

**TOWN OF GRANBY**  
**Kearns School Study Committee**  
**Final Report**  
**May 11, 2017**

**INTRODUCTION**

In January 2017 the Kearns School Study Committee submitted an interim report to the Board of Selectmen. Since that time, the Committee has continued to meet with various parties to gather information and obtain public input on the future use of the Kearns property. We held a second public input session on February 21, 2017 and also met with two commercial real estate appraisers and a local builder who is familiar with the Kearns building.

The Committee was charged with recommending “[t]he highest and best use of the [Kearns] facility.” The Committee agreed that it was important that its recommendation reflect the opinions of residents and be fiscally viable. We quickly came to the conclusion that making a single specific recommendation would require a level of fiscal analysis that was beyond the scope of our charge and our limited resources. Rather, we have collected a comprehensive list of possible uses and data on residents’ concerns and suggestions. Based on the information that we have received, we are recommending that the Board of Selectmen consider two general scenarios, as explained below:

**REDEVELOPMENT**

The redevelopment option is intended to achieve 100% disposition of the Kearns School and adjacent real estate. This option would result in the elimination of any operating expense for maintenance of the facility and could potentially yield some general fund revenue. Any potential future tax revenue generated would be determined by the subsequent use of the property and/or the purchaser.

The unique characteristics of the building would suggest that using it for an educational purpose would be appropriate. However based on the community survey, public input and our own discussions, we recommend that the Board also consider some form of residential use, particularly elderly housing. Residential use would be appropriate considering the location of the building, existing zoning, the nature of the neighborhood surrounding the property, and an apparent need for such housing. In order to gain access to funding for certain residential development, such as senior housing, the establishment of a housing commission may be appropriate and should be considered. While residential and education appear to be the most appropriate future uses for the Kearns property, we recommend that the Board be open to considering other uses that would be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

If the Board chooses the redevelopment option, we believe that it a realistic, aggressive, and adequately funded marketing strategy is crucial for the success of the redevelopment approach. We also suggest that the Board pursue such a strategy without further delay for two

reasons. First, it appears at the town would need to spend approximately \$50,000 per year just to keep the building open, presentable and available and would receive no benefit from such an expenditure. Any preventive maintenance would require additional funding. In addition, the condition of an empty building may deteriorate rapidly and is prone to undiscovered leaks, mechanical system failures and vandalism, resulting in a reduction in the market value of the property.

Finally, we recommend that the Board consider deeding the roughly 22 acre wetland parcel to the rear of the school to an open space protective organization such as the Granby Land Trust, the Nature Conservancy or the McLean Game Refuge.

We would suggest two possible redevelopment approaches:

**Sale As Is:** The intact building and land would be marketed as is. Any additions or modifications would be at the expense and option of the purchaser. This approach would involve ongoing operating expense to keep the building and grounds presentable during the marketing process and might take some time before a suitable buyer is found. Appendix A contains a list of representative similar sales in Connecticut. The town could “mothball” the building for a period of time in the hope of finding a buyer, thereby avoiding operating expenditure for keeping the building open.

**Clear Lot:** Alternatively the town could raze the building and market the site as an open lot. This option has the advantage of establishing a known cost to the town for keeping the building but would incur a one-time expense, which could be significant. However the resultant cleared parcel with access to town water, sewer and gas would likely be very attractive to a residential developer. We recognize that the Kearns property has significant sentimental value to the community but this option may be the most fiscally viable one.

### **RETAIN FOR TOWN/COMMUNITY USE**

We received expressions of interest for retaining the facility in its current configuration and making it available to non-profit community groups for no or a nominal charge. Appendix B contains a listing of potential groups and uses. While we did not make an exhaustive analysis, we estimate that the building would not be completely occupied by such groups. Some portion of the building could possibly be leased to an outside party both to achieve 100% utilization and as a source of revenue. There were also requests from a number of town departments to utilize parts of the building. Appendix C details the operating cost incurred by the Board of Education during the last year the building was used by them. The facility would require program and supervisory staffing in addition to the custodial coverage contained in the BOE numbers. Preventive maintenance must also be considered. Revenue from leasing and user fees might not be sufficient to cover these expenses and could impact the town budget. While retention for community use is clearly an attractive use of the building, we suspect that it would have significant cost implications for both operating and capital budgets. To be successful, this building use would likely require strong taxpayer support.

