

**TOWN OF CABLE
PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING
CABLE COMMUNITY CENTRE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2023**

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Haag called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The meeting opened with the pledge of allegiance.

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Chairman Haag stated that he is happy to see so many interested people attending.

He explained the process for the meeting. After the presentation anyone who wishes to speak should raise their hand, keep their comments to 3 minutes and not repeat previous comments. No votes will be taken tonight. The next elector meeting for a vote will be February 23, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.

PRESENTATION BY SUPERVISORS POPELKA AND HAMBRECHT

Background

- The school property has been owned by Joy and George Wolski since the late 1990s.
- In 2004, the boiler failed while George was in Iraq. The building has not been occupied since that time.
- The Wolskis have tried unsuccessfully to find a buyer or investor to renovate the property.
- There have been attempts to find grants or investors to rehabilitate the property with no success.
- The roof has failed and the building began to deteriorate because of water damage.
- Vandals broke in and tried to burn the building. One room was burned and there is damage and graffiti all over the building.
- The stage and gym have now caved in.

In 2021, a new board was elected. The old school was identified as an area of concern. He and Supervisor Hambrecht took on the research. Several large developers were asked to look at the building and none felt the building could be economically renovated. Research was done into funding sources to convert the building, renovate it or demolish it. Few options exist. Either the project was not large enough for a grant or did not meet the requirements.

In spring 2022, David Wierzba, this area's WEDA representative, suggested applying for a WEDC Site Assessment Grant to demolish the building and ready the site for reuse. At that time, research showed estimates for demolition were close to \$450,000. In May 2022, the town began the process to apply for the Site Assessment Grant with a resolution of support from the

town board. Also, in May 2022, the owner, Joy Wolski, agreed to an option for purchase of the property by the town for \$60,000.

Preliminary estimates obtained for demolition were based on DNR requirements and a hazardous material report that identified asbestos in the building. In June 2022, Joy found a potential buyer. The town asked to retain its option until December.

This issue was discussed at town board meetings almost monthly. Agreement to proceed was only given with the condition that there be little or no cost to the town. The grant application was completed and submitted in December 2022.

Then research was done to find ways to reduce costs. The only significant way to save that could be identified was in the disposal cost of demolition waste and transportation of debris to a disposal site. Hauling and transporting debris is a major issue. There is documentation that there were oil tanks on the site that leaked and that they were taken care of in 1996. The DNR was contacted about demolition material disposal. There is still asbestos on the site that must be taken to a licensed hazardous waste facility. The bulk of the building is disposable. There are 17 acres of an old dump site on West Cable Lake Road that is not being used. In September, a DNR representative inspected the school and walked the dump site. At the end of September, the DNR granted approval for disposal at the old dump site. This will save \$100,000 in hauling costs—32 miles to Hayward at approximately \$600 per dump truck load. The key to disposal locally at the old dump site is that the town must own the property. The town board does not allow just anyone to haul demolition debris. The property must be owned by the town. A professional abatement company will be needed to remove everything from the building and certify that it has been removed. Contractors will be bonded so that if they find suspicious material, the abatement company will be called back to address the issue.

An abstract and ownership history of the property was done by Bayfield County at no cost. There is no record of an owner before 1930. There is also no record that Cable School District ever disbanded. The building is blighted and detrimental to the economic health of the town and devalues the surrounding property in the downtown. It is a health and safety hazard. This is why the town became involved. Demolition materials will be sorted—metal to the recycling center; trash to an approved landfill and nothing to the town dump site except clean waste.

The WEDC Site Assessment Grant went to underwriting in January 2023, and final approval was received February 8, 2023, for up to a maximum amount of \$150,000 with a 20% match. WEDA Representative David Wierzba worked hard to reduce the grant match from 50% to 20%, which is \$40,000.

Any time the town is involved with a land transfer, elector approval is required by statute. The town board is adamant that there be no financial burden to taxpayers. In order to have firm numbers on costs, bids were requested on three separate items: 1) trash cleanup; 2) hazardous waste removal; and 3) demolition and removal of the remainder of the building. Final bids came in at just under \$200,000, which is less than half of what was expected. With a 20% match on the grant, the numbers are very close.

Results:

- A local disposal option is imperative to making this project affordable.
- Joy Wolski was approached and informed that the town could not afford the \$60,000 to purchase the school lot. She has agreed to transfer a clear title of the school parcel to the town at no cost to the town. If the town sells the building parcel for more than its cost, Joy would receive the overage. Chris and Amy Parker have a purchase agreement with Joy Wolski for the other two lots. The town is not involved at all in that agreement.
- The Parkers are willing to purchase the school lot from the town after demolition.

