

Thorne Building Planning Committee Announced



By Rona Boyer

Mayor Rod Brown and a group of concerned local citizens announced the formation of a Thorne Building Planning Committee tasked with developing a proposal that would transfer the Thorne Memorial Building, a dominant architectural feature of the Village, to a new non-profit corporation for use as a community center.

The committee has been formed under the aegis of a new 501c3 non-profit organization, the Thorne Building Community Center, Inc., which grew out of a series of workshops held by Mayor Brown and which is funded by a \$100,000 grant from the Millbrook Tribute Garden.

The workshops were stimulated by concern among some residents about the cost to the Village of maintaining the three-story former school building (which is owned by the Village and was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1996), and a desire by others to see the building renovated and put to a good community use.

The committee will be tasked with developing a plan for a) the best uses of the building for the greater Millbrook community, b) the costs of renovation to meet those uses, and c) fundraising to support the renovation and operation of the facility.

The committee includes local arts groups, businesses, educators, senior citizens, clergy, philanthropic organizations, elected officials from the Village of Millbrook, and elected officials from the Town of Washington. It will be chaired by Charles E. Pierce Jr., formerly director of the Morgan Library and Museum, in New York City, and a long-time area resident.

It is anticipated that the effort will take approximately 6 months, at which time the committee will present its findings to the Millbrook Village Board of Trustees. At that time the board will consider whether to transfer the building to the new 501c3 for the purposes outlined in the plan or to pursue some other direction for the facility.

"Many people have good ideas about potential uses for the Thorne Building, and we are committed to conducting a very public process that will include open community meetings so that everyone's ideas can be heard," said Chairman Pierce.

"We also are committed to building an enduring community asset, so we will engage consultants to help us understand what the community's needs are going to be over the next several decades and then design our programs to satisfy those needs," he said.

Mayor Brown commended the effort, but made it clear that the Village will keep an open mind about the future use of the building.



"I applaud this effort because it would get the Thorne Building out of the Village cost structure and could create a valuable public good," said the Mayor. "However, at the Village we will need to keep an open mind about whatever other alternatives may present themselves and then weigh the costs and benefits of each alternative."

The Thorne Memorial Building is a three story, Beaux-Arts style, former school building that was built and donated to the Village of Millbrook by the Thorne family in 1895. It served as the Village's public high school until 1962, served various other community uses from 1962 until the mid-1990s, and has been used sporadically for special events since that time.

Besides Chair Pierce, the committee will consist of:

- Robert S. Audia, formerly President of Audia Motor Sales, Inc. and member of the Town of Washington Board,
- Rona Boyer, publisher and President of the Millbrook Business Association,
- The Reverend Dr. Matthew Calkins, Rector of Grace Church and member of the Board of Trustees of the Millbrook Library,
- Roderick W. Ciferri III, owner of R.W. Ciferri Inc., general contractor,
- The Reverend Thom Fiet, Pastor of Lyall Memorial Federated Church,
- Ann Gifford, Of Counsel to Teahan & Constantino and President of the Millbrook Arts Group,
- Robert Knapp, formerly Superintendent of the Millbrook Central School District,
- Patsy Pollack, senior merchandising executive in home furnishings industry, most recently with Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia,
- Joe Rochfort, Deputy Mayor of the Village of Millbrook,
- Grace Rosa, community advocate for the Thorne Building,
- Betsy Shequine, attorney, mediator and Town Justice, Town of Washington.
- Sarah Stack, former Chair Dutchess Day School Board and Chair of the Berkshire-Taconic Community Foundation, and
- George T. Whalen III, President of the Bank of Millbrook and member of the Board of Directors, Millbrook Tribute Garden ■