

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

TOWN HALL RENOVATIONS PROJECT BUILDING COMMITTEE

February 3, 2015

Town Hall – Main Level, Helen Nelson Conference Room

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

I. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Alan Bongiovanni at 6:03 PM.

II. Roll Call – Members present: Alan Bongiovanni, Chairperson; Jim Marocchini, Dave Nagel; Sarah Jorgensen-Bucchi; Rodney Mortensen; and Whit Przech. Others present: Members of the public; Chuck Boos, Kaestle Boos Associates; Dave Langdon, Director of Facilities Management; and Jeff Baron, Director of Administrative Services.

III. Public Participation – None. Mr. Bongiovanni asked for a moment of silence in honor of Town Councilor Myra Cohen, who passed away earlier in the day.

IV. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – Mr. Mortensen made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 20, 2015 meeting as presented. A second to the motion was made by Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Marocchini made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 6, 2015 meeting as presented. A second to the motion was made by Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi. The motion passed unanimously.

V. a. Updates on previously discussed items - Hazardous Materials Survey. Mr. Baron stated that a purchase order had been issued to EnviroMed for \$29,993. Mr. Langdon stated that their work would cover the entire building, that they were scheduled to start the following morning, and that their work would probably be completed by March 2nd.

V. b. Updates on previously discussed items – Structural Issues. Mr. Boos reported that the masonry work had been completed and that the report would be forthcoming in a couple of weeks.

V. c. Updates on previously discussed items – Space Needs Analysis. Mr. Baron reported that meetings had been held with six of the Town Hall departments. Three other meetings remain, in addition to the Committee’s discussions with Parks and Recreation and the Board of Education.

VI. Discussion with the Board of Parks and Recreation – the Board of Parks and Recreation had been invited to the meeting. Superintendent of Parks and Recreation Bruce Till and Board member Eileen Francolino were present. Board Chairperson Don

Woods participated via speakerphone. Mr. Till presented a handout, consisting of the Space Needs Analysis questionnaire completed by the department in 2013, the Mortensen Community Center usage, usage of Newington schools by Parks and Recreation programs, and the square footage for a new Community Center that was in the previous referendum request. On the handout showing the use of the public schools, Mr. Till noted that the department had used the schools extensively over the years, that the department was using all the school facilities, and that they had an excellent relationship with the Board of Education. He stated that the square footage needs had not changed since the prior Building Committee's recommendation. 16,000 square feet are used at the current time in Town Hall. The current gym is roughly 7,000 square feet with the remaining space being used for meeting rooms, offices, the Teen Center, arts and crafts, and locker rooms. Directors from other Towns that have built new facilities but have only had one gym have told Mr. Till that it has been a mistake for them not to have two gym spaces. The space is not just used for basketball. The department needs the flexibility and space for activities to meet the needs of this community.

Mr. Mortensen noted that there is no longer a plan for a separate building. The department is spread out over a lot of buildings. How detrimental would it be if the second gym was not connected to the first gym? Mr. Till replied that the two gyms should be connected. It would not be as bad of a problem if they were not. Mr. Till would prefer to have Parks and Recreation control the gym and have primary use. Mr. Mortensen noted that there may not be space in this building. Mr. Till informed the Committee that Parks and Recreation reimburses the Board of Education for custodial overtime for weekend use at the schools. He also observed that the Parks and School concept was an old one. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi felt that this site was limiting potential growth for the future. Should the location be some place where the department could grow out? Mr. Till responded that the previous Building Committee had looked at numerous Town-owned sites. Mr. Przech asked if programs interacted with the existing park. Mr. Till said that yes, they did, but that he was not present to try and sell the previous concept. Mr. Bongiovanni asked if 33,000 square feet would address the department's needs. Mr. Till said they would. The department can compromise. Gyms are their first priority. The department is not looking to compete with the private sector. Mr. Bongiovanni asked if there was a fitness center now. Mr. Till stated that the department used the Senior and Disabled Center's fitness space, and were looking to expand on that. The square footage for "support facilities including circulation" was not Parks and Recreation's figure. Mr. Bongiovanni noted that the Town Council will determine if there is money. The Committee needs to determine if the space needs will fit on this site. The Committee will endeavor to accommodate the programs Parks and Recreation has.

Ms. Jorgensen Bucchi noted that the pools tie in with the fitness program. Regarding the pre-school program, an effort is being made to expand the pre-school program in the public schools. The Board of Education has been talking about that and these are restricted budget times. Mr. Nagel confirmed that the fitness center would be on the Town hall site, that the average size for a gym was around 7,000 square feet, depending on the amount of bleacher space, and that the proposed square footage page was in order by priority, with the fitness center being the lowest priority.

