

TOWN OF NEWINGTON
TOWN HALL RENOVATIONS PROJECT BUILDING COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

August 3, 2016

Town Hall Lower Level, Conference Room L101

- I. Call to Order – Mr. Miner called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM.
- II. Roll Call – Members present: Chris Miner, Chairperson; Dave Nagel; Jim Marocchini; Joe Harpie, and Whit Przech. Others present: Members of the public; Tanya Lane, Town Manager; Dave Langdon, Director of Facilities Management; Bill DeMaio, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation; Karen Futoma, Director of Human Services; Carol LaBrecque, Human Services Coordinator; and Jeff Baron, Director of Administrative Services.
- III. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes - Mr. Harpie made a motion that the minutes of the July 20, 2016 meeting be approved as presented. A second to the motion was made by Mr. Marocchini. The motion passed by a vote of 5 YES to 0 NO.
- IV. Discussion Concerning Department Revisions to Space Needs – Mr. Baron stated that written updates to departmental space needs that he had received had been distributed to the Committee in advance of the meeting. These were from the Superintendent of Schools, Town Planner, Director of Finance, and the Town Manager’s Office. Two other departments are discussing this topic with the Committee this evening. Departments that did not have an opportunity to respond prior to the meeting have been given a response deadline of August 10th. There were no questions or comments from Committee members on the updates received.
- V. Discussion with Superintendent of Parks and Recreation Regarding Space Needs and Project Scope – Mr. DeMaio spoke with the Committee and provided a submittal. He came to provide factual information and common sense. He wants to be a resource for the Committee. He has visited many other community centers in order to know what works and what doesn’t work. The Parks and Recreation administration did not have any input into some of the earlier analysis, which was inaccurate in a number of ways. In effect, his department started over. They measured their section of the building. Many (eleven storage areas and four other areas) current areas used by the department were not accounted for in the earlier space needs analysis. Size calculations were incorrect also. The earlier analysis showed 14,000 square feet, which the design team cut by 3,675 square feet. The actual amount currently in use is 18,000 square feet. If this is reduced it will impact programs.

The drawing in the submittal shows the current Parks and Recreation request. It includes a double gym with roll-out bleachers. He would not recommend an elevated walking track because of the issues an elevated track would create for climate control and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance. The department recommends putting it around the floor of the double gym instead. The gym would have an accordion-style divider. The Teen Center proposed earlier was designed for 13 kids. That would not be acceptable. Office and lobby space is under-served. The department gets long lines of people for program registration, sign up for picnic spaces, etc. Parks and Recreation uses the hallways for registrations, gym mat storage, and other storage. A storage offset would be needed if the hallway size were to shrink. The department has a need for more workstation space. It recently installed new computer software and the office is now paperless. Each person in the office needs space for a computer. The storage space request is increased by 1,000 square feet. Mr. DeMaio also asked the Committee to consider including 2,000 square feet of space for the pre-school program. The program is state certified, and is required to have a minimum of 35 square feet per child. This program is currently operated 5 days a week year round. The department uses space at the First Church of Christ Congregational in the center of town. The department could also use this space for training.

In the earlier discussions about a second gym it was stated that the department can use the schools. They can use the schools, but only when the schools themselves aren't using their gyms. The Parks and Recreation Department is using every bit of space at the schools that is available. After speaking with the Chief Financial and Operations Officer, it would not be easy to build a second gym onto a school. Such a project would not qualify for reimbursement from the State. A hoist system for storage of equipment in the gym would be recommended that is similar to the one used at the High School. Newington High School teams use the Mortensen Community Center extensively also. A multipurpose room is critical. The department is requesting an expanded multipurpose room, along with a kitchen. There would be three sections to the multipurpose room space. Recreation Division programs use between two and four rooms at a time of the Senior and Disabled Center quite a bit, also. The total departmental request is 33,066 square feet. The department tried to think about things that made sense. The software that the department now has can be used to schedule rooms.

