

## TOWN HALL BUILDING COMMITTEE

### NOTES FROM MEETING

October 24, 2019

Members Present: Jay Butler, Mike Twomey, Patrick Reffett, Tim Olson, Jack Lawrence, Jean-Pierre Minois, Jeff Hubbard

Members Absent: Bill Olson

Others Present: Owner Project Manager (OPM), Design Technique (DTI) – Kevin Monkiewicz; Board of Selectmen (BOS) members – Darcy Dale and Rosemary Kennedy (and Jeff Hubbard); Historic District Commission (HDC) members – Ed Howard, Scott Clements, and Katherine Mittelbusher; Hamilton Development Corp. and Planning Board member - Rick Mitchell; Option C Promoter - Doug Trees; Planning Board member - Peter Clark; Patton Homestead Board member - Carin Kale; Finance Committee (FINCOM) member – David Wanger; and seven others.

Mike Twomey opened the Town Hall Building Committee (THBC) meeting at 5:01 PM in the Memorial Room at Town Hall.

#### **Meeting Minutes**

Mike asked Jay Butler to get the past meeting minutes approved. Jay mentioned that there are still some approved meeting minutes that need posting to the web page, i.e., 8/21, 8/29, 9/3, and 9/23. After clarifying past meeting dates, Jay asked for approval of several other minutes, i.e., 9/11, 9/25, and 10/9. They were seconded and approved unanimously. Mike asked if the minutes needed to be added to the Dropbox – Jay said it was not necessary.

#### **Outreach**

Mike asked Tim about a web site update and Tim pointed to the project update that was sent out with the Town Meeting warrant.

#### **Project Direction Discussion**

Mike mentioned the need for a new project schedule and both Mike and Tim mentioned that they had a new one from LLB but Mike did not think it was appropriate to show it around given the uncertainty surrounding the direction of the project as a result of the confusion generated at Town Meeting. Mike felt that the committee needed BOS direction on how to proceed. Jean-Pierre felt that the committee was given clear direction at Town Meeting to follow Option B. Jack felt that the committee should look at Option C especially when one reconsiders some of the ideas contained within – the boilers are only 10 years old; there is insulation in the building walls; the basement does not need a complete overhaul; etc.

Mike noted that Town Counsel mentioned that voting at Town Meeting was for a dollar amount but not a building option. He thought the committee should look at Option C and ask Town Counsel for an opinion.

Jeff wondered if we should get Option C costed to see where it comes out compared to Option B. He commented on the Option C features that restored the second floor meeting room, left the basement untouched, and required use of the DPW garages.

Tim commented that he spoke with the committee's architect, Drayton Fair of LLB, at Town meeting and Drayton offered that the idea had not been vetted nor costed and he felt the cost was too low. Tim said that considering Option C was a new project in its entirety and that the committee should ask the BOS for their opinion on whether to consider Option A or B, but not C.

Mike brought up a question as to whether or not we had a solid legal opinion on the building renovation and both Jeff and Tim felt we did. Mike and Jeff indicated we had a legal opinion from Town Counsel, KP Law, indicating approval on both Option A and B for use of CPA grant money for historic preservation.

Patrick noted that we thoroughly vetted and costed Option A and B using two independent cost estimators but we had not examined Option C.

Tim mentioned that there is a need to consider the move of the DPW gas tanks with Option B so there is already a delay of sorts but there is even more work to be done to consider Option C. He also objects to a building in the DPW yard.

Jack noted that Town Meeting wanted Option B, and not Option A.

David Wanger spoke and complemented the committee on their work and noted that Town Meeting voted for the money and not an option, but they essentially voted for Option B and that Option C was too nebulous for the committee to consider.

Rick Mitchell spoke and noted that the Town Meeting was the worst one he ever attended in his 40 years of Town government experience in terms of lack of clarity and state of confusion. He was especially concerned over the low attendance where less than 1% of voters were in attendance. He felt that Option C should be taken out of the discussion. He further felt that an approximate \$9M decision should be made with inputs from the voters and not from a Town Meeting vote based on inference on what option they were voting to support.

Doug Trees spoke and agreed with Rick Mitchell over the confusion at Town Meeting. However, he noted that Option C was now in front of the THBC. He also said he had reviewed the detailed Option A drawings which would be similar to Option B and found several issues with the design, not the least of which was the resultant ceiling height in the basement. He also feels the building design options should strictly follow the US Department of the Interior

standards for historic preservation. Doug also mentioned he reviewed the Option A and B cost estimates in detail and found several things which concerned him, specifically the approximate \$1M to waterproof the basement. He noted that the plan for a new French drain around the basement was blocked by the front steps rendering it somewhat ineffective. He mentioned the basement drainage info that Dave Thompson had provided to the committee.

Jean-Pierre spoke and noted since the committee has in existence for over 2 years that he had never heard of Doug Trees. He further noted that the details on Option A were available to the public for many months.

