

Old Library Accessibility Committee
Meeting Minutes
July 11, 2017

Members Present: Wendy Cote-Magan, Mark Mikitarian, Ken Swanton, Lucy Wallace
Guests Present: Austin Ludwig and David Pollak, Abacus Architects & Planners; Bill Scanlan, Town Planner; Ron Ostberg

The meeting was called to order at 3 PM by Mark Mikitarian.

Abacus Architects Update

David Pollak and Austin Ludwig walked the Committee through the July 11, 2017 Schematic Plans for the front entrance and noted interior issues to address in meeting MAAB accessibility requirements.

Pathway and Ramp: The proposal shows a curved pathway (1:20 grade) leading to an open-designed ramp (or bridge) leading to the landing in front of the restored front entrance. The benefit of the bridge design is that it enables the existing façade of the building be visible underneath the ramp and, therefore, is less intrusive. There is roughly a 57” difference in height between the sidewalk and the landing. The intent is to have the pathway to have covered 35” of this height difference when it reaches the base of the ramp/bridge, thereby having the ramp/bridge cover the remaining 22” difference. Austin explained that code requires the ramp to have both upper and lower handrails on both sides, but because the ramp is adjacent to the building it would only need a guard rail on the outside. Two options for the guard rail were shown: glass or cable railings. The Committee agreed it preferred the cable railings.

The surface of the pathway could be concrete or asphalt. Wendy Magan advocated for and the Committee agreed that concrete would be the preferred surface.

Entry: The historic recessed front entry will be restored, putting the front door approximately 7-8’ inside the building. David explained that the side walls (currently on the inside of the building) would need to be insulated and then covered. He suggested stucco as being a suitable and inexpensive exterior cover. The plans also showed restoration of wooden double doors with a fan light over the doors. Ron Ostberg asked if an airlock would be required with the new entry. Austin explained that it was not, as this is a renovation of an historic building and the interior square footage was below the threshold requiring an airlock. In response to Ron’s concern about the cold air that would come in when the doors are opened, David suggested putting a hot air grate in the floor just inside the door which would create warm air “curtain.”

Lucy Wallace asked about the cost of the fan light and wooden door. David estimated they would not exceed \$20,000. While the original doors were solid wood, the Committee felt the new doors should have glass in some of the panels. That would allow people using the door to see if someone was on the other side, as well as let light into the entry. The question arose regarding the area framing the door: should it be solid and stucco similar to the side walls or sidelights? It was agreed that glass sidelights would be best, again to enable better lighting and people to see through both sides of the doorway.

Front Stairway: The plans show the front stairs leading from the landing towards the sidewalk in a slightly longer run than the original stairs. The 13”-treads are slightly wider than the code minimum width, and the 5 ¾”-risers are slightly lower than the code maximum height. The plans

currently show restoration of the historic mason sidewalls which framed the stairway. The Committee felt the masonry was too heavy and preferred the installation of railings along the stairs. Ron asked if the stairs could have an interim landing to further soften their rise, but others felt it would bring the stairs too close to the sidewalk.

Exterior Lighting: The architects will develop a plan for exterior lighting, probably using lamp posts at the base of the ramp, midway along the ramp and at the landing. There also should be a light in the recessed entry. There may not be a need for lighting along the path if there is a street light that would provide sufficient lighting.

Landscaping: Once Abacus has the contour plan, they will be able to finalize the location of the pathway and develop a landscaping plan. This cost will be included in the cost estimate.

Removal of Side Entrance: There was considerable discussion about the level of restoration to be included in the removal of the side entrance. Wendy Magan advocated for restoration of all four windows to their original full length. Lucy suggested a less expensive alternative of restoring the window where the door currently is to a half window similar to the others. The Committee asked the architects to get an estimate on Wendy's proposal, understanding that the cost might be such that nothing would be done at this time. Ron suggested keeping the side entrance as is for two reasons: 1) in the future it could be converted to a small exterior terrace; and 2) it would continue to serve as an additional emergency egress.

Assessment of MAAB/Code Compliance Issues: Austin had prepared a detailed list of all the adjustments that would be required to meet MAAB accessibility requirements, ranging from relocating outlets 2" higher to correcting the direction of the swing of the door into the handicap bathroom to adding a railing along the stairway from the first floor to the basement. It was felt that we should seek waivers for many of these adjustments. Wendy noted that if we address some more significant corrections, then the MAAB might be more willing to grant the variances. The Committee agreed we should, therefore, make the following corrections:

- Correct the handicap bathroom door to open out instead of into the bathroom
- Correct the location of the grab bars in the bathroom
- Correct the height of the mirror in the bathroom
- Change the door knobs to paddles or levers
- Lower the pull emergency fire alarms to meet MAAB requirements
- Install a railing along the lower stairway
- Correct the handle in the elevator
- Install braille signage

Ken Swanton asked about the need for sprinklers. David explained that the International Existing Building Code (IEBC) has various levels of required code upgrades which are driven by the extent of proposed work. If the improvement is essentially to comply with accessibility, then the Level 1 requirements stand and these do not require installation of a sprinkler system. David added that we cannot make the building less safe than it is today, which is a decision of the Building Inspector.

Ken noted that he and Lucy would be meeting with Gabe Vellante and Rick Sicard the next morning and would review these items with them. He also will go to the August 2nd meeting of the Historical Commission to give them an update on our work. He has already spoken to the chair.

Schedule to Completion

We need to be able to submit an application to CPIC by September 25th, but before doing that we need to have the Selectmen sign off on it. Their second meeting of that month will be on September 19th. In order to prepare for that meeting and make a final determination on what we would be recommending, the Committee would like the final cost estimates and plans by September 6th.

David noted that the cost estimator will need several weeks' lead time to get it on his schedule, even though the work can be done in a week or so. In order to meet our September 6th deadline, therefore, the cost estimator will need to have plans by August 21st. And to have final plans to give the cost estimator, Abacus will need the contour survey being done by D&D by August 11th at the very latest. Mark had been advised by Marie Sobalvarro that D&D felt it could get the survey finished by late July/early August. Mark will contact Marie and ask her to contact D&D to let them know the urgency of having the survey work completed as soon as possible.

Our next meeting will be on September 6th, 3 – 5 PM.

Complete Streets Grant

Bill Scanlan advised the architects that the Planning Board is seeking a grant under the Complete Streets program to improve pedestrian and vehicular flow around the north Common (from the Rt 110/11 intersection northerly beyond the Town Hall). He noted work in front of the Old Library would be addressing pedestrian crosswalks and parking.

Administrative: The minutes of the June 13, 2017 meeting were approved as amended.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 PM.