

2020 WRAP-UP THOUGHTS ON FUTURE OF JHS FACILITIES

I have thoughts and ideas swirling around in my head and need to write them down. My brain can only hold so much before some of it gets automatically deleted. Ideas are great when they are fresh but spoil with age and without any sort of preservation. So this is my way of consolidating my thoughts, funneling them down into a jar, and sealing the jar before moving on to something else.

Do we stay or do we go?

First, we need to decide what is important. Are we interested in changing how we display items? Are we willing to spend effort in marketing the JHS to bring in people to see the displays? Is there any appetite for enhancement? We could maintain *status quo* by preparing new exhibits in the Library cases, the Civic Center glass cases, and the Civic Center Auditorium occasionally. Room 2 downstairs has virtually no public exposure and hasn't changed in many years. Who among us would be knowledgeable enough to be comfortable leading a tour in that room and be proud to show it off to visitors? Not me. I guess I could make more of an effort to learn, make fresh new labels and signage, hire an electrician to replace the once-existing track lighting, and find someplace else to store the boxes of books. It seems to me this room was created as a "stage set" exhibit without a theme. There are artifacts from 1790 beside furniture from 1950. The stuffed chairs have no special historical significance other than they were donated by kindly Jaffrey residents. The piano, while unusual in design, is simply one that was donated by a Mrs. Crabtree of Peterborough. She originally offered it to the Village Improvement Society for the Meetinghouse, it declined; then she offered it to the JHS in 1974. Reportedly it is an 18th century square grand piano. No historical provenance to Jaffrey, just an antique used to set the period of the room.

If we are going to stay at the Civic Center and if we are going to keep Room 2 as an exhibition room, I would favor divesting ourselves of the stuffed chairs and piano to save space. If we are going to follow a new plan of thematic displays then we need to put away unrelated materials, move the extra display case into the room from the hallway, and comb our holdings for related items. I personally have no more motivation or ability to make this happen than anyone else in the Society. I guess if the majority of people were excited about this and several members were ready to roll up their sleeves and work at it, I would join in. Or maybe we just leave it as is.

I'm thinking about elementary or secondary school class trips. We could convert the room to an education center and offer a lot of local history if we were prepared with talking points and artifacts to show. We could have different period corners of the room such as the 1773 section with drawings, maps, tools, and clothed mannequins. The 1873 section would have period

appropriate items. And so on up to the 2010s. It's all history. There could be a civics section that explains current-day Jaffrey municipal operation.

Keep in mind that the basement level is not *handicap accessible* which is a big issue for students and adult visitors in this day and age. Maybe we shouldn't waste our efforts in remodeling the basement room considering this limitation. This leads to thinking about another space in the Civic Center that *is* rudimentarily accessible. The Auditorium is probably not feasible since setting up exhibits in there would prohibit the room being used as a large group area or for other Civic Center and community functions. The Conference Room is a possibility for exhibits. It could be locked when unattended and there are fewer environmental concerns, but would be tight for hosting a class of students.

My greatest concern is for environmental security for our holdings. A leak or break in an overhead water pipe anywhere in the basement could ruin many of our holdings. In Room 1 we have over 50 archival boxes of documents on the shelves, old school books, vintage clothing, a resource library, business files, a computer with peripherals, and small historic artifacts. Even the vault has water pipes overhead. Just excessive humidity, absent of any leak or flooding disaster, would damage the irreplaceable contents.

Secondary issues with the archives include diminishing storage space, limited work space, and lack of reading space for visiting researchers. JHS volunteers have worked in this space successfully cataloging materials for over 50 years under these conditions, so we *can* continue as is. But any upgrades would help. The contents of Room 3 are a combination of period exhibit and storage. Beyond the same space and environmental concerns as Rooms 1 and 2, there is also a pest infiltration due to an unsecured window well. On a positive note, all three rooms have good intrusion security with keyed locks and glassed walls. Again, we don't have a master plan for how we want to use these rooms or how they should look. We can change the function, or we can maintain the current usage with cleaning and upgrades, or we can keep it just as is and do nothing.

The second floor of the Civic Center would be an excellent area for the Jaffrey Historical Society. The heat is through baseboard hot water and there are no overhead pipes. There is great natural and overhead lighting (both track lighting for exhibits and general lighting for work). It is accessible with the lift. We wouldn't need the Classroom but it still should be made accessible with construction of a ramp and modification of the restroom to be ADA compliant. So the Classroom could remain usable as a revenue source of the Civic Center. There is enough space in the three gallery rooms that one could be for exhibits, one for archive storage, and one for a reading room or to remain as an art gallery. It would require some remodeling to enable us to lock up the archives. The JHS could rent this space, providing the Civic Center with a reliable income. Less costly for JHS than renting or buying new facility.

If we decide to keep the Civic Center as our home but expand our space we should probably increase our “donation” to reflect a greater use of the building. Do we rightfully owe a greater obligation in the expenses, i.e. heating, electricity, alarm system, upkeep, etc.? Do we contribute to building improvements such as accessibility to the main floor, remodeling basement level, driveway repair and landscaping?

Should we stay or should we go?

If we go...

We would need to spend big bucks for a building and customization upgrades. We would need a large fund to pay for continuous expenses: furnace and water heater maintenance and repairs, electricity, phone, internet, alarms, increased insurance, plumbing, painting, mowing, plowing, cleaning. One-time expenses such as a sign, accessible entrance, dehumidifier, and furniture. And a capital account for a new roof. If the new building has no assembly hall we would have to rent space for programs and the annual meeting. On the positive side, we could save \$4,000 in donation to the Civic Center. We might be able to partner with some other organization to share the cost and expenses.

The Melville House has more than enough space, appears to need no interior or exterior painting or repairs, has a modern heating system, has a garage to store and display town hearses, has large parking lot, is historically relevant, and is *above ground!* If a benefactor came along to fund the purchase of the building and an endowment to maintain it, this building would be at the top of the list. It would need very little modification. The school building however would be an unwelcome accompaniment. If some developer bought the whole package and subdivided the parcel and gave or sold the Melville House to the JHS it would be a great solution.

If we stay...

We need new archival storage that offers protection from water, humidity, fire, theft, and pests. We need more storage and exhibit space out of the basement. The heating plant in the Civic Center needs to be repaired or replaced to regulate the temperature. Accessibility to the building needs improvement, more handicap parking, driveway improvements, parking delineated, the front entrance utilized with a walkway and signage and proper reception. Fire and intrusion alarms need to function.

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