



TOWN of WINDSOR

29 Union Street - Windsor, Vermont 05089

www.windsorvt.org

DATE: February 13, 2018

TO: House Corrections and Institutions Committee

RE: H.806

FROM: Selectboard, Town of Windsor

The Southeast State Correctional Facility consisting of agricultural structures, correctional facilities, office and manufacturing space set in an idyllic Vermont landscape is a unique property. The thoughtful repurposing of this 100 plus acres is important to the quality of life and the future of Windsor.

As such, the Windsor Selectboard supports H.806 with amendments. The creation of a committee that can give broad and thoughtful consideration to potential reuses will serve both the Town and the State well. To be effective however, the Selectboard believes that membership should consist of local, legislative and executive branch representatives. The Selectboard recommends that the committee consist of seven members consisting of the following:

- One member of the Windsor Selectboard, one resident of Windsor who shall be appointed by the Selectboard, the Windsor Town manager, one state representative and one member of the senate, and two members appointed by the governor.

The Selectboard believes that such a configuration will facilitate communication among Windsor, the legislative branch and the executive branch as potential uses are vetted.

The Windsor Selectboard believes that the charge of the committee should include the following:

- Develop a request for proposal designed to solicit plans from the public and private sector for facility purchase/transfer and repurposing.
 - Conduct a vetting process for proposals received
 - Submit recommendations based on the vetting process to the appropriate legislative committees.
- Develop recommendations for facility oversight and improvements to be funded in the current legislative session.
 - Assessment and removal of dangerous structures
 - Budget allocation for continued oversight and maintenance of viable structures through the eventual transition.
- In order to meet these objectives, the Selectboard recommends that the Chair call the first meeting of the Committee to occur on or before April 15th, 2018.
- The Selectboard agrees with all other aspects of the bill as drafted.

This process is not without precedent. When the Vermont State Penitentiary, also located in Windsor, was closed in the 1970's a similar process was used to determine the facilities future. Left with an outdated and apparently unredeemable structure the legislature budgeted \$150,000 for demolition. After soliciting bids however, a unique and unforeseen use was proposed. A Boston developer responded to

the solicitation for bids and successfully purchased the old penitentiary for \$27,050. The developer was able to secure financing to renovate the building into 60+ apartments for seniors. The building, which had been an albatross to both the State and Town was transformed into an asset that still serves the residents of Vermont well 40 years later. (See attached excerpt from "The Closing of Windsor Prison" by Charles T. Morrissey).

The residents of Windsor hold high expectations that through a collaborative effort between the state and the town the former Southeast State Correctional Facility will find a new purpose that serves their community and all Vermonters well for decades to come.

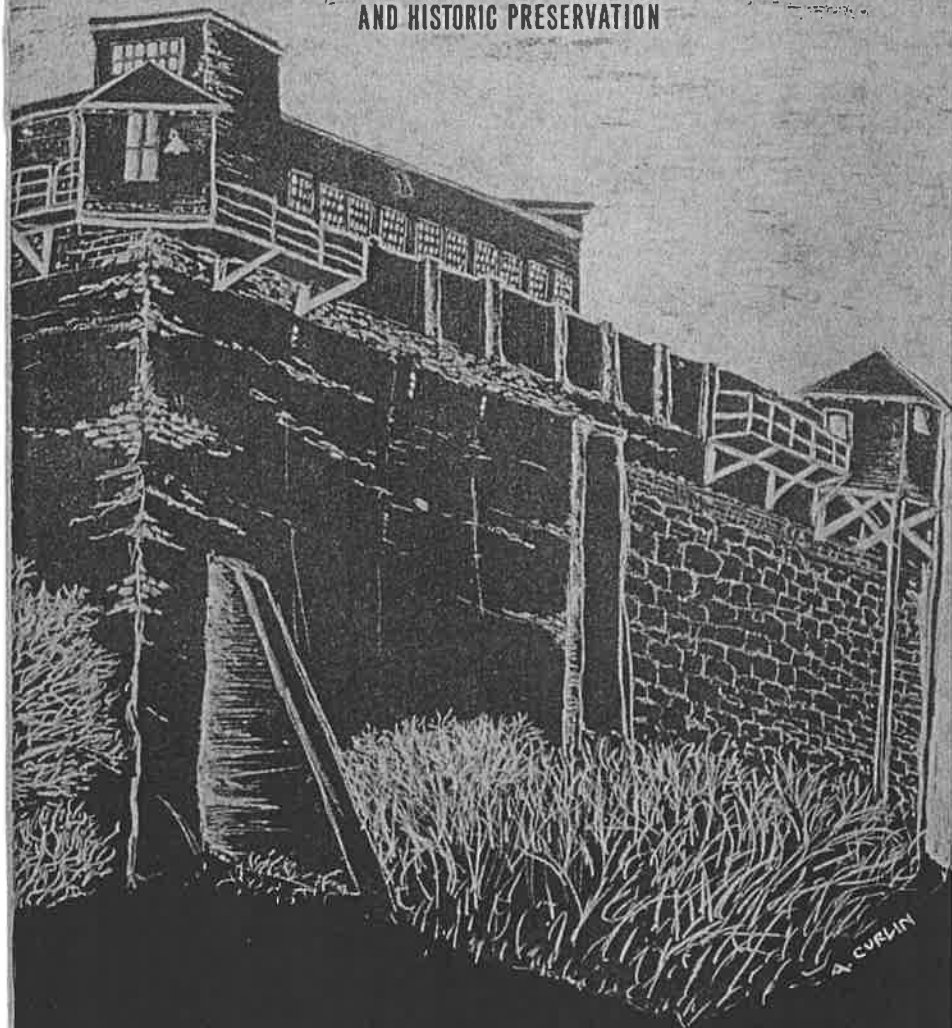
Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rich Thomas", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rich Thomas
Chair, Windsor Selectboard