## **CONCLUSION**

Regardless of which option is selected, time is of the essence, as explained above, as delay would result in additional expense to the town. We are available to discuss our finding with the Board at our request.

The Committee wishes to thank Susan Christian for her work with the Committee, including scheduling, keeping minutes, and other assistance.

**SUMMARY OF SCHOOL SALES**

#	Location	Sale Date	Sale Price	Land Area (Acres)	Bldg Area (SF)	Sale Price/SF	Sale Price/Acre	Proposed Use	Comments
1	462 Ailing Street, Berlin	3/12/13	\$598,000	1.85	31,256	\$19.13	\$323,243	Church parking, parish green, prayer garden	Vacant for 25+ yrs in poor condition. Site had previous approvals for 31 units of senior housing but financing fell through and never happened. Seller proposed a 67-unit development with adjacent town-owned land but was denied by town.
2	291 Burlington Ave, Bristol	10/1/13	\$100,000	4.40	49,874	\$2.01	\$22,727	Elderly 1BR & 2BR apartments/day care center	Vacant since 2012. Approved for 35 market-rate apt. units on upper floors with day care center for 110 children on ground floor. Will preserve historic exterior and add new entrances and elevator. \$3.25 million granted by State Bond Commission to help Bristol Preschool Child Care relocate.
3	73 Rockwell Ave, Bloomfield	1/17/13	\$200,000	3.51	19,262	\$10.38	\$56,980	Day care center	Town closed building for safety reasons and evicted Bloomfield Early Learning, a long-time tenant. Buyer (Corp. for Independent Living-CIL) made repairs and entered into a 30-yr lease with learning center for \$4,000/mo NNN. CIL will convey property to learning center at end of lease.
4	29 Maple Street, Seymour	2/18/15	\$335,000	5.47	52,425	\$6.39	\$61,243	1BR & 2BR apartments	Vacant since 2012. Received zone change from R-18 to MF and approval for 42 market-rate apt. units. Buyer will invest at least \$3 million in property and will get partial tax abatement for 5 years. Town has right of first offer to purchase until 1/31/35.
5	61 Durant Terrace, Middletown	3/7/11	\$800,000	1.01	12,996	\$61.56	\$792,079	Senior center/municipal offices	Vacant since 2009.
6	95 Willowbrook Road, East Hartford	5/4/11	\$1,025,000	8.60	18,824	\$54.45	\$119,186	Magnet school Pre-K/Kindergarten	Buyer (Goodwin College) signed agreement with EH school board to lease existing early childhood center (Willowbrook) for \$1/yr. and operate for up to 10 yrs. Received approval 7/10/12 to build 33,832 SF magnet school on adj. site and rear land.
7	3 North Street, Bristol	11/16/15	\$109,500	3.40	47,878	\$2.29	\$32,206	Elderly studio apartments	Approved for 39 market-rate apts. and 39 parking spaces with 7-yr. Enterprise Zone tax abatement for all improvements. Building will have geothermal and solar energy technology.
8	122 Park Street, Bristol	11/16/15	\$109,500	3.80	63,436	\$1.73	\$28,816	Elderly studio apartments	Approved for 41 market-rate apts. and 41 parking spaces with 7-yr. Enterprise Zone tax abatement for all improvements. Part of building (including gym) will serve as multipurpose community use with remaining existing 38 parking spaces.
9	519, 545 & 549 Palisado Avenue, Windsor	3/19/10	\$1,350,000	14.69	62,746	\$21.52	\$91,899	Private school	Vacant nursing home. Buyer offers classes for K through 10 <sup>th</sup> grade.
	<b>Average</b>		<b>\$514,111</b>	<b>5.19</b>	<b>39,855</b>	<b>\$19.94</b>			
	<b>Median</b>		<b>\$335,000</b>	<b>3.80</b>	<b>47,878</b>	<b>\$10.38</b>			

