

Thursday, November 3 Meeting

7 W Guilford Committee Meeting

Present:

Mayor Raleigh York Jr

Carol Brown

Andrew Clement

Kelly Johnson

Tammy Joyce

Blythe Leonard

Nancy Staton

Payton Williams

David Yemm

Ron Braxton

Absent:

None

The meeting was called to order at 6:03p by Mayor York.

Attendees were welcomed by Mayor York.

Andrew Clement made a motion to add “Additions and Deletions” to the agenda after the welcome. Motion was made by Andrew, second by Kelly and passed unanimously.

Carol Brown made a motion to amend the 10/06 Minutes to include members absent (Ron Bratton) and approve the minutes as amended. Seconded by Kelly Johnson. Passed unanimously.

Blythe Leonard made a motion to add “Approve Meeting Notes from the 10/29 walkthrough” to Item 3. Nancy seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Carol made a motion to amend the meeting notes to include members absent (Payton Williams) and approve as amended. Blythe seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.

Discussion about the walkthrough occurred. Each member was asked to share their thoughts individually.

- Nancy Staton: Nancy liked the space and thought about how it might hold a cafe, some sort of viewing room in the old council chambers, and how, were it to become a museum, it could recognize the rich Black History of Thomasville. Nancy acknowledged that the building needs to be more handicap friendly/ADA accessible and she would like to see areas for children to feel at home.

- Blythe Leonard: Blythe divided her thoughts into two categories: ideas for the use of the building and a “realistic list” to begin work. Ideas for the space include preserving the history as a museum for Thomasville, including a children’s room with a train theme, a room for women in the community to knit or crochet or create together, a health foods store, private training gym, old-school arcade, wine shop, a store selling Thomasville merchandise, converting the former council chambers into a music theater or performing arts space, converting the basement into rental or office space, adding picnic tables outside for community engagement. In her list of work to begin with, she suggests that volunteers remove trash and furniture, the police department wipe and remove the old computers, things of value are taken out and sold for donations, the building is pressure washed, and the useable doors and other pieces from rooms to be gutted are removed for later use.
- Andrew Clement: Andrew is in full agreement with Blythe about where work needs to begin, and he emphasized that the building must pay for itself, suggesting that 2/3 of the building needs to be income-producing space that compliments the building. He shared that there are great models of this type of thing in other places in NC and asked if city staff could help with research of other museums run by cities in our area. Andrew is confident that the money to renovate the building can be raised but believes it should sustain itself.
- Carol Brown: Carol would like to see the temporary walls that have been added come down so we can better understand the space and envision its uses. She likes the idea of using the building as a museum and also agrees that it needs to pay for itself. Her father was a WWII vet and she would like to see representation for Thomasville’s veterans in the museum.
- Kelly Johnson: Kelly is in agreement with Blythe and points out that many of Blythe’s ideas are revenue-generating. She points out that we are lacking representation from the Arts Council and it would be helpful to have their perspective on the design. If a wine shop is included, history of wine in our area could be added. The basement could potentially be the money-maker for the building while the upper floors are dedicated to a museum and performing arts space.
- Ron Bratton: Ron shared that he likes some of the ideas that had been shared and others he doesn’t. He is concerned that using 2/3 of the space to generate revenue won’t leave enough space for a museum or other things. He pointed out that if the building is rented 5 days a week we have to pay for utilities 5 days a week, and historically that has been very costly. As far as a museum goes, the rich history of furniture and textiles, and military veterans would be great to highlight. He believes that schools will make good use of it and maybe it doesn’t have to be open 5 days a week. With all the repairs needed to the infrastructure of the building, upfitting it will be very costly.

- Payton Williams: Payton was absent for the walkthrough but has enjoyed hearing everyone’s ideas and opinions. She plans to go on a walkthrough before the next meeting.
- David Yemm: David agreed that making the building multi-use is the way to go if the city retains ownership. He suggested building a parking garage in the back parking lot because parking is an issue downtown. David suggested that if we sell the building, we place it under a restrictive covenant to have some control over what it becomes. He also said a wine shop would be a cool use of some of the space.
- Tammy Joyce: TJ said she thinks everyone’s ideas are great. She agrees that we need to generate income with the space and thinks we should consider allowing someone to purchase the building who could then use grants and independent funding to renovate it. We could put a restrictive covenant in place to allow the city to retain the right to use a portion of the building as a museum that captures all the historical aspects of the city that have been mentioned so far. ADA accessibility is absolutely a must and attaining that will be a challenge.

After everyone shared their thoughts, we discussed various aspects of the conversation further, including:

- Building codes and ADA accessibility requirements
- Concerns surrounding the sale of the building
- The opportunity to make the building “green” with grant funding under the Green Initiative
- The need for community input
- Whether or not the city could or would move back into the building and use it as city hall
- The mission and vision for the committee

Blythe: what is the goal for this building? Nancy agrees

- Can’t lose money
- Bring foot traffic to downtown
- Attract families from nearby towns to downtown Thomasville
- Andrew: tourism should be a part of it because they have an income stream,
- Ron doesn’t think this building should turn a profit/be able to support itself, wants the city to commit to keeping the building open as a museum

Nancy: will we have a forum for input from the community?

- Yes
- David asked if we could get someone from historic preservation to guide our thinking

Andrew: could we get Heather to quote us to consult on the building?

- no opposition
- Would ask for money from city council

Mayor will get info on utility bills before it closed, we closed the building because it was no longer economical to keep the building open just for council after police moved- power is on but heat/air/expensive stuff is off

Heather Fernbach (architectural historian) could consult on the extent of work needed, order of operations, rough cost estimates, etc

Blythe suggested finding someone at Revolution Mill to talk us through their suggestions/failures etc so we can avoid same mistakes and capitalize on their learning

Could City Hall go back to the police building? Something to think about

Action Items:

- Andrew is going to contact Heather Feanbach (architectural historian) to get a proposal on consulting with the committee.
- Mayor York is going to talk to other cities about the costs incurred for operating their museums.
- Mayor York is going to meet with city inspectors and a contractor suggested by Kelly- Zane Matthews- and walk through to get some insight on what needs to be done to bring the building up to code. He will inform the committee on the date and time of this walkthrough so we can attend if we are available.
- Mayor York is going to research previous utility bills.
- Mayor York will figure out the process for removing the temporary walls in the building.
- Mayor York is going to look into getting the original architectural plans from 1937 printed for each committee member.
- Payton to research code enforcement in Thomasville compared to other areas, specifically surrounding minimum appearance standards.

The agenda for our next meeting on December 1 was discussed. Items will include:

- Discuss proposal from Heather Feanbach
- Information on utilities
- Inspectors' report
- Mission and Vision

Committee members were asked to think about the mission and vision of the committee and bring their thoughts to the next meeting.

Andrew made a motion to adjourn and Tammy seconded, it passed unanimously.