

MINUTES

Town of Southborough, MA
Meeting of the 21 Highland Future Use Committee
South Union School
Recreation Department, Room 2
21 Highland Street, Southborough MA 01772
Thursday May 15, 2025, 7:15 PM

- Attendees: Freddie Gillespie, Lisa Braccio, Kristin LaVault, Albena Phillipo, Kevin Miller
 - Absent: Destin Heilman
- Meeting called to order at 7:15
- Committee members in attendance at the property tour for community members on April 22 provided a brief recap. The tour was led by John Parent, Southborough's Director of Facilities. The number of attendees was less than ten, but those in attendance offered positive feedback about the condition of the building and space available and shared some of that feedback on social media. Future public tours will be planned pending the potential extension of the Committee's charge. Community members can also reach out to the Committee if they are interested in a walk-through.
- Review of Collected Reports and Discussion of Needed Documents and Information
 - Aside from the reports detailed in the interim report and posted to the Committee website, the Committee considered if there was additional documentation needed at this time.
 - The Recreation Department has collected the requested current usage information for inclusion in future reporting.
 - The Committee agreed to approach the following Committees and Commissions for their opinions on the building to support the discussions on future uses.
 - Historical Commission
 - Open Space Committee
 - Recreation Commission
 - The Committee agreed that a layout of the parcels of land used by the schools would be helpful to distinguish between town-owned versus school-owned properties and land.
 - The Committee also agreed to open the topic to:
 - Local developers to understand thoughts on this property use to contribute to the potential future use recommendations.
 - The Economic Development Committee (EDC) to understand potential mixed-use opportunities, current economic drivers, demand, price control leases, etc.
 - Kindergroup to discuss current use and potential future usage for the property.
- Create Timeline to Finalize Recommendations

- Following the “No” vote in the Special Town Meeting and the election ballot, questions on the future use of Finn School remain. The Committee believes all options should continue to be considered so that they are prepared for refinement as decisions on other parcels of land are finalized in the coming months and years.
- Other open items to support recommendations include:
 - What needs does the building have for a MA historical architectural assessment for Preservation Restriction (PR)?
 - Who could defend a PR in perpetuity?
 - Parking considerations if opened to business lease or sale (zoning would need to be clearly understood and an RFP would be required).
 - Note that affordable housing has already been studied by a previous committee and as a result housing is not being considered.
- Plan Public Forum
 - The format for a 21 Highland Future Use Public Forum would be like that of the MBTA zoning forums: short presentation, tables for idea generation, etc.
 - Preliminary dates in June and methods for publicizing the forum were agreed to; to be confirmed after consulting the calendar for other town committee meetings and events, and a location is secured.
- Chair Report
 - The Select Board had to cancel the meeting with the 21 Highland Future Use Committee on Tuesday, April 15 because of a town website outage. F Gillespie had asked Select Board Chair Andrew Dennington about a reschedule, to which he replied that he would confirm. To date a confirmation has not been received and the interim report therefore not formally presented, although provided, to the Select Board.
- Minutes
 - K Miller made a motion to approve minutes from the February 27, 2025, meeting, A Phillipo seconded; unanimously approved.
 - K LaVault will send out a survey for June meeting dates given several conflicts noted during the meeting, and the absence of members.
 - A motion was made to adjourn at 8:33 pm by K Miller and seconded by K LaVault; unanimously approved.
 - Additional documents referenced: N/A