TWN	ADDRESS	SLDATE	PRICE	ACRE	CONST	AGE	SQFT	S/SQFT	MEMO
ENFIELD	23 Church St	11/2/2016	\$90,000	0.11	FR	1916	1,371	\$66	Church
HARTFORD	236 Capen St	7/6/2011	\$130,000	0.18	BR	1922	1,456	\$89	Church
MANCHESTER	43 Spruce St	4/29/2013	\$290,000	0.15	FR	1893	2,530	\$115	Church
HARTFORD	681 Broad St	11/20/2012	\$130,000	0.08	FR	1900	2,704	\$48	Church
NEW BRITAIN	131 Monroe St	12/11/2013	\$195,000	0.45	BR	1957	3,311	\$59	old hall to use as church
BRISTOL	18 Academy St	7/27/2011	\$245,000	0.54	FR	1901	3,430	\$71	church
BLOOMFIELD	1601 Blue Hills Ave	8/31/2011	\$0	3.13	FR	1935	3,456	n/a	includes 1296 Sq ft fin bment
HARTFORD	1059 Albany Ave	6/5/2014	\$300,000	0.22	FR	1937	4,463	\$67	church
EAST HARTFORD	1535 & 1537 Forbes St	2/16/2011	\$855,000	7.02	BR	1977	4,475	\$191	Church + 1 family home 2912 Sq Ft
SOUTH WINDSOR	100 Long Hill Rd	3/27/2015	\$650,000	6.5	CBL	1984	4,600	\$141	Church
NEW BRITAIN	55 Chapman St	11/4/2013	\$390,000	0.56	BR	1967	4,650	\$84	church - Sq ft includes fin bment
NEWINGTON	800 N Mountain Rd	12/18/2015	\$302,500	0.94	BR	1972	4,910	\$62	convert hall to church
GLASTONBURY	330 Naubuc Ave	5/24/2013	\$550,000	1.26	FR	1988	6,059	\$91	vacant at time of sale - day care convert to church
EAST HARTFORD	1160-1180 Main St	5/12/2015	\$475,000	0.93	n/a	0	6,100	\$78	hall & Church
HARTFORD	110 Russ St	10/31/2011	\$279,000	0.14	BR	1900	6,228	\$45	Church - includes 3114 sq ft fin bment
HARTFORD	700 Blue Hills Ave	6/28/2011	\$0	0.39	CBL/BR	1957	6,456	n/a	Church
HARTFORD	700 Blue Hills Ave	6/2/2011	\$471,000	0.39	CBL/BR	1957	6,456	\$73	Church
WEST HARTFORD	389 Park Rd	8/31/2016	\$220,000	0.61	FR/CBL	1961	7,272	\$30	built as church
MANCHESTER	314 Woodbridge St	3/18/2013	\$650,000	1.3	STL	1995	7,747	\$84	church
HARTFORD	3280 Main St	8/17/2012	\$825,000	0.59	BR	1930	8,700	\$95	church
WINDSOR	100 Pigeon Hill Rd	12/23/2016	\$435,000	4.28	FR	1985	9,488	\$46	Church includes 4744 Sq Ft fin lower level
HARTFORD	929 & 981 Park St	6/9/2016	\$620,000	0.55	STC	1960	9,638	\$64	church
BLOOMFIELD	76 & 74B E Dudley Town	11/19/2015	\$425,000	10.06	FR	1957	10,154	\$42	convert to Church
EAST WINDSOR	329-333 & 341 Scantic Rd	6/21/2011	\$292,829	49.3	n/a	0	13,356	\$22	religious compound former military base
WINDSOR	691 Windsor Ave	5/27/2011	\$650,000	4.08	FR/BRV	1963	15,908	\$41	Church + 1 family home 2088 Sq Ft
BRISTOL	175 Summer St	1/19/2016	\$400,000	0.99	STN	1947	18,794	\$21	Church includes 4805 sq ft fin bment
EAST WINDSOR	53-59 Prospect Hill	12/7/2015	\$1,450,000	8.25	n/a	0	26,068	\$56	vacant several years convert to church
ENFIELD	1600 King St	3/22/2012	\$1,620,000	18.71	BR/STL	1977	26,980	\$60	convert to church after sale
ENFIELD	90 Alden Ave	10/6/2016	\$150,000	2.59	BR	1958	28,279	\$5	convert School to 20 Apartments
WEST HARTFORD	141 N Main St	10/30/2014	\$1,450,000	7.14	BR	0	34,467	42	n/a
	Average		\$484,678	4.38			9,650	\$67	
	Median		\$395,000	0.935			6,342	\$63	

