

FINAL REPORT
THE COOLIDGE SCHOOL REUSE TASK FORCE
APPROVED AS OF JUNE 23, 2015

1. TASK FORCE: Creation, Charter, Composition, Process

1.1. Creation:

In 2013 Maynard School Administration identified to Town Administration cost and safety concerns associated with their continued occupancy of the Coolidge School on Bancroft Street. Working together, both groups began investigation of alternate sites to host School Administrative offices. When the Historical Commission became aware of the possible closure of the Coolidge School, one of the last historically designated municipally owned buildings in Maynard, it began a dialogue with the Board of Selectmen on the future of the building. This culminated in a formal request to the Selectmen in October of 2014 that a Reuse Task Force be established to provide guidance and recommendations to the Board on the future use of the property. In December 2014, the Selectmen unanimously approved establishment of a seven member task force.

1.2. Charter

Make recommendations to return the Coolidge property to productive use for the benefit of Maynard on or before June 30, 2015.

1.3. Composition

The Task Force was constituted in January 2015 with the following representation:

Council on Aging	Lee Acker, <i>Corporate Executive, retired</i>
Historical Commission	Ken Neuhauser, <i>Building Enclosure Expert with Conservation Services Group</i>
Cultural Council	Tim Hess, <i>Architect, Studio InSitu Architects</i>
Community Preservation Committee	Rick Lefferts, <i>Housing Development Consultant</i>
Economic Development Committee	Jack MacKeen, <i>Management Consultant, Retired</i>
At-Large	Sally Bubier, <i>former Select Board Member</i>
At-Large	Vicki Stevens, <i>Abutter</i>

1.4. Process: The Task Force held 15 meetings between January and June 2015. Several interested citizens were also present and participated in each of these meetings. We met with the following professionals during the course of our deliberations: Preservation Massachusetts circuit rider Stacia Caplanson, Maynard Real Estate Broker and Appraiser Nancy Quinn, Town Administrator Kevin Sweet, Assistant Town Administrator Andrew Scribner-MacLean and Facilities Manager Aaron Miklosko.

On Saturday February 28, 2015, the Task Force held a public forum at Maynard Public Library to inform the public about the Task Force’s mission and invite citizen involvement. Approximately 50 residents attended the 2 hour forum. Angus Jennings, a Planner and Facilitator who has assisted with other Maynard municipal projects, led the session. (See Appendix A: Public Forum Summary Report.)

The Task Force was provided with documents relative to the building, including the 2000 Historical Inventory Report, the 2008 Tappe Associates evaluation of the building requested by the School Committee, and the Coolidge portion of the 2011 assessment done of all town facilities. In addition, we reviewed recent reports from Newton, Fairhaven and Groton which also addressed reuse options for municipally owned historic buildings. We also contracted with Maynard based Epsilon Associates for a current preservation assessment. (See Appendix B, Tappe Associates Report, and Appendix C, Coolidge excerpt from AECON Report.)

2. THE PROPERTY

2.1. General:

The property consists of a single municipally owned parcel of land bordered on three sides by Parker Street, Elmwood Street and Bancroft Street, and on the fourth side by privately held parcels, including a church building. The subject parcel contains 2.478 acres more or less, and is identified on Town of Maynard Assessor’s Map 20, Lot 234. It is zoned as GR—General Residential. (See Appendix D— Bing.com Neighborhood Aerial View)

On the elevated western (Bancroft Street) end of the parcel is a neighborhood school building of brick construction, built 1906 with a second story added in 1909, totaling 10,198 square feet of gross floor area (not including basement or attic), plus an 18 space paved parking area. The balance of the property, containing 1.7 acres more or less, is a playground renovated in 2014 with funds approved by a Town Meeting vote. Water and sewer are provided by the town. Cable service is available from Verizon and Comcast. Electric power and natural gas delivery are both provided through Eversource.

