

Statehouse Legislative Advisory Committee

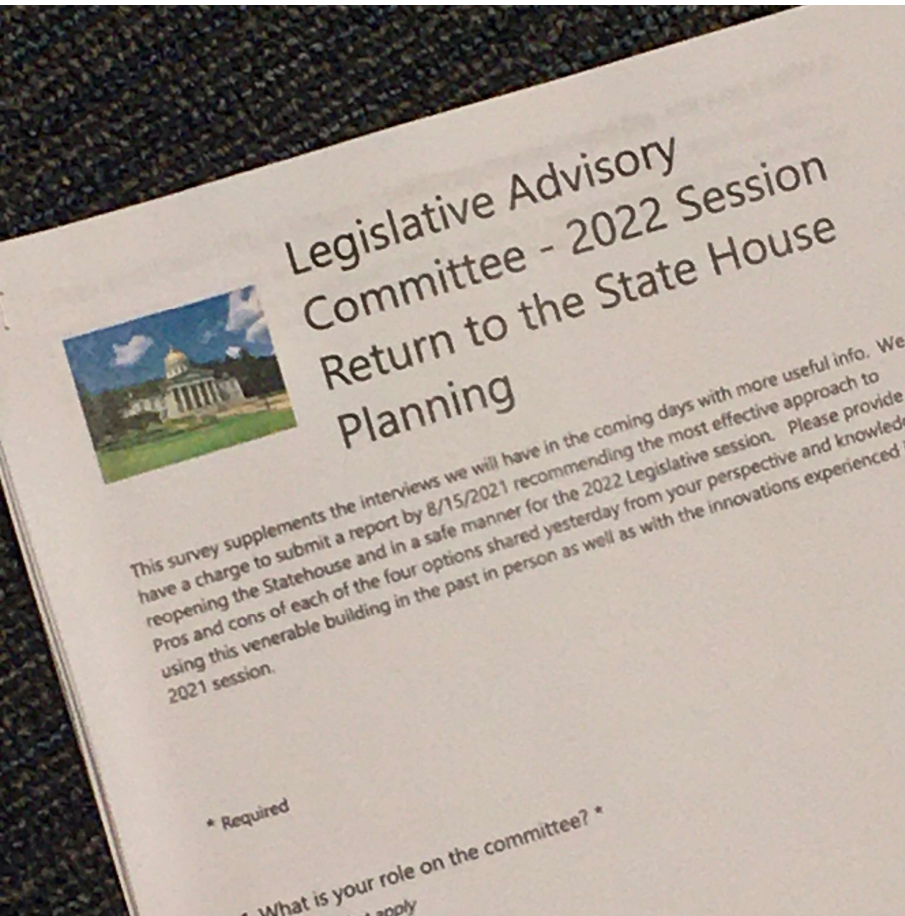
2022 SESSION SPACE USE OPTIONS

Initial survey findings

July 30, 2021

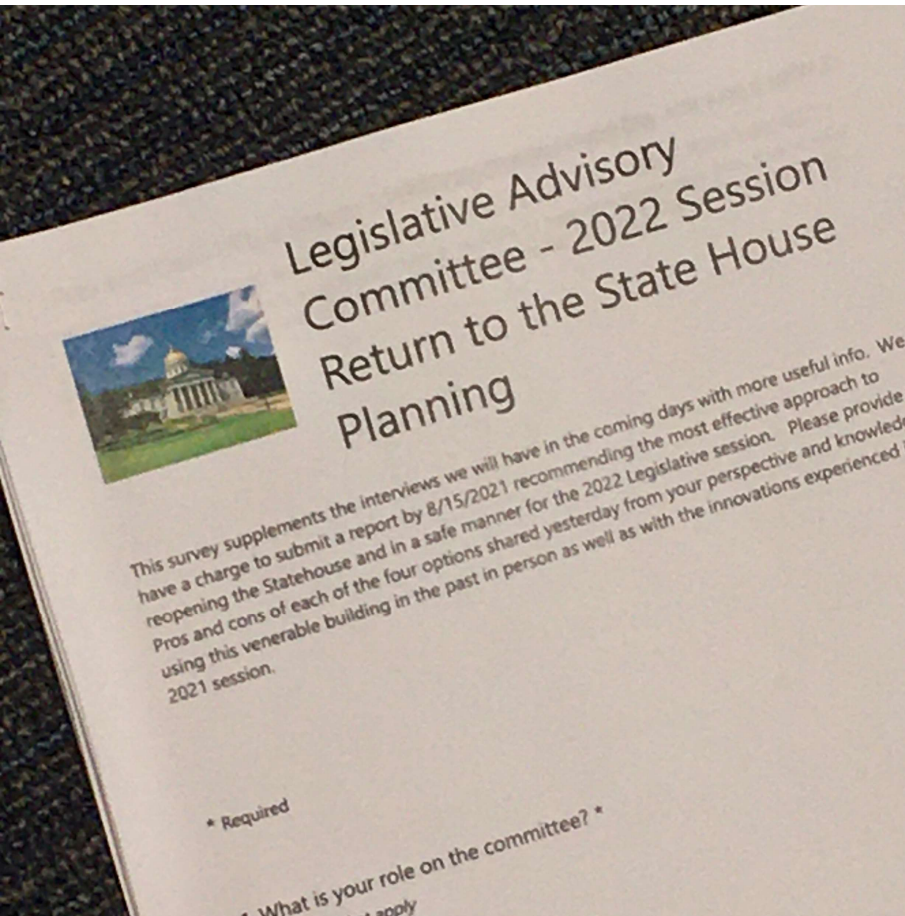


Survey Focus



- The committee asked BGS Planning to survey participants to inform group discussions, planning, and decision-making to help support developing a Legislative Report due 8/15/21.
- They asked us to get feedback from committee members and support staff on (4) four initial space use planning options shared by the Sargent at Arms to spark discussion to generate feedback useful to group.
- We did this survey along with 1 on 1 interviews from 6/23-6/24 with participants to collect additional background information.
- 15 participants responded, including Legislative committee members from the House and Senate, Legislative Operations, BGS, Friends of the Statehouse, Vermont Historical Society, and others.
- This information was collected before in-depth tours were taken by participants of the Statehouse, 133 State Street, 2 and 4 Aiken Avenue, and 109 State Street 2nd floor link.
- View the findings more of a straw poll reflecting what participants knew at the time it was taken. Additional information and impressions of the options and other ones since then.
- The Legislature commissioned an air-comfort/airflow analysis of existing committee rooms of the statehouse which recommended lower occupancy levels in these meeting spaces. This is what is referred to HVAC optimized committee rooms.

Survey Questions



- Option 1 - Use HVAC optimized statehouse committee or other rooms in person.
- Option 2 - Use HVAC optimized statehouse committee or other rooms in person along with meeting space available in 109 State Street Link.
