

TOWN HALL BUILDING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
December 17, 2020

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

Members Absent: Rosemary Kennedy, Tim Olson

Others Present: Owner Project Manager (OPM) – Lee Sollenberger and John Sayre-Scibona of Design Technique (DTI); Designer/Architect - Lerner Ladds Bartels (LLB), Drayton Fair and Mark Ritz; Nick Tenson, FINCOM ; and Steve Astulfi, abutter.

Mike Twomey opened the Zoom audio/video teleconference at 1:03 PM.

Past Meeting Minutes

Jay made a motion that was seconded to accept the 12/1/20 meeting minutes that was then seconded. He noted that he had received more emails mentioning that no typos were found than he usually got when there were some typos. Hearing no comments, Jay recorded a roll call vote of 5 - 0 to approve. (Jean-Pierre was delayed signing on to the meeting.)

Review of Special Election Voting

Jay reported that the vote was 660 No and 461 Yes, from a total of 1130 voters out of the total eligible of 5967 or 18.9% of eligible voters.

Future Plans

Darcy immediately suggested that this was a process and not a one and done situation, and thus insisted that we plan on going before the Annual Town Meeting (ATM) on May 1, 2021 to try again, maybe with more support from the CPC. She noted there had not been a lot of time between the Special Town Meeting (STM) and the special election for promotions, so she felt we need more public relations marketing if we were moving toward the ATM. She felt that the Town Hall project was a human rights issue given the fact that the second floor of town hall is not ADA compliant. Darcy went on to say that the chair of the BOS was trying to conflate the school budget issues with the Town Hall Renovation project in terms of how the town will spend money. She, and according to her, Rosemary, were very much against this idea as she felt that the School Budget needed to be treated separately. She thought another Select Person would join her and Rosemary as well. She said the Chair of the BOS was looking at the Fall STM for bringing up another vote on Town Hall.

Jack mentioned that at the Capital Committee meeting this week that Joe Domelowicz announced that the School Committee had pledged to support the Town Hall Renovation Project. He also mentioned that the key to promoting our project is to be tied into social media, such as Facebook. This prompted Darcy to mention that Rosemary has a PR person in mind who could help with this, a Wenham resident named Kirstin Alexander who could be hired to promote the project.

Mike reported on a meeting he attended earlier this week with Joe D. Tim, Patrick, and Shawn Farrell. He learned that there was likely a concerted effort by school supporters to vote down our project. He estimated the number between 100 and 200. There was info on Facebook in this regard. Mike went on to say that the committee needs a new charge from the BOS to proceed. Joe and Shawn wanted to look at the Town Capital Plan to see where our project fit and they felt that the ATM was not appropriate due to concerns on the expected school budget discussion. Mike then noted that it will be tough to hold onto the pricing bids we now have and thus all our work on the bidding process will be lost. Patrick noted the issue at the ATM of the school budget and likely override. He felt that we would have a greater chance of success in the Fall. Darcy said she wanted to fight the idea of waiting until Fall and went on to repeat much of what she had said earlier in the meeting about the project and her opposition to conflating the school and town budgets. Patrick suggested that she was preaching to the choir and that we want to move ahead with the project. Mike asked if Rosemary could vote at the BOS meeting since she is out sick and having trouble speaking but Darcy said she could as it will be a zoom meeting.