The current pending assessment values the building at \$743,200, the land at \$210,500, for a total valuation of \$953,700. Insurance on the property is current and appropriate notice has been given to Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA). (See: Appendix E— Coolidge Assessor’s Report, Appendix F— MIIA Commercial Building Valuation Report)

2.2. The Coolidge School Building-History:

In 1906 in response to growth in the number of school age children as a result of mill expansion, the Bancroft Street School was built as a single story building in the classic revival tradition. The architect was the noted Charles J. Bateman (1863-1947) of Boston, whose other works include listings on the National Register of Historic Places and the Massachusetts State Register of Historic Places. The Contractor was James Mullin, patriarch of a notable local family. With rapid growth continuing, a second story was added in 1909 which was designed by the architect John Ashton of Ashton and Huntress. It was renamed the Calvin Coolidge School in 1932.

Used continuously as an elementary school for the 75 year period from 1906 to 1981, it is estimated approximately 3000 Maynard children were educated in this building when neighborhood schools were part of the Maynard educational system. The building is an important part of Maynard's educational history and is considered unique for both its history and architecture.

In 1978 the Coolidge School was first placed on the State Inventory of Historic Properties, a finding confirmed in 2000 by an independent consultant who also noted the Coolidge School as "Recommended for listing on the National Register of Historic Places". This eligibility was reconfirmed during the current preservation assessment by Maynard based Epsilon Associates. Coolidge was transitioned to administrative use in 1984, a use which continued until School Administration vacated the building at the end of 2014. At various times during the period 1984-2014 rooms in the building were rented to outside organizations. The sole use of the building at this time is the Maynard Food Pantry which is open each Monday. (See Appendix G, MHC Form B and Appendix H, Coolidge School Description and History.)

By letter dated January 9, 2015, the School Committee notified the town of its decision that "The Coolidge School building is no longer needed for school purposes". A vote at the 2015 Annual Town Meeting confirmed transfer to town control as required by MA General Law. (See Appendices I and J, School Committee letter and Annual Town Meeting Article.)

2.3 The Coolidge Playground

In 2007, a group of neighbors and Maynard residents formed the Friends of the Coolidge Community Playground. One of their chief goals was to provide a playground for young children. At the time, the Coolidge grounds contained a metal slide and a few swings, a two-hoop basketball court and a ball field. The group met for several years, raised \$6,000 and worked closely with a playground design firm to specify improvements. Later the town became involved in the process and Town Meeting approved funds for construction. The total cost for design and construction came to \$368,725. The park was opened in 2014 with a new playground that included a hill slide, a pavilion, climbing structure, swings and several other features. In preserving the popular winter sledding hill, the two-hoop basketball court was redesigned to have only one hoop, placed along the Elmwood Street side of the park and removed from the potential path of sleds. The ball field now features a taller backstop. There is also a butterfly garden that a local Girl Scout troop tends.

Although the newly refurbished Coolidge Community Playground is informally used year-round by children and adults, there are two local groups that run organized programs on its grounds each year. The Farm League division (softball for 8-year-olds) of the Assabet Valley Little League uses the Coolidge ball field for practices and games from April to mid-June. In addition, the Boys and Girls Club of Assabet Valley in Maynard runs a six-week summer camp on the ground for 5 to 12 year olds. The morning camp is expected to draw 75 children this summer.

3. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

3.1 Coolidge School Building:

It is quite possible that the Coolidge School, an existing, in-place structure, might meet a future municipal facility need. The building is structurally sound, but deferred maintenance has created a long list of items that need to be addressed.

The Task Force recognizes: 1) Any new use in the building will take some investment and 2) any municipal facility need is going to need some capital. There are potential sources of funding including grants from Community Preservation Act funds, Community Development Block Grant or Mass Preservation Projects Fund (Mass Historic Commission) to repurpose the building.

Therefore, we suggest that The Board of Selectmen make a definitive decision as to whether there is any municipal need within 2-3 years for which the Coolidge School could be used.

3.1.1 Demolition:

Finding: Demolition of this building is not consistent with the public interest.

1. A strong preference for preservation of the building was expressed in the February 2015 public forum.
2. The former neighborhood school is an example of Maynard's essential character as a fundamentally walkable town. A graphic image of the building is the literal symbol of our Community Development Principle to "Redevelop and Reuse".
3. Advice from expert consultants and the Historic Commission has identified that the building holds special historic value.
4. The construction, detailing, and materials are fundamentally sound and of very high quality.

