trustees recommended to the Select Board that the library move. Jean: this was a one-sided approach to issue.*

**Brian:** *18 Jacobs Road was designed and built when ADA code was in full force, so the building is compliant, with possible small issues to address. At Sawyer Hall, there needs to be two accessible means of egress. Out the back, there is no way to get from the exterior door to a public way. Using the front ramp, the landing of the ramp goes directly into the roadway. There needs to be a 5-foot sq. level area at end of the ramp.*

**Jean Gran:** You reached out to the ADA. Who paid for this report? **Brian:** *It was free. Then why not treat situations equally? Brian: we are doing that.*

**Brian:** *On the Select Board there is an architect and a building contractor. We know Jacobs Road is accessible. We got on Sawyer Hall because it is the most difficult to address.*

**Thuy Lu:** Can we make do? We need to think of how do we make do, and how do we improve. Struck by lack of complaint to prompt assessment. Based on ADA would the entire Town Center be out of compliance? Seconds Jean's complaint: there was no comparable assessment. Things need to be right and fair for such a big community decision/move. Not sufficient that you, Brian and Robyn, have professional experience. It is not sufficient to take your word for it. Must we hurry or not? What is instigating these actions? This feels fast. Is the library now just going to move?

**Robyn:** *The Office of Disabilities Report is available on the town web site. The decision to move now comes from the library trustees.*

**Deb:** *The Trustees have three recommendations: that all buildings be assessed; to learn how to solve issues at Sawyer Hall; to operate out of a different location until issues are resolved.*

**Bob Viarengo:** Based on reports over the years, exterior issues have been well known for a long time. The Post Office is at risk, now.

**Margaret Freeman:** There have been no official complaints, but yes, seniors have talked about their concerns to the Council on Aging. This talk is about the Center, but Heath extends over a large area. Jacobs Road is not remote for all.

**Gloria Fisher:** There is a lack of trust in the Select Board.

**Bill L. attrell:** The ADA is both a legal obligation and our moral obligation.

**Nancy Thane:** My 94-year-old mother-in-law, who was librarian here for many years, cannot get into the library in Sawyer Hall and says that she is afraid for her safety to go into the stacks.

**Don Freeman:** The move is temporary, then the Trustees will have time and space to get all information needed. There is a potential legal liability there, now.

**Jesse Weigand:** Thanks to library trustees for desire to involve the community. And thanks to Kate for giving him a private tour. Building maintenance seen as a long-term problem at Sawyer Hall, and at Jacobs Road. We need to take care of maintenance instead of waiting until there are serious problems.

**Susan Gruen;** Taking into consideration Brian's and Robyn's professional knowledge is not enough. What is the need for the door at Jacobs Road? **Robyn** has asked for a final ruling from the Fire Chief, who had said that he felt we should change a back window to a door.

**Susan Gruen:** Temporary means, what? **Deb:** *It is impossible to tell. The town needs to research, go to Town Meeting for financial approval for work on Sawyer Hall, and do repairs.* **Robyn:** *People will need to decide how to move forward when given actual costs.*

**Brian:** *Accessibility is the law. We need to make a move to solve this problem. Won't leave Sawyer Hall empty but will need to make decisions.*

**Susan:** Will you fix the issues at Jacobs Road, first? **Brian:** *any issues are not significant enough to wait on for use of the building.*

**Bill Fontes:** When will temporary move happen? **Deb:** *a timeline is being developed. It will be posted. Don't want to interrupt library services. There is a list of things needing to happen (select books to move, move shelves...).* **Bill:** If you don't wait for the Fire Chief's assessment, and then he says we need a second egress, will you then temporarily move library again, then will you move it all back? He thinks this seems disingenuous. **Deb:** *not looking to spend a lot of money on this temporary move.* **Bill:** Can meetings happen if ADA requirements are not met? **Brian:** *even if we want to rent building will need to.*

**Amy Krane:** does not believe there are nefarious reasons for this recommendation. Can we get the ADA info on Jacobs Road ASAP? Amy does trust Robyn's and Brian's level of expertise. But for credibility among all concerned individuals, please get the ADA report ASAP. What is the cost of putting in a door, anyway?

**Robyn:** *Take out the window, make room for the door - more than \$1,000 and under \$10,000. Need landing and a walk, as well. In terms of code, occupancy does not require two lanes of egress. Fire Chief can require, but it is not a legality.*

**Jean Gran:** Recognizes importance of making buildings accessible, legally, and morally. Process is the concern. A lot of distrust and upset in town. This is an environment where leaders have a challenge. Concerned that there was not an even-handed approach. P.O. is a huge issue, not just a library issue. Imperative that best for whole town be pursued. There is a bigger picture, even though there was a library question, first.

**Bob Gruen:** Is it temporary or not? Town Offices move was said to be temporary, but temporary is only temporary in word, not in fact.

**Devon Clark:** don't get mad at librarian or Trustees. Who attended a recent meeting of Trustees? Only a handful of people.

**Nina Marshall:** Meetings aren't at a good time.

**Bob Viarengo:** It is stunning that legality of buildings has been known for a long time. He thinks the Select Board is planning not to fix, or care about P.O.

**Jesse Weigand:** understands people feel suspicious. This is a tool to move permanently, in the end. Slow creep, creep, creep. Doesn't doubt intentions of Library Trustees, just the Select Board.

**Sue Lively:** *at 1 hour and 1/2 now; it is clear that an opinion of suspicious motives is evident. Are there other comments to be made?*

**Jack Estees:** how long has ramp been there? He and Dave Howland fell on stairs a while back and a railing went up immediately. **Brian:** *was not on the Board at that time. Pavement has heaved over time. The current ramp was the town's attempt to make the building accessible, but not done to official regulations. Brian did work on elevator installation process.*

**Susan Gruen:** Ramp was done better than 20 years ago. Good collaboration with them (Gruens) as abutters.

**Jesse Weigand:** Thank you to library board for reaching out and having this meeting.

**Barbara Rode:** And thank you to Margaret for helping COA talk to all seniors.

**Deb:** This is a community issue; we need to hang in there, together.

*On a motion by Don Freeman, seconded by Deb Porter, the Library Board of Trustees unanimously voted to Adjourn their meeting at approximately 9:00*

**Select Board reactions:**

**Brian:** *reminder that we have the Jacobs Road space now and didn't have the option of different space in the past. Please read the report on-line.*

**Sue:** *These needs have been around a long time. Jesse is right; by not doing work along the way, we now must spend a lot. Reason to do ADA evaluation of Sawyer Hall first was also because it was the building with the most foot-traffic. P.O. is a concern, but we need to face the issues. Sue agrees that we need to next ask the Office of Disabilities to evaluate all buildings.*