

**First NH Statehouse Public Meeting
Portsmouth, NH
November 14, 2011
Strawbery Banke Museum
Tyco Visitors Center**

Laura Black welcomed attendees and gave a brief history of the First NH Statehouse (FSH) including its modern history. She then explained the purpose of the EDI grant, which studies are underway, how they relate to the overall project. She also gave an overview of the changes that have occurred since the award of the grant, including the development of a visitor center at the Discover Portsmouth. Laura summed up the project by stating that we are looking to get a viable action plan as a result of this project.

Laura introduced Stephen Gianotti as the meeting facilitator.

In attendance: John Sullivan (former Blue Ribbon Committee), Robert Padian (BR), Roger Wood (NH Public Radio), Steve Field, Ann Walker (BR), Bob Cook (Portsmouth Patch website), Kerry Vautrot, Lulu Pickering, Elizabeth Farish, Richard Nylander, Duncan MacCallum (BR), Ken Herrick (Albacore), Wendy Lull (Seacoast Science Center), Craig Tuminaro (Historic New England), Nancy Carmer (City of Portsmouth), John Sullivan, Lawrence Yerdon (Strawbery Banke Museum), Joey Cresta (Portsmouth Herald), Harold Whitehouse, Bob Lister (City of Portsmouth), and staff of the Division of Historical Resources.

Christine Miller Cruise presented her conservator's report. Loss and overall integrity were assessed with each element. From this information, repair recommendations were made for each piece. Some pieces were identified as "unsalvageable." Future use was also considered. Most have 0-35% of deterioration; overall the pieces have pretty good integrity. At the time of the survey the number of hours needed to repair all the elements was estimated at 811.5 hours. Only a handful of pieces could not go back together. Her report recommends that the FSH would be best used as an exhibit or within an interpretive context. It is also important to note that 2/3rds of the building are missing and reconstruction would cover all of the early pieces.

Jason Bailey presented for TMS Architects. Their task was to create digital models that give a better idea of what the FSH parts would look like when reassembled and to present conjectural digital representations and models. The original disassembly drawings were used to create the new CAD drawings. In the digital models, each piece is a separate layer and is identified using the same nomenclature as the original drawings. The conjectural full reconstruction drawings created by Salmon Falls were used to create CAD drawings, which were then used to create 3-D drawings.

Blake Hayes of the Cherry Valley Group presented on the interpretive models that are currently being explored and began with existing research on the resource, the other information needed when developing an interpretive plan, and how that information is

used. A potential spectrum of use for the FSH was presented, including three test scenarios:

- NH Center for Civics Education
- FSH Virtual Museum
- FSH Inn/B&B

James Stevens from ConsultEcon discussed the economic impact analysis that will be undertaken for the project. He will be looking to provide a realistic evaluation of the economic viability of interpretive concepts for the FSH and to provide a qualitative assessment of how the state as a whole can increase the positive economic impacts of historic preservation and heritage tourism-related activities.

General reactions from the public:

- I was very surprised at the lack of quantity. When the FSH was present on this site, she brought her children to see it and later watched one of her former students put it in the trailer piece by piece. She is surprised how little is left from what she remembers.
- The trailer itself is rotting! It was in the trailer, being eaten by spiders, and the trailer is sinking into the mud. Nobody seems to care. I thought there were some interior features stored in the trailer. (It was explained that some finished pieces date from the 19th century, after the building was subdivided, moved and its use changed.) They have people ready to raise the money if they have the space.
- Has anybody working under the grant read the minutes taken during the Blue Ribbon Committee meetings and reviewed them to see how they addressed the questions being asked? The Committee's biggest problem was finding a location. (Laura Black has those documents and has reviewed them. The committee did a huge amount of work. A solid understanding of what we have and a way to translate that to the general public is the current focus.)
- How much of our original \$250,000 is in the state's budget? It was seed money, how much is left? (Laura explained that the money was for a planning project and could only be used for the planning activities in the grant agreement with HUD.)
- For the record, there is a model based on the original document and a computer based model sited at the park.
- Harold Whitehouse agreed with Mr. Sullivan that a lot of research had been done. He would like to see how much money was spent on salary, etc. Can we get an accounting of what has been spent? (That information is available at the Department of Cultural Resources business office.)
- If the McIntire site is available, could the FSH be reconstructed on it? If the site is available, is there anybody who thinks that it cannot be done there? Discussion ensued; the consultants responded. If there is public and financial support, there is no reason (Interpretation). It can be done with enough money but from a preservation standpoint, what do you have? You are not preserving the original object, but the idea. It is not sound preservation philosophy but as preservation of an idea, it might work (Conservator). Funding for construction would be needed.