Budget for the Project

Costs:

Acquisition of school lot	0
Demolition/trash cleanup/asbestos removal	\$187,000
Misc. town costs	\$. 4,000 (hazard survey, recording fees)
Total Cost	\$191,000

Funding for the Project:

Grant	\$150,000
Parker agreement to reimburse the town the grant match plus soft costs that have already occurred	\$ 41,000
Total:	\$191,000

There have been minor costs of staff time. If the town can get rid of this building, it needs to be done. A comparable was noted across from Wal-Mart where there are two acres of property available for commercial development. The cost is \$20,000 per acre. That property has not sold.

Chris Parker

The community grows through redevelopment. Redevelopment builds the economy and adds to the tax base. Financing is through Chris and Amy Parker who have a contract with the school owner to purchase the remainder of the school real estate aside from the school parcel. The Parkers have the financial ability to fund the project. With the combination of their business and construction industry experience, we are well positioned to accomplish redevelopment. We are a 6th generation family and committed to Cable. We are dedicated to a sustainable future and the well being of our community to benefit all of Cable.

Once the school building is removed, there will be an opportunity for residential development and job creation that will positively impact Cable's economy and area businesses, as well as

contribute to a downtown curb appeal. We have a team of professionals working with us to give us the best opportunity for success. There will be a future market research and feasibility study to refine the redevelopment that combines retail and residential living. Buildings will be of a timeless design using low maintenance materials. There is no intention to build something cheap and make a quick buck.

OPEN DISCUSSION

Supervisor Hambrecht stated that when the board was elected, it was tasked with researching and coming up with viable options to address the school property. This property has been a blight for many years. The current board laid down guidelines, and this is the best option to bring this property back on the tax rolls.

Chairman Haag stated that there has been a divided board on this issue. At this meeting, the board wants to hear what residents have to say going forward.

Brittany Haag stated that nobody needs convincing that this has long been an issue. The part that was left out is what residents will be voting on. This has not been discussed. Residents will vote to fund a private real estate transaction. It was said the town will get its money back. In the mean time that money is funded by the town. When does the town give private citizens such assistance? At what point does a private person come in and want to purchase property with the town becoming responsible? This is a bigger conversation about funding and setting a precedent. The owner needs help, but where does the community draw the line in setting a precedent? What is the vetting process for working with someone? What happens if there is a default on the loans?

Supervisor Popelka responded that the precedent was set 4 years ago when the same grant funding was used to benefit the Birkie for \$750,000 to tear down Telemark Lodge. There was no guarantee the match would be paid. That precedent has already been set. Why are the Parkers involved? He did not want to see an end purchaser before the building was demolished. He would have preferred to send out requests for proposals to anybody for the highest and best use of the property. The board would not agree to that because it required that zero town funds be invested. Three individuals were contacted. None responded. We have someone who approached the owner to be involved. The Parker agreement includes an escrow deposit of \$40,000 to be paid in advance for the school parcel. That is why there is a guaranteed purchaser.

Chairman Haag asked Supervisor Popelka if he was speaking as a supervisor or a resident. Supervisor Popelka answered, as a supervisor. Chairman Haag asked him to give correct information and asked Clerk/Treasurer McCauley the amount of the Birkie grant. She answered, \$150,000.

Gil Rasmussen stated that a precedent has not been set. The Birkie applied for the grant and the town was not involved with the demolition. It is misleading to say there is precedent. The Birkie is a private entity that is going to make money. These are two separate deals. The town does not belong in this. If the town does this, the property should be kept as green space.

The town cannot do this for someone going to make money. Once the real estate changes hand, the town loses all control.

Supervisor Popelka clarified that any grant through the WEDC must be sponsored through a municipality. The Birkie grant was in the town name. The town was on the hook, and there were issues with paperwork. The town cannot afford to finance green space. This is a piece of property that can bring in tax dollars and income to the sanitary district which is needed. The cost each year is too much to keep the property green. The only way the county will get involved is through tax forfeiture which takes seven years.

Stacey Hassel, District Director for Senator Michael Quinn, asked why the buildings were not condemned. Chairman Haag stated that only the county can condemn it. The town reached out to the county without success. Stacy stated that any municipality can condemn a building. She asked why do all this work and not put the property up for sale at fair market value for a successful economy and project? The owner should be on the hook for the cost. The town is saving the owner and providing a deal that needs to be transparent to all parties.

