

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

TOWN HALL RENOVATIONS PROJECT BUILDING COMMITTEE

March 9, 2015

Senior and Disabled Center Cafeteria

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

I. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Alan Bongiovanni at 6:00 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 and Nelson Bastos, Kaestle Boos Associates; William Collins, PhD, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Marc Finkelstein, Newington Board of Education; and Jeff Baron, Director of Administrative Services.

III. Public Participation – Mike Rosenkrantz, President of Newington Community Television (NCTV). He saw preliminary plans with the Human Services Department where NCTV is now. NCTV moved to that location five and a half years ago. The relocation was expensive and time consuming. The current space fits NCTV's needs well. They are good where they are. There is a lot of cabling that will be needed if they have to move. There are also ventilation, climate control and electrical needs as well. It would be simpler and more cost effective to stay where they are.

Steve Silvia, 45 Basswood Street. He questioned the need for two vaults. There should be one vault, with a common wall between them. One vault would be cheaper. This is space that requires a five hour fire rating. He advocates one common vault rather than two separate vaults.

IV. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – Mr. Marocchini made a motion to approve the corrected minutes of the March 3, 2015 meeting as presented. A second to the motion was made by Mr. Nagel. The motion passed by a vote of 5 YES (Marocchini, Nagel, Mortensen, Przech, and Bongiovanni) to 1 NO (Jorgensen-Bucchi).

VI. Town Hall Conceptual Starting Point Workshop – Mr. Boos, the Project Architect, revised the conceptual Town Hall floor plan drawings since the previous Committee meeting. NCTV is now shown as being on the Lower Level, in their current location. Mr. Boos will look at the vault space and combining the two vaults into one with a permanent wall in between. The Board of Education is back on the Upper Level. There is space for a new Helen Nelson Room, as well as Information Technology, the Superintendent of Schools, Curriculum, the Business Manager, storage (3,300 square feet of usable area), a

break room, and meeting spaces. There is also additional program space on the Upper Level; Human Capital Development may need to be located there. The space designated as the Upper Meeting Room will have a one and a half story ceiling. Kaestle Boos Associates kept the two gym concept, with a separate grade level entrance, that is two feet higher than the level of the upper parking lot. There will also be a large new stairway on the west side of the gym. Mr. Marocchini asked about the ceiling height. It will be about 22 feet high, with a bent frame having a lower wall at the street that rises to the middle. Mr. Nagel asked about the weight and the sound that would result from having the gymnasiums over program space. Mr. Boos was not concerned about the weight as there can be columns to support it. In the program space people will be able to hear it if there are basketball games going on above. The program space could be raw storage. It could also be filled in, but the Committee would not meet the program needs if it did so. The size of the gyms are slightly smaller than the gyms that were proposed in the referendum, but are the same size as the current Mortensen Community Center gym. Mr. Boos was asked about relocating the gyms to the Lower Level. The number of people that he would have to design for to exit the building would be significant, and to accommodate that number of people would require him to take program space.

Mr. Bongiovanni asked to look at a one gym concept in addition to the two gym concept. Mr. Boos had that already prepared and displayed that concept. This would have an unexcavated area beneath the gym. It would retain auditorium space and convert it into level program space. Mr. Mortensen asked about the cost difference between the two concepts. Mr. Boos responded that, even though the project that went to referendum failed in part because of the cost, he felt this project was at the price level of the last project, although the budget would still be tight. He is proposing the reuse of existing space that can be adapted. New construction has a much better modular width. The project can also maintain a lot of the existing spaces on the Lower Level, and create a loading dock. The percentage of building being kept would depend on whether there were one or two gyms, somewhere around 40-50%. Mr. Bongiovanni asked if the auditorium could be converted to a gym. Mr. Boos replied that it wouldn't be a gym because it wouldn't comply with height requirements, but yes, it could be converted if the Committee so chose. Mr. Mortensen observed that Parks and Recreation's preference was for two connecting gyms. Mr. Boos rhetorically asked if there was voter support for two gyms vs. one gym. He noted that his design was taking pieces off the building to comply with Town Planning and Zoning requirements and because they were in the way of progress. He felt that consensus was needed, either from the Building Committee, the Town Council, or the public. Mr. Bongiovanni stated that the Committee was tasked with providing two gyms. That is what the Town Council wants. If the dollar figure is too high, then the Building Committee can come back with an alternate in the one gym concept.

Mr. Boos asked the Committee to keep in mind the concept presented has areas that represent school construction and other areas that represent commercial office area. He asked the Committee to think in terms of adjacencies. Mr. Boos discussed the Board of Education changes. The Upper Level captured corridor space, had a new main entrance, and access from the gymnasiums would be controlled by hardware. The

Transition Academy would have the same amount of space as it currently has. There would be a new Town Council chamber on the Main Level. It would be a formal meeting room with appropriate electronics and lighting. It would not be meant for daily meetings. It is a more formal space which the Board of Education could also use for their meetings in addition to the Town Council. People would enter the building through the main entrance, come down a large corridor, and the Town Council meeting room would be right there.

Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi asked if the Committee could look at the drawings from the first referendum. She felt there should be an auditorium in the building. She would like the Committee to go over the ideas of the focus groups. She expressed concern about the money that would be spent to take off parts of the building. Mr. Boos responded that he was proposing to remove those sections to preserve the dignity of the Town municipal center and the identity of the building. He felt the current Transition Academy was in the way of a successful solution to the building. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi stated that there was a lot that needs to be done in town, the Committee needs to keep that in mind and be concerned about it.

