

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

MILL POND PARK POOL PROJECT BUILDING COMMITTEE

2020 AUG 12 AM 11:49

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

August 10, 2020, Zoom Event

  
Town Clerk

- I. Call to Order – Chairperson Donahue called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.
- II. Roll Call – Members present: John Donahue, Carol Anest, Phil Knowlton, Don Woods, John Bachand, Jay Bottalico, and Garrett Havens; Others present: Mayor Beth DelBuono; 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. Project Activity – No formal action taken. Mr. Baron opened the discussion by stating that although a project timeline had been requested, the Project Building Committee ordinance requires the Committee to submit the anticipated planning costs, along with the preliminary cost of the entire project, to the Town Council. Mr. Baron had e-mailed a page from the master plan received from Mr. Fortuna earlier in the day, showing a black box which represented what would be the anticipated footprint of an indoor pool. Mr. Woods stated that he would like to see a consensus of what the other Building Committee members think, their preference for an indoor pool or an outdoor pool. Mr. Bachand asked how many Towns have Parks and Recreation run indoor pools. Mr. DeMaio replied, off the top of his head, there is Cornerstone in West Hartford, Mansfield, Wethersfield, Rocky Hill, Glastonbury, Cheshire, Stamford and Greenwich. He also stated that there had been 120,000 gallons of water lost at Churchill Pool. It is leaking like a sieve. Over the last 14 years there have been many studies done. There have been efforts at pool repair the last 3-5 years. He can't guarantee the opening of both pools next summer. The Town and the Committee will have to move quickly to have a pool. There is an impressive number of users at Churchill Pool. He is very fearful that they will be stuck with no recreational swim lessons next summer.

Ms. Anest said that she had asked for a visual of the proposed pool in Vernon, and inquired about the status of that. Mr. DeMaio noted that Mr. Fortuna was participating in the meeting. He was unable to show the Vernon pool. When the request was received, Mr. Fortuna asked Vernon for permission to provide it to the Committee. As it has not yet been presented to the public in Vernon, they did not respond to the request. Mr. Fortuna didn't get power back following the tropical storm until today, and sent along the drawing with the black box showing the footprint. Ms. Anest asked for photos or pictures of other facilities. Mr. DeMaio responded that he did not have that. He introduced Mr. Fortuna. He noted that the firm hired to conduct the building survey of all Town facilities had subcontracted with TLB Architecture to evaluate the two pools. Mr. Fortuna can get photos of other facilities that would be comparable. Cornerstone in West Hartford is in a designated Enterprise Zone.

The Town takes a cut of the profit. He has access to facilities nationwide. Mr. Fortuna told the committee that a number of the other pools are not in parks. Mr. DeMaio stated that if a new facility was constructed on Garfield Street, it could be complemented by the programming ability of the new Community Center. Mr. Fortuna noted that Vernon has a main lane competition pool and a warm water recreational pool for exercise, but no diving. Mr. DeMaio stated that he could also show movies, as he has done in another community. There could be a mushroom and he could show features in the shallow end of the pool. He could have movies and lessons for little kids. He could also shut one down at different times. Mr. Woods asked, on the budget figure of \$15 million to \$20 million for an indoor pool, would the exterior be conforming to the look of the new Town Hall? Mr. Fortuna replied that the cost varies tremendously. What do you want it to look like? Low energy (solar panels, geothermal) drives the operational costs down but drives the building costs up. If you use \$12 million to \$16 million for construction, you could get a pretty good-looking building with traditional systems. The look of the building is not what is driving costs. It has to complement the construction of what has been built nearby.

Mr. DeMaio asked him to explain what "net zero" means. Mr. Fortuna stated that it means to produce as much energy as you consume over the course of a year. If it is not a pool, you can build something that is carbon free. This will drive down your energy costs significantly. It all comes with first cost impact. The estimate was \$3.5 million in Vernon. They are checking on the payback period. Mr. Knowlton asked if the cost for the indoor pool included a splash pad or if it was a separate cost? Mr. Fortuna replied that the cost estimate numbers came from the Vernon project. Mr. Knowlton asked if the other Towns identified were about the same size as Newington. Mr. Fortuna responded that West Hartford and Vernon were bigger, some of the other Towns were smaller. His firm would recommend that a market analysis be done. The Town could couple that with energy model. Those help in decision making. They typically like to have that up front. Mr. DeMaio asked if geothermal and solar would be used on an outdoor pool. Mr. Fortuna replied that you could, but that the payback period would be very long. Mr. DeMaio asked about the water table. Mr. Fortuna responded that there would be utility mappings and borings. If the Town was considering geothermal, there would be a test well drilled that would go about 500 feet down. Mr. DeMaio asked if you could use the water from the test well to fill the pool? Mr. Fortuna said that conceivably, you could do so.