Recommendation: After careful consideration, and consistent with the Community Development Principles, the Task Force recommends that the building should not be demolished. An adaptive reuse should be sought.

3.1.2 Preservation of Coolidge Building:

Finding: There is widespread respect in the community for the architecture and character of the building and its neighborhood setting. It is noteworthy that 84% of the attendees at the February 28, 2015 public forum voted for preservation under one or more scenarios. In addition, the Maynard Historical Commission made a formal request to the Board of Selectmen that the building be preserved.

As noted in 2.2 above, the building is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. An assessment by preservation consultant Epsilon Associates identified a number of building features of significance. Using the Epsilon assessment, the Maynard Historical Commission has recommended a set of building features which, if protected, would allow a future owner to apply for State or Federal historic rehabilitation tax credits. It should be noted

that adaptive reuse professionals are not deterred by broad preservation deed restrictions. (See Appendix K, Epsilon Associates Coolidge School Assessment Letter.)

Recommendation: Impose preservation restrictions.

The architecture and essence of the building should be protected either by deed restriction or requirement in an adaptive reuse Request for Proposal process. The preferred method, which would guarantee preservation of the building in perpetuity, is by deed restriction based on the included recommendations of the Historic Commission. If restrictions are applied as part of an RFP process, the Historic Commission recommendations should be made a visible part of the suggested requirements and then used in evaluating responses. (See Appendix L, Maynard Historic Commission's Recommendations.)

3.1.3 Immediate Actions:

Finding: The task force reviewed similar surplus property processes in Newton, Fairhaven and Groton. A finding from those reviews is that the time to finalize a transfer of the building to another party may be longer than expected. The democratic process can be cumbersome, especially with regard to assets that have accrued a cultural significance in the community. Therefore the community should plan for the contingency of holding the property during an interim period. According to the Facilities Manager, the Building Commissioner and Epsilon Associates the Coolidge building is serviceable and in good condition. It is structurally sound, but deferred maintenance has created a long list of items which need to be addressed. (See Appendix B, Tappe Report.)

Recommendation: Invest to preserve the value of this asset.

With continued municipal ownership likely for an indeterminate period, four (4) critical and reasonable cost steps should be taken immediately to maintain the value of the building. The task force suggests the following near-term actions for the Coolidge School building are the minimum necessary to maintain the value of the property. These immediate actions will give the Town time to consider a long term solution that is most beneficial to the community.

1. Keep the building occupied to enhance security and to generate revenue.
2. Replace worn out roof flashing to prevent water damage.
3. Block gross air leaks and passive ventilation shafts (currently open to sky) to significantly reduce energy costs.
4. Replace steam valves with functioning thermostatic valves to further reduce energy costs and provide reasonable comfort within the building.

Detailed support of these recommendations is provided in Section 3.3, Addendum.

3.1.4 Long Term Strategy

Finding: A Highest and Best Use Analysis of the property by local Realtor/Appraiser, Nancy Quinn, suggests that the 'as is' value of the building is in the \$300,000 range for use as multi-family residential. The property is situated within the General Residence zone, which allows for multifamily dwellings and such use would not require zoning changes. Further, the playground could be subdivided from the larger parcel and not have significant impact on the building and remainder land.

In addition, during our process and particularly during the public forum, a variety of other uses were suggested; senior/veterans/affordable housing, community center, historic society museum, to name a few. Many of these would bring ancillary benefits to the community.

Recommendation: Formulate an Adaptive Reuse Request for Proposal (RFP).

We recommend that the BOS appoint a small group to assist Town Administration in the formulation of a Request for Proposals (RFP) and responses thereto. The RFP should identify *Benefits Sought* by the community in addition to articulating firm *Requirements* of all proposals. We have found strong and compelling RFPs or “Offerings” prepared by professional Real Estate Advisors, and suggest the BOS consider contracting with such a firm. For an example, see Appendix O:

http://www.ci.woodinville.wa.us/Documents/News/OldSchoolHouse/OWS%20Updates/SchoolhouseOM_030915.pdf

The RFP should be distributed first to town departments. Within a brief period (90 days) in which the offer is extended exclusively to these departments, the town should consider steps to encourage and foster collaboration and collect and evaluate *abbreviated* proposals.

