

Town of New Hope
Minutes from Open Meeting Re: Future Meeting Space

9:00 am, August 10, 2024

9785 Town Hall Road, Amherst Junction, WI

Members Present: Chair Todd Knepfel, Supervisor Timm Raddatz, Supervisor Ray Reser,
Clerk Pat Zellmer

Guests: Steve Ellingboe, Sally Ellingboe, Gloria Onan, Dean Onan, Pat Ludeman, Susan Groshek,
Norman Groshek, George Guyant, Jenny Larsen, Jim Hotvedt

The Open Meeting was called to order at 9:00 by Chair Todd Knepfel, with a brief overview of the state of the current Town Hall, located at 9785 Town Hall Road, Amherst Junction, WI

The Town Hall is in need of a number of repairs, including a new roof. The windows (which were falling out) have been repaired, but should be replaced. There is no running water or septic on the property; an outhouse is located next to the building. No internet is available, although the building is wired for electricity, and a heater has replaced the wood stove. Currently, the building does not meet a number of State building codes.

A brief history of the New Hope Town Hall:

- Circa 1919: New Hope Town Hall is constructed.
- 2008-2009: Discussion of remodeling (~\$40,000-70,000) vs. rebuilding (\$128,000); purchase of 0.75 acres additional land
- 2010: Design for refurbishing existing building and 700 sq. ft. addition completed, at an estimated cost of \$180,000. Fall referendum resulted in approval of that plan (220:186), but was rejected in February 2011 (55:38) when costs increased to approximately \$195,000.
- 2011: Two alternative plans were submitted, for an estimated cost of \$150,000 for either.
- 2012: Advisory survey in April resulted in inconclusive direction, followed by rejecting a new town hall (33:30) in May, and a second rejection of a new building in November (43:35), resulting in a search for an alternative meeting space and polling place.
- February 2013: first elections held at North New Hope Church, followed by use as Town meeting space.

Although the Town Hall is old (built circa 1919), there is nothing of historic significance to place it on the State Historical Buildings list. However, as the building continues to deteriorate, a decision must be made in the very near future on what to do with it. Regardless, the mill rate will almost certainly increase (ranging from slight increase to significant).

The Town Hall, in its current state, does not meet State code, especially for people with special needs.

- It is noted that if any repairs are made to the building, all repairs to bring the building up to code must be completed. As such, a number of options were discussed with the residents in attendance, divided into 1) what to do with the existing building, and 2) what will be used as a replacement. Implementation of a plan to move forward is needed by the end of the year.
- Note that regardless of whether a new building is added or the lot is vacant, the land will be kept by the Town of New Hope as an asset.

I. Plans for the Current Building:

Options on what to do with the building are:

1. Demolish the existing building, (possibly with recycling or repurposing building materials) with site clean up to follow.
2. Use the building as a fire training opportunity for the Iola Fire Department, with site clean up to follow.
3. Sell the building and have it moved (buyer's expense), with site clean up to follow.
4. Make all necessary repairs to the current structure.
5. Regardless of whether a new building is added or the lot is vacant, the land will be kept by the Town of New Hope as an asset.

II. Future Town of New Hope Town Hall.

Options on what to do with the building are:

1. Repair the existing building: Repair the current building, bring all aspects of the building up to code, including a new roof, siding, new septic and well, minimum two bathrooms, new windows and insulation, internet and phone installation, secure storage space for election equipment, clerk's office cubical. The existing building is small; bathrooms and secure storage would need to be added to the building's footprint.
2. Build a new town hall. As a comparison, the Village of Nelsonville shared costs of their newly constructed building, including a well, septic, and demolition of the existing building. The total cost was approximately \$330,000, and was financed using a 10- year loan (which must be renewed at the end of the 10 years) through Bank of Amherst with an annual payment of \$23,825 at an interest rate of 4.875%. The average cost per household of about \$164/100,000 property value is shared by 73 households (New Hope has 180), and would be different from the cost for New Hope Residents because of property value differences. Utilities for the new building run about \$100 per month.
3. Continue to utilize basement space from the North New Hope Church, with an increase in the donation amount per year to the church. Currently, New Hope makes a small annual donation to the church. However, with rising costs for North New Hope Church, the Board feels it expedient to increase the annual donation for a fair compensation for the building's use, utilities, snow and lawn care, etc. Storage space for voting equipment and a place to locate a Town notice board outside the building would be included, with actual costs for creating the storage area and building a posting board would be covered by the Town. Snowplowing may be a negotiating item.
4. Purchase the Church and rent space to or do a cost-share with the North New Hope Lutheran Church. Cost has not been discussed, although this was presented as a possibility. Upkeep of the cemetery would remain the responsibility of the Church.

Another open meeting will be held later this year for public input. A decision will be made by the Board by year's end, with the resulting costs included in the 2025 Town of New Hope Budget that will be completed in late 2024 and put before the public in the Budget meeting at year's end.

These minutes will be posted on the town website, Town Hall, and Sunset Lake.