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TOWN OF NEWINGTON  
MILL POND PARK POOL PROJECT BUILDING COMMITTEE

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

May 24, 2021, Zoom Event

  
Town Clerk

- I. Call to Order – Chairperson Donahue called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.
  
- II. Roll Call – Members present: John Donahue, Chairperson; Carol Anest; John Bachand; Jay Bottalico (joined at 6:08 PM, left at 7:28 PM); Garrett Havens; Philip Knowlton; and Don Woods . Others present: Beth DelBuono, Mayor; Michael Fortuna, TLB Architecture; Bill DeMaio, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation; James Krupienski, Town Clerk; and Jeff Baron, Director of Administrative Services.
  
- III. Public Participation – None.
  
- IV. Review Master Plan – Mr. DeMaio reported that the Town had gotten the geotechnical and survey information. Mr. Fortuna put it together into a nice package. Mr. Fortuna stated that he took the 145-page Master Plan Report and distilled it down to nine pages. The survey didn't reveal any new surprises. They were able to locate the underground utilities. They also want to avoid the sewer line right-of-way and the large underground structure. They also did borings. They went down nineteen to twenty-four feet. They only got refusal at one spot, at sixteen feet, so it can be concluded that there is no ledge. There was groundwater at the end of the proposed pool, closest to Garfield Street, at four feet deep. The shallow end of the pool will ride above it. The area near the playground was worse. The north end of the site was the better choice, based on the geotechnical analysis. They have the information needed to proceed to design. Originally, they looked at putting the pool in four different areas of the park, before deciding to locate it on the north side of the park. The Master Plan shows one shift from the last time. The building is now shifted slightly to the east. It is now between the two crosswalks on Garfield Street, and further from the floodplain. The deep pool end and the lap pool will have groundwater. Either crosswalk on Garfield Street will get you to the proposed building. The baseball field will be gone.  
Mr. Fortuna also showed a floor plan of the building. You could shut down the building and just have the splash pad open if that is what the Parks and Recreation Department chose to do. The concession area can serve different purposes. Mr. Fortuna then showed several elevation drawings of the proposed building. He was cognizant of the design of the building across the street [the new Town Hall – editor]. There is a roof sloped to face south for solar panels to heat the water. This can be a combination of photovoltaic and hot water heating. There are green roofs on the lower portions of the roof. The pool goes from zero depth to the lap pool to the deep end. The solar hot water system includes a fairly conventional pool heater to regulate the water temperature. Nothing in the survey or geotechnical data located anything that was significant that was unexpected.

Mr. Fortuna discussed the project costs. The dollar figures that were used reflect current dollars. There has been a spike in the cost of construction materials. It is hoped that costs will come down over time. The major cost is for the aquatics piece (about \$7 million) [\$6,948,383 – editor]. There are also costs for removal of the current baseball field [\$31,670 – editor], field sports [\$233,203 – editor], soft play area [\$269,479 – editor], to demolish the old pool facility (no hazardous materials costs are included) [\$194,336 – editor], and to regrade this area and include an amphitheater terrace for a bandshell [\$276,389 – editor]. There has been an ongoing discussion with Parks and Recreation as to whether demolition of the old building and regrading this area should be part of Phase I or part of Phase II. He anticipates about \$200,000 to demolish everything and about \$270,000 to re-grade the area that will be the bandshell. Mr. DeMaio added that you will get the space back if you do both. It is about \$8 million in Total Probable Construction costs [\$7,953,460 – editor] and when you add in the other costs total [\$1,301,567 – editor] the Total Probable Project cost becomes roughly \$9 million [\$9,255,027 – editor].