Doug Trees mentioned that he had been away on business much of the past year and then noted the cost per square foot for the project is near the top of the charts. He also mentioned that the voters don't understand the issues with the construction details and that while Option C may not be right, we should look at it. He went further in mentioning that it was preposterous that we need to spend money to support the second floor with extra bracing and take out the stage. He noted that with the decision to embrace Option B, we were going back to the start as Option B was only a concept. Thus, we could look at Option C as well. He stated that his plan was only meant to preserve the building.

Mike mentioned that the THBC was an advisory committee to the BOS and that while originally endorsing Option B, followed direction from the BOS to embrace Option A.

Doug Trees argued that in the case of the advisory committees for the HW Library and the Public Safety Building, that the respective committees made the necessary decisions themselves, and that the THBC should make their own decisions instead of taking direction from the BOS.

Carin Kale spoke and admitted she was completely confused about the events at Town Meeting especially with regard to voting on inferences for building options. She continues to investigate the legal terms used as explanations. She mentioned she liked the earlier survey that the committee conducted for comment on the building options and that she was attracted to Option A. She commented that when she first heard of the vote to be taken at the recent town meeting, she was perplexed because the date of town meeting was not yet posted. She also mentioned that she did not fully understand the differences between Option A and B. She suggested having another special town meeting to clarify any misunderstandings from the recent meeting and noted that it takes only 200 signatures to petition for one. She reiterated her embarrassment over the recent Town Meeting.

Darcy Dale spoke, not as a member of the BOS, but for herself as a voter, and commented that many people did not see any info on the Town Hall project prior to Town Meeting. She said that the committee was too optimistic to expect people to understand the project and that we were expecting too much too fast. She felt the committee should look at all contingencies and noted the pressure to move quickly was likely coming from the architect. She wanted the committee to slow down. She did note that the Town Meeting majority voted for Option B and she felt that

that was the right direction but suggested a possible hybrid of Option B and C. Once again, she noted that most people in town just learned of the project.

Robin Davis spoke and first apologized for being late to the entire discussion and then commented that she did not understand the colored two-dimensional drawings showing the office layout and wondered if some three-dimensional drawings could be generated. She commented that when the Public Safety building was being designed that one of the firemen made a video of the situation that she found very helpful. Mike interjected that 3D drawings were possible but very expensive. Robin further commented that she felt that the voters will say no to a nine or ten million dollar project, and that the committee needs to sell the project to the voters.

Mike commented that the committee has held several meetings and appeared before several committees and that tonight's meeting was the first time in almost 3 years that a committee meeting had more than three visitors.

Jeff commented that the decision on which option to choose was a political decision and one had to rely on the available expertise. He further commented on the past votes by the HDC and FINCOM for Option B and the BOS vote for Option A, and he was happy that the info provided in advance of Town Meeting showed both options. He commented that the allowance of a vote on Option C was done with respect to all of the work done by Doug Trees. He further commented that he, as a member of the committee, had listened to the consultants over many meetings and watched in detail over the discussion amongst the two independent cost estimators to come up with the vetted cost estimates for Options A and B.

Doug Trees spoke again and noted that his Option C offered a new approach that would be much cheaper. The cost of renovating parts of the garage was relatively easy and not so expensive in terms of dollars per square foot, and the DPW would get a new building.

Mike commented that he was baffled by the position of the HDC to allow an addition for the stairs and elevator in the case of Option B. He felt that the HDC would want the exterior envelope preserved.

Scott Clements noted that the HDC was giving only a conditional Option B approval as they would now like some more design changes beyond that which had already been agreed. He noted that the HDC has regulatory authority concerning the approval of changes to the exterior of the building and is merely advising on changes to the interior. He further suggested that Town Counsel misinterpreted the CPA statute and that he feels that the project interior work should strictly follow the US Dept. of the Interior historic preservation standards. Doug Trees enthusiastically agreed. Scott's latest design concern involved the lowering of the stage on the second floor. He now would like the stage to remain at its current height and juggle the office layout to allow this. Jay suggested that this will trigger some ADA concerns but Scott suggested installing a small chairlift. Scott insists that he wanted to minimize any demolition within the building, and therefore save unnecessary costs.

Tim wondered why were just hearing of this latest design change now and noted that the committee had reached out to the HDC some time ago for inputs on the interior and had conducted a tour of the inside for their comments on historical preservation that were accepted. He also pointed out that both Option A and B required the stage to be lowered. At that time, only the issue of the grand staircase was in dispute. Scott countered with the fact that with the vote to now go with Option B requires backing up the schedule and doing the detailed design. Therefore, this change could be considered as a desired change by the HDC.

Mike then asked Scott what it will take to get the HDC on board with the project as he noted that without their support it would likely not pass at Town Meeting. Tim commented that the committee needs support from the HDC and all other relevant committees.