- (Economic Impact). There is not enough here; by the Secretary's *Standards* there is not enough evidence for reconstruction. What is the story that is to be told here? The building was the capital building for only a short period of time in its history. There is a legal piece to it, but the story has not been defined yet (Architect).
- When it was paid to have the steeple done on the North Church, assuming that most of the timbers were replaced, it still preserves an icon important to NH. Newington did the same. Why are we so mired that it has to be preserved by a ridged historical standard? The other point she has is related to the Louis DeRochemont house in Newington, which people wanted to restore. A public/private partnership made it happen. Could this happen with the FSH? (John Merkle was involved with that project and noted that the interior and exterior elements were all extant and intact.)
 - There are multiple treatments for working with historical resources: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction. The steeple project was rehabilitation. The primary concern with the reconstruction is the false sense of history it provides. If we are reconstructing building without solid evidence and placing it in a different location are we creating a false sense of history?
 - It is not an original building that can be reconstructed. It could serve a valuable purpose to students. It could be a public/private partnership. There is no place for people with cottage tourism industries to operate out of. It does not have to be a faithful/pristine reconstruction, but it could be of some value.
 - As a newspaper reporter in the past, I covered this story when it was at Strawberry Banke Museum. Why did they not want it? The building did not belong to SBM, but to the State of New Hampshire. Considering the interpretive plan that existed at the museum, it did not fit into that plan.
 - Councilor Bob Lister hopes we will not get hung up on preservation and reconstruction. It has the opportunity to bring people to the city. With modern buildings being built, it is important to have an opportunity to see something of historic value. I hope this does not get stalled for a long time.
 - There is a rumor that Concord wants to have it.
 - Laura Black commented that we have had a lot of comments from people who see value in the other interpretive models that are being explored.

Ideas?

- Be done with it, bonfire. There comes a time when too much money is spent rehashing. I am surprised that none of the presentations brought up the work of the Blue Ribbon Committee. If the State continues to delay, then it should be destroyed. We should do, not delay. Construct it.
- The team who presented today has taken the first step to getting a product we can use. The planning done is important in understanding what the next step is. The conservator's report is a great resource; the architects' model has incorporated very good information.
- As we move ahead, I hope we put this in a broader context of preservation. Portsmouth has some amazing resources, as does the rest of the state. What kind of financial situation is every one of those single institutions in? About 1500

people come to the Gov. Langdon Mansion each year. About 65,000 (12,000 schoolchildren) come to Strawberry Banke Museum. The numbers do not support the idea that thousands of people will come. Who will come, in what numbers, for what services?

- It needs to be repurposed to meet unmet needs. A small business area for tables selling products. A place where children can change their clothes with lockers and public restrooms. One room could be used for interpretation. It is not that large a building and could be combined with the McIntire project. If it is rebuilt and it looks like the building, there should be people willing to front the money.
- We have the Discover Center in Portsmouth that acts as the central information center for visitors.
- But the Discover Center is noncommercial and not kid friendly; we need to do something that is kid friendly. The Pitt Tavern was renovated by the Masons, with \$400,000.00 they raised. If it has a commercial context where tables are rented for businesses, then there is income. A new building will have less maintenance costs.
- When the Children's Museum left, the city lost a resource. Could this fill that void?
- If it was in the parking lot off of Bow Street next to an open park, it could work, but not as a museum.
- Finding a partner is key.
- Re-using the FSH could be one of the requirements for a developer to re-develop the McIntire building/lot.
- Would you then propose that having a building that is an exterior reconstruction?
- The proposal would use only a part of the parking lot. It could be built on the corner of Penhallow and Bow streets.
- Is there a way we can incorporate the structure as part of an exhibit, but not as part of the actual structure?
- The wood is old, but there is nothing that makes it into an historical masterpiece. It is all about interpretation. Some of the framework could be incorporated and exposed. Some artifacts could be in a case and some could be touched. You could reconstruct it – use the bones of it to the extent you are able and expose them – and use floor boards, etc., as it makes sense. Give people a feel for what it was – feel and see history.
- In the Pitt Tavern, only one corner has salvaged original floorboards. It, like the FSH, has a Washington connection.
- When kids go into a building, they want to feel what George Washington felt and see what he saw. The building would be more interesting as a faithful reconstruction. We need to reconstruct that experience even if it is not true.
- (Blake) “When you create a true environment...creating a place to get in touch with history and not worrying too much about the specific nature of the historic fabric, everything is conjectural. You can mention that George Washington stood in this building, but what happened on a day-to-day basis and what is compelling for our visitors?”
- This is not the State of NH; this is the colony of NH. It was built by King George and is pre-America.