Mr. DeMaio provided responses to a number of questions asked by Committee members. Mr. Harpie asked about the number of staff members. There are 14 now. Mr. Harpie asked if the layout was similar to the structure proposed for construction at Mill Pond Park. No, it is not. Mr. Harpie asked if the department was looking for a re-design of the Teen Center. Mr. DeMaio would keep the rectangular shape but would relocate the bathrooms. Mr. Harpie asked about the locker rooms. They are not

ADA compliant, the partitions are too low, current codes would require more urinals and toilets, and gang showers would be replaced by individual showers. Mr. Harpie asked about the equipment needed. There is no fitness center requested. That would not be a high priority. Mr. DeMaio is currently applying for outdoor exercise equipment. Mr. Harpie asked about use of the Teen Center. Dances draw good numbers. They are very popular. Mr. Przech asked about the preschool program. There are 30 children enrolled. Mr. Przech asked about the amount of space that was leased from the church for this program. Mr. DeMaio agreed to research the specific number but felt it was about 2,000 square feet. The requirement is at least 35 square feet per person. Mr. Miner asked what the capacity of the Mortensen Community Center was. This summer, on occasion, there have been 150 1st and 2nd graders and 150 3rd and 4th graders that have been separated but using the Center at the same time. Mr. Miner asked if the department used all available space in the Mortensen Community Center. The department rents out the Community Center at the times when it is not in use. The fee is \$60. Mr. Miner asked if the department maxed out all the school gym times that were available to it. It does, and the needs of the travel basketball program, especially, keep on growing. Mr. Miner felt this gave the Committee a better picture of the Parks and Recreation needs.

- VI. Discussion with Director of Human Services Regarding Space Needs – Ms. Futoma and Ms. LaBrecque spoke with the Committee and provided a submittal. The drawing sheet in the submittal is an earlier layout that their department felt was the most efficient. It shows the department expanding into the current Town Clerk's Office area. Being at the end of the building has advantages. The layout presented would meet confidentiality and privacy needs, is closest to the Senior and Disabled Center, and would be on one floor for deliveries. The drawing presented would be the department's visual of the ideal. Currently, food storage is inefficient. The program has grown and the needs have grown. The department is hoping for an outside loading dock for donors to drop items off more easily. The current arrangement is wearing on staff and is not efficient. The refrigerator and the freezer are in the vestibule of the ladies room. The clothing closet is in the loft upstairs. It should be next to the food pantry. There never seems to be enough storage. Storage should be consolidated and made accessible. The department uses the conference room constantly, often for temporary storage. The receptionists are across the hall from staff. The layout presented would locate them with the other department staff with a window to the reception waiting room. The current size of the offices works for the department members. The department should be all on one level. The drawing presented would add a program room where the front lobby is now, and would place the conference room in that vicinity also. The amount of storage that is in the drawing would work for the department. The department does not have a lot of outside options. It cannot use the classrooms in the schools. It did construct a one room yurt at the Challenge Course, but that is of limited use. The department also uses the Teen Center, auditorium and gymnasium at various times of the year.

Ms. Futoma and Ms. LaBrecque provided responses to a number of questions asked by Committee members. Mr. Harpie asked if programs were for Newington residents only. They are. He asked how Newington compared to other towns. It would be all over the map. The department receives lots of support. It can do better. Confidentiality improvements are needed. Mr. Harpie asked if the department had tried to limit donations of food to certain days only. The department tries to accommodate donors and doesn't want to turn donations away. It would be helpful to come through one area. The ramp outside the front entrance is too steep. The department needs to become more efficient and sensitive to those who use the department's resources. Mr. Marocchini felt there was sensitivity with the need for privacy and ADA requirements. The loading dock and so forth is tricky. A portion of the space is a grocery store. The Committee needs to accommodate that. The site is a challenge at best. Ms. Futoma responded that she would not recommend moving off site. The current location has the Police Department next door and other departments that they work with. Mr. Nagel asked if the department preferred to be all on one level. It does. Mr. Nagel asked if they would no longer need the stage area. They just got the area recently, and would still need this area unless comparable space was provided elsewhere. Even then, they might still need it for occasional circumstances. Mr. Nagel asked Mr. Langdon if the entrance from Cedar Street would be blocked off entirely. Yes, it could not continue to be used. Mr. Nagel asked if the loft would be used for storage. It would not be used for services without an elevator. It is not ADA compliant. If the clothes storage area was brought downstairs the department wouldn't need it. Ms. Futoma noted that the drawing shows a door in the hallway near the auditorium. This would add security and privacy. The department would also like to convert the lavatory in the Town Clerk's Office to a utility sink for the food closet. It was noted that the "renovate as is" concept would not add space for Human Services. These changes would not be part of the scope of what the Committee is looking at. The layout requested would require a total re-design. Ms. LaBrecque stated that the current space is not compatible with the department's needs. Ground level access would be preferable. Mr. Langdon stated that the current ramp by the front entrance would go away under the renovation concept being considered. Mr. Przech asked about the previous building plan. The department was not happy with the department's layout in the last Committee's new building plan.