- Option 3 – Use HVAC optimized statehouse committee or other rooms in person with meeting space available in 109 and 133 State Street.
- Option 4 – Go back to using the Statehouse like it was before the Pandemic.

Pros Option 1 - Use HVAC optimized statehouse committee or other rooms in person.

1. If doable this is a good option.
2. There are none.
3. This might give us a legal basis if there is a Covid breakout in the building and we are held liable.
4. Allows for better air flow and quality, and hopefully healthier rooms.
5. Accounts for illness that usually pervades the building. Provides some kind of return. Leaves granular details up to the person.
6. This seems like the better long-term solution to keeping the committees all in the State House where members can more easily interact.
7. Less disruptive.
8. Keeps all committees in the State House, easy for collaboration, easy for staff.
9. improved air quality for those present; ability to meet in-person;
10. Gets us back into the State House.
11. Sets clear safety standards for working together.
12. It should be easier to keep temperatures and CO2 under control.
13. This will provide improved levels of airflow in committee rooms at a reduced density.
14. Optimal for the primary work of the State House - legislative business. Much more effective for legislators and witnesses to be able to meet in person.
15. Gets us back into the Statehouse - but it will require some creative thinking and flexibility. And it will require extended empathy for each other's (House/Senate/Staff/Public/Lobbyists) challenges. Encourages us to focus on the long-term fix = the next renovation/expansion of the Statehouse.

Cons Option 1 - Use HVAC optimized statehouse committee or other rooms in person.