Mr. Woods stated that the space needs usage and the demand for the community center is real. The Board has made adjustments to meet the overall needs. They want the best possible facility the Town can get. It will be used to its maximum. He hopes the Committee can give it a hard look and build a realistic facility for the Town. Mr. Boos informed the Committee that support facilities consisted of space for walls, corridors, stairs, custodial and toilet facilities. It is normally at least 15% of any building. Lobbies also have their own code issues.

Mr. Mortensen noted that there was a huge amount of usage. People believe that Town facilities belong to the entire Town and not a particular department. The Committee will need huge cooperation to make the project work. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi noted that Parks and Recreation programs are in all buildings, not just the Town Hall. Mr. Nagel stated that the figures shown reflected the number of visits, not the number of individuals. Mr. Till responded by encouraging the Committee to check out the Mortensen Community Center to see the level of activity. The department is looking out for what it believes is best for the community and submitting a proposal to meet the needs of the community.

Ms. Francolino encouraged the Committee to invest in infrastructure and to invest with an opportunity for expansion. Government has changed, technology needs to be addressed. She asked the Committee to consider the impact of the renovation on the Parks and Recreation Department, in terms of outsourcing programs during renovations. Parks and Recreation has been a cornerstone of the community. Mr. Bongiovanni responded that phasing will need to be worked out. The Town has a lot of resources and will need to use them. There will be inconvenience for all involved. Mr. Woods stated that the 43,561 was the number for the Community Center alone, not other locations. Mr. Marocchini stated that he was concerned about the future, the need to plan 30-40 years ahead. Mr. Bongiovanni felt the Committee needs to digest and understand the materials presented, to see if the Committee can make it all fit. The Committee is relying on departments to tell it what they need.

VII. Any Other Business Pertinent to the Committee – Mr. Marocchini felt that the biggest area of space is the auditorium and what will happen with that. Mr. Boos stated that he had also been thinking about the auditorium and how it will be used. It has assets and liabilities. The floor could be levelled and result in perhaps 5,000 square feet of multipurpose area. The balcony area overlooking the auditorium is not a good investment. The entrance is well within the setback line from the road. There will never be an entrance on Cedar Street. It makes a lot of sense to convert the auditorium. Mr. Bongiovanni felt that the entrance should remain unless there is a compelling reason to remove part of the building. Otherwise, it is very expensive. Mr. Boos felt that the facility should look like a building that will be around for fifty years and should conform to zoning requirements.

Mr. Bongiovanni noted that when the Committee met with the Library Board and the Town Council that a multi-purpose room was being proposed by the Library Board. The Town will be looking to share these resources. There is an auditorium in Newington High School and in other schools. It might be a wise move not to spend resources on this. Ms.

Jorgensen-Bucchi noted that the library proposal was not set in stone. Mr. Mortensen observed that significant use of the auditorium had been limited for some time. Those who need it should be able to use school resources.

Mr. Boos stated that parking is a key driving point. His goal will be to maximize parking. This is a very important component. Mr. Bongiovanni stated that there is no agreement to use library land for parking. Everyone recognizes that we are all part of the same town and both the library and Town Hall will need parking. He had requested a layout for the site of their proposed expansion so the Committee can master plan the campus site for parking.

Each Committee member was asked if they were in favor of keeping the Town Hall auditorium. Mr. Mortensen said he was not. Mr. Przech felt the space could be better used as a gym or multi-purpose space. Mr. Nagel felt it could not be used as theatrical space because the problems that exist would require huge amounts of money to resolve. The acoustics are poor and the space doesn't function well. He agrees it should go. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi said she was conscientious of other things that are and are not going to happen. She recognizes that is a possibility. Mr. Marocchini would like to re-utilize the space. He felt it was not good even for the rare need for overflow space during Town Council meetings. He asked if it was high enough for a mezzanine. Mr. Boos said that no, seismic needs preclude building anything on top of something else. The floor would be concrete and would make a marvelous multi-purpose space. The structure is there, the Committee should use it. It also presents an opportunity to create an appropriate façade along Cedar Street by taking out the loft area.

