

## **Town Facilities Assessment Committee Report**

The committee was formed in July 2022 with the following charge:

Charge: To prepare for the Select Board an assessment of town facilities and recommend an overall plan and priorities for maintenance and improvements. The assessment will include all town-owned facilities. The Committee shall report back to the Select Board periodically to review progress. Committee members include Gary Anderson, Charlotte Fyfe, Eric Danis, Barbara Draper and Paul Dallaire.

Since the formation of the committee, facilities have been toured and meetings with department heads have included Public Works, Police, Fire, and Town Hall/Community Center, Recreation, Blaisdell Library, Old Fire Station, Old Town Hall, and Grange.

The information below is a culmination of meetings and inspections to include both current and future issues. The information contained is preliminary and broad-based and is intended to highlight some short-, mid-, and long-term considerations.

## Public Works Department

There are some inherent space issues for public works at the existing facilities. More to the point, there are not many improvements at each of these individual facilities that would dramatically improve their functionality.

The **highway garage** lacks facility to wash vehicles in winter. An important element in protecting the investment of the equipment due to extensive exposure to salt. It also lacks basic employee support spaces such as office, breakroom, and storage for electronic equipment.



The lot that surrounds the highway garage does not afford the ability to expand in any significant way.

Perhaps a short-term solution would be to provide some employee support space by placing a modest addition on the west side of the building. Size would be determined by function and cost but could be accomplished with minimal impact to current building. Given that plow operators are not usually able to return home between plowing runs, it seems reasonable to consider a modest addition to the left side of the building to house a bathroom, breakroom-meeting space and adequate locker space and storage for sensitive equipment.

The **old fire station** is used primarily as a storage facility. At this time, there is no other consideration for the use of this building as the steep slope drive is a detriment. It appears the structure is sound and there are no major issues that would prevent the building to function in the current role for many years to come. There is, however, some basic housekeeping that could be done to protect and improve the exterior appearance. Drainage and moisture control need to be addressed. The capacity for storage should only be limited to items that are impervious to moisture, as the lack of ventilation and propensity for mold and mildew is high. This is a town building which is on the main thoroughfare and is visible to all who pass by. Repair trim, paint or vinyl siding, windows, gutters and retaining wall repair should all be considered.

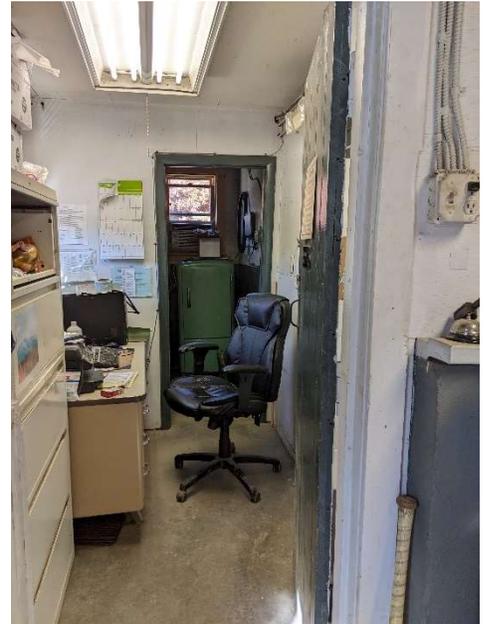


Consideration should be given to petitioning the State to put a pedestrian walkway between the shared Old Firehouse and Old Town Hall parking area and the Library, across Rte152. Perhaps this could be done in concert with an engineering study to determine potential site improvements and/or demolition of the existing structure if storage needs are relocated.

The **recycling center** is currently inadequate for the size of the operation. The limitation is mostly due to space and layout of the building and site. While traffic flow outside is a safety concern, there are not many changes that could be made to the current site to improve the flow of the community traffic and internal operations. Site limitations make expansion or re-routing traffic an improbability. Given only a small percentage of residents use the facility, if that percentage were to increase, there would be a real concern that the facility would be overwhelmed.



There are maintenance and cosmetic issues that persist due to a lack of a dedicated town maintenance resource. There are currently 4 employees to support the recycle center. These employees are currently tasked with recycling center operations and provide housekeeping within the facility. There is no



provision for regular maintenance or upgrades. The recycling center would be well served by a town wide maintenance resource. Perhaps consideration could be given to a small portable which could be placed on site to act as an employee break area and fee collection office, freeing interior space for operational use. A temporary solution until a plan can be formulated to address the more looming question of site viability.