1. Time constraints for implementation.
2. Every Senate committee room either meets desired airflow now or can with a manual override. Depriving chairs and committee assistants of full time work space negatively impacts work product.
3. I don't believe we can even meet this standard, it's unrealistic. We won't be able to work within the State House.
4. Does not take the opportunity to obtain and use badly needed additional space. I love the State House, but it is too small for the work of legislators, staff, advocates, press, the public, etc. We need to take this opportunity to improve the State House space and adopt additional space for staff, legislators, and members of the public.
5. Does not address the overall situation.
6. The upgrades to the HVAC system will be complex and can't be completed in time for January's opening session.
7. Very Limited participation, limited rooms, committees sharing rooms will be difficult.
8. Not any spare rooms for committees to move to a bigger room if needed.
9. Reduced capacity of individual rooms and building; requires significant layout changes; requires significant fit up of TBD spaces; requires heavy use of videoconference and livestreaming tools for day to day operations.
10. If this option requires sharing of rooms, there may be some issues.
11. impossible to enforce or identify WHO enforces any room limitations.
12. They will be spread out in different rooms than they are used to, furniture and IT will have to be moved.
13. This option limits what rooms can be used by a reduced number of occupants, It will be difficult to manage and provide equitable access to Legislators, Staff, Media, and the Public. Who controls entry?
14. Potentially limits public participation and engagement. Zoom meetings have presented an opportunity to make the State House more truly accessible to all. There is an equity issue to consider - in-person meetings are less accessible to many seniors, people with disabilities, those with economic and/or transportation challenges.
15. Limits the number of Legislators able to meet in the Statehouse proper - and will have us using 109 and 133, spaces we only have for 1 year. So, in 2023 we'll have to come up with another interim fix as we await the completion of the HVAC work and/or the extension plans to materialize.

Pros

Option 2 | Use HVAC optimized statehouse committee rooms along with 109 State Street rooms.

1. This could be a temporary solution to improve creature comforts,safety and health.
2. I am looking only at 2c, as the other suggestions (2, 2a, & 2b) are impractical due to the negative impact on work product. Public meetings in 109 may require additional security, but this will not impact work product and availability of legislators in one space to meet with lobbyists, legislative council and the public.
3. More space for committees to work in.
4. Enables healthier airflow & more comfortable committee rooms. Takes advantage of additional space. The available space in 109 is beautiful and functional for our needs.
5. Provides more room (*Desperately needed).
6. This will work and will utilize existing under utilized areas that are near the State House.
7. Slightly more rooms/space, easier public participation.
8. May give extra rooms for public overflow.
9. improved air quality for those present; ability to meet in-person;
10. More space, safer.
11. increased options of meeting rooms.
12. Same as option 1.
13. 109 State Street provides needed temporary space relief, especially with the larger rooms and large open area outside those rooms.
14. Same as Option 1, with the added benefit of increased public access and larger meeting spaces. Existing StateHouse rooms are often overcrowded, and my understanding is that 109 State Street rooms are more spacious.
15. Nice well light spaces - a pleasure to work in - might give us ideas about what we want for the expansion. We'd get more exercise moving building to building...

Cons

Option 2 - Use HVAC optimized statehouse committee rooms along with 109 State Street rooms.

1. This could isolate members from each other and impede needed conversations. If a committee is located out of the building when the floor is in session it could be difficult to reach the chamber in time to vote.
2. Construction might have to be done during a legislative session. This will impact work product.
3. Would be hard to move members back and forth between 109 and the State House. Mobility issues with some of our members would create a real problem for them to access 109 and also getting back and forth to the State House. Also, it separates the legislative body too much as we get to know each other by passing folks in the hallways and common rooms in the state house, such as the coat room, Cedar Creek room, the cafeteria. These common space is where you see members that are not in your committee or circle of friends.
4. Short-term solution. Complexities of security and access to 109.
5. Challenges from an access perspective and moving people back and forth.
6. It will take time for committee members to get back to the when a vote is called.
7. Having to move building to building, security.
8. If committees are moved there, transportation and timing getting back to the State House. Extra Security and staff.
9. Reduced capacity of individual rooms and building; requires significant layout changes; requires significant fit up of TBD spaces; requires heavy use of videoconference and livestreaming tools for day-to-day operations.
10. Would require adjustment in meeting times, ability to access the floor quickly

continued

Cons

Option 2 - Use HVAC optimized statehouse committee rooms along with 109 State Street rooms.

