

TOWN HALL BUILDING COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
February 11, 2021

Members Present: Mike Twomey, Jay Butler, Rosemary Kennedy, Darcy Dale, Jean-Pierre Minois, and Patrick Reffett

Members Absent: Tim Olson, Jack Lawrence

Others Present: Owner Project Manager (OPM) - Design Technique (DTI), John Sayre-Scibona; Designer/Architect - Lerner Ladds Bartels (LLB), Drayton Fair and Mark Ritz; Pat Shannon, Assistant to the Town Manager and CPC Coordinator; David Wanger, FINCOM; and Kirsten Alexander, Marketing Consultant.

Mike Twomey opened the Zoom audio/video teleconference at 1:02 PM. Jay then took a roll call of committee members.

### **Past Meeting Minutes**

**Jay made a motion that was seconded to accept the 2/04/21 meeting minutes, referencing comments by Jack Lawrence, Jay then recorded a roll call vote of 5 – 0 (Patrick abstained as he did not participate in the bulk of the meeting.) to approve the minutes.**

### **Marketing Consultant**

Rosemary introduced Kirsten Alexander as our recently hired by the Town as consultant for the project. Mike confirmed that her work would be restricted to our project. Kristen said that she was a marketing consultant and sometime fundraiser who lived in Wenham but who owns property in Hamilton.

### **Brainstorming Sessions**

Mike asked Jay to speak on the past brainstorming sessions to Kirsten. Jay then explained the two-step brainstorming process where the first session was to help identify some of the problems associated with why the project was voted down on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. The second session was held to develop ideas on how to address the problems that we identified in the first brainstorming session. Jay then went through and mentioned the recent voting results for the ideas on how to fix the problem, and after noting the top vote getters, read off the list of all of the ideas:

1. **Develop a 10 question, Yes/No, flash online survey** to find out what the voters were thinking and get some idea of how to best approach the next try to get the project approved. **6 VOTES**
  - i. Did you vote in the Special Election on December 3, 2020 concerning the approximate \$4.7M request for the final construction funds for the Hamilton Town Hall Renovation, Addition, and Preservation Project?
  - ii. Did you vote to approve the project?
  - iii. Were you aware that the Total Project Cost was approximately \$8.9M?
  - iv. Would you approve the project if the Total Project Cost was lower?

- v. Were you aware that the recent Special Town Meeting approved a \$3M Community Preservation grant to defer part of the project cost?
  - vi. The estimated effect on the tax rate for the completion of the project was an increase of \$0.20. Would you vote to approve the project if the increase to the tax rate were lower?
  - vii. Do you think that the Town Hall Building Committee did enough to publicize the project?
  - viii. Do you think the Town Hall Building Committee acted with enough transparency while working on the project?
  - ix. Are you aware of the litany of outstanding problems with the current Town Hall, including: lack of a fire protection system; plumbing and electrical code issues; deteriorating exterior; building structural concerns; and widespread lack of ADA compliance within the building?
  - x. Do you feel that there are more important capital projects facing the town than the Town Hall project?
- b. Create a survey using Survey Monkey to solicit information from voters.
2. Establish dedicated website for project. **6 VOTES**
    - a. Develop a stand-alone website, independent of the Town website, that can be linked to different accounts and provide easily accessible information.
    - b. Update and publish the list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) on the Town Hall project.
  3. Develop a Facebook presence and a Friends Group. **4 VOTES**
    - a. Using Facebook, and embracing an experienced professional, not only educate and communicate on the project, but actively head off any misinformation by providing the current information.
    - b. Use Facebook, and other social media, e.g., e.g., Instagram, Twitter, etc., and our consultant, establish a "give and take" discussion forum on the project.
    - c. Ensure we have response to all negative Facebook comments.
  4. Develop a video presentation showing the current conditions at Town Hall and show repeatably on Hamilton Community cable channel. **4 VOTES**
    - a. Use local TV station to promote project.
    - b. Using a high school student, develop a video showing town hall conditions.
  5. Reach out to organizations in Town, e.g., American Legion, Council on Aging, Historical Society who offered support to the project by asking them to be more vocal in their support, perhaps by publishing that support in their publications. **4 VOTES**
    - a. Ask the Historic District Commission for their active endorsement.
    - b. Take advantage of local organizations to promote the project, e.g., League of Women Voters and the new Human Rights Commission, emphasizing the ADA issues.
  6. Find a permanent corner in the library or Town Hall or rented space at the Shopping Center to display photos, articles, building designs and other information. **3 VOTES**
    - a. Rent a storefront as realtors do or a window of a business to promote the project with photos and diagrams.
    - b. Use the windows at the Black Cow.