Mr. Bottalico asked how much it cost to operate Churchill Pool and Mill Pool every year? Mr. DeMaio responded that it cost \$125,000 for lifeguards for the summer. There has been \$35,000 to \$60,000 for pool construction to fix the pipes. Mr. Bottalico asked about the Churchill Pool water loss. Mr. DeMaio stated that it was 120,000 gallons in four days. Mayor DelBuono asked about the impact of the project long term, with staffing needs. Mr. DeMaio stated that programs run from six o'clock in the morning. The cost of lifeguards comes out of the Enterprise Fund. The Mayor said that in addition to that there were other staff that would be needed. She also asked about the cost of insurance for liability, particularly liability from diving programs. Mr. Fortuna stated that the decision to have diving is normally a program, not a risk, decision. Mr. Baron state that the Town's insurance costs were based on experience. If there were more claims, the cost would increase; if there were no claims, it would not. Mr. DeMaio noted that when the diving boards were taken out of Churchill and Mil Pools, the pools were over 70 years old and it was determined that the water needed to be deeper. New diving board designs would meet current safety standards.

Mr. Bachand asked if the Project Building process evaluated "needs" versus "wants". Mr. Baron replied that the process was spelled out in the Project Building Committee

Ordinance. That Ordinance did not address “needs” versus “wants”. Mr. Fortuna added that his firm would gather stakeholders and get input from them. That would be used to create a master list. Prioritizing would be done based on cost, risk and other factors. You have a project budget, and what falls within the budget becomes your programming document. Mr. Bachand asked if historically, one pool was used more than another. Mr. DeMaio responded that had been discussed at the previous meeting, that there were 10,000 to 20,000 visits to each pool. There were more picnickers at Churchill Park, while Mill Pond Pool was more of a neighborhood pool. The usage numbers are about the same at both pools. With new gyms at the Community Center, he could use Mill Pond Pool more during the day and would recommend going with a splash pad at Churchill Park. Mr. Bachand asked if the High School pool was under Parks and Recreation’s purview? Mr. DeMaio responded that, after a drowning in Hartford, the Board of Education decided that its teachers would not be responsible for monitoring the pool. The Parks and Recreation Department uses it Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. From 2:30 to 5:30 the High School swimming and diving teams use the pool. The Newington Swim Club uses it Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Parks and Recreation provides the lifeguards. He felt that the Committee needed to reach a consensus on an indoor versus an outdoor pool. Then it could go out for an architect or, if it was comfortable with TLB Architecture, it could ask the Town Council to waive the RFP requirement.

Mr. Bachand said that, after listening to discussions about geothermal and solar options, and looking at the black box on the diagram, he wondered if it would fit. Mr. Fortuna replied that the black box was just to show the location in the park. The geothermal would be capped. The box shows a 21,000 square foot footprint. Mr. Woods noted that the baseball field is not utilized much anymore. Mr. DeMaio added that there was \$176,000 set aside for baseball improvements. He felt it would not be a major issue if the building went on to what is now the baseball field. That field is only being used by the High School freshman baseball team. The pool could be pushed more to the south if that was an issue. Mr. Donohue stated that he still had a concern about a 21,000 square foot building on Mill Pond Park. Mr. Bachand stated that it was ten feet from the first base line. This would be a safety issue. He also had reservations about a building in the park. The location was not great. He likes the look of the park without the pool. Is there a reason why it is considered to be in the wrong place? Mr. DeMaio responded that it is because of the high water-table. The hydrostatic water pressure problem, that is the main driver for relocating the pool. A number of communities are building pools close to the road for police and safety issues. All utilities are also on Garfield Street.

Mr. Knowlton stated that he would favor an outdoor pool. He wondered if it would be better to have the pool closer to the road and the pump house closer to the pond. Mr. DeMaio responded that since this conceptual drawing was done, they were made aware that there is a 36” to 40” Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) easement through the park. If this becomes an outdoor pool it would still have to move to the east. Councilor Anest asked if the building could be designed with more glass so it doesn’t look as big or as cumbersome. A closed structure in the park will not fly. She needs more than the black box in order to make a decision. She needs to get more drawings. Mr. DeMaio observed that \$20 million is a lot of money. For \$12 million, you could get a Mill Pond Park renovation, with basketball courts and many improvements. There is something to be said about getting the bigger bang for the buck. This is affecting more families’ lives. Mr. Havens stated that he was leaning more towards an outdoor pool. He is weighing \$12 million versus \$20 million. The rest of the park would be much improved. Mr. DeMaio added that you would get a new