11. Tracking who is where and what is happening where would be very difficult if not impossible.
12. Same as Option 1.
13. 109 State Street access has complicated security requirements with multiple state agencies, departments overseeing certain existing users. Adding Leg uses with its unique needs to the mix must be figured out to make this work.
14. Same as Option 1.
15. It is a lot of re-organizing for a 1-year fix. If it were a temporary solution which would last until either the HVAC system was fully fixed or until the expansion is complete - that would be more palatable. But to go to all that effort for one year seems wasteful.

Pros

Option 3 - Use HVAC optimized statehouse committee rooms along with 109 and 133 State Street rooms.

1. Again, providing larger committee rooms is good for the health of members. I would use this space for Joint Committee Meetings and swing space when individual committees need a temporary large room.
2. Senate committees will not have to share, Desirable airflow can be met for all.
3. Could be used for overflow space, but need to define what overflow means.
4. Allows for maximum space for use of everyone, which is necessary, healthy, and would improve the work atmosphere of the State House.
5. Provides even more room.
6. The space is available.
7. Most usable space?
8. Using all buildings would give extra space at the State House. for larger committee rooms when needed.
9. expanded opportunity for larger committee rooms; improved air quality for committee rooms; ability to meet in-person.
10. Same as Option 2.
11. Same as Option 2.
12. Same as Option 1.
13. Provides even more optional space for Leg to spread out. Large spaces will supply more choices.
14. If basement of 133 State Street has suitable airflow, this Option has the added benefit of increased public access, allowing space for a public viewing room and/or larger, less crowded meeting space.
15. More exercise moving building to building. Being in these less desirable locations would help us underscore need for expansion - helps sell the need.

Cons

Option 3 - Use HVAC optimized statehouse committee rooms along with 109 and 133 State Street rooms.

1. I would favor 109 State over this location for ease of access to the State House. Two remote locations could prove too big of a hurdle for security staff.
2. Security and transportation issues are problematic. Access by lobbyists and the public is problematic.
3. Again, it spreads out the legislative members that will negatively impact our work. And mobility accessibility is an issue.
4. Basement of 133 State St space is not ideal space, with little light & access, so could be of limited use for many purposes. Complexities of access & security. Short-term solution, not long term addition of space. Likely the most expensive option.
5. Spreads out operations.
6. A bit difficult to access.
7. Very Unattractive basement like rooms, moving building to building, air quality?
8. 133 space is not as pleasing as the State House and 109.
9. Far too spread out for support personnel; hard to navigate the legislative spaces for those unfamiliar; temporary move, rather than permanent.
10. Same as option 2 (and the space is much less appealing).
11. Same as option 2.
12. Same as option 1.
13. Basement level meeting rooms are less attractive than 109 Main Street and the Statehouse. There is also a relatively high degree of security for the Tax Department due to its threat level. Use 2/4 Aiken for Leg ops.
14. none, if basement of 133 State St has suitable airflow.
15. More fragmentation of the Legislature...time waste moving building to building...more health challenges as everyone would do it without coats, hats or boots. 133 basement rooms are lousy meeting spaces - no windows, oppressive to meet in.

Pros

Option 4 – Go back to the way it was at the Statehouse committee rooms before Covid-19.

1. The answer here is "This is the easy way out" but we need to find larger spaces for 5 House and 1 Senate committees. This is an area where we need to think outside the box.
2. Least impact on work product. Easy access to legislators by press, lobbyists and public.
3. We would all be together and do our work as we normally do.
4. Logistically easiest.
5. Easiest from institutional knowledge standpoint.
6. None.
7. Easy, less disruptive.
8. Less logistics to work through.
9. This is a poorly worded question. "just go back to the way we did it before" will never be an option. However, some version of this could be an option. Air standards have no legal bearing on the State House.
10. Not a reasonable alternative.
11. The ONLY way to effectively return to the State House.
12. They will be back to where they are used to being.
13. It would allow the Statehouse to return to semi-normal operations and be the simplest to operationally carry out.
14. The legislature is used to operating in person, and a great deal is lost without face-to-face contact and informal hallway conversations. There is also enormous value to opening the building to the public and school groups, and allowing them to experience the State House art, architecture, and history as well as to interact with legislators in person. These benefits must be balanced, however, with the equally enormous negative consequences of ignoring public health data.
15. Such close quarters would encourage/require everyone to be vaccinated. Accommodating needs (House/Senate/Staff/Public/Lobbyists) would require us to think creatively (sharing Committee rooms etc) and be flexible. Legislature could function well/productively. Might discourage us from moving forward with expansion.