The ***Smoke Street Gravel Pit*** is currently used to store materials for storm fighting and road repairs. The only structures on the property are the salt sheds, which are in need of new coverings due to leaking. Because the structure is mounted on concrete barrier blocks, there is some shifting to the blocks due to loading and unloading of materials. It may be reasonable to consider a more permanent structure to house winter materials.

The expansiveness of the property suggests that there may be an opportunity to consolidate the DPW operations through a capital improvement project which is located at the Smoke Street pit. The facility could be designed to encompass all DPW facilities in one building/location. This would include highway resources and recycling. Both current locations contain lot limitations which would prevent adequate expansion or reorganization. A building/buildings could also allow for the department to share resources across the operations to include personnel and equipment. A modern, planned facility could provide the DPW with the efficient operating environment required for a long-term growth plan.

## Police Department

While the police department facility has only been in service since 2002, it does suffer from some space and security issues that are inherent in a growing operation.

Chief Woodman provided a very detailed list of some cosmetic and housekeeping issues which include painting, minor wall or trim repair, ceiling tile replacement, toilet issues. These are seemingly minor issues which could be easily addressed with a vigilant all encompassing maintenance resource such as a maintenance technician or facility maintenance company. These “minor” issues continue to persist with the lack of such a resource and wear and age of the space is a reasonable concern.

Aside from the general housekeeping and repair issues, Chief also expressed concern for the security of the building as well as the ongoing safety and space challenges with the location of the police department.

The proximity of the of the department to the rec department and community center activities creates a hazard for officers leaving during an emergency call. There is narrow and difficult access for the patrol



car parking area and entry to the sally port, which could easily be blocked off intentionally, inadvertently, or by weather conditions. Also, being next to the food pantry loading area creates a potential issue and clash with food pantry operations. There is also some reasonable concern that certain “guests” of the department are also too close to the rec department/community center and the youth and elderly population that frequent the facility.



The current location and building space for the police station does not accommodate the needs of the current or future police staff. While exploring updates and additions to the facility may lead to minor improvements, it does not appear that the current location affords any substantial changes to the effect of providing the police force with the resources to shoulder uncompromised public safety to a growing community.

There is also accommodation for only one (often none) police vehicle in the sally port. Exterior storage of vehicles is less than ideal.

The investment of vehicles and all the electronic and ancillary devices which are included is significant and exterior storage compromises the life span and security of each asset.



And interior administrative and office space are limited. The server/electronic room has insufficient security for the nature of the data. Communication servers need to be upgraded and stored in a more secure area.

Appropriate bathroom/shower/locker space is needed.

Ventilation for potentially hazardous evidence.

Larger secure armory and equipment space is needed.

There is currently insufficient space for a reasonable training room.

Provision for emergency overnight or prolonged stay for staff at the station in the event of a natural or a civil emergency.

As Chief also noted to the committee, the fire station was originally designed with the forethought of an addition. It may be reasonable to consider a capital improvement project which combines the police and fire departments into one safety complex. This complex could be built to address several of the concerns with the existing space.

## Fire Department

The current Fire Station was built in 2007 and has housed the fire department since that time. Chief Vilchok communicated some current and long-term concerns regarding the fire station.

The bay doors do not currently have a safety closing system and have experienced some incidents and minor damage to equipment. Per Chief, there is a pending estimate of approximately \$15K to install system.

The bay floors current paint coat is wearing in many locations. Chief has requested estimates for a more durable epoxy coating which is approximately \$60K.



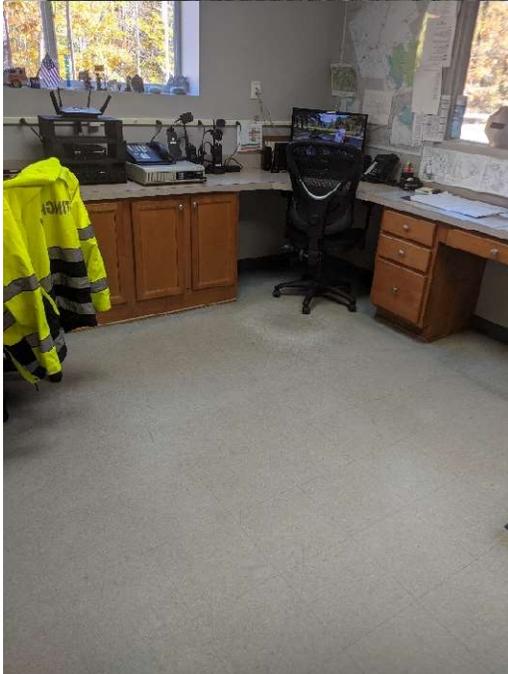
There are roof leaks at solar panels.