If from this first period no promising proposals have emerged, the RFP should then be made available to all potentially interested parties, including but not limited to private developers, town departments, corporations that invest in affordable /alternative housing, and local and regional non-profits.

Parameters for an Adaptive Reuse Request for Proposals:

- *Requirements of Proposed Projects; The successful proposal will:*
 - Purchase the building from the Town or engage in a long-term lease from the Town
 - Demonstrate respect for the historic character of the existing architecture.
 - Provide a sustained use or uses compatible with the neighborhood setting
 - Maintain and promote the Coolidge grounds' character of open space for the community.
 - Demonstrate the financial capacity to make repairs and updates to the building as required by the proposal – as well as regular maintenance.
 - Demonstrate the financial viability of the proposed use sustained over the long-term.
 - Provide a mechanism to maintain the use and benefits to the Town described in the response to the RFP.
- *Benefits Sought from Proposed Project:*
 - Financial benefit to the town through the combination of purchase price and ongoing revenue via taxes.
 - Preferred uses of the building include such things as:
 - use by a Town Department or Meeting space for Town and community groups.
 - affordable, veterans, or elderly-housing, assisted living,
 - senior center, museum or art center; Historical Society or other similar.
 - food pantry, or community meals
 - Historic resource appreciation: Provide for preservation of the building through deed restrictions as articulated in the June 11 letter from the Historic Commission. (See: Appendix L. Maynard Historic Commission's Recommendations.)
 - Maintain public access across the property to the sledding hill as well as the playground, ball field, and basketball court.

3.2 Coolidge School playground:

Finding: As described in Section 2 above, the current parcel is a single property containing both a playground and school building. A citizen group worked extensively over several years to refurbish and enhance the playground, succeeding in 2014 with the support of Town Meeting approved funding. 85% of the attendees at the February 28, 2015 public forum voted to retain public use of the playground.

Recommendation: Subdivide property into two separate lots.

In the event of third party ownership, the task force recommends that the lot be subdivided such that the town retains ownership and control of the Coolidge Playground for use as a public playground, including use of some significant portion of the hill for winter sledding. (See Appendix M, Draft Parcel Division)

3.3 Addendum—Detail for Near Term Recommendations

The recommendations for immediate actions listed in 3.1.3 are explained below.

1. Keep the building occupied to enhance security and to generate revenue.

Maintaining regular use and occupancy of the building is among the most important steps toward preventing rapid deterioration and loss of value. Insurance premiums are typically much higher for unoccupied buildings. Preservation Massachusetts circuit rider Stacia Caplanson, in her remarks to the Task Force earlier this year, also advised that maintaining regular occupancy and use in the building is the most important thing the Town could do to protect the building and preserve its value. We believe that a regular presence in the building – particularly that of a conscientious tenant – will greatly enhance the ability of maintenance personnel to stem minor issues before they become larger issues.

Not only will continued use serve the value of the physical asset, continued use by a paying tenant or tenants would help defray carrying costs. A recent tenant of the facility, Hudson/Maynard Adult Learning Center, had provided rents and fees on the order of \$8000, per year. Another tenant, the Maynard Food Pantry has confirmed a willingness to pay rent of \$1,000 per month (\$12,000 per year) for continued use of the space. Combined, such rents would defray approximately two-thirds of the expected continued carrying costs.¹

2. Repair worn out roof flashing to prevent water damage.

Protection from liquid water is essential to maintaining the physical asset of the facility. The roof system (slates, flashing, overhangs) can continue to provide this function with proper maintenance. While the materials and configuration of this roof system provide a remarkably long service life, certain components, such as metal flashings, require periodic (every 40-50 years) replacement. The roof is long overdue for repair and replacement of metal flashing components. As recent experience in Maynard has proven (to wit, the Memorial Gym and the Roosevelt School), a roof leak that is allowed to continue can rapidly deteriorate the value of a facility. To date, Maynard has been very lucky in that a leak that has been active for several years had not yet caused significant damage to the building. It would be irresponsible to (again) continue to risk significant loss of value for the citizens of Maynard.