Cons

Option 4 – Go back to the way it was at the Statehouse committee rooms before Covid-19.

1. Health and safety of members and staff until we reach 100% vaccination.
2. Airflow remains problematic for House rooms especially (Senate can reach acceptable airflow with manual override). But this can be mitigated to some extent by authorizing committee chairs to limit room capacity and by instructing all committees to vacate rooms on regular breaks.
3. Members may feel really uncomfortable in such close environment with Covid present.
4. Least healthy option. Does not acknowledge that even prior to COVID, the State House was too small to do the work of everyone involved. On many days, the # of the people in the building and in many rooms was not comfortable, healthy, or safe. We must take advantage of this opportunity to make the State House a better place to work, visit, and participate in democracy.
5. Looses momentum. Building was not in a good place health wise even pre-pandemic.
6. This isn't a healthy solution and is just putting off the need for larger committee rooms.
7. Assumes Covid under control, Need to confirm vaccinations of those entering statehouse, etc fear of Covid surge.
8. ASHRAE standards are known but we aren't following, is that the right thing to do? In normal sessions usually flu runs through the State House, now people will be worrying more. Staff consideration as a workplace, not just the public building.
9. Continued temporary acceptance of known poor air quality. Potential for staff exodus. Potential for operational issues as individual comfort levels vary quite dramatically.

continued

Cons

Option 4 – Go back to the way it was at the Statehouse committee rooms before Covid-19.

10. I don't see this as an option anytime soon.

11. safety and public viewpoint of the reduction to safety.

12. Temperature and CO2 control is compromised.

13. This does not seem a prudent option from an airflow perspective. Perhaps other experts can weigh in on this option. With this, what are the necessary short-term accommodations for non-vaccinated and or immunocompromised individuals that must be made both in policy and space use, or other controls.