There is some corrosion at the entry doors which is caused by splash from the roof and lack of gutters or water diversion, as shown to the left. Some maintenance is required to the doors and some form of gutter should be installed.

Regular gutter maintenance has not been performed in quite some time, as well as parking and driveway sealcoating.

The floors in the main office and command center are showing wear and Chief indicated that he has solicited estimates for replacement throughout for approximately \$15K.

It appears that while the fire department staff is very diligent about housekeeping and maintenance items, there are maintenance items which are beyond their purview. The fire department would benefit from a townwide maintenance resource, and possible "approved vendor list".



## **Town Offices/Community Center**

As the central point of town administration and resource, the town office building experiences the highest degree of internal and external use. The building functions as the home for town administration, town clerk, tax collector, recreation department, building department, planning and zoning offices, supervisors of the checklist, food pantry, regular board meetings, official town record storage, and countless other committee and community requirements.

To recognize and assess the building as a whole, the facilities assessment committee would like to present some overarching themes that were present in general areas or are present throughout the building. There are some issues which continue to center around the lack of a central resource, or more specifically, the lack of facilities management as a single source. Some general items for consideration are health and safety. There does not appear to be regular testing for water and air quality, or posted reporting if testing has been conducted.

Labeling and signage are limited. While there may be some exit signs, bathroom signs, office signs, etc., there is virtually no identification of any ancillary devices. The circuit boxes which are located in the boiler room and rear of the building are not completely descriptive and lack some labeling which is clear and understandable to all. There is no defined signage which explains the relationship between the two circuit box locations. There are some vendors and internal personnel which may understand the functionality, but it is not a clear path for a new vendor or employee. In most commercial settings, and in some localities, as required by code, each outlet in the entire building has a label indicating the circuit breaker associated with it. The same could be said for the lights, data ports and telephone outlets, as well as, plumbing piping and HVAC ducts. This type of labeling eliminates confusion especially in an emergency.

The lighting in the town office building is older florescent style lighting. While functional, some consideration should be given to upgrading to more modern and efficient LED lights.

There are panic buttons available for some employees in the building. Currently, there is no known regular testing schedule to confirm the functionality of these devices, or individual training on what occurs when a button is pressed. Safety issues such as this should be a high priority.

It appears that some pest related issues persist in various parts of the building. While there seems to be mouse traps scattered around the building, it is not known whether these are effective or if there is a regular maintenance plan to not only maintain traps, but to insure points of entry are sealed and continually monitored.

The Town Clerk office was recently renovated in 2018 but was limited to the immediate work areas and transaction counters for the Clerk and Tax Collector. This office also serves the Supervisors of the Checklist, and space in this office is limited. There is little to no storage area available for official record keeping and certainly no provision for future records retention.

The Administrator/Select Board office is a shared office space which has not been renovated, or updated and has been in continual use for many years. While personnel are continually striving to make the space functional, there is apparent overcrowding and storage issues. The shared office space does not appear to provide any separation for sensitive personnel issues, or town financial information. The area is also prone to significant distraction due to the natural role of the office in town information and

resources. The transaction counter is open and does not provide any level of safety in the event of an emergency, as the upgrade in the town clerk and tax collector office addressed. It has been quite some time since basic maintenance items such as painting were completed. As the main office for town visitors, residents, and employees, it is most likely the most visited of town facilities.

The Building Department/Public Works/Planning and Zoning office is also a shared space which seems to experience similar challenges as the Administrator/Select Board office. There is some inherent confusion for visitors as to which area is designated for each department. There have been no known renovations to this space in many years. Some division in office space may aid this area's functionality by adding walls or partitions.