TWN	TYPE	ADDRESS	SLDATE	PRICE	ACRE	CONST	AGE	SQFT	S/SQFT	ZONE	MEMO
ENFIELD	DC/OFC	Moody Rd	1/25/2017	\$600,000	0	STL	1990	8,697	\$69	I1	part of portfolio sale - 5 in Enfield
WINDSOR	DC/HLTH	1045 Day Hill Rd	8/5/2016	\$860,000	0	FR/BRV	1989	8,772	\$98	I	land purchased on seperate deed
FARMINGTON	DC/APT	1422 Farmington Ave	12/19/2014	\$375,000	0.42	FR	1969	3,063	\$122	R20	n/a
WEST HARTFORD	DC/OFC/SP	389 Park Rd	8/31/2016	\$220,000	0.61	FR/CBL	1961	7,272	\$30	R6	built as church
SOUTHINGTON	DC	1137 West St	6/16/2016	\$1,400,000	0.92	FR	2006	8,211	\$171	I1	n/a
ENFIELD	DC/OFC	1537 King St	2/7/2014	\$350,000	1.12	FR	1960	4,598	\$76	R44	includes 1329 Sq Ft fin bment
SOUTHINGTON	DC/OFC	1721 M & W Tpke	8/23/2016	\$547,000	1.15	FR	2000	4,560	\$120	B	n/a
GLASTONBURY	DC/SP	330 Naubuc Ave	5/24/2013	\$550,000	1.26	FR	1988	6,059	\$91	PT	vacant at time of sale - day care convert to church
SIMSBURY	DC	1 St Johns St	1/28/2016	\$4,465,000	1.75	FR	2007	18,560	\$241	R40	n/a
GLASTONBURY	DC/OFC	194 House St	7/3/2013	\$346,000	2.39	CBL	1968	3,784	\$91	PBD	day care
SOUTH WINDSOR	OFC/DC	60 & 68 Deming	4/5/2012	\$700,000	2.65	FR	1957	5,445	\$129	RC	+ 1 family home 1080 Sq Ft
			<b>Average</b>	<b>\$946,636</b>	<b>1.36</b>			<b>7,184</b>	<b>\$113</b>		
			<b>Median</b>	<b>\$550,000</b>	<b>1.15</b>			<b>6,059</b>	<b>\$98</b>		

**Community Use**

**Artist**

- Studios
- Classes
- Gallery

**Music**

- Studios

**GCTV**

- Storage
- Studio
- Office
- Control room

**Scouting groups**

**4-H**

**Rovers**

**Little League**

**Conference room space**

**Adult education**

**Granby Robotics Team**

- Storage space
- Playing field

**Town Use**

**Recreation**

- Daytime activities
- Basketball
- Gym space for younger kids
- Class

**Seniors**

- Durable medical closet
- Exercise classes
- Storage of exercise equipment

**Voters of Registrars**

- Voting

**Youth Services**

- Family counseling
- Afterschool youth services meetings
- Gym space
- Evening activities

**Granby Public Library**

- Annual book sale
- Book storage

**BOE**

- Storage & maybe outside use

**Town IT**

**Emergency Operations Center (EOC)**

**VNA Food Bank**

- Food storage
- Food Pick-up

**Senior Housing/Ass't Living**

**Adult Daycare**

**Rent building out for offices**

**Add'l space for community gardens**

**Town share/rent out**

## ***Kearns building estimated annual expense***

### **Operating Expense (2014 dollars)**

Electrical		31,309.00
Oil/Gas		10,409.00
Water/sewer		5,937.00
Telephone		3,700.00
Liability insurance		4,000.00
Fire alarm contract		1,510.00
Boiler contract		2,700.00
Custodial		45,800.00
Custodial supplies		7,920.00
Maintenance supplies		4,400.00
Annual plumbing/electrical repairs		2,500.00
Total annual operating cost		120,185.00

### Major Maintenance reserve

Square feet	40,000	
per square	\$0.50	
		20,000
		140,185.00

2% annual inflation	5607.4
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<b>total estimated annual cost</b>	<b>145,792.40</b>
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NOTE: Does not include parking lots and exterior maintenance