- The committee that met for five years mentioned this briefly. The Portsmouth Traffic circle will be redone. The liquor store could be rebuilt with the lower story used for that purpose and the upper floor could be restored and a tourist attraction.
- We (Blue Ribbon Committee) looked at every possible open space in the city of Portsmouth. The one that was most cherished was in Prescott Park near the water. It could have located with the flower gardens in front. It could have been a visitor center for SBM in that location. In the community, the highest commodity is finding the property to put it on, not building and maintaining it.

**First NH Statehouse Public Meeting
Concord, NH
November 15, 2011
2 Pillsbury Street, 5th Floor**

The first hour shared the same information presented the evening before in Portsmouth (see above.)

In attendance: Martha Pinello, James L Garvin, Connie Austin, E. Nicholl Marshall, Maggie Stier, and staff of the Division of Historical Resources.

General reactions from the public:

- The suggestions from the interpretive assessment were impressive. Some of the ideas are placed in other parts of NH. If this is going to be a partial or full reconstruction, it should be in Portsmouth.
- With establishing the virtual museum, only electronically in cyberspace, the other options would still be available for future implementation.
- The name of the project – what building was used for colonial government before 1758? (J. Garvin answered that the Governor and Council met in taverns.)
- One of the things I have grave concerns about is how we as a State take care of our artifacts. An organization disassembled its building fragment collection in a very sad way in the recent past. These fragments should be preserved. It is very clear that reconstruction is not even the right term to be using based on how much we have. We need to think about this as an archaeological resource. Other study collection examples: Harrisville and Historic New England. We should be very careful in a time of very limited resources that to be stewards of our resources, not only for this one, but for the ones that are still standing. There are areas in Portsmouth that echo the FSH story: the stories of life under the crown and to independence. The crown is not discussed in our schools and needs to be.
- There are uses for the building that will take a lot of work and a lot of training. Coursework to train future architects, engineers, archeologists, etc.
- If this was to be rebuilt into a partial building or a B&B, is it habitable? (Christine Miller Cruiss: You can make it habitable, but would cover up a large portion of the original portions.)
- We should look at this not as a building but as a piece of sculpture. Think of it as a passive exhibit in Manchester Airport; it would reach large numbers of people with minimal expense.
- If reconstruction was doable, it would have been done by now.
- Though reconstruction may become one of the options we have long talked about, what we have is an artifact. What do we do with architectural

fragments is a concern. The State of New Hampshire needs to make a curatorial commitment to preserve these large fragment collections.

- By our actions of how this is treated, it sets an example of what is possible. How the State House is treated will provide a model for others to follow.
- To see a three dimensional model that shows the fragments is positive and more important than a slicked up model of what it could be.
- If we look at restoration/reconstruction of this, we do not need this fragment. What will be created will be all new, and the old would not be seen. Reconstruction could happen at any time with or without the fragments incorporated into it.
- Are NH kids taught the history of New England and NH under the crown? I doubt that this topic is ignored.
- I want to complement the project; I am blown away by all the work that has been done. It is on the right track to bring a better understanding of what the resource is. Who are the partners for any of these ideas? Has this been looked at? Have you talked to inn keepers, the universities, the historical societies? So many kids come to Concord to look at State history; this would be a great place for it. It could be in the atrium outside of the Preservation Alliance's office! (Blake: We need to limit the options to what is possibly doable and costing will be looked at. Laura: We have talked to a number of key organizations and stakeholders in a conference call meeting and in other conversations.)
- Who is responsible for talking to these partners? (DHR)
- I would love to see more heritage trail info with virtual tools. Other states have these trails that incorporate physical maps and online resources.
- Who will fund it? (Maine has used graduate students.)
- Can we start this work and leave the remains in the trailer?
- Highways have been willing to fund exhibits in rest areas. This could be a possible venue.