The rear of the main building is a steel structure that was added to the original school to expand the classrooms when more space was needed many years ago. Since the building became the town hall/community center, this space has primarily been used for storage. There are some notable issues in this space. The storage areas are also used for the deposition of unused equipment, furniture, files, etc. As such, there is some clutter that creates trip hazards and much of the area is not maintained. There is considerable and unmitigated deterioration in the ceilings and walls. The electrical room, which was originally a bathroom, is not adequately labeled and is often blocked by debris and clutter. It is apparent that the space has sustained some water damage, which, if the roof was repaired, that damage still exists. The potential for mold and mildew seems high if not already prevalent. Points of entry for vermin seem to also be a concern and there is some apparent damage that has occurred as a result. The area has also sustained recent vandalism.

This rear of building steel structure has been determined to be out of compliance with current codes for occupancy. There was however, an engineering assessment and details of upgrades completed in 2013 which, if completed, would allow for the structure to be compliant and fit for regular use. Aside from these minor upgrades to structure and general neglect, the structure is sound and could be serviceable. With the space concerns that are inherent in the Clerk and Administrators offices, it would seem this area retains the potential for that use, as well as, additional meeting or office space into the future.

A short term plan of action for this rear of building space should include complete demolition of interior walls, ceilings and finishes. The building exterior integrity should be insured by removing all vermin points of entry, and keeping the structure dry. Once this is completed, an overall plan for use of this space could be developed and consideration be given to how that would be accomplished. Continued neglect for this space will further devalue the usability and potential it holds for future town needs.

## Recreation Department

Kortney provided the committee with some detailed information concerning the facilities which are under the purview of the Rec Dept.

A major concern for the department and the facilities which they inhabit is the lack of a central maintenance resource. It would appear that regular maintenance is either deferred or completed on a volunteer basis.

Another major concern is currently the lack of available space for office and activities. The office that is used for all rec. dept admin. is insufficient for regular use by three or more employees. Aside from the obvious lack of space, there are also safety concerns with the location and small size of the office. There are no privacy areas for conferencing with parents or children. Being the first office upon entry to the building, the rec. department suffers from chronic interruptions for directions or information.

The picture below clearly shows that the office space is woefully undersized and is indicative of the conditions that the operation is subject to.



The gym, which is used heavily by rec, has considerable safety, cosmetic and functional issues.

There are no provisions for future maintenance of Marston field or community center fields.

Kortney has made recommendation that the community room undergo renovation to accommodate some of the space needs that they are experiencing. The room could be outfitted with individual office spaces, storage and activity areas which would add safety and efficiency to the department. *The committee recommends this renovation as a priority.*

Regular maintenance of buildings and grounds needs to be addressed through a maintenance resource, either as a maintenance technician or building maintenance contractor.

Other issues also included are town beach maintenance, playground upkeep and maintenance, trails. There are not currently sufficient town resources to support maintenance of these facilities.

## **Blaisdell Memorial Library**

The Nottingham Facilities Assessment Committee toured the Blaisdell Memorial Library with staff member Dan Bunker.

In general, this Committee found the Library to be one of the newer (25 yrs?), more inviting, and well maintained public buildings in town. An active and committed Board of Trustees presented a successful warrant item this past year to replace the non-functioning elevator, and is now awaiting final completion and inspection. The front entrance was, for the first time, made ADA-compliant with the addition of an automatic door opener. The front walkway, a liability, was repaired and leveled.

With an additional \$20,000 received from the Town, the Trustees intend to spend \$10,000 to contract with an engineering firm to redesign the parking lot, which suffers from runoff and drainage issues stemming from the Old Firehouse and Old Town Hall parking lots across the street, as well as unsafe entry and exit onto State Rte 152. The other \$10,000 will be used for legal and title work necessary to determine the boundaries of the land the library sits on.

General maintenance is lacking, however, with Library Staff performing such duties as replacing ceiling lighting, washing windows, small plumbing repairs, shoveling snow, cleaning gutters, and landscaping. It was noted that interior painting and carpeting should be replaced over the next couple of years. Participation in both adult - and especially youth programming - has skyrocketed since the pandemic. With increasing use comes increasing wear.

Following the Facilities Assessment Committee's visit to the library, there has been a more recent Joint Loss Committee visit and evaluation (June, 2023) which found serious discrepancies in safety and ADA compliance which should be addressed as soon as possible, according to the Building Inspector who is one of that Committee's members:

1. The present double, interior door on the lower-level blocks egress to the emergency exit and interior ramp – it needs to be redesigned and replaced.
2. The lower-level emergency exit opens out onto a steeply pitched, unimproved area which needs hardscaping or leveling to make it usable in the event of an emergency.
3. The handicapped ramp needs to be replaced.
4. Outside lighting needs to be improved (over emergency exits and in the parking lot) for safety.

