



# **Process to Consider Possible Future Use of Historic Town Hall**



# Historic Town Hall Committee Charge

Consider the possible future use of Historic Town Hall as a **Visitors and/or History Center**

- Feasibility?
- Community Value?

# Context



## Petition

Report to Council  
June 27, 2016

As you know, many citizens of Chapel Hill were disappointed when our Town decided it could no longer afford a museum and were unwilling to support it with any funds. (As a former Chair of the Board, I was particularly disappointed.) We now are pursuing a unique opportunity to open a new museum and relocated Visitor's Center in the old town hall once vacated by the IFC Kitchen. This is a brief summary of the activities that have taken place with regard to the utilization of the old town hall as a relocated Orange County Visitor's Center and Chapel Hill Museum.

- Met with the Orange County Visitor's Bureau Board and made a presentation on the proposal. I believe it is safe to that the general concept of combining the Visitors Center with the Chapel Hill Museum was met with enthusiasm.
- We have met with the IFC on several occasions to discuss their schedule, look at alternatives for the kitchen and keep lines of communication open.
- We are scheduled to talk with Chancellor Folt after the Fourth of July to enlist the University's support for the idea, provide Chancellor Folt with a similar update to this presentation this evening and explore the potential for some economic aid for the effort.
- We have reviewed the report provided by the County for the upgrade of the old town hall. While a number of us believe that the estimates are on the high side for the repairs that need to be made we recognize that a variety of different sources of funds will be necessary to not only renovate the building but up-fit the space for both the visitor center and the museum.
- We have contacted five old board members of the museum who have expressed an interest in helping in any way to revive the museum.
- We anticipate having a reconstituted Chapel Hill Museum Board of Directors this year who can work in concert with the Visitors Bureau Board of Directors, the Chapel Hill Town Council and the Orange County Board of Commissioners.

Thanks for your enthusiasm and support for this idea.

Rev. Robert Seymour Alan E. Rimer

# Committee Members

- Sally Greene – Town Council – **Committee Chair**
- Penny Rich – Orange County Commissioner
- Moses Carey – Community Member
- Joel Curran – UNC-Chapel Hill
- Richard Ellington – Historical Society Board Member
- Josh Gurlitz – Architect
- Alan Rimer – Former Chapel Hill Museum Board Member
- Lee Storrow – Visitors Bureau Board Member
- Chela Tu – Chamber of Commerce

# Committee Partners



# Historic Town Hall

- 7,534 usable sq. ft.
- Fully renovate interior
- Reconfigure to be more open/  
welcoming
- Sustainable funding source
- Continue maintenance/repair
- Costs and benefits to downtown businesses



“Either the museums will transform themselves into an activist role or . . . ‘the museum as a living institution will disappear. Petrified into a state of passive conservation, it will be nothing but a static cultural archive center, oblivious of its responsibilities and remote, if not entirely removed, from those who most require it.’”

—Dillon Ripley, *The Sacred Grove: Essays on Museums* (1969)

# City of Raleigh Museum





# Durham History Hub



# Community Input Meeting

- How could a place to connect people to Chapel Hill's history and culture, past and present, be of value to the community?
- What would such a space need to look like and do to feel like it belonged to the community?
- Does a future use related to history/ culture resonate for Historic Town Hall?

# Findings

- Evolving Nature of Museums
- Evolving Nature of Visitors Centers
- Historical Society Well Situated in Library
- Demand for Space for Cultural Activities

# Suggested Considerations

Continue considering

- Future use as a space to highlight local history and culture
- Visitors Bureau and Orange County Commissioners' interest in co-locating in Historic Town Hall
- Nearby properties with potential synergies

# Committee's Recommended Next Steps

- Engage Diverse Communities and Identify Opportunities for Collaboration
- Define Mission, Goals, and Audience
- Determine Ownership and Financial Commitment
- Analyze Economic and Social Costs and Benefits

# Recommended Council Action

That the Council adopt Resolution R-13 to:

- accept the Committee's report,
- dissolve the Committee, and
- authorize the Town Manager and Chairs of the Historic Town Hall Committee and Town Properties Task Force to review the reports, identify connections and discuss potential next steps.

The Town Manager will bring a report for the Council's consideration in the Fall.