

# Otego Elementary School Repurposing Committee

**TO:** The Unatego Board of Education

**FROM:** The Otego Elementary School Re-purposing Committee

**SUBJECT:** Recommendations for a Request for Proposal (RFP)

**DATE:** 03/12/18

The Mission of the Otego Elementary School Re-purposing Committee is to research and collect data, obtain information and community input, seek out proven and existing examples of, and find viable options for, the Repurposing of the Otego Elementary School. Such information is to be forwarded to the Unatego Board of Education to help facilitate a Request for Proposal (RFP) to solicit prospective buyers. To that end, the Committee would like to provide the Board a critique of actions taken, leading up to this point and presentation, and provide a summation of its findings and consensus.

The Repurposing Committee was formed and began formal meetings in June of 2016. It consists of the following members:

Ken Olsen – Chair Person  
Dr. Dave Richards – Advisor  
Chad Angellotti  
Ellen Brown  
GX Cramatte  
Buzz Hesse

Cindy O’Hara  
Ron Pleban  
Florian Reyda  
Jim Salisbury  
Dave Welch  
Dick Downey - Consultant

Over the last several months the Committee has met consistently at least once a month. An agenda is provided for each meeting and minutes are taken and recorded. They are available at each meeting and are open for inspection at any time. The Committee operates under generally accepted norms and protocol, with open discussion, motions, and consensus polling. Including time for public participation. Over the course of the Committee’s operation and function, it has endeavored and evolved, with the main focus centering on purposeful and pragmatic options for the repurposing of the Otego Elementary School. With an emphasis on those examples which would benefit the Otego community as a whole, maintaining the building in an acceptable and appealing manner, and possibly providing a financial benefit for the community.

During the course of our meetings, Dick Downey has been a vital resource for our committee. Dick has supplied the committee with a number of documented examples of repurposed schools throughout the state including locations such as Milford, Cherry Valley, Smyrna, Bridgewater, Gilbertsville, South New Berlin/New Berlin, and Watkins Glen. Some resulting in successful outcomes, and some not. Dick was instrumental in attaining several guest speakers to attend our meetings, and discuss their experiences regarding closing schools in their districts and trying to sell the buildings. Among them were Linda Zaczek from Gilbertsville/Mt. Upton, and Vickie Gregory from Unadilla Valley. Dick also arranged a meeting with himself, Ken Olsen, and Grace Della. Grace works for an entrepreneur who purchased the Gilbertsville School and is attempting to transform the building and grounds into a destination for artists and sculptors. And finally, Dick had Barry Cummings of Community Enhancement and Redevelopment Group, and Tim Peters and Tony Scalisi of Otsego Rural Housing come and talk about their associations and experiences involving the revitalization of building structures and creating affordable housing units. GX Cramatte also conducted a walk-through of the Otego Elementary School with developer Ed May of Oneonta, to acquire additional insight and perspective. We were also supplied publications with examples of repurposed buildings, and summations of personal visits. We owe Dick a great deal of gratitude for his input and efforts. The resources he attained were informative and most helpful.

The Committee also reached out to the elected officials in our community, to seek their insight and opinions regarding the proposed repurposing, including any input they may have received from constituents. Invitations were extended to Otego Town Supervisor Smoke Hurlbert, Otego Mayor Ernie Kroll, and Otsego County Board Representative Cathy Clark. The Repurposing Committee also attended an Otego Town Board meeting and conducted a presentation. Smoke Hurlbert and Cathy Clark have also attended Repurposing Committee meetings, as well as Otego Town Board member Dave Sheldon and Otsego County Representative Ed Frasier.

The Committee appointed a Needs Assessment Sub-Committee who were tasked with reaching out to the public for community wide input. It was determined by the committee to formulate a survey to be available to the residents of the Unatego Central School and the accompanying towns. The survey, approved by the full committee, consisted of five (5) questions and a section to include any comments. The time frame began just before the Christmas Holiday and ran until the end of January. The survey was made available through the district web site, social media, and strategic placed paper copies. Over 300 responses were received. A copy of the results are attached to this report. In addition, as stated before, every Repurposing Committee meeting included a public comment period. Over the course of the last nine (9) months, we were fortunate enough to have a significant amount of community members voice their opinions and concerns. As well as members being approached or contacted individually by the public.

The Chair of the Otego School Repurposing Committee would like to thank the members of the Committee for their hard work and dedication tackling the task we have volunteered for. Each and every member has contributed and made a concerted effort in an attempt to find the best solutions for the future of the Otego Elementary School building. In addition, the Committee would also like to thank Dr. Dave Richards for his time and help for which the Committee is grateful, and the Board of Education for allowing us this opportunity and believing in our mission.

Several points and conclusions have been reached and agreed upon by the Committee as a result of our research, observations, involvement, and participation. As such, we would like to make the following recommendations to the Board of Education.

- The footprint of the Otego Elementary School extends beyond the actual square footage of the building. The land behind the school consists of baseball and soft ball diamonds, soccer fields, open space, and an additional parcel further up Willow St. The Committee would like to suggest, if possible, to retain as much of the land behind the school as possible, for future community use.
- The Committee would like to suggest to the Board when developing an RFP, to use language that would not constrain the possible concept ideas perspective buyers might have for repurposing the school building, that are outside the suggestions the Committee might make. Or, any other preconceived ideas the district may have. Although there are recommendations and concepts the Committee believes are in line with the work they have performed, and community interests, there may be different ideas brought forth from potential buyers that are relevant, acceptable, and beneficial.
- Based on the work of the Committee, and the input of the community, the Committee would like to recommend the following potential uses for the Otego Elementary School building: Educational facility/Trade school, Medical facility/Healthcare, Senior Housing (+55), Community Center, Office Space.
- Buyer(s) must understand, adhere to, and comply with, all applicable Planning Board rules and restrictions, or zoning laws and ordinances. Or, if applicable, go through proper channels to facilitate the sale thereof.

Respectfully submitted by the Otego Elementary School Repurposing Committee.