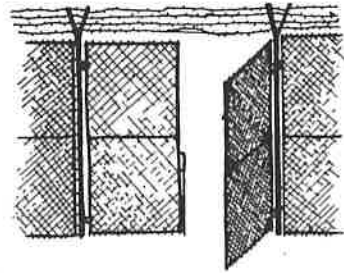
The Closing of Windsor Prison

VERMONT'S UNIQUE EXPERIENCE IN CORRECTIONAL CHANGE
AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION



BY Charles T. Morrissey

the programs of the regional correctional centers, and they are justifiably proud of the feat they achieved at Windsor. But time will tell if Vermont can continue to be the only state in the nation to close its maximum security facility and operate a correctional system without a state prison. Windsor Prison is closed, but not the story of its closing.



Happily, the story of its closing continues in a different respect, too—in the daily lives of the new inhabitants who choose to reside within the ancient walls. The Prison itself has been marvelously transformed by historic preservationists into a structure containing 75 attractive apartments designed primarily as living quarters for elderly men and women. Nobody anticipated when the Prison was closed that the site itself had a future as an apartment complex. The Legislature appropriated \$150,000 to demolish the vacant structure, and one of the few inquiries about its fate came from a movie studio, Columbia Pictures in Burbank, California, which was searching for a 19th century prison it could dynamite during an exciting escape scene in its film, Harry And Walter Go To New York.¹¹⁹ Other proposed uses seemed far-fetched: a New Jersey man, for example, suggested that Windsor be remodeled into a restaurant-discotheque called “The Cell Block,” where waiters would be garbed in the traditional prison uniforms of horizontal black and white stripes.¹²⁰ As excess property the state announced it would accept bids on Windsor Prison from anyone who wanted to buy it. “We expected none,” said Richard C. Raymond, Director of the Purchasing Division of the Agency of Administration. “Did you ever try to sell a house of 300 rooms with bars on the windows?” he asked.¹²¹

In Boston a youngster named Paul Della Ianaco, age 16, was thumbing through the July 9, 1975, issue of the New England Real Estate Journal when he noticed that bids were being accepted for Windsor Prison. Della Ianaco was working as a messenger boy and office aide for Gerald F. Doherty, a Beacon Hill lawyer who took special interest in projects involving the renovation of obsolete buildings. The youngster knew that Doherty had been involved with more than a dozen of these projects and he felt his boss might be interested in buying a prison. He reminded Doherty of what Doherty had once pointed out to him: every investment in renovation must contain at least three necessary elements--a structure which was solidly built, with outlets to a sewer system, and adequate land around the building. Windsor Prison had all three, Della Ianaco remarked, when he brought the bid notice to Doherty's attention.¹²²

Initially, Doherty was skeptical, but the longer he mulled about the problem of renovating an abandoned prison the more intrigued he felt about the prospect. He telephoned Edward A. Fish, president of the Peabody Construction Company in Braintree, Mass., with whom he had collaborated for several years on renovation projects totalling about \$400,000,000. "I'm doing something crazy," Doherty said to Fish, "but would you like to be my partner?" They agreed to bid on Windsor Prison, even though they didn't know what to do with it if their bid was accepted.

They didn't know how much to bid, either. They decided they shouldn't submit an offer under \$25,000 since some unknown competitor, acting on the hunch that only a single bid would be submitted, might offer less than that amount. But then they reasoned that an unknown competitor might also select the random figure of \$25,000, so they raised their bid to \$27,000. But an unknown bidder might follow the same hypothesis, so they raised their proposal to \$27,050.