### **Old Town Hall Building**

The old town hall building currently houses School Administrative Unit No. 107. The office space was renovated in 2022 and prepared specifically for the needs of the SAU. While there have been significant upgrades to that end, there is a large portion of the building that remains out of date, unheated and used for storage and occasional events or meetings. The main structure appears sound, however, no known structural inspection or report is available. Some concerns might include occupancy capacity and no labeling or signage is available to indicate that limitation. There is also no exterior signage to indicate building use. While the space is considered handicapped accessible, there appears to be some possible elements that prevent 100 percent compliance, if in fact that is the goal.

If this building is to remain in service for storage or community events, some long-term assessment should be considered as to the necessary upgrades and maintenance to make the space a safe and reliable resource.

### **Town Grange Building**

The town grange building currently is used for the storage of larger historical society memorabilia. Farm museum pieces and other items are stored and viewed in this space. The space is opened for public viewing on limited dates or by appointment only, perhaps only once or twice a year and only in the late spring, summer and early fall, as there is no heat available in this building. There are a few electrical outlets available as well as a few lights. There is not any water or bathroom facilities. It is not handicap accessible and parking is generally limited to the space by the old town hall, old fire station and perhaps the library. Discussion with historical society personnel indicated that there is some confusion as to where responsibility lies for issues which arise from the maintenance of this building. There is no regular or planned maintenance for this structure. The structure is generally sound but does need some cosmetic repair such as exterior trim and paint to insure it remains dry and protected from the elements. There is also a substantial rodent issue. Volunteers have spent considerable time cleaning and combating debris left behind by vermin. The building is generally not accessed by anyone in the winter. No interior or exterior signage is readily visible or available.



While there does not seem to be any additional need for this building at this time, it may be important to develop a maintenance plan to address repair or preventative maintenance issues. There is no known report of structural integrity or assessment for this building, which considering the age, may be worthwhile and valuable to accurately understand. Neglect of this building's maintenance could lead to costly results into the future. As a potential historic structure, this building may qualify for some grants for upgrades or repair, however, this remains in question as there would need to be some study and effort associated with the development of that opportunity.

### **Van Dame Building**

The Van Dame Building is currently home to the Nottingham Historical Society. It is a town owned building and houses historic records and museum pieces collected mostly by donation over many years. The operation is completely volunteer, and donation based. The building is regularly open to the public, and is handicapped accessible with parking available in the community center lot. There is minimal heat in the building, and no water or bathrooms. The space does have adequate electrical outlets and lighting. While the building and structure are sound, there are some ongoing maintenance issues that need to be considered, mostly light maintenance such as painting. Currently, volunteers continue the valiant effort of upkeep including cleaning and trash removal, landscape maintenance and often painting and snow removal. The primary concern for historical society volunteers is who to contact in the event maintenance is required and what is the town's role in providing resources. Considering that this is a town owned building, the path to maintenance responsibility should be clear and volunteers should only add to resource of a previously developed ongoing maintenance plan.

### **General Notes**

Former Town Administrator Chris Sterndale shared some thoughts on the general condition of facilities with the committee. Facilities manager or support personnel has been included preliminary budget in the past, but had been cut due to financial constraints. All town departments and facilities would benefit from such a position, to include the library, which currently operates semi-autonomously.

There is currently a regular HVAC vendor in place.

There is not currently a list of “approved vendors” that service town needs.

The rear of the building has no real use, and per Chris, has no current purpose except to say it collects clutter.

The Rec Department needs more square feet of office space. Chris feels that consideration should be given to renovating the conference/meeting room for rec dept, and renovating the community room for the conference/meeting room. This would allow rec to be closer to the kitchen, gym and entry to more centralize the operation.

There is a continuing increase in the demand for community use space.

Shared offices in town office is not optimal.

There is a need for an upgrade to the audio/video capabilities of the town. Chris would recommend using the opportunity to renovate a conference room while accommodating the upgrade.

The gym is in need of upgrades for safety, cosmetics and functionality.

