

MILL VISIONING MEETING NOTES  
NOVEMBER 12, 2009  
19:00–21:50  
BEATY ROOM, THAMESFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

22 people in attendance plus 2 facilitators (Thor Dingman and Laura Dent)

Dave Whitney chaired the evening and opened with going around the table for introductions. Dave introduced the Mill Committee members in attendance and gave an update on the Committee's work to date, which has culminated in the visioning session this evening. Dave then introduced Thor Dingman.

Thor presented a slide show of photos of both inside and outside the Mill. There is a collapsed structure outside the mill building that was a vault. There is a shaft opening that was not planned for in the original construction and the brick was just knocked out and this needs to be repaired. Vegetation growth on the brickwork shows early stage erosion and some mortar erosion which needs attention. The structure is sound but at the "tipping" point. There are exterior cross braces which tie into the floor beams, making for a very strong structure. The windows need to be replaced and repointing needs to be done. The foundation is good in the low building. There are many artifacts in the buildings that could be used in displays. There are some areas of the mill that are not able to be adapted for re-use. They are industry specific uses. It does not seem that the "lean to" could be saved in an efficient manner and so would likely need to be removed. There are 3 (three) posts that seem to have settled, the bolsters are not tight all the way across. The utilitarian buildings will need to be taken down very carefully; there is no new use possible. The store structure has an exterior of architectural blocks and is not in good shape. But there is cherry flooring.

Dave introduced Laura Dent who did a short card exercise with the group.

Thor talked about the heritage component of the Mill and mentioned that Sarah Hill's dissertation is a great resource, as are the family of previous owners and operators of the Mill. Heritage is not just built heritage but also natural and environmental. The river is a powerful element and part of the local communities heritage and inheritance. There will be a significant cost to repair and maintain so there may be a benefit to having a use in mind.

The river is a natural green space and the dam and pond provide water and food for migratory water fowl and other species. Small pleasure craft use the water way and there is often people fishing. The building adjacent to the water way is a beautiful setting.

The elevators can come down but keep the main building.

The meeting broke into 3 groups to discuss 4 questions. See attached for reports.

Laura reported back on the word exercise and identified the Mill as: economic development, branding potential, and heritage value. (??–*paraphrasing may not be accurate*)

1. WHAT SHOULD A REVITALIZED MILL LOOK LIKE?

- ▶ Social components: Multi-purpose learning centre, e.g. tai chi, art classes  
Artists' cooperative/workshops (Artists of Oxford)  
Youth centre  
Performing arts centre—e.g. for amateur theatre group  
Day care—licenced  
Seniors' centre  
Museum—whole or in part, e.g. silos as museum  
Medical centre—hearing aid clinic
- ▶ Food related: Bakery-Butcher-Green Grocer—permanent/expanded farmers' market  
Restaurant  
Tea Room  
Micro brewery
- ▶ Green Building: Pumping system to hook up to sewers on other side of river  
Solar panels on roof  
Generator of hydro using water flow
- ▶ Physical: Restore brick to original colour (yellow)  
Remove elevators  
Keep long building but change roof lines  
Develop drive shed building  
Use Loading dock as an outdoor stage  
Keep silos and main building (silos could be aesthetic)
- ▶ Commercial: Retail—gift-art  
Offices  
Convention Centre  
Creative businesses, e.g. animators, video game developers, architects, designers
- ▶ Other: Residential component  
There needs to be some activity that would be a constant and would make people stop at the site and keep coming back to it.

## 2. WHAT SHOULD THE GROUNDS LOOK LIKE?

- ▶ Series of boardwalks along river by the Mill and north, with an educational component as well as recreational, e.g. Wye Marsh in Midland.
- ▶ Gardens and green space that features and protects heritage trees
- ▶ Preserve the dam and the pond
- ▶ Restore the mill race and turbine
- ▶ Park—with paths incorporating old mill works (industrial heritage) as an outdoor museum
- ▶ Build/preserve a safe place to fish
- ▶ Foot bridge (s) across the river to create a hiking trail that loops through Grace Patterson Park and the Lions River Park
- ▶ Outdoor skating rink

## 3. WHAT USE IS THE MILL PROPERTY BEST SUITED FOR?

- ▶ Mixed use: refer to Question 1 responses; there is currently a mixed zoning assigned to the site: industrial and development

## 4. HOW COULD THE MILL PROPERTY BEST SERVE THAMESFORD?

- ▶ Mixed use-multi-purpose: see Question 1 responses