

Historic Town Hall Committee



Draft Minutes – 11/28/2016 Historic Town Hall Committee Meeting

Opening

- The meeting began at 4:08pm.
- Roll Call - A quorum was present. One member, Alan Rimer, was absent.
- The committee members briefly introduced themselves.
- The committee approved the agenda.

Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

New Business

Charter

The committee reviewed the committee charter.

Council Member Greene stated that the Town Council has noted its intent not to demolish the building, and there is an interest in placing a preservation easement on Historic Town Hall in the future.

Council Member Greene noted that the Town Council has not decided what agency should occupy the building. Although this committee's scope is to focus on the opportunity to locate the Visitor's Bureau, Historical Society, and/or a revived Chapel Hill Museum in the Historic Town Hall, the charter is limited to determining whether any combination of these potential uses appears to be feasible for this location.

The committee will invite the Visitor's Bureau board to nominate a board member to the committee, subject to Town Council approval.

Historic Town Hall Background Information – Historic Significance

The committee reviewed the National Register nomination form for Historic Town Hall. The building originally housed multiple municipal departments, and the building's Neo-Colonial style set the trend for many other Town buildings to be built in the same style. The building's construction led to the establishment of citizen committees to oversee development, specifically the Planning Commission.

Historic Town Hall Background Information – 2015 Physical Assessment

Josh Gurlitz summarized the building's condition. Mr. Gurlitz's firm renovated the building for the IFC in 1988-1990. During these renovations, some critical structural issues were corrected, including introducing modern steel with more carrying capacity in some sections of the building. Asbestos mitigation was also done for most of the building. The courtroom windows had been bricked up years before; the bricks were removed and windows replaced during the renovations.

Other critical issues remain, including plumbing problems. The roof has needed regular repairs, and the gutters have ongoing problems with leaks.



Mr. Gurlitz noted that building is 9,000 to 11,000 square feet (including or excluding the basement), but the effective, usable square footage is less.

Historic elements of the building were discussed, including the old fire bays and the cupola.

Committee Members' Perspectives, Interests

The committee members discussed their interests related to the committee's charge. Interests included encouraging Orange County and the Town of Chapel Hill to remain involved in maintaining the community's history, continuing to partner with the University to meet visitors' needs, preserving the Historic Town Hall facility, involving stakeholders in discussing the building's future, providing opportunities for the public to experience local history in an interactive way, and maintaining a public and historic presence downtown.

The Historical Society has had a good experience with its location at the Chapel Hill Library. The Society is interested in building collections of family history and serving as a resource center.

UNC is pursuing a downtown location on West Franklin Street for the university visitors center. UNC is supportive of the County Visitors Bureau and providing a link between the two visitors centers.

Committee Timeline

The committee reviewed the timeline included in the handbook. Council Member Greene noted that the Council would need to approve any spending for an architect to do a cost estimate. The committee discussed the possibility of requesting volunteer services for a cost estimate or researching the cost of renovating similar facilities through the State Preservation Office.

Meeting Schedule/ Scheduling Tour of Building

The committee reviewed the draft schedule. The schedule and next meeting date will be finalized in the coming week. The next meeting will include continued discussion on the Historic Town Hall facility and a tour of the building.

Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

Adjourned

Summary of Action Items to Complete Before Next Meeting

- Committee Members will send Megan Dale their availability to finalize the meeting schedule by December 2.
- Confirm the next meeting date and location and tour of Historic Town Hall.
- Invite the Visitor's Bureau board to nominate a board member to the committee.

Tentative Agenda for Next Meeting

- Hear and discuss interests/ perspective of the Chapel Hill History Museum from Alan Rimer.



- Hear and discuss interests/ perspective of the Visitor's Center from the Visitor's Bureau board member.
- Tour of Historic Town Hall.