

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

TOWN HALL RENOVATIONS PROJECT BUILDING COMMITTEE

February 17, 2015

Town Hall – Main Level, Helen Nelson Conference Room

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

I. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairperson Whit Przech at 6:00 PM.

II. Roll Call – Members present: Whit Przech, Vice Chairperson; Jim Marocchini, Dave Nagel; and Rodney Mortensen. Others present: Members of the public; Chuck Boos, Kaestle Boos Associates; William Collins, PhD, Superintendent of Schools; Dave Langdon, Director of Facilities Management; and Jeff Baron, Director of Administrative Services.

III. Public Participation – Roy Zartarian, 25 Stuart Street. He expressed his appreciation for the posting of the materials from the last meeting on the Town’s website. He reminded the Committee that the gym is used for more than just athletic activities and encouraged them to keep elections in mind.

IV. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – Mr. Mortensen made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 3, 2015 meeting as presented. A second to the motion was made by Mr. Nagel. The motion passed unanimously.

V. a. Updates on previously discussed items - Hazardous Materials Survey. Mr. Langdon stated that EnviroMed’s inspection was 75% complete. The outstanding items are on the upper level and outside. In response to questions from the Committee, he anticipates he will have results by the end of March, the material received will be given to the architect, and the Committee should anticipate some surprises.

V. b. Updates on previously discussed items – Structural Issues. No further testing or masonry work can be done until the weather warms up.

V. c. Updates on previously discussed items – Space Needs Analysis. Mr. Baron reported that meetings had been held with all of the Main Level Town Hall departments and the results provided to the architect. The Committee is meeting this evening with the Board of Education. The Central Connecticut Health District needs to verify their space needs request with their Board later this week. A meeting still needs to be held with the Registrar of Voters for the Democratic Party.

VI. Discussion with the Board of Education – the Board of Education had been invited to the meeting. Superintendent of Schools William Collins, PhD, made a presentation to the Committee and answered questions. He had completed the space needs analysis questionnaire some time ago. The Transition Academy has opened since that time. The Board's priority is in the schools, not in their office space. He is identifying four things that are problematic. These are the Board's needs, what they feel they have to have. Any other items are things that would be nice to have. The majority of the Board's business takes place in the schools.

He presented a three page handout, which included pictures of recent significant water damage. These show the first of his four needs, the need for a safe environment for Board of Education employees. There are also air conditioning and climate control issues. The second need is for adequate storage space. His office receives Freedom of Information requests that they must comply with, including one recently for information from 30 years ago. One has to crawl over steam pipes in order to get certain information. The Board is not allowed to enter into any lease that extends beyond the end of the fiscal year, by Town Charter. Records are currently stored above the gym. Third, parking issues need to be resolved. Parking is inadequate and a travesty. The fourth need is in regards to conference room space. If the Nelson Room is modified or converted into office space, the Board needs another room to replace it. It would need to be duplicated somewhere, preferably within the Town Hall. They shared the Nelson Room in the evenings with the Town Council for years. The problem occurs during the day. The Board needs a room they can count on for training and meetings. It is all one building, they all do work for the same entity, they get that, but they do need a meeting room of their own. They have survived with people off site. It is not the best, but they can do it. They have renovations at Paterson and Reynolds that are needed that they have delayed requesting in order to help the Committee as they attempt to get funding for the Town Hall.

Mr. Mortensen felt that the requests were not unreasonable. Does the Board use any offsite storage? Dr. Collins replied that there are trailers behind Newington High School. Personnel records must be kept under lock and key and in the Town Hall. They are currently not being stored properly. He cannot enter into a multi-year lease. Mr. Nagel asked how much space was needed to store documents. Dr. Collins replied that the previous design originally had their document storage in the loft area over Human Services. There was no connection from the upper level Board of Education offices, and no elevator access to this space. They have tried to digitize as much as they can. Mr. Nagel asked about parking as it relates to the Transition Academy. Dr. Collins responded that drivers must activate their flashing lights when loading or unloading students. As a number of students have physical accessibility issues, this can take a while. The Transition Academy must be at an off school site. The Board looked at the Lower Level of Town Hall (the old police department) initially. They just renovated the Transition Academy. It doesn't have to be in that location but, again, the Board can't lease if the Academy has to move. Mr. Nagel asked if there was any specific requirements for the Nelson Room. Dr. Collins said that the location did not make any difference. Having a kitchenette for hot water has proven to be handy. Mr. Mortensen noted that the Town Hall renovation affected many groups. Their charge is to renovate the Town Hall. There

is a need to look out far into the future. The Town Council and the Board of Education also need to think about a more comprehensive plan for long term needs. The Parks and Recreation Department renovation needs will require more sharing. It will be a nightmare while work is being done. There will be an even greater need for cooperation and sharing. Dr. Collins agreed that a campus that will connect all tenants needs long term planning. The Board is flexible. They work well with the general government. They will provide cooperation and space. On the office configuration of the upper level, the Board will make do. They currently have Custodial and Maintenance Supervision and Special Education sharing an office. You don't see that anywhere else. Only the four things that were mentioned earlier are what the Board is looking for. Mr. Przech asked about staff that should be moved to the Central Office from the schools. Dr. Collins replied that eight were in the plan originally, as was moving the bus garage. Mr. Nagel asked about the sizes of individual offices. Dr. Collins replied that he had no idea where the numbers came from. The Board doesn't have that now. Offices are for meeting with parents, expulsion hearings, etc. If the conference room next to his office is in use and he has more than four people, he has to find another room. The Chief Finance and Operations Officer could use a space to meet with contractors.