Time was short: bids had to be filed in Montpelier by 2:00 p.m. on August 14, and Paul Della Ianaco was dispatched on the morning flight from Boston to Montpelier in order to file before the deadline and deposit a check for ten percent of the actual bid. Della Ianaco carried out his mission without a hitch; when he arrived back in Boston on a return flight he informed Doherty and

Fish that they were the new owners of Windsor Prison. Only five bids had been filed, and one was for a minus amount, submitted on the premise that the state, in effect, would pay a contractor to remove the prison from its concern. Two were slightly above zero. Doherty and Fish offered more than twice the amount submitted by their closest competitor. Della Ianaco, in the spirit of the occasion, picked up a Windsor Prison t-shirt while in Montpelier and wore it back to Boston.

For about eight years Doherty and Fish had worked with a team of young architects and preservation planners in the Boston firm of Anderson-Notter-Finegold, Inc., on several renovation projects involving schools, a convent, and especially one in North Peabody, Mass., which converted a tannery into an apartment complex of 284 units. They asked the Anderson-Notter-Finegold team if it wanted to work on the Windsor Prison project, and the architects expressed warm interest. But still the likelihood of transforming the prison into apartment was uncertain: to obtain clear title to the site required almost a year of legal research, and adherence to Vermont's Act 250, the heart of its strict environmental statutes, demanded careful attention.¹²³ Doherty was ready to abandon all plans for the site if Windsor residents were dubious of them. "If you don't want us here we'll go," he declared at a public meeting in Windsor in October. "We're not asking for a medal, but we like to rescue buildings, and we consider this our most provocative project."¹²⁴

Windsor residents were enthusiastic about plans to retain the prison walls but gut the interior and construct new apartments. "It's a godsend," said Richard Furman, chairman of the board of selectmen, when the architectural drawings were displayed in May, 1976.¹²⁵ The town was pleased that the apartments would not place a burden on its school system when the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington agreed to subsidize rents for low-income oldsters for as long as forty years.¹²⁶ Sewage disposal, it was estimated, would be only two-thirds of what the prison had emptied into the town system. The new heating plant in the complex was designed for a cleaner fuel than the crude oil burned in the prison's outmoded boiler which had for years emitted air pollutants into the neighborhood surrounding the prison.¹²⁷ Expressing his enthusiasm for the way the renovation was pro-

gressing Fish spoke warmly of receiving "tremendous cooperation from the entire town of Windsor, including its public officials. When we originally entered into the venture, we did not anticipate that the entire town could be so supportive of the project."¹²⁸ Fish continued his personal interest in the work at Windsor even though his firm made only a modest profit from it.¹²⁹

What to call the project? Windsor Prison became Olde Windsor Village. "That sounded trite but we liked it," Fish explained about the name.¹³⁰

Olde Windsor Village exists today as a modern community of elderly citizens who live comfortably and peacefully within the thick walls of the old prison. The walls have been sculpted to provide pleasant walkways and vistas of Mount Ascutney. Vermonters were proud of their prison on that festive day in 1809 when they followed a marching band from the quarries on Mount Ascutney to dedicate the new structure with cheers and thundering canon. They can be proud today of the transformation of this site as they contemplate its history while wandering freely among the remnants of the old prison. Vermont's unique experience in correctional change and historic preservation conveys the hopeful suggestion that humankind can recycle its social attitudes as well as remodel its old buildings.



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H.806

Introduced by Representatives Belaski of Windsor and Bartholomew of
Hartland

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Public institutions; corrections; correctional facilities; Southeast State
Correctional Facility

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create a
committee to study and make recommendations on the future use of the
Southeast State Correctional Facility.

An act relating to the Southeast State Correctional Facility Study
Committee

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. SOUTHEAST STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY; STUDY
COMMITTEE; REPORT

(a) Creation. There is created the Southeast State Correctional Facility
Study Committee to study and make recommendations on the future use of the
Southeast State Correctional Facility.

(b) Membership. The Committee shall be composed of the following five
members:

1 (1) the manager of the Town of Windsor;

2 (2) two members of the Town of Windsor Selectboard, who shall be
3 appointed by the Chair of the Selectboard; and

4 (3) two residents of the Town of Windsor, who shall be appointed by the
5 Chair of the Selectboard.

6 (c) Powers and duties. The Committee shall study the potential uses of
7 space at the Southeast State Correctional Facility.

8 (d) Report. On or before December 15, 2018, the Committee shall submit a
9 written report to the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the
10 Senate Committee on Institutions with its findings and any recommendations
11 for legislative action.

12 (e) Meetings.

13 (1) The Chair shall call the first meeting of the Committee to occur on or
14 before August 1, 2018.

15 (2) The Committee shall select a chair from among its members at the
16 first meeting.

17 (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

18 (4) The Committee shall cease to exist on July 1, 2019.

19 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

20 This act shall take effect on passage.