

TOWN HALL BUILDING COMMITTEE  
MEETING NOTES  
February 25, 2021

Members Present: Mike Twomey, Jay Butler, Rosemary Kennedy, Darcy Dale, Jean-Pierre Minois, Tim Olson, and Jack Lawrence

Members Absent: Patrick Reffett

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

Mike Twomey opened the Zoom audio/video teleconference at 1:01 PM. Mike then apologized for not getting the meeting agenda posted within 48 hours and thus the committee will not vote on anything today. Jay noted that since this was not an official meeting that approval of the 2/18/21 meeting minutes would be deferred until next meeting.

**Proposed Voter Survey**

Kirsten began by taking the committee through her proposed survey that she had sent out to the committee this past week. She referred to the fact that she had used the FAQ list to get some of the information. However, Jack mentioned that he had sent the latest update only to Mike and thus she needed to see that version. Mike asked Jack to send out the latest version to the entire committee. Kirsten then asked the committee to comment on her survey.

Darcy emphasized that voters need to understand that the project will not go away, and that if it does not pass on May 1<sup>st</sup>, that the project will appear on every Town Meeting warrant going forward until it passes. She went on to note that trying to do the project piecemeal will likely cause the 30% of assessed value “trip wire” that will then require the entire building be brought up to code. Further, the state at any time could demand that the building be brought into compliance with fire protection and ADA requirements. And the building will eventually become unfit for use and we should thus complete the project now under the current conditions of low interest rates. Finally, she offered the analogy that homeowners are typically required by their insurance carriers as a condition of their coverage, to keep their property in safe condition. Darcy continued, noting that there was general sense of optimism given the expected increase in the GDP, expected job growth, and general desire for the community to get together.

At this juncture, Kirsten commented on the timing for the survey suggesting that we needed to do it ASAP, especially since the warrant for Town Meeting will likely be closed in March. Jay mentioned a couple of suggested corrections in dates in her document and suggested that the document needs more focus on ADA facets of the design. Kirsten suggested a video showing someone trying to get a baby stroller or a senior using a walker up the grand staircase. Darcy noted that 30% of our population are seniors.

Mike related a recent discussion with some town employees who felt the project costs too much and suggested that this position was probably embraced by others.

Jack said that the wording used in our documents is important in terms of how to portray the project and used the analogy of required mask use as something that is perceived as a threat to one's liberty as opposed something that would ultimately help. In other words, we do not want to push voters into a corner to get their approval.

Mike referred to a past 40 year old incident whereby the state mandated that all move out of Town Hall due to lack of ADA access.

Jack warned that interest rates are going up. Kirsten agreed noting that current prices won't last over time.

In an effort to get the discussion back on track, John asked who would be supplying the missing dollar amounts in Kirsten's writeup. Mike said that we had to work that out. Jack asked about the CPC contribution.

Kirsten then suggested that she will see that the latest version of the FAQ's is sent out to the entire committee.

Rosemary noted that the CPC has already stepped up to support the project and wondered if more could be done. Kirsten said that she was prepared to explain the limitation on use of CPC funds.

Finally, Kirsten mentioned that she will send out a list of her six recommended short videos to the committee for comment.

### **CPC Support**

Mike asked Jay to comment on potential increased CPC support. Jay then announced that he has proposed that the CPC consider increasing their contribution to the effort by \$1M. Tim Olson will prepare an additional grant request that will be discussed at the next CPC Zoom meeting on March 11, 2021 at 7:00 PM. Jay said that he has spent some time evaluating other potential future asks of the CPC and has concluded that the only potential larger asks would come from the Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) or one for the turf fields at the high school. No near-term large grant requests are expected from the AHT and the turf field is some years away. However, Jay will reach out to the turf field Friends group and suggest that they help sponsor a surcharge increase from 2% to 3%. Jay also mentioned that he had identified more money in the CPC reserves as he received an estimate of the 2021 surcharge revenue from the finance department and noted an increase due likely to increased property assessments and the recent property tax increase. Nick expressed concern if the 3% surcharge were to be brought up at the May 1<sup>st</sup> Town Meeting but Jay assured him that it was off the table and that the only other grant to be considered was one for refinishing the tennis courts at Patton Park for \$32k.

### **Project Budget**

John began by referencing a working meeting held the day before amongst himself, Mark, Mike, Tim, and Jay where they conducted a detailed review of the items comprising the \$4.7M ask for construction. John showed the latest version of the budget on the screen (Tim had sent out a copy to the committee just prior to the meeting.) The highlights of the new budget were the reduction of the construction contingency to 8% and the reduction of the soft cost contingency to 3%. He also removed some costs that have already been paid out, inserted a grant for the generator for \$67k, and added the potential \$1M grant from the CPC. The net result of \$1,285,402 in cost reductions was the new proposed ask at Town Meeting of \$3.4M. Mike, Tim, and he declined to lower some of the added item costs that were done after the receipt of the unexpected lower general contractor bids, as they felt the increases were a better representation of the expected costs. He did mention that he was pursuing possible utility incentive programs with National Grid, having recently identified the contact person. John was also waiting on quotes from W.B. Mason for furnishings for both Pilgrim Hall and the new Town Hall. Mike pointed that there has been no reduction in the scope of the project. He also noted that perhaps a Friends Group could be established that could reach out for community donations. Given the fact that the CPC will not vote on the \$1M addition until March 11th, Mike asked Kirsten if she could wait on publishing the survey until then. Kirsten agreed.

