



## Clark-Haddad building will stay put in Sandwich

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SANDWICH — A proposal by the Sandwich Chamber of Commerce to move the Clark-Haddad building and turn it into a visitors center is history.

On Thursday, the selectmen voted 4-0, with Selectman James Pierce abstaining, to place a preservation restriction on the 1885 school building at 16 Dewey Ave. in the Jarvesville section of Sandwich, effectively killing the chamber's idea.

"Now we know the building won't be moved," Selectman Ralph Vitacco said.

But the building's future still remains unclear.

Thursday's vote came after the board consulted with the Sandwich Historic District Committee, an elected board set up by state law to preserve the area north of the Old King's Highway. In a unanimous vote Dec. 14, the committee found the former Sand Hill School is historically significant. Moving it would be a "detriment to the public interest" and the building "should remain in its historic location," committee Chairman William Collins wrote.

In abstaining, Pierce said he wasn't sure a preservation restriction would have any added effect, given the committee's previous vote.

Kate Bavelock, executive director of the chamber, said after the selectmen's vote that the chamber would move on with its second option, which is to construct a new building on land it leases from the town on Route 130, near the transfer station.

"It was a nice idea to have the Sand Hill School at the entryway to the town, but I also understand the need to preserve Jarvesville," Bavelock said.

Chamber officials estimated it would be \$150,000 cheaper to build a new structure.

The school was built to accommodate the children of workers in the Sandwich Glass Factory, located near the school, historical records show.

After the town stopped using it as a school, it became an American Legion post and was named after two men from Sandwich who died during World War I. The building was last used by the Sandwich school administration, but in 2007 the school committee decided to abandon the building and move the superintendent and other administrative staff into Sandwich High School.

Since then, the building has become a target of vandals, with several windows broken or boarded up. It's become a glorified storage shed for town government.

At Thursday's meeting, Town Manager George "Bud" Dunham reiterated that the town doesn't have the money to repair the building, estimated at \$500,000. The town could not "in good conscience" spend money on the Clark-Haddad building when other town buildings still used by employees are falling apart, he said.

The selectmen tried to get permission to sell the aging building in 2010, but voters at town meeting blocked it, saying the building should be preserved. Town leaders may seek permission to sell it again, and having a preservation restriction might sway voters, Selectman Linell Grundman said.

"It sends a message we want this façade to remain and it has great significance to our community," Grundman said.

In the meantime, Dunham said, he will seek an appraisal.

The selectmen haven't specified the historic preservation, except to say it's only on the outside of the building. The inside has been modified many times through the years to make offices.

Before the vote, Ellen Carlson, a member of the Sandwich Historical Commission, a town board independent of the district committee, said her board would seek public input at a yet-to-be scheduled meeting in March or April. The forum would include a building tour and would solicit ideas for possible uses. "It's not in terrible shape. It's not falling over," Carlson said. "We have some time to think about this."

Neighbors would like the eyesore fixed up. "I live in a historic home and I'm not in favor of ripping down things, but it's a disgrace with boarded-up windows and paint peeling off," Barbara Knight, a Dewey Avenue resident, said. "Sell it or something, but let's not let it just sit there."

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