

Josiah Smith Tavern and Old Library Working Group

Update and Next Steps, September 2015

SAVE THE DATE – SEE BELOW FOR DETAILS ON OPEN FORUM ON SATURDAY 10/17

Introduction

The Working Group (WG) continues to meet approximately bi-weekly with the objective of facilitating and coordinating Town efforts to find a reuse for the Josiah Smith Tavern (JST) and Old Library (OL). Our meetings are open to the public, with video archives available at the Weston Media Center website (westonmedia.org) and minutes and other material located on the Town website (weston.org). Since inception, we have met 34 times, including 15 times this year.

This letter provides an update to Weston residents (Residents) on our activities, and specifically:

- Statements of Interest submitted by potential sponsors who are interested in proposing a reuse(s) for the JST and/or the OL.
- Ongoing work being performed by TDC and McGinley Kalsow & Associates, consultants engaged by the WG;
- An open forum scheduled on **Saturday, October 17th, at 9:00 a.m. in the Town Hall Auditorium** for potential sponsors to present their Statements of Interest (discussed below).

Statements of Interest

In June of this year, the WG issued a request for Statements of Interest (SOI) to provide a preliminary assessment of the quantity and viability of potential sponsoring organizations. By early August, the WG received nine responses from potential 'sponsors' and user groups. In September, the WG performed a preliminary review of the Statements of Interest. We are tremendously encouraged by the responses. A summary of the SOIs received follows, with the full SOIs available on the Town Website.

Sponsoring Organization	Prop-erty	Concept Summary
Artport One: Weston's Creative Commons	OL only	Create a center devoted to 'communal creativity' integrating exhibition space for visual arts, a digital media education facility and start-up incubation offices as well as culinary and wellness programming. Likely in conjunction with the New Art Center of Newton.
Brook School Apartments Extension (Elderly Housing Committee)	OL only	Construct seven to nine age-restricted apartment homes, which would be available at market rates and at least two of the units would be for low-income, age-restricted tenants.
New England Watercolor Society (NEWS)	OL only	Create art gallery and workshop space to "practice and appreciate the art of water media" and serve as a home for NEWS, a 130-year-old visual arts organization. Upper and mezzanine levels would be open to public for rotating exhibitions (every 3-4 weeks), receptions, demonstrations, workshops, classes and other events. NEWS may facilitate workshops beyond the watercolor medium. Facility would be owned by Weston and rented to NEWS with management overseen by existing NEWS Board and volunteers.
Weston Art & Innovation Center (Weston Library/Weston Media Center)	OL only	Make the Old Library a branch of the Library specifically for an "arts and technology learning center that provides multiple types of hands on instruction for all ages" with cultural learning and event space in the historic reading room, maker spaces in the 'stacks' area and a film studio in the second floor office. Offices & work space for the Weston Media Center would be in the lower level. Weston Public Library (WPL) and Weston Media Center (WMC) would jointly manage the center and develop/ implement programming with additional oversight from the existing WPL and WMC boards.
Friends of the JST	JST only	Restore JST to active use that would house a revenue-generating culinary center in the Barn, and subsidized space for local non-profit tenants in the Tavern. The culinary center would be a 'non-profit restaurant and function space operating in conjunction

		with an academic partner [prospective lead academic partner to be announced] under professional and faculty management'. The culinary center would be available for adult education classes, demonstrations and dinners. The Tavern will be kept intact and the space available at a reduced rate to local tenants.
Historic Gateway to Weston	Both OL and JST	Lease to a 60-80 seat 'casual' restaurant in stacks area of the OL with the reading room to serve as both a small bar/seating area & as art gallery/function space. OL lower level could be offices for WHS or other use. JST would become rental office space, with ballroom as function room managed by WCL, who would remain a tenant in the Barn and Connector.
Historic Weston	Both OL and JST	Historic Weston would work with Town to acquire (lease or purchase) JST/OL site, renovate buildings, develop and implement preservation plan and subsequently oversee the management of the property. This entity would serve as a "landlord", leasing different spaces to local nonprofits.
Women's Community League (WCL)	JST only	Expression of interest to remain in the Barn section of the JST.
Weston Historical Society (WHS)	OL or JST	Expression of interest in leasing space in either the JST or the OL

We encourage all Residents to review the SOIs share any comments with the WG and/or the sponsoring organizations.

On-Going Consultant Work

To assist the WG in providing specific and relevant expertise, the WG has engaged the following consultants:

- Based on Resident feedback in the Citizen Petition town surveys and at Town Meeting, the WG engaged nonprofit management consultant, TDC, to formulating a needs analysis for an 'arts and cultural center' in the Old Library. As part of this work, TDC will review existing arts and cultural resources in the region, assess the viability of arts & cultural reuse in Weston, assist potential sponsors in positioning their proposals and provide valuable data to the WG in assessing the viability of arts & cultural proposals received.
- The WG also engaged historic preservation architect, McGinley Kalsow & Associates (Kalsow), to perform a feasibility analysis for the Tavern and Barn. Kalsow's work considers two likely use scenarios in light of code requirements and historical preservation restrictions. This analysis will inform potential sponsors about the buildings and help the WG evaluate the SOIs that relate to the JST complex.

We expect final reports from TDC and McGinley Kalsow & Associates to be submitted in late-September. These reports will be made available on the Town website.

Next Steps

The Working Group will facilitate an open forum on **Saturday, October 17th, at 9:00 a.m. in the Town Hall Auditorium** for potential sponsors to present their concepts and for the WG and residents to ask questions. We encourage all interested Residents to attend.

The Working Group would like to thank the potential sponsors who have submitted SOIs and all those who have participated in this process so far. We are confident that that these buildings will once again contribute to the vitality of our town.

Josiah Smith Tavern and Old Library Working Group

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