

# Observer News

## Our Town

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### Committee meets to decide Gura Building's fate

By **ROB GLIDDEN**  
STAFF WRITER

During the first meeting of the new Gura Building Use Committee, officials discussed the

possibility of demolishing the aging structure but ultimately expressed disapproval of the idea.

Town Councilor Dawn Miceli, who chairs the

committee, said the group's charge was to explore three different options for the building's fate – demolition, selling it to a private developer, or making a leasing arrangement with a non-profit group (the Southington Arts Center has asked to use the building for a potential arts center).

The potential demolition was the topic of the meeting, and Town Attorney Mark Sciota estimated the cost would be about \$210,000.

"That would include dealing with hazardous materials, demolition and removing it from the site," Sciota said. "It would not include anything like landscaping."

Two letters from residents in support of demolition were read into the record, but the officials on the committee favored a different outcome.

"I really don't see that as an option," said committee member Michael

“

This is possibly the most prominent intersection in town.

”

Michael Riccio,  
Committee Member

Riccio, a former town councilor. "This is possibly the most prominent intersection in Southington. I can't imagine staring at a parking lot on Main Street."

The deteriorating condition of the Gura Building was a frequently cited reason for the necessity of a new town hall that would better serve the departments currently working inside it (health, youth services and finance). The town hall renovation project pro-

posed in 2008 would have demolished the Gura Building but the plan lost the referendum vote that November.

This eventually led to the North Center School plan, which will provide another opportunity to move these departments.

Demolishing the building would have been unavoidable in order for Town Hall to expand, but this is not the case for the North Center plan.

Last year, the Southington Arts Council outlined their proposal to convert the building to an arts center and finance the necessary improve-

ments through private donations. The costs of remediation are expected to be extensive, but committee member Paul Chaplinksy said the building was "salvageable."

Several committee members said they felt a parking lot in the Gura Building's spot would be inappropriate and found the other two options more favorable.

"My first instinct is that it would be used as something vibrant for the community," Miceli said.

Comments? Email [rglidden@southingtonobserver.com](mailto:rglidden@southingtonobserver.com).



ED HARRIS

The Gura Building, above, has been a constant headache for town officials over the past few years. Now, a committee is looking into how best to proceed with the building.

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