14. There are two chief cons from my perspective:

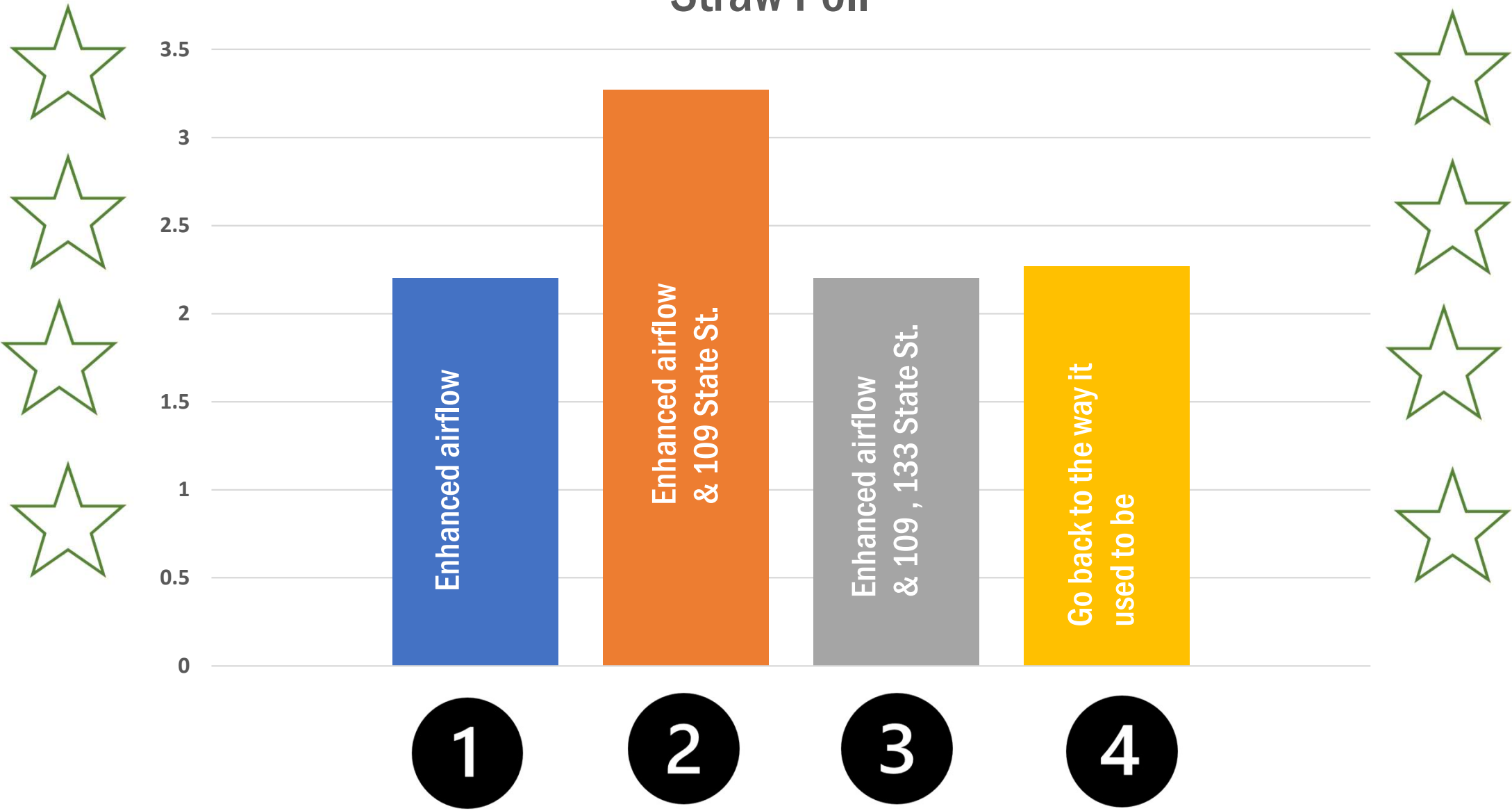
1) **Public health concerns.** As long as public health risks from COVID continue, our decision should be grounded in solid public health metrics. I would like to see a plan for re-opening the building that includes the possibility of phased openings and closings and/or capacity limits that are driven by evidence. ...This option also ignores the needs of Vermonters who are more vulnerable to COVID for a variety of reasons (*immunosuppression due to medication or cancer treatments; living with a family member who is immunosuppressed; etc*).

2) **Accessibility and equity issues.** Zoom has opened up the workings of the legislature to a much wider public, including people in our state's legislative process who face obstacles to participating in person (transportation challenges, health issues, disabilities, etc.) We have an opportunity to make the State House more genuinely accessible to all. "Going back to the way we did it before" does not accomplish this.

