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## [CE SBAC] Clarification on School to Housing Conversion

1 message

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**Kevin Justh** <kevinjusth@gmail.com>  
To: cesbac@capeelizabethschools.org

Fri, Jan 26, 2024 at 4:27 PM

Dear SBAC - I thought it important to address something that came up in your latest workshop, specifically as it relates to the 1934 historic school building. I think it will be important for the community to understand the basis for the recent recommendation to re-purpose that building for housing should it not be necessary for educational purposes.

The town's housing advisory committee has made the recommendation that IF that building is not needed by the CESD for educational or district purposes, it should strongly be considered for housing. If it is needed by the CESD, then everything else here is moot.

If it is deemed surplus, the town would then take the next steps to address how to re-use (or remove) the structure. Conversion of buildings like this is extremely common in Maine, New England, and throughout the country. There is AMPLE federal, state, and private funding for such conversions, in addition to the usual sources of financing (again federal, state, and private funding) for affordable housing. It is common to completely replace all systems (mechanical, utility, HVAC, vertical transportation) as part of a substantial renovation. A quick example of the historic tax credits is described here:

<https://www.maine.gov/mhpc/programs/tax-incentives>.

One other thing that was discussed was setbacks, densities, and lot size. While not in the direct purview of the SBAC, there is ongoing dialogue on adapting the town's land use to accommodate this precise type of development. There have been specific recommendations that the town will be considering over the coming years to ensure such a conversion is viable.

And again, while this committee is not charged with what happens to that structure if it reverts to the town, it will be important for the design team to understand whether and how to design educational structures (and access, parking, security) should that structure be retained. There are also opportunities here for shared access and parking.

Separately, should the district seek to use that structure for office or non-classroom space, there are federal and state avenues for funding - those are much more complicated, but they absolutely do exist and have been used extensively. That would be something a design, finance, and legal team would need to address separately from this process. Unfortunately those sources do not exist for classroom or educational space.

Again, I know that the ultimate use of this building is not in the purview of this committee, but from the town perspective their advisory committee has made this recommendation, and that recommendation is

based on the substantial, ample, and documented history of financing available for that specific purpose.

With continued appreciation,

Kevin Justh  
9 Spruce Lane  
Former Chair, 2022-2023 Housing Diversity Study Committee

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