7. Send informational flyer out to all households. **2 VOTES**
  - a. Direct mailing to voters.
8. Start a "Save our Town Hall" effort. **2 VOTES**
9. Let people know how serious things are at town hall and explain that delaying the project until later will cost more. **2 VOTES**
  - a. Tell the voters that the conditions in Town Hall are not a threat to life.
  - b. Emphasize the lack of code compliance conditions at Town Hall as well as lack of ADA compliance as Town Hall is the biggest offender in these areas yet we force other organizations to comply.
10. Encourage school officials to stand up and support the project as an educational opportunity as ADA compliance is a significant aspect of the project. **2 VOTES**
11. Use the electronic sign outside the Public Safety or a banner on the side of the Patton Park tennis courts to direct people to the Facebook page. **1 VOTE**
12. Develop a short summary on the status of the turf field project at the High School including details of current activities: current engineering studies; Friends Group activities; fundraising; issues that need resolution; potential CPC support; and an estimated schedule and cost. **1 VOTE**
13. Identify someone amongst the 440 voters who supported the project on December 3<sup>rd</sup> and have them help us verbally or provide social commentary. **1 VOTE**
14. Emphasize Town Hall as a place for community inclusiveness with space for community activities. **1 VOTE**
15. Set up a Friends of Town Hall committee that can spearhead and promote the project, and potentially raise money. **1 VOTE**
16. Develop a short summary on the status, estimated cost, and estimated schedule for building a new school, including potential renovations of others, and the availability of state support. **1 VOTE**
17. Develop a short summary what types of projects that CPA funds can support vs. those they cannot as well as explain the potential funding and cost implications in increasing the CPC surcharge from 2% to 3%. **1 VOTE**
18. Explain that the Town's debt capacity will get some relief in the near future as some large debts are paid off. **1 VOTE**
19. Develop a summary of the mail-in ballot process available for all elections especially noting the flexible options. **1 VOTE**
20. Prepare some newspaper releases and provide to the Salem News and Chronicle & Transcript for publication.
21. Emphasize the \$0.20 increase in the tax rate for the project as small price to pay for a new Town Hall and move away for the \$8.7M Total Cost focus. Set up a "sandwich board".
22. Send some stories to the Boston Globe for publication. -
23. Develop answer to the question as to why we are pursuing a second vote on the project when the Town has already spoken.
24. Consider using Twitter for communications.
25. Publish a list of future capital costs facing the town in the next five to ten years, including school projects.

26. Develop a short summary of the unfunded retirement obligations facing the School Department and planned resolution.
27. Investigate how many people subscribe to the Town newsletter and sue that medium.
28. Develop a short summary of future financial concerns with the Town wells.
29. Publicize that the School Department is not sponsoring any capital expenditures for the Annual Town Meeting.

### **Consultant's Marketing Approach**

Before proceeding further, Mike took the opportunity to introduce all persons in the Zoom meeting for Kirsten's benefit. Kirsten introduced herself and then acknowledged having already seen the brainstorming results from the most recent session but not the first one. She then proceeded to show a power point presentation on how she would approach the project and embrace some of those ideas.

Subsequent to the presentation a discussion ensued about available spaces for public meetings to use for promoting the project in Hamilton. Patrick Reffett mentioned the fact that we are an active community with many public meetings and the issues with finding meeting space for larger public meetings. John asked if the library could be used. Patrick said that the Library has many of their own events and we should not be dependent on it. Darcy bemoaned the lack of meeting space for such things as poetry readings and art exhibits. Rosemary suggested that a renovated Town Hall could be used for things such as fifth grade graduation exercises. Kirsten mentioned that as Chair of the Hamilton Garden Club, she has surveyed every available meeting space in Town including the Middle School, Library, and the Community House and mentioned issues with using each of them. She suggested that a renovated Town Hall would provide a space of interest in Town.

As part of her presentation, Kirsten indicated several areas where she needed more information from the committee. Drayton asked that the committee be sent a copy and she agreed. When she mentioned a problem with contacting Hamilton cable TV, Patrick offered to send a contact name to Kirsten. John noted that the last public Zoom meeting forum was not that well attended.

Immediately following the presentation, Jean-Pierre asked about the next step, but Mike indicated that there was a reason for not giving Kristen the green light to work on the project.

### **CAPCOM Input on Project**

Mike asked David Wanger to comment on a report from the CAPCOM that was sent out a couple of days ago regarding their position on support for the Town Hall project. David and Mike commented that the report is somewhat confusing and they both wished Jack Lawrence, a member of the CAPCOM, would have been at the meeting to explain it. Mike said that the report established the Town Hall project as a Tier 1 project for FY22 and assigned a \$4.7M cost. However, Mike said that he was not sure what that cost considered as the details coming out of the meeting was that the CAPCOM wanted a reduced scope project by allowing only for the elevator, ADA compliance requirements, code compliance work, and other life safety issues, but no cosmetic activities. In other words, it seems they wish the project to be done in components. Mike felt the project design did not contain any purely cosmetic components. Rosemary noted that the \$4.7M was the exact amount needed to complete construction, and thus likely what it contained. She expressed her frustration about a report being discussed that the committee had

not yet seen. David suggested that this report could be distributed with approval from Joe Domelowicz. Mike said he would follow up on that. Mike then asked Drayton if the project could proceed based on his understanding of the CAPCOM input, and Drayton noted that the building inspector's interpretation would be needed, and then he favorably considered the addition with elevator, stairs and the ramp, but shared some concerns over the height of door thresholds, widths of doorways, and the second-floor access off the elevator. He also suggested we could use a wooden temporary ramp as a cost savings.

Although he preferred keeping the project together, Mike asked Jay if the CPC would support a partial build. Jay responded that there might be a problem with a change in scope to the currently approved \$3M grant, but the CPC might approve a partial project.

John asked if the Gordon Conwell site for temporary location of Town Hall during construct was still available. Patrick said it was even though the seminary was considering its use for other projects, although nothing was in motion yet. Darcy asked how much it might cost if we needed to set up temporary quarters somewhere else. Mike and John both said that they had put a placeholder in the budget at \$200k but that the real cost would likely be higher. John noted that the refitting cost alone at Gordon Conwell was \$75k.

During this part of the meeting David Wanger said he felt the FINCOM supported the complete project as presented, but then he mentioned another Town budget issue happening in the near future. He told the committee that the School Department had filed an application for state funds to support building a new school in the next three to five years. For this reason, he felt that we needed to get the Town Hall project approved soon. Mike offered that since the school would require Wenham support that there could be some delays given their financial situation. Darcy once again noted that our project was "shovel ready".

Mike wondered when the project might come before Town Meeting once again. Darcy mentioned that once approved at Town Meeting, that the required Special Election at the polls if could be delayed as long as 90 days which would allow more time for Kirsten to complete her marketing work.

### **Next Meeting**

Mike said the next meeting was on hold as he needed to better understand the CAPCOM report and get direction from the BOS as to whether or not we will place the project on the warrant for the May 1<sup>st</sup> Town Meeting. He said that he would send out an email to the committee as soon as possible letting us know what was happening.

### **Adjournment**

**Darcy made a motion to adjourn at 2:18 PM that was seconded and voted by roll call vote 6 - 0.**

A True Record,

Jay Butler, Secretary