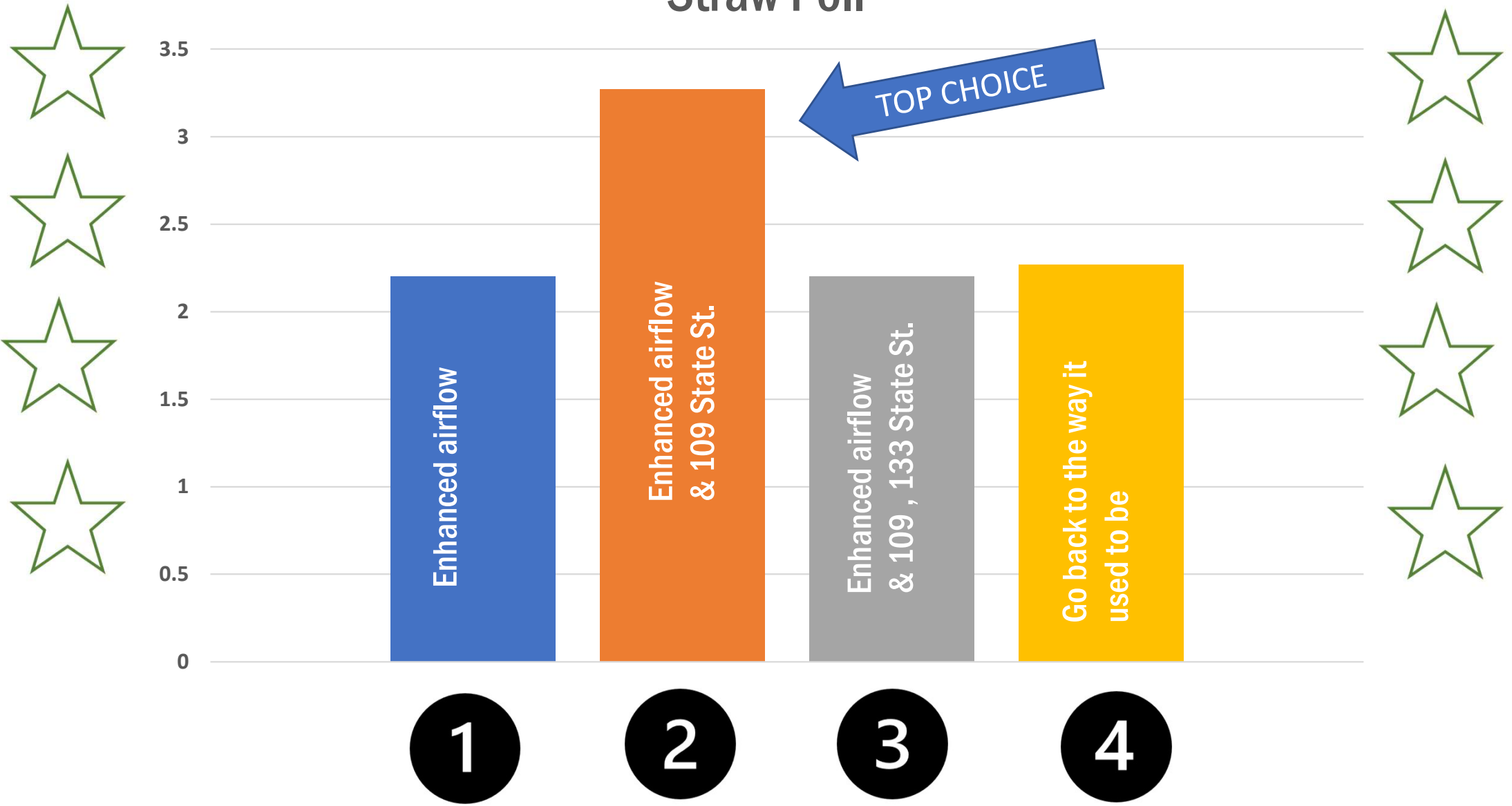
15. Everyone one would fall back into old patterns - would encourage complacency about expansion.

Health concerns - might mean more Legislators participate remotely.

Return to the Statehouse Planning Options Straw Poll



Return to the Statehouse Planning Options – Straw Poll





Enhanced Airflow

"One option that hasn't been considered is to do this one but use 2 and 4 Aiken too. Then this would be my five star."

"We are out of time for any renovations of any kind."

"We need to shift expectations for this session only and place some limitations on how we use the building in committee rooms and elsewhere."



Enhanced Airflow w/ 109 State

"A hybrid model seems to be the best answer right now."

"We need more space to make the State House more accessible, comfortable, and safer for democracy. What about using 2/4 Aiken to add more choices, other options?"

"....provides the most flexibility of the temporary changes, along with 2 and 4 Aiken usage."

"Ignoring the continuing public health risks of COVID-19 is not a realistic option. This offers more choices to us."



Enhanced Airflow w/ 109 & 133 State

"A hybrid model seems to be the best answer right now. Gives us more space for this Session."

"We need more space to make the State House more accessible, comfortable, and safer for democracy. What about using 2/4 Aiken to add more choices, other options to the mix?"

"133 State is not a good option due to its basement location and busy street crossing, separation from Statehouse."

"The more spread out we are the more disconnected we are."



Go back to way it was before

"Work product and access to legislators by staff, lobbyists, and public is paramount. It will also speed up willingness to do HVAC and other later planned projects."

"This one because it is the only feasible way to open up if the public are allowed in."

"Do as little as possible with a return to normal in the Statehouse with caveats to do any necessary public health accommodations."

Other comments

"Hi, very difficult to decide. The cons seem to outweigh the pros in every case." "None of the above are my favorite choice." "I do not have a favorite choice yet."

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