Mike suggested that the committee put a hold on spending on the project until we decide what to do and get everyone on board. He would like buy-in from all relevant parties.

Rick Mitchell spoke and noted now we have Option D, referring to Scott Clements' new proposal to prevent lowering of the stage. He felt sorry for the THBC given the sudden emergence of Options C and D. He noted that the HDC had ample time to point out their concerns. He cautioned the THBC to slow down and not rush the project as he felt if the committee proceeded for a vote at the Town Meeting in April 2020, it would blow up, even if the project will take more time and cost more money. He suggested the committee question the authority of the HDC by asking Town Counsel. He further offered that he had really liked Option A.

Robin Davis suggested that we need to have a building sized for the next 100 years and asked "what if we need a new department 25 years from now?" She also questioned what was in the basement – just storage? And why was there a meeting room there? Mike noted that Town Hall staff had all been interviewed regarding their space needs during the design process and that discussion of necessary expansion was included in those discussions. He indicated that three new employees were included in the plans.

Jack mentioned that storage needs will be limited since the Town has begun a paperless initiative.

Patrick suggested that much of the information on the project was not well understood by voters. He pointed out that as Director of Planning and Inspections he had 3 full time and 11 part-time employees and noted that space needs for his department were considered effectively. He did, however, recognize that new regulations may spawn the need for new employees. He mentioned that Title V regulations that were unknown 30 years ago now require almost full-time focus interest of the Board of Health officer's 15 hours of service. And he noted that the Town Manager specified that no full-time employees will have offices in the basement. Patrick did note however, that having an office in the basement would not be an issue for him and that some committees would opt to meet in the proposed conference room in the basement.

Mike also mentioned that he had participated in the interview of town employees regarding office space and reaffirmed the plan to go forward with a paperless initiative. He mentioned a favorable outcome on a paperless initiative that he had experienced with a former employer.

Doug Trees spoke again and suggested that the committee recruit more experienced building and architectural professionals to the committee and suggested Dave Thompson and Greg Keller, although he admitted they were likely very busy. Jay mentioned that the committee had been advertising for a couple of new members for several months and they were only able to recruit Jack Lawrence to date.

Patrick mentioned that LLB had developed a list of recent construction projects and that the info showed that current LLB costs for the current project were of similar magnitude. He specifically mentioned that the recent Topsfield Town Hall cost \$12M. He further stated that public construction was expensive and that the committee needed to put that info on their web page.

Ed Howard spoke and recounted the work the HDC in preparation for the recent Town Meeting. He mentioned that their planned meeting was for the Thursday before Town Meeting which was when an electrical outage caused the Town Hall to be closed. It seems that the HDC held a meeting on the stairs outside Town Hall at 4:00 PM to try and get a position statement developed for Town Meeting. They did so and then Scott Clements using his own money got the statement printed and then delivered to Ed's house. Prior to their meeting at Town Hall, the Town Manager informed Ed that they could not have a meeting at Town Hall as it was closed. Further, the Town Manager told Ed that he could not distribute his position paper at Town Meeting without prior permission from the Town Moderator. Ed felt the HDC did not need such an approval. Jeff noted that the Town Moderator was responsible for Town Meeting and that was the rule. Ed's final comments was that past Chair of the HDC and the CPC, and architect, Tom Catalano, wanted to preserve Town Hall and was advocating for a new building on the Town Hall property.

Mike said he needed a motion on the direction of the committee.

Jean-Pierre noted that Town Meeting endorsed Option B.

Jeff noted that Option B had HDC and FINCOM support and as a result of the Town Meeting vote, had BOS support as well. He did note, however, that Town Meeting was not attended well. He said the committee could ask the BOS for clarity.

Doug trees noted that Option B was not yet designed and most agreed that it was in the conceptual stage.

Mike questioned if the second floor should be restored, and in general what to do?

Scott reiterated his desire not to demolish anything and his desire to just tweak some things with the architect. He felt that Option B with some tweaks would be OK.

Mike asked that that the HDC consider their approach and develop a formal statement.

Doug Trees spoke again and noted that he had studied the complete collection of detailed design documents and found several problems. He asked who on the committee had done so and Jay responded he had. When Doug asked Jay what he thought of the drawings, Jay said he saw several notes that the contractor should note what he found during demolition. Doug was concerned over the need to brace all of the floor joints for the second floor and how much money that that would cost. Doug asked about contingencies and Mike noted 10% for construction and 10% for design.

Jack asked Mike if he wanted a motion.

Mike felt the committee needed to go back to the BOS for direction or develop a conceptual cost on Option C.

Jack made a preliminary motion to meet with the BOS on financial concerns and which option to consider and it was seconded. However, Jay made an alternate motion to have LLB study Option C and present their comments to the committee for their consideration. Jay's motion was voted unanimously. Jack's motion was not voted.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM. No plans were made for the next meeting.

Secretary  
Jay Butler  
Attested 10/27/19