- VII. Any Other Business Pertinent to the Committee – In response to earlier requests for information, Mr. Baron distributed a memo from the Chief Finance and Operations Officer for the Board of Education. It included the cost of the Transition Academy Renovation (\$695,000) and School Construction Grant considerations. Mr. Baron also identified the amounts spent on the 2009 renovation and hazardous materials abatement (\$1,380,904) and the 2011 Lower Level renovation (\$519,145). That total renovation cost was \$2,595,049. Mr. Marocchini distributed the draft of a document entitled Top Ten Design Principles. These are ten points put forward by Mr.

Marocchini to serve as topics for discussion to move the Committee towards a Request for Proposals (RFP) for an Architect. They include his vision of what the project should include. Each of the ten items was read by Mr. Marocchini and Mr. Baron was asked to post the document on the Town's website. Regarding this document, Mr. Nagel observed that interaction was needed with other organizations, such as the Library and the Board of Education, who may not be in agreement with certain aspects. This has to be a collaborative effort. The Committee needs to look at realities. The Chair stated that conversations need to continue to occur. Mr. Marocchini replied that he feels the Committee needs to move forward. He realizes that it needs to be done collegially. If, for instance, you believe in a 30,000 square foot Community Center, then you are not renovating. Mr. Miner observed that lending prospects are as good as they will get. Construction in Connecticut is quiet and the Town can expect to get good prices from hungry contractors. Mr. Marocchini noted that material costs continue to rise. Mr. Harpie stated that he appreciates Mr. Marocchini's effort. There have to be certain capital improvements made to this building. These are long overdue. The Town can only defer them for so long. The Committee needs to move diligently and frugally to develop the scope of the project. There are huge issues that have to be resolved. Mr. Miner stated that previous upgrades to the building had been made in a piecemeal fashion. Now the Committee has to make the most cost conscious decisions. He asked if the Committee could issue an RFP or if it had to go back to the Town Council first. Mr. Marocchini felt the Committee could go out for an architect. Mr. Baron stated that the Committee could issue an RFP for an architect. If it was anticipating a project in excess of \$25,000,000 it would need an estimate of what it was recommending. An architect could help with that estimate. Once the Committee had an estimate for an anticipated project cost, if that were in excess of \$25,000,000 then it would need to go back to the Town Council. Mr. Marocchini noted that the scope could need to be different. Mr. Miner stated that he sees the overall scope as four pieces of a building. The Town could gain benefits from better space usage. The cost of operation could be greatly reduced. Mr. Harpie stated the need for the Committee to agree on the scope of work before going out to RFP for an architect. The Committee agreed to hold its next meeting on the first Wednesday in September at 5:00 PM, and to try holding future meetings that are on the third Wednesday of the month at 7:00 PM.

- VIII. Public Participation – Bill DeMaio, 22 Burdon Lane, on consideration of a taller building with a smaller footprint. Steven Silvia, 45 Basswood Street, on knowing what the Committee, the community and the Town Council wants. Rod Mortensen, 53 Meadow View Court, on difficulties encountered by the previous building committee and wasted money. Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive, on history of the project and communication.
- IX. Response to Public Participation – Mr. Miner stated that the Committee was in this situation through no choice of its own. Its charge was to renovate the building. It

needs public participation. Tonight four people spoke on a \$25 million or greater project. The Committee would like to know what the public wants it to do, either through a public information meeting or meetings at a different time. He invites anyone who wishes to speak to let the Committee know what they want it to do. The Committee chose a time and location that was consistent so there wouldn't be any confusion. The Committee wants the public to participate. The Town of Newington's facebook page is now up. The Committee will try to get information out there.

X. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Baron

Jeff Baron
Director of Administrative Services