

Kasson Alliance Email News, Vol. 3, No. 7, Kasson City Council Responds: 1918 Kasson School Reuse Study

Kasson Alliance for Restoration (KARE) Supporters,

Many of you have emailed or called KARE to ask about how the Kasson City Council responded to the Final Reuse Study Report for the historic 1918 Kasson School. In our last ENews letter we reported that the Reuse Study Team, led by John Lauber, was presenting the final report to the council on Wednesday October 28.

The council chambers were filled to capacity on the 28th as many citizens came out to hear the presentation and ask questions. John Lauber and team did an excellent job of presenting the study and answering a wide range for questions. The Honorable Mayor Tjosaas's October "Mayor's Memo" expressed support for the Reuse Study effort extending beyond the final report. That memo, which is included at the bottom of this E-Newsletter, was published in the Dodge County Independent Newspaper (and on the City's website). Following Mr. Lauber's presentation, the mayor addressed the citizen's in attendance and further expanded on his support for the pursuing the recommendations in the School's Reuse Study Report. The council members in general also expressed their support for the study and its recommendations. Their general feeling can be paraphrased as: "let's work together on this as a community and move forward in a collaborative manner". In formulating its recommendation for the historic school building, Mr. Lauber's Reuse Team assigned priorities to options that would:

- a. Keep the largest number of reuse options open.
- b. Reflect community values.
- c. Enable the community to achieve as many of its stated goals as possible.
- d. Fill unmet needs in the city that have been identified and supported by a large segment of the public.
- e. Be economically or socially viable. An economically viable project is defined as one that would generate sufficient revenue to be self-sustaining. A socially viable project is one that serves a generally acknowledged public need, and that citizens would be willing to subsidize through the tax structure.
- f. Appoint a Citizen Task Force to oversee a systematic planning effort** for rehabilitating the former Kasson Public School as a multi-use library/community center. Because the

school building and site are city-owned property, the task force should be comprised entirely of individuals residing and voting in the city of Kasson. The task force should have the authority to direct and draw upon the expertise of appropriate city staff and outside experts.

Overall, the Reuse Team recommended that the community of Kasson pursue the challenge of rehabilitating the 1918 Kasson Public School Building as a multi-use library/community center. The entire report is at <http://kassonschoolreuse.net/>.

In the Mayor’s memo below he discusses the need for the aforementioned **Citizen’s Task Force** to be set up to (he quotes the Reuse Team) “oversee a systematic planning effort”.

The Mayor agreed with the Reuse Team that the **Task Force** should be comprised entirely of individuals residing and voting in the city of Kasson. It was stated that the **Task Force** should be made up of individuals who have not previously served on committees directly involved in the Reuse Study planning to-date in order to bring a fresh perspective to the project. Other citizens and experts will assist the Task Force members as needed. A number of citizens approached the Mayor after the meeting to volunteer to serve on the **Task Force** with one citizen offering to assist with grant writing. The make-up of the **Task Force**, and how its members will be selected, will presumably be determined by the Mayor and Council in the near future.

The City of Kasson has five building on the National Register of Historic Places. The historic school joins the Eureka Hotel, the Kasson Municipal Building, the 1895 Limestone Water Tower and the Jacob Leuthold Jr. home on the list. The school was designed by architect Nels Jacobson Jr. of Owatonna, MN and it won praise for its design soon after it was completed. It remains a vital part of Kasson’s history and an important link to Main Street.

[The Reuse Study was funded in part by a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota.](#)

Thank you for your renewed support following the publication of the final Reuse Study Report. Our membership and support from citizens and the business community continues to grow.

OCTOBER 2009 KASSON MAYOR’S MEMO

As I’m writing this and it is raining – again, with a possible chance of snow – again, I start to wonder where our sunny fall like weather is and if it will eventually arrive or if we are going to skip right into winter. Hopefully the rain (and snow!) will stop soon so all of us can get dried out some and let our

farmer neighbors get their work done. Keep an eye out for those grain trucks, tractors and combines this fall and give them plenty of room as they move around.

In case you were not aware, Wednesday, October 28 the re-use study on the old elementary school will be formally presented to the sponsoring entities at 7 PM. We've already reviewed the "draft" report, made some comments on the content and information and will now be presented with the final report. As it has been reported, the re-use that has come to the forefront (or remained there you could say since 2006) is to utilize the building for a library, community center and city offices. The report will call for some additions to the structure to make the facility more useable. The full report will be available online for you to review as well (see www.kassonschoolreuse.net).

One of the key takeaways for me is the call from the re-use team that a **Citizen's Task Force** be set up to "oversee a systematic planning effort". Rough estimates for the rehabilitation of the school for these uses in 2010 would from \$5.5 million to \$6.9 million dollars. Suffice to say that is a lot of money for our community to absorb at one time. To me and my way of thinking, **we will need a Citizen's Task Force** to come together, to review, to plan, to discuss options and then to report back to the City Council with what the residents of Kasson will and/or will not support. It is safe to say, in my estimation, that our library desperately needs more space; however, we as a community need to make a decision not only on whether to rehabilitate the school but to also look at the long term impacts to our overall budget and to the library's budget individually by utilizing that existing facility. I like many others in our community and surrounding area, enjoy and appreciate our history and our historical places; still we need to make educated and fiscally sound decisions on how we could adequately and effectively maintain those places or how to move in another direction. **I look forward to having this Task Force actively interact with our community and provide the City Council feedback on how best to move forward.**

Lastly, on **Wednesday, November 4**, I will be at the Library for my next Mayor Meeting. However, this will not be a traditional Mayor Meeting – this meeting will also be an interactive Wii gaming night! So, come down at 7PM and try your hand at the Wii and take me on in a game of bowling (by the way – I'm not very good so your chances are high that you can beat the Mayor!). See you there on there on the 4th!

In your service,

Mayor Tim Tjosaas

mayor@cityofkasson.com

The Kasson Alliance for Restoration (KARE) is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization formed in January 2007. KARE's mission is to preserve historic buildings, structures and properties to serve as landmarks of Kasson's' heritage along with being a source of education in the importance of historic preservation. For more information Phone, 507-365-8324, or email KassonAlliance@Kmtel.com or visit

<http://www.kassonalliance.org>.

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Kasson Alliance for Restoration

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