A prospective buyer/lessor of the facility would value a roof system that is able to provide the critical sheltering function without near-term investment. Given the historic value of this resource, it is likely that funds would be available to support restoration of the roof to proper function. Examples of sources for such funding include CDBG, MPPF, and CPC.

We do not recommend full replacement of the roof at this time. Since we do not know the long-term scenario of ownership and use, it would be inappropriate to pursue a more extensive

¹ Recent years' operating costs for the school department have been approximately \$35,000 of which approximately \$19,000 has been energy costs. It is expected that energy costs could be significantly reduced for a relatively small investment on the part of the Town.

restoration than would be needed to allow the roof to continue its function of protecting the building.

3. Block gross air leaks and passive ventilation shafts (currently open to sky) to significantly reduce energy costs.

Since the 1909 addition and continuing through the 1951 heating system renovations, the building has operated with ventilation shafts that open to the attic and to the sky. While the system may have originally been conceived to operate with dampers to close off the ventilation shafts, none were observed during a visit by the Task Force. Therefore, the larger openings in each classroom function essentially as a continuously open window. The heat loss from such uncontrolled air exchange is expected to account for a significant amount of heating energy use.

In addition to the open ventilation shafts, there is a complete absence of air control or insulation at the attic floor. This allows heat from the building to flow into the attic relatively unimpeded. The flow of heat into the attic, through ventilation shafts and the lack of thermal control at the attic floor, creates a powerful mechanism for the generation of ice dams. In the current configuration, the energy purchased to heat the building instead contributes to a significant building durability and safety risk.

The building also exhibits windows that are not fully closed, window air conditioning units remaining in place year-round, gaps around air conditioning units, and missing or broken panels in window openings. These allow significant air leakage that further diminishes the effectiveness of energy purchased for heating. A member of the Task Force with expertise in the area of building energy performance has estimated that the heat loss from this air leakage could account for between 1/3 and 2/3 of total heating energy.

These measures to control gross air leakage from the building could achieve a simple pay-back within one winter. In other words, it may be within the Town's financial interest to pursue the energy reductions *even if the Town only retains ownership/management of the building for one year*. The Task Force has confirmed that incentives are available from Eversource to help defray costs of this kind of energy reduction projects in municipal buildings.

4. Replace steam valves with functioning thermostatic valves to further reduce energy costs and provide reasonable comfort within the building.

The Task Force believes that modest repair investment –could result in a functional heating system that provides significantly greater comfort at reduced operating cost. According to observations by Task Force members and accounts from recent users, the balancing and distribution of the steam heat is very poor. Functioning thermostatic valves at each radiator could greatly improve heating distribution and control by preventing over-heating and allowing heat to reach parts of the building where it is needed. By limiting over-heating, improved controls contribute to reduced fuel use by the steam boiler. Incentives from Eversource may help to defray costs of replacing steam valves. With utility incentives, the pay back to the Town for upgrades to the steam heating system is likely to be within the timeframe of the Town's continued ownership and operation of the building. A functional heating system may also

increase the value of the building to a potential buyer as the space could be used without immediate investment in the heating system.

4. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Appendix A — Public Forum Summary Report
- Appendix B — Tappe Associates Report
- Appendix C — Coolidge excerpt from AECON Report
- Appendix D — Bing.com Neighborhood Aerial View
- Appendix E — Assessor's Valuation
- Appendix F — MIIA Commercial Building Valuation Report
- Appendix G — MHC Inventory Form B
- Appendix H — Coolidge School Description and History
- Appendix I — School Committee letter to Town declaring property surplus
- Appendix J — Annual TM article May 2015 for transfer from School Department to Town
- Appendix K — Epsilon Associates Coolidge School Assessment Letter
- Appendix L — Maynard Historic Commission's Recommendations
- Appendix M — Draft parcel division
- Appendix N — Historic rehabilitation tax credit information:
<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhctax/taxidx.htm> and
<http://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives/taxdocs/about-tax-incentives-2012.pdf>.
- Appendix O — Woodinville, WA Request For Proposal URL
http://www.ci.woodinville.wa.us/Documents/News/OldSchoolHouse/OWS%20Updates/SchoolhouseOM_030915.pdf