VII. Any Other Business Pertinent to the Committee – Mr. Nagel had been at a previous meeting with the Fire Marshal, and they were speaking about the auditorium and what was needed. Mr. Nagel requested that the Committee ask for a list of things that need to be done to the auditorium to make it a safe environment as it is and if the Committee were to convert it. Mr. Boos noted that the fire code improvements had to be done no matter what. Americans with Disabilities Act modifications are also cost considerations. If the space were to stay as a theater there would be acoustic considerations as well as lighting. That would be a different cost model than leveling the floor. Mr. Baron was directed to ask Fire Marshal Schroeder to provide the information requested above in written form.

Mr. Langdon told the Committee that the gym roof could not be coated now due to weather conditions. There are a couple of other options he is looking into. Mr. Marocchini requested that the Committee invite Economic Development Director Andy Brecher to the next meeting. Mr. Baron was directed to do so. Mr. Brecher's comments should be limited to the impact of the community center. Mr. Marocchini had also spoken with State Senator Paul Doyle, who is on an energy committee at the capitol. Green energy initiatives are also a possibility. Mr. Langdon noted that the Committee has to consider the payback. It is best if you fund the project yourself, as the Town is doing. There are some grants but there is not much available at the present. There are a lot of options. He is not in favor of geothermal. Mr. Boos stated that geothermal could work as the building is air conditioned during the summer; geothermal achieves greater savings when it runs air conditioning in the summer. He would like geothermal on the list of possibilities. Mr. Langdon replied that it requires high maintenance and that the boilers are not that old. A different type of boilers would be needed if geothermal were installed. The Town has already started the conversion to a hot water heating system on the lower level of Town Hall.

Mr. Przech asked if Mr. Boos had been thinking about any new schemes or designs. Mr. Boos said that he had been working on conceptual designs and a fresh vision. He offered to make a presentation at the next meeting, which the Committee accepted. Any design will have to meet code. Mr. Mortensen felt that the Committee needs to start focusing on the design of the building. Mr. Boos cautioned that this will be one concept plan focused on showing the building and community center in a location, but with no departments listed anywhere. That will come later, if the Committee accepts Kaestle Boos Associates' ideas. Mr. Mortensen also stated that people need to understand that this is a conceptual idea of where you might start. Mr. Boos felt this concept would be bold, would work for the future, and would remove areas that are liabilities. He asked the Building Committee to be open minded. Mr. Marocchini and Mr. Nagel will mention this conceptual workshop at the next Town Council meeting in order to raise public consciousness.

VIII. Public Participation – Maureen Klett, 104 Harold Drive. She questioned the benefit of inviting the Economic Development Director to appear before the Committee, as Parks and Recreation expertise was provided by Mr. Till and code expertise by Mr. Boos. She encouraged those around the table to use the microphones, both for the benefit to the public in the audience and also to those who may choose to listen to the tape of the meeting.

Sharon Braverman, 39 Churchill Way. She noted that the Committee could ask Sophie Pachocki in the Superintendent of Schools office for a list of PTA people if it wants to get the word out about the conceptual workshop. Both the ladies room and the handicapped ramp in the Mortensen Community Center have accessibility issues. Those could be addressed now, rather than waiting for the referendum.

Anna Eddy, 41 Churchill Way. She thanked the Committee members that attended last month's walk through at the library. She was present to ask if there were any follow up questions. The Committee combined this agenda item with item IX, Response to Public Participation, in order to engage in a dialogue with this speaker. Mr. Mortensen felt that the library and other groups should know that the Committee is starting to look at concepts. Mr. Przech asked about parking. Ms. Eddy responded that the Transition Academy buses are a big issue. The Board of Education offices are in the Town Hall, they have meetings, and sometimes the parking lot is filled before the library opens. The library staff parks in the Garfield Street lot or in the Town Hall lower lot. They ask that the Transition Academy staff park in those locations as well. There have been a number of complaints from patrons on parking. These complaints have increased since the Transition Academy has been there. The library has lost patrons because they haven't found it convenient to park. The library is open to discussion. Their plans have a designated area for space for parking that won't impinge on the expansion. The plans call for the main entrance to change and for parking in what will become the front of the building. Mr. Mortensen asked about any talks with the Town about using library owned land for parking. Ms. Eddy replied that they were not at that point in the conversation. The library has designs that were drawn up several years ago. There is an open Community Room in the proposed design. The library's events are well attended. The

library is open until 9:00 PM weeknights except Fridays. Mr. Mortensen asked about shared parking. Ms. Eddy responded that she would see a benefit to brainstorming. There is a cost factor involved in converting space to parking. She would want the best utilization of the space for everybody.

IX. Response to Public Participation– Some Committee comments and questions are included in item VIII, Public Participation. Mr. Nagel responded to Ms. Braverman’s comments on code compliance, stating that the Committee will keep a close watch to maintain adherence to present standards.

X. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 7:18 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Jeff Baron*

Jeff Baron  
Director of Administrative Services