## Summary and Recommendations

From the data collected by viewing and meeting with department heads, there seems to be at least one common theme. There is considerable deferred maintenance due to the lack of an in-house maintenance resource. Department heads continue to struggle to address minor or moderately sized tasks which, over time, accumulate and become sometimes *costly*, sometimes *dysfunctional*, and sometimes *unsafe*. This is also evident in the cosmetic issues which have gone unaddressed for some time. Painting, door repair, ceiling tile replacement and other regular issues are all minor, and manageable if part of a regular maintenance program. It is not the responsibility of the department heads to undergo these tasks. It is apparent that maintenance is currently reactive and not proactive, incurring various autonomous projects. These projects can lead to overlaps where past work is undone to make way for current work. And often, some projects are completed out of order, in the interest of expediency. Any project, expected or unexpected, should be completed with attention to an overall plan, cross-resource effect and how future work, vendors, employees or even generations will be able to undergo continued maintenance.

All departments and town facilities should have a regular maintenance program which can be reviewed and addressed regularly. A *single point of contact* is strategically important to addressing small, moderate, and large-scale issues while minimizing overlap in various areas. Most importantly, this program should include documentation of maintenance performed to provide a history of each building. Future work and maintenance can be addressed through this program and would provide a more reliable method of prioritizing the physical and economic needs of all facilities. Approved vendor lists would also aid in completing repairs or upgrades. Contracted items should include a clear record of the bid and contractual process, including documentation supporting reasons bids were awarded and not awarded. Written verification of completed work should accompany each authorized payment. Reports of completed contracted items should also include compliance or complications with the contract and performance of the vendor in the event the vendor is considered for future contracts.

Well maintained town buildings/facilities can be the most influential element in projecting civic pride and improving *employee* and *community* relations. Volunteerism, while highly appreciated, is not a reliable source of maintenance, and should only be considered as an augmentation of a full-time planned program.

*It is the recommendation of the committee that consideration be given to making a maintenance resource a top priority either through a full-time employee or outside maintenance contract.* This position/contract should be capable of maintaining records, developing contracts, managing needs and planning of all town facilities. Responsibility should also include the initialization of a space usage study to determine the viable outcomes for the facility areas that could be a capital improvement project. Continued deferment of said position has the potential to incur costly capital expenditures into the future, already evident in the unexpected projects incurred over the last year.

While the inclusion of a qualified in-house maintenance resource would go a long way in providing functional and cosmetic upgrades, there are still many capital needs which should be considered on both a short and long term.

The space issues of the highway garage would be alleviated in the short term with the addition of more square footage. This could easily be done as a modest addition to the existing building on the existing

pad. This would be a relatively inexpensive option to provide some additional space to the existing building with minimal impact on the current operation.

The *long-term* solution for the highway department seems to be consolidating all operations at the Smoke Street sand pit in a *new* public works facility which could be planned to accommodate the needs of the highway department and recycling center concurrently. Although development of the property piecemeal may be necessary, it may be prudent to consider how the additions of various items or operations would fit into an overall extended plan. Placing new town assets at the Smoke Street location without an overarching long-term plan could prove costly in future development.

There are many short-term solutions at the Police Department that could be addressed through a maintenance resource, most would be cosmetic or repair oriented. But a *long-term* consideration should be to *move* the Police to the Fire station with the addition to that building. Consolidating all public safety personnel and assets into one facility is a logical and considerable upgrade to the environment they currently inhabit.

Addressing the needs of the Rec Department through the renovation of either the community room or the conference room, should be considered high priority. The office they currently inhabit is insufficient. The additional space they would adopt through a renovation would be critical to the growing operation and would have a minimal economic impact in the short term.

On the long term, if the move of the police station were considered, the rec department could inhabit the space left behind and have the space required for continued community growth.

The rear of the town office/community center building suffers from *severe* neglect. *The condition is unsafe and requires attention*. At a minimum, the space should be posted *No Unauthorized Access* or *No Trespassing* at all interior and exterior entry points. This space has the potential for viability with minor structural upgrades and possible renovations which could serve to suit many future purposes and resource needs. Although there may be no immediate intended use, aside from possible dry storage, a plan to demolish the interior ceiling, walls and finishes, should be considered. Insuring the structure is weather tight and free from moisture and vermin would also go a long way in preparing the space for future use. Once the space is clean, secure, and free from safety hazards and further deterioration, a plan for future use could be developed through space usage study.