Regarding the roof over the gym that was discussed at the last meeting, Mr. Boos distributed the roofing report that was given to the earlier Committee in 2008. Concerning the leakage, it is a gypsum roof with little holding capacity for nails. Nails become loose in heavy weather. It can't be repaired. There is a sprayed on compound that could be used as a temporary fix. It has a five year life span and would cost \$26,000 to apply. Any decision on using such an application would be Mr. Langdon's responsibility rather than the Committee's.

Mr. Mortensen asked about the timeframe for a referendum in November. Mr. Baron replied that the Committee would need to present a recommendation to the Town Council for their consideration by July. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi felt the Committee needed to know what the library is planning. Mr. Bongiovanni agreed that the Committee needed to keep its eye on the bigger picture.

Mr. Przech made a motion that the Committee agreed not to realign Garfield Street and that it will not touch the park. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi made a second to the motion. Mr. Bongiovanni suggested an amendment to the motion that the Committee not consider working within the park proper for expansion of this building or relocation of Garfield Street. Mr. Przech agreed to amend his motion to include this. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi agreed to second the amended motion. Discussion: Mr. Przech felt this would allay any fears from the previous meeting that might be in anyone's mind. Mr. Nagel felt it would

eliminate concerns and misconceptions that are out there. Mr. Bongiovanni stated that if a drainage line has to cross the park, the Committee is not proposing to remove parkland for development purposes other than utilities, necessary things. He felt Garfield Street may be relocated within its own right of way. The Committee may also infringe on the park property because that is where the water flows, downhill, and there may be some ancillary work that has to happen. The amended motion passed by a vote of 5 YES (Marocchini, Nagel, Jorgensen-Bucchi, Mortensen and Przech) to 1 NO (Bongiovanni).

For the March meetings, the Town Council budget work sessions will be held the same evenings and will start at 7:00 PM. The Committee meetings will need to start earlier, probably at 5:00 PM. The next meeting will be on February 17th at 6:00 PM. Mr. Boos was directed to present questions that arise between meetings either to the Chairperson or to e-mail the Committee as a whole.

VIII. Public Participation – Mady Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive. She was responding to what had happened that evening. She had a question on the square footage in the Parks and Recreation handout. Also, the highest usage was for rentals; who is renting? If the plan is going to the Town Council in July, will there be a draft of what the building will look like? On the free items stated by the architect, is there a breakdown of what those items will be?

Maureen Klett, 104 Harold Drive. She was speaking as a resident, not as a Town Councilor. On the motion to not straighten Garfield Street, was the Committee opposed to straightening for motor vehicle travel or just park use? Most people would oppose straightening for motor vehicle use. Cost was also a factor in the opposition to the referendum proposal. The library, Parks and Recreation, and the Board of Education are all vying for major improvements. Parks and Recreation considerations should include moving the bus garage. This would open space for parking. If parking is at a premium, consider off-site parking for employees at Constitution Square. That would free up needed parking spots. It would be foolish if we don't look to improve Mill Pond Park. We should make the pool accessible to the elderly. The Town doesn't need two pools, potentially. Perhaps that space can be used in Mill Pond Park. The police department may have outgrown their space. The Town can do without the auditorium. Users haven't done the best job of coordinating with the Board of Education for the use of their auditorium. It is important to the townspeople and employees to make improvements. The Committee owes it to all to move forward.

Roy Zartarian, 25 Stuart Street. He asked that the Parks and Recreation handouts be placed on the Town's website.

Steve Silvia, 45 Basswood Street. He found the conversation encouraging. The Committee can work within the constraints of Garfield Street. He has looked at the campus and its layout. The budget will be a challenge but the campus can handle everything presented thus far.

IX. Response to Public Participation– Mr. Bongiovanni, on Mortensen Community Center rentals: that includes travel basketball and other programs. He encouraged Ms. Kenny to check with Parks and Recreation for further details. On July and completion of plans, can the Building Committee be ready by then? There are certain requirements the Committee must meet. It needs a preliminary budget. It will develop the best program it can. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi asked for a copy of the architect’s contract revisions. Mr. Boos stated that his firm said it would provide its pre-referendum services at no additional charge; these are not freebies. Mr. Bongiovanni stated that the motion was not to move Garfield Street into the park. The bus garage is not part of the Committee’s charge. On off-site parking, if Mr. Silvia’s analysis shows that there is enough space, hopefully the Committee can accommodate parking needs on the campus site. The pool is not part of the Committee’s charge. Neither is the police department. Mr. Baron was directed to provide the Parks and Recreation documents on the Town’s website.

X. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 7:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Baron

Jeff Baron
Director of Administrative Services