Supervisor Popelka responded that the board has insisted there be a buyer to cover costs.

Elizabeth Holland stated that it is critical to separate the processes. Residents are being asked to vote on steps that are not clear. The town wants funding to demolish the school. Once the demolition is done, the property increases in value. One stumbling block is the cost of demolition. There has to be different phases. A proper property assessment needs to be done. This has not been an open and fair process. It is a gift to the property owner. This sets a precedent for bailing out a private property owner and then gifting the property to a private entity. Resident hear about work force housing, senior living and commercial uses and then the idea of short term rentals. Short term rentals are not needed on that property. There needs to be a more open process with the building coming down and the property going out to be so the town can make more money.

Tom Baron asked what the cost for this project will be 10 years from now. He commended the board for the work that has been done. The town had nothing to do with the Parkers' interest. This is a hell of a deal.

Jamie Holly stated that this is a private land issue. There is no contingency for overruns or for any cost extras, such as whether it takes more time or the effort to prep the dump site. What happens if costs override the \$150,000? Is the town on the hook for remediation of the site? What will be done with the dump once all the debris is put there?

Supervisor Popelka answered that the disposal site will be prepped and capped as part of the demolition bid. The only thing the town is on the hook for is providing the filters needed which can be obtained from the town gravel pit. Topsoil and plantings are not part of the bids. Site bid documents are to slope all sides at a 3 to 1 slope. It will be up to the purchaser to plant grass.

Sue Rosa asked why the building has not been condemned. Then the onus would be on the owner to take care of the site. That building was neglected and is the fault of the owner. She commended the board for taking on this issue and expressed her appreciation for all the work that has been done.

Chairman Haag stated that the board initially discussed condemning the building but were led to believe that only the county had that ultimate authority. He agreed to get more clarification regarding neglect of the building.

Kristine Lendved stated she does not believe there is any property anywhere in town similar to this situation. She lives two doors away and is very excited to think that something might be done for economic development where there is none. Partnerships of this nature are not unheard of. She appreciates all the work that has been done. As stated, the town is willing to move forward at no cost at all. She thanked the board and stated she hopes it moves forward.

Bunkie Miller stated that she worked for 25 years in her career with such buildings and situations. If the town or county condemn the property, then that entity is responsible to follow through with the demolition, not the owner of the building. It is partnerships that get these projects done and working together is a good idea. To get a market rate project from this property will be tough.

Mick Endersbe stated that he has looked at the school with demolition people and real estate people. It is not salvageable. The vote is to acquire the property in order to dispose of the school and then sell it. Dave and Dean and the board have done their due diligence. They have done a ton of work. It is a complicated issue and where we are today is light years ahead from where we were. Ownership is confusing, but not too many people can come up with \$40,000. This is a tough piece of property and this deal is sweet. What it is bid is worth it. Is green space what we want? He would not want to diminish all that has been done.

Bob Walter asked if the brick and concrete can be crushed and recycled for roads.

Supervisor Hambrecht stated that the board did look into that. It takes more hauling time, and it is difficult to find crushers to work with. Only concrete and brick can be recycled at the pit site.

Tom Frels stated that as a green community, crushing should be considered.

Supervisor Popelka stated that it will cost a lot more to crush it.

Mary McCormick stated that the town is only working with the lot for the school. The building has been empty for years. It needs to be taken down.

Chris Parker stated that he has an agreement to purchase the other two lots. He is not in it for a lot of money. It will take a ton of investment and time. He is trying to help the community and development in the town. For 10 years he has wanted to build handicapped housing. Short term rental would only occur in a multipurpose project if there are units empty. Would he

pay \$50,000 for 2 lots? He is over paying for those lots but is trying to generate growth in Cable.

Gil Rasmussen stated that government work force government housing is being built. Parker responded that there will be no government housing, none at all.

Gary Crandall, Drummond, stated that this public/private partnership has huge potential for this area. People were against the town getting the grant to raze Telemark Lodge and wanted to wait for something better. There have been a lot of bad actors who have come and gone and done the town no good. This is a good opportunity with trustworthy people. Through a public/private partnership at long last someone will do something with that property. We can get something going in Cable if we get rid of the blight in the middle of downtown, and he would like to see Joy get out from under.

There were no further public comments or questions.

Chairman Haag stated that the elector meeting will be February 23, 2023 to vote on whether or not the town should acquire the school property for demolition.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Haag declared the meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.