

Kingston Chronicles: A Two-Town Treasure!

Have you ever wondered what will become of the Sanborn Regional School District's architectural treasure – the Seminary Building – that stands majestically in the center of the old high school campus? Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it is recognized as NH's finest example of High Victorian Gothic architecture. And – not to be dismissed – it is the symbol of fine education and fond memories by countless alumni.

Currently it is vacant, but it is not forgotten.

On November 7 the Sanborn Regional School Board welcomed Virginia Morse and Judy Rubin, chair and vice-chair of the Kingston Historic District Commission, and Maggie Stier, field service representative with more than 30 years experience in historic preservation from the NH Preservation Alliance, to discuss future plans for this historic building. Despite the disappointment in the 2012 School District vote not to fund the restoration project as presented, the School Board clearly indicated that it is their intent to continue to pursue renovations and re-use the Seminary as an educational asset for several reasons.

- Septic, water, heat and sprinkler systems are tied into the entire campus and this one building cannot and will not be separated
- The Articles of Agreement made when the Seminary sold the campus to the combined Sanborn Regional School District specified that it would remain as an educational component for the towns of Newton and Kingston
- Currently, the District needs space for not only the Superintendent and SAU offices, but the technology department, presently housed in a building with no restroom facilities and that is unacceptable
- The building is an asset to the campus and the two towns, an architectural treasure and every effort will be made to preserve and restore its historic features
- Upon completion/restoration of the entire building, any space unused by the SAU could be rented to compatible businesses for district revenue

The future focus will be to explore ideas towards building community relations and informing the taxpayers of the future use and renovations of the building. Ms. Stier commended the existing report done by the well-respected Lavallee/Brensinger Architect firm, and together with the HDC members, suggested several steps toward reviving interest in renovating the building.

- Quickly and immediately fill out an LCHP register form, and when another grant round is opened (sometime in 2013), SAU 17 can prepare and submit a formal application for funding
- Nominate the building to the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance's "Seven to Save" Award. Nominations are due in September 2013 and the announcement of listees made in October 2013
- Investigate the practicality and costs of breaking the renovations down into phases, beginning with the first floor and moving to other areas as time, money and need allow rather than request funds for the entire restoration at once
- Identify what elements of the plan might be supported with private contributions and develop a capital campaign targeting alumni and other supporters. A new non-profit

entity, perhaps the Friends of Sanborn Seminary, might be formed to manage this fund-raising effort.

- Inform voters of the value and benefits of a rehabbed Seminary using monthly announcements in the Essential News and other means available

The Historic District Commission strongly supports this pro-active plan and stands ready to be of service in whatever capacity fits best...a resource to the School Board. Ms. Stier is willing to help develop an action plan that would outline the stages of communication, further exploration of the re-use options, perhaps an Open House to showcase the facility, future funding options and extensive communication in both towns that will hopefully result in a more positive vote in 2014 or beyond. Ms. Stier will share strategies that have worked well with similar projects in other communities. The HDC commends the School Board's enthusiasm in pursuing the renovations of the building. The School Board and the HDC both welcome your comments, suggestions, and especially your support for the preservation for this unique two-town treasure!