

To: North Chapel Board of Trustees
From: Michael Stoner
Re: Monthly Report from the Refreshing Our Facilities Task Force

There has been a significant amount of progress since our meeting on 25 March.

1. Update

We've continued to acquire information that helps us to better understand our building and its unique challenges:

- Jack located pdf files of our floor plans, along with the CAD files with the building floor plans.
- Norwood contacted Roy Snell, who worked with the architect who designed the renovations to the building when we constructed the Social Hall. Norwood and Gina toured the grounds with him and Snell followed up with a detailed memo about some of the problems he observed, along with recommendations for addressing them. In general, his observations corroborated some of what we heard from Sabrina Duk and Tom Havill. [Havill is an excavator Gina has contacted about doing some grading around the building.]
- I also followed up with the three companies that responded to our RFP to answer questions about their proposals and fill in some missing information.

We (Gina, Norwood, Anne Dean, and me) met on 5 May to discuss what recommendation we wanted to make to the board regarding a partner for the work we outlined in our RFP earlier this year.

2. RFP Responses and Recommendation

After we completed the "Focus on the Future" strategic plan and launched it in the community, the board organized a task force to explore how our space could meet better meet some of the needs we identified. One of the recommendations from that task force [called Facilitating Our Future Task Force], which Chris Bartlett and Anne Dean led, was that we identify an architect to work with us to resolve some of the challenges we have with the internal space at the North Chapel; help us in planning to rectify or ameliorate the moisture and other issues; and work toward making our facility carbon-neutral.

In order to clarify these needs, we developed our RFP, which was reviewed by Buildings and Ground, the Board, and the Preservation Trust of Vermont. Then, we circulated the RFP to three organizations recommended by The Preservation Trust of Vermont: Robert Black, from Brandon; Keefe and Wesner, who have offices in Bennington and Middlebury; and Stevens Associates from Brattleboro. Each of them provided a detailed response to our needs and we're convinced that any one of them could be an effective partner for the work we outlined.

After reviewing their proposals and the additional information they provided, we recommend to the Board that we hire Robert Black to work on this project with us.

Black has 40 years of experience as an architect solving the kinds of problems we've encountered in our building and managing construction projects designed to ameliorate them and improve the way the buildings work for the people who are using them. "A lot of what I do as an architect is assess priorities," he said. That's important to us because one of the significant outcomes of our work needs to be a document outlining the work that needs to be done and proving cost estimates for the various phases, allowing us to budget more effectively.

Equally important to us is the fact that Black clearly understands that working with a group like ours requires listening to the needs of multiple constituents and trying to accommodate them as much as possible into proposed solutions. As part of his work with us, he'd facilitate a group workshop to explore our needs, helping us to identify and make choices about priorities. This work will guide us in developing a plan for the work that needs to be done and it is exactly the kind of process that the FOF Task Force envisioned.

I'm attaching a copy of Robert Black's proposal to this memo.

Note that the first part of his work involves reviewing what we've done so far. At this point, I have a collection of materials (including Focus on the Future; a number of valuable documents generated during the FOF process; various recommendations relating to insulation and moisture abatement; and the FOF report itself). We believe that the work we've already done prepares us well to take the next steps in the process.