John reported that he had talked with Ralph Castagna of Castagna Construction, our low GC bidder, who noted that he had done many projects on the North Shore, e.g., libraries, police stations, etc. Ralph said he could hold his pricing for 60, and maybe 90 days. He had reached out to some of the sub bidders and learned that the low bid steel supplier may drop out and the low bid electrical bidder might have an upcharge. Upcharges or escalation might be up to \$125k until May 30th but could be negotiated after that. One thing that Ralph made clear to John was that he did not want to bid against Windover Construction since if the time lapse between now and when the project would be approved is too long then Windover would then have its DCAMM historic preservation certification and thus would be eligible to bid. John then noted that as the COVID vaccine is made available, he felt that design and construction would speed up. He noted that we have a bird-in-hand with our bids and further that he and Mike had discussed the idea of removing some of the contingencies that had been added after bids had been received. He did admit, however, that Town Counsel and the Attorney General's Office would need to be queried about making any changes at this point. Mike asked if there would be a conflict with Windover if changes are made. Drayton opinion was no, because Windover did not meet the experience criteria at the time of the initial bid. Drayton also did not see how any changes could be made, unless approved by Town Counsel or the A.G.'s office as the sub bidders would protest. Mike suggested that we may need to go out for bid in May and at that time Windover would be eligible. He then asked John what the cost might be for the rebid and John suggested \$900 - \$1000 for Project Dog, project advertising, and expenses for LLB and DTI. Mike suggested the committee still had some money and thought the entire cost might be around \$10k. Mike then offered that the committee had completed their charge and met their obligation, and thus needed to wait for BOS direction. Patrick interjected that regardless of an approach for the ATM or STM, we need some PR support. Drayton asked about our local news outlet and Mike noted that the weekly Chronicle carried little news about Hamilton, and the Salem News, being the only true daily newspaper, carried some intermittent articles. Nick suggested the online, Hamilton Patch but Darcy noted that not many people commented in that forum. Drayton suggested that we need to find out who voted against the project and for what reason. Mike said that between 100 to 200 school supporters voted No but he was very surprised at both the number of people voting as well as the 441 Yes votes. He felt it was a very diverse group of voters. Darcy felt many of the voters were misinformed about the turf fields and CPC

grant money. And she felt that the turf field supporters and the school department did not have a plan for the field. Jay said that the turf field supporters did have a TURF (Towns United for Recreation Fields) Facebook volunteer group and that the school department was including an engineering study in their capital budget for this year, and had listed the high school turf field as part of their 5 – 10 year capital budget. Jay went on to say that many people do not understand all of the potential issues with the turf field, especially the \$500k escrow account in Hamilton that Wenham must match in part before it can be used or the restrictions on the use of CPC grants. e.g., they may not be used to pay for artificial turf. He felt we needed a Friends of Town Hall group and that Mike's list of questions and answers he presented at the zoom public meeting should be published. Darcy mentioned that Wenham was having some budget issues and that they had entered into a municipal agreement because of it that may prove a problem to their support of schools.

Mike mentioned several of the issues he has seen on Facebook where people had questions that had already been answered by the committee, e. g. such as why keep the grand staircase. He felt we needed to confront those on the internet with such questions and answer them. He also summarized some of what was said earlier about the committee wanting to try for project approval at the ATM. Jay interrupted and explained that he did not support going to the ATM and be in competition with the school budget and a potential override. Darcy wondered if anyone knew what the override amount might be. Jack and Nick said that the plan was to try and reduce expenses to avoid the override.

Once again, Darcy mentioned that using Kirsten Alexander would help our project, especially since she is a strong ADA supporter. Jack expressed concern over the town paying for someone to do PR work for a project. He felt that others may feel that their favorite project should have paid PR support as well. Hence, the need for Joe D. to check with Town Counsel.

John and Lee reported that Topsfield had a Friends of Town Hall that did some fundraising and suggested asking the HHDC to serve as the Friends Group for fundraising for PR support.

Mike reported on a couple of issues concerning Pilgrim Hall at Gordon Conwell. First, Pilgrim Hall is only available for a two-year window. Secondly, Tim Olson is pushing to move the second floor Town Hall employees to Pilgrim Hall so as to make their offices ADA compliant. Several thought that this move could help our cause regarding Town hall not being ADA compliant. However, Jack said that this reminded him of the planned 3-year handicap ramp that lasted 30 years at Town Hall, and suggested it was not wise spending and hides the solution.

Future Meeting Discussion

Mike did not wish to plan another meeting until he received direction from the BOS, suggesting the committee might be re-directed, members may change, etc.

Darcy motioned to adjourn at 1:56 PM that was seconded and voted by roll call vote 6 - 0.

A True Record,

Jay Butler, Secretary