Mr. Mortensen stated that a lot of money had been spent in patching things. The worst thing is a plan that doesn't pass and the Town has to spend more money to patch more things. Town Hall needs to be fixed mechanically and aesthetically. Newington is changing. It needs a completely renovated Town Hall. The Committee's charge is to renovate and expand where needed to accommodate Parks and Recreation and the Board of Education. People want to keep Newington moving forward.

Mr. Marocchini asked what the next step would be. Mr. Bongiovanni felt that would be to run the project by stakeholders. Dr. Collins stated that he was upset originally about the Transition Academy being torn down, but some things in the current wing don't fit and there are already some problems in the current section of the building. He feels the Academy would be better off if it was taken out and built correctly. He also noted that he currently has storage issues. If the current gym came down he wouldn't have any storage. Dr. Finkelstein noted that the Transition Academy is a firmly established program. There are issues there, but the Town needs to keep the program. Dr. Collins added that the Transition Academy can't be in a school building, but does not have to be in Town Hall. Mr. Bongiovanni felt that it would give the project better access to the building and more parking if the current Transition Academy wing were to come off. Mr. Boos stated that the existing gymnasium is structurally challenged. If left where they are, the Parks and Recreation program could not expand. That is an important decision. The most economical place for it to be is in the north end of the building. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi felt that this presented a long distance to Mill Pond Park for the summer playground program. Mr. Bongiovanni reported that he had spoken with Parks and Recreation Superintendent Bruce Till and that this was not a programmatic problem.

Mr. Marocchini asked how the Committee will keep programs going during construction. Mr. Boos replied that Parks and Recreation would have to relocate for a couple of years. The simplest way to address this is to level the floor of the auditorium

and use that area as a swing space; build or renovate certain spots and then move the department in the auditorium into those spots. Filling in floors is something Kaestle Boos Associates does a lot. It works and is relatively inexpensive to do right. Mr. Baron will coordinate a meeting with department heads, Director of Facilities Management Dave Langdon and Mr. Boos to give the Town Hall departments input on the latest concept. The Committee will wait on putting out drawings for the public.

Mr. Przech stated he could go with either design concept. Both meet the Town's needs for the future. It is cheaper to borrow money today. A lot of maintenance has been deferred.

VII. Any Other Business Pertinent to the Committee – The Committee agreed to hold its next meeting on March 31st at 7:00 PM. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi felt the Committee should discuss the construction manager at that meeting. The Committee agreed to discuss what types of services it will want from a construction representative at that meeting. Mr. Boos told the Committee that when he sets an estimate for his design he will consult with construction experts. His number will not be as solid as a construction manager's number. It should be an agreed upon number. Mr. Bongiovanni observed that the Committee does not know how much space is new, how much is renovated space, or how much is for each type of construction space. There will also be substantial soft costs. It is a small site and complicated project, with a lot of costs. The Committee can't just throw out square foot numbers. Mr. Mortensen stated his hope for a more definitive time frame on March 31st. He would like to set some milestones for the Committee to meet. Mr. Marocchini stated that he had spoken with Senator Paul Doyle about Green Bank. They have new products and ideas to consider. Mr. Baron will contact Fire Marshal Schroeder regarding the Committee's request concerning corrective activities needed for the auditorium in order for it to comply with the fire code.

VIII. Public Participation – Steve Silvia, 45 Basswood Street. He got a rash seeing Board of Education storage in good, quality administrative space. He suggests the meeting room be constructed so storage could go above it to use the same space and free up office space. He feels the Town would be hard pressed to get more than what it has now. It could be hard to get two gyms. The ceiling height for the gymnasium space should be high enough to accommodate any sport, for future use.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. She offered a number of comments on the current Town Hall signage. She encouraged the Committee to do signage right and to keep the nomenclature the same throughout the building. The last time around she asked for a master plan. The Committee should consider what Parks and Recreation's needs are, not their wants. The Committee has a lot to take into consideration. She doesn't get how the process works. The last time the Building Committee went over the dollar amount, the Town council said fine and the public said no. She has watched Town Hall go downhill over the years. The building is in bad shape. The Committee needs to look at a dollar amount. She appreciates having the drawings in the front of the room. The Committee needs some sort of timeline. She offered comments on the location of the entrance. The Committee needs a master plan. Listening to discussions on Channel 14 and the

Transition Academy is disheartening. The Committee should show the public what it has planned.

Natalie Harbeson, 63 Fifth Street. She would strongly push for two gyms. They should be together. If the Committee is planning for fifty years, they are not fluff. She would also like to see a timeline. She finds it hard to get to Building Committee meetings. She would love to see them filmed on NCTV. Once the Committee explains why things are being done, it makes more sense. The Committee needs to get more information out.

IX. Response to Public Participation– Mr. Bongiovanni stated that the Committee is working towards a timeframe. It is refining the concept presented and hopes to go to referendum in the fall. It hopes to make the Transition Academy better for everybody and to last for many years. Not a lot of fluff has been requested. Different people have different feelings. The Building Committee will present a concept based on the needs that were presented to the Building Committee and the Town Council will set a number. The Capital Improvement Plan Committee determines what the Town can afford to borrow. There are other needs, for schools and for other buildings.

X. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Baron

Jeff Baron
Director of Administrative Services