Mr. Bachand asked what big items were in the cost summary. Mr. Fortuna replied that the two biggest were the pool and the bandshell. Mr. Bachand asked if borings had been taken at the existing pool site. The map of the boring locations was referred to. Borings had been taken there. At the proposed location, boring B9 was close to boring B14. There was no monitoring well for boring B9. Mr. Bachand asked if the presence of water in the ground would affect construction. Mr. Fortuna replied that if there was underground water and hydrostatic pressure, there would be hydrostatic relief in the bottom of the pool. The north end of the site was stable. An underdrain system would be installed to relieve water pressure under the pool. It would either drain to the pond or to the storm system pipe. Mr. Woods asked what the next step would be, to discuss the bandshell? It would be to approve a motion to forward the project to the Town Council. Mr. DeMaio stated that if asked he would favor doing the entire project all in one shot [including the aspects of the project that were not presented at this meeting or in Phase I but were included in the Master Plan – editor]. Construction is ugly. He appreciates it would mean spending \$13 million versus \$9 million. He felt it was a no-brainer decision to demolish the existing bathhouse to give back the space and to get back the bandshell (the music program that would use the bandshell is very popular). He wrote a letter earlier in the day that the pools have reached their life expectancy. He shared that with the Committee so no one could say they weren't told. It laid out the facts. It takes a while to get anything done in government. The process for this is the Building Committee has to approve it, then it goes to the Town Council and to referendum, then it is designed and then it is constructed – at the risk of having the pool collapse and being behind the eight ball. It will look like we didn't plan ahead. The Town will probably have a splash pad at Churchill Park and will want to focus its extended period of swimming at Mill Pond Park and address its immediate swimming needs. Mr. Knowlton said that he is a splash pad guy, and that he had two questions. First, will the splash pad be accessible when the pool is open? Mr. Fortuna replied that yes, it would, that both could be accessed at the same time. Second, is the splash pad a basic arrangement? Mr. Fortuna replied that \$700,000 gets you a nice splash pad. It is really involved, with lots of features.

Mr. DeMaio added that the State of Connecticut Health Department requires warm water for showers. His department could open or close the bathrooms. The splash pad could be used from April 1<sup>st</sup> through October 30<sup>th</sup>. Kids hit a button which runs a computer program that cycles through each feature for a minute. It would only be in use when people are playing on it. Mr. Donohue noted that this Committee was considering putting a new

building in Mill Pond Park. Would it be absorbing space that was needed for the Extravaganza? What would the impact on the fireworks be? Mr. Fortuna responded that for the Extravaganza, things would change. There would be an evaluation of how the land is used. Things would be in a different place with the baseball field gone. The new development would be well out of the fireworks zone. You would have to rope off part of the amphitheater area. Councilor Anest asked about the amount of space, new vs. old. Mr. Fortuna replied that it is similar, the order of magnitude is about the same. The facilities are sprawled right now, the design is more compact.

There was a concern earlier about preserving the view into the park. This was addressed in a video that Mr. Fortuna played for the Committee of a vehicle that drives up and then down Garfield Street. He noted that nothing we are building would obscure the view. Mr. DeMaio added that he was not sure that all the trees that are on the edge of the park will stay. If they come down, they will be replaced with strategic plantings. Mr. Donohue noted that he looked at the big report but didn't study it. Ms. Anest noted that the Committee had to move a motion. Mr. Woods made a motion that the Committee accept the Master Plan for Phase I, items A through D, and items E1, E2, and N [Other Costs – editor], for a Total Probable Construction Cost of roughly \$9 million. A second to the motion was made by Mr. Botallico. Discussion: Mr. Woods asked if an exact figure was needed for the motion. Mr. Baron said that it was not. Mr. Bachand stated that he was still a holdout on the location. He prefers to see it stay in the same place or by the playscape. Mr. Woods noted that Mr. DeMaio's letter from earlier in the day on hydrostatic pressure shows it is not a good idea to put it back in the same spot. Mr. Fortuna added that we can recognize groundwater better now than we could 50 or 60 years ago. There are other reasons to put it closer to Garfield Street: security, the proximity to Town Hall and the summer playground program location, a lot of the other factors that were discussed are some important reasons to put it closer to Garfield Street. It is also less expensive to build it near Garfield Street. Mr. Bottallico asked if it was built in the same place, would you lose the pool for at least one year? Mr. Fortuna responded that yes, you would. Mr. DeMaio added that he lost two years at Willowbrook Park [in New Britain – editor]. Mr. Bachand stated that the pool is a seasonal feature that would be more tucked away and less obvious in the center of the park. It is a seasonal asset. Mr. Fortuna responded that you want open space in the middle and programs at the edge.

Another member stated that it was almost as if the pool is in the way and that moving the pool away from the playscape will improve things. Mr. Havens stated that he was leaning towards Mr. Bachand's point of view. He saw no advantage to moving the location if we still had to manage groundwater. He likes the bathhouse where it is. Is the current bathhouse ugly? Yes. He likes the design that was presented but doesn't like the location. Mr. Woods stated that he would defer to the professional. TLB Architecture talked at length why we shouldn't build at the same location. We have the best architectural firm giving us his input on the project. We should listen to him. Ms. Anest concurred with Mr. Woods. This would allow the Committee to utilize the pond with so many better ideas. The focal point is the pool and she felt it should be where it is proposed, on the north side near Garfield Street. Mr. DeMaio added that the Town could have a fishing pier on the pond as part of Phase II. Mr. Fortuna added that the pond is what the park was created around. Mr. Woods then asked to call the vote on his motion. Mr. Donohue requested time to look at the Mater Plan report. He stated he was concerned about surprises. Mr. Fortuna responded that, while there is risk in construction, he had a really good sense of what things cost. The Town spent the money to do the underground analysis. We know what the topography is and where the flood plains are. We know what we need to know. Mr. DeMaio pointed out

that expending money to do the underground research wasn't done in the past. To Mr. Bachand and Mr. Havens, the politics of closing pools for the summer would look really ugly. Nobody wants that to happen. We are the only Town in the area that doesn't have splash pools. He is spending a lot of money on repairs; throwing good money after bad.

Mr. Bottalico stated that he didn't want to drag this out. He urged the Committee to do it or forget it. He felt it is time to present it to the Town Council. Mr. Fortuna added that he thought he knew what these things cost. We are as comfortable here as on any project with what things cost. Mr. Havens stated that these were well reasoned responses. He asked, what if the referendum fails? Councilor Anest stated that it would be "back to the drawing board". She asked if it was correct that Mr. Fortuna built in a 30% increase in materials that may not be there in two years? Mr. Fortuna responded that not all materials were increased, but the major ones were. There was also a 10% contingency, of \$900,000. Mr. Donohue stated that as a new politician, he didn't appreciate being threatened. Mr. DeMaio responded that that was not his intent. His entire career he has tried to keep politicians from getting into difficult situations. Mr. DeMaio asked if the \$900,000 contingency was included in the Total Probable Construction Cost? Mr. Fortuna responded that it was. If it was not used it could perhaps go towards construction of the bandshell. This led to discussion on whether the motion needed to be amended to include the bandshell. It was not amended. Mr. Baron took a roll call vote, by which the motion passed by a vote of 4 YES (Anest, Knowlton, Bottalico and Woods) to 3 NO (Donohue, Bachand, and Havens). The Chair asked what happens next? Mr. Baron stated that he would draft a memo to the Town Manager informing him of the Committee's action and requesting that the matter be placed on the Town Council's Agenda for action. Mr. Donohue stated that when the matter is considered by the Town Council, he will request that the Building Committee members be present, plus Mr. Fortuna and Mr. DeMaio.

- V. Any Other Business Pertinent to the Committee – The Committee will meet again after it hears back from the Town Council.
- VI. Public Participation – None.
- VII. Comments by Members – None.
- VIII. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 7:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Jeff Baron*

Jeff Baron  
Director of Administrative Services