building with a renovated park. Mr. Knowlton asked, if we are spending \$170,000 for baseball improvements, what expectation is there that more people will use the baseball field? Mr. DeMaio responded that it is the old adage, if you build it they will come. The current field doesn't have a fence or a scoreboard. It is not the greatest location for a hardball baseball field. You could re-do the infield and the outfield. You could do more for flag football. He is not sure that baseball is the total answer there. Mr. Bottalico stated that a Butler building wouldn't look good. It couldn't be glass because fly balls will hit the building. He would favor an outdoor pool. You could take out the baseball field if it gets very little use. Mr. DeMaio stated that the project is in the conceptual design phase. The Committee would need to know what kind of dollars would be needed to get started. Mr. Fortuna said that the geotechnical work would be a per diem, \$6,000 to \$7,000 for borings. You could update the master plan for a couple of thousand dollars. Mr. DeMaio mentioned a land survey and a wetlands survey. Mr. Fortuna added that the master plan impacted soft costs. It would be about \$20,000 for a survey. Other soft costs would be spent on soils, etc. If the project is in one phase there would be about \$1 million in soft costs, close to 10% of the total project cost. Mr. DeMaio added that there would be improvements in parking and to the tennis courts, also. Mr. Fortuna stated that the improvements would affect a lot of people.

Mr. Knowlton asked about solar parking canopies. Mr. Fortuna replied that he had looked into them for the Black Rock State Park project. They work well. Mr. Knowlton noted that while geothermal drives up the cost initially, he felt that savings can be achieved through solar canopies. Mr. Fortuna then spoke about several solar initiatives and concluded that the Town wanted a reliable source of power. Mr. DeMaio added that there were some streetlights in the project also. They would make a classy addition. He stated that the cost of a separate referendum was closer to \$12,000 to \$13,000, if you chose to go out to referendum during the year, rather than wait until November. Ms. Anest said that she had heard concerns that the pools were only used for two months. Could we heat the water to have longer use? Mr. Fortuna replied that the water could be heated to extend the season, but not without using geothermal. Mr. DeMaio added that the splash pad would be open from April through October, also. Ms. Anest said she was looking to extend the season.

Mr. Woods said it looked as though the consensus of the group was for an outdoor pool. There would be the same factors, the same improvements, if it was an indoor pool or an outdoor pool. Mr. DeMaio, using rough numbers, said it would be \$5 million for the aquatics, \$3 million for demolition and the amphitheater, and \$4 million for the rest of the park. Mr. Fortuna observed that these numbers were now two and a half years old. You need to factor in an escalation cost from March of 2018. Councilor Anest felt that you couldn't go to referendum with these numbers. Mr. Bachand stated that heating the outdoor pool wasn't the issue, the pools closed because the lifeguards have to go back to school. He feels the public may see this as a "Taj Mahal". Enlarging the park (to include the current bus garage area) could get a lot of people interested. He was not happy with the black box location either. He does like most of the other improvements. Mr. Knowlton said that he appreciated the value of the nature path that was being planned also. He had been looking at the current location of the pool earlier. It is ugly, dead space. It would look much better if you could move it closer to Garfield Street.

Mr. Donohue inquired if he should poll the members for their preference on an indoor pool versus an outdoor pool, or if we should ask the public. Ms. Anest replied that we are the Building Committee, that the public might have a wide range of ideas and items that they would like to see. Mr. DeMaio added that the Committee could go to the Town Council

to authorize TLB Architecture or to proceed to go out to a Request for Proposals. Then the Committee would have more concrete plans, a survey, and geotechnical information to take to the public with a project cost. Mr. Fortuna added that the Committee also needed to form a consensus on how far it wanted to go on the level of planning. If it is an outdoor pool, he can update the plans and the budget. He will write a proposal for what is needed to update the master plan. He understands that the Committee needs to limit its costs up front. Mr. Havens asked when a referendum would have to be approved to be on the ballot for November. Mr. Krupinski said that it would need to be approved for the ballot by September 3<sup>rd</sup>. This led to a brief discussion on timing. Mr. DeMaio concluded it by stating that you always want to start construction in the spring. Mr. Bachand asked about comparing the Newington project with the A.W. Stanley pool project in New Britain. Mr. Knowlton asked if it was design or construction that the Committee would be asking the Town Council for a waiver on. Mr. DeMaio replied that any waiver request would be for the architect and engineer only, not the construction. Mr. Knowlton concluded the discussion about the A.W. Stanley project work by asking if the new pool could operate while PCB removal on the old pool was taking place. He was told that it could.

Mr. Bottalico then asked Mr. Donohue to call for a consensus on the Committee members' preference for an indoor pool or an outdoor pool. The unanimous consensus was for an outdoor pool. Mr. Fortuna said that he would provide a cost to update the master plan, along with the survey and geotechnical costs, the whole thing. It would be a full proposal. Mr. Donohue said that the Committee needed new numbers for the up-front work and for the whole project. Mr. Baron was directed to distribute them upon receipt.

- V. Any Other Business Pertinent to the Committee – The Committee agreed to hold their next meeting on September 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM. Mr. Krupinski reminded the Committee that there are a number of other committees meeting that evening.
- VI. Public Participation – None.
- VII. Comments by Members – Mr. Bottalico stated that he felt that this was a good meeting.
- VIII. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Jeff Baron*

Jeff Baron  
Director of Administrative Services