### **Project Bids**

John noted that in time since we received our project bid last fall, that he was not sure what costs had gone up. Mike said that the cost of wood has doubled. Jean-Pierre said that energy costs had gone up, especially gasoline. John recommended that we go back out to bid so that we can have a firm cost in hand for Town Meeting. John estimated that it would take 6 weeks to complete a new bid cycle. Jack asked if Windover be able to bid if we went for a rebid and John said yes as they now have the required historic preservation certification. Nick suggested going back to low bidder to see if their bid will remain firm. Realizing that there might be an issue as Castagna had mentioned the need for a \$75k adjustment, John suggested that he would have to inquire what can be done regarding adjustments from the Attorney General's (AG) office. Mike suggested we could lose some subcontractor bidders on a rebid, or things could go better. John noted that if he posted the bid on March 4<sup>th</sup> that it could be advertised on March 10<sup>th</sup> and with the necessary timing, that we would get the final bid on April 28<sup>th</sup>.

Tim objected to the rebid as it would cost from \$10k – \$20k and then if the project fails at Town Meeting, what then, as we have limited funds available. Tim further mentioned the fact that if the vote at the Annual Town Meeting is successful, he will be under significant pressure to coordinate moving, storage, outfitting, trailers, etc. and that sufficient time must be allocated to take the burden off of himself and other Town Hall Department Managers who would otherwise be stressed with trying to quickly move and set up in a new location so as to immediately conduct business. The previous schedule was too tight. John suggested that the bid documents could specify a 60 – 90 day delay in start of construction. With regard to Tim's suggestion to not rebid now, John felt that going out to bid in May after the project passes at Town Meeting would likely result in higher escalation costs. Mike noted that both the Town Manager and the BOS needed to weigh in on their feelings on a rebid and he will approach them. Mike did note that asking for a rebid with an unfunded project would put us at a disadvantage. Jean-Pierre asked why we were now considering a rebid as he thought that the low GC bidder said he could hold his bid. John said that the agreement to hold the bid was informal and that since that discussion

the low bidder had suggested at \$75k adjustment. Besides, John was not sure that he could do something like that, and hence the need to contact the AG. John also commented on Tim's suggestion to not rebid and suggested that we could confer with our cost estimators to see if we can understand where some costs have increased. Mark indicated that his effort would take a week or so and John indicated we would use PM&C and Fennessey Consulting and do a line by line analysis. Tim wondered if a contractor accepted the job knowing that they were underfunded, would they inflate some invoices or use change orders to recoup their losses. John said yes. Jack commented that we were shovel ready and that we should go with what we have and avoid the rebidding costs. John said that the low GC bidder, Castagna, had asked if we were going to rebid as they are anxious to win this project.

Rosemary commented that having a rebid result be presented just before Town Meeting would create much anxiety. She wondered what would happen if the rebid was considerably higher than the previous bid and if the contingencies would cover the increase. John said that the contingencies would not cover a bid explosion and explained that they covered only architectural coordination and unanticipated conditions. He then suggested that when the shortfall is recognized that some of the scope can be removed such as removing the cost of furniture and landscaping from the project and using fundraising to pay for it. John mentioned he has seen success with this approach.

### **Schedule of Meetings**

Mike took this opportunity to summarize where we were. He suggested the committee meet next Thursday, March 4<sup>th</sup>; then some attend the CPC meeting on March 11<sup>th</sup>; and the committee meet on March 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **FINCOM Position Paper**

David Wanger said he would recycle the FINCOM position paper that was developed for the Fall 2020 Town Meeting and asked the committee to review to ensure it would be correct for the upcoming Town Meeting. He also took the opportunity to suggestion the potential use of a Friends Group for fundraising by commenting on a recent experience in Quincy where he observed the use of donation bricks. Mike supported the use of Friends for both support to the project and potential fundraising.

### **Plans for Next Week**

Mike suggested we try and do the following for next week's meeting:

- Report on rebidding from Town Manager and BOS
- Report on AG ruling on bidding regulations
- Report on Castgna on holding their bid
- Report on getting the estimators to review the budget
- Kirsten to report on revisions to survey document
- Committee to review FAQ list
- Committee to review suggested short videos
- Committee to review FINCOM position paper
- Report on potential National Grid incentives

### **Final Comment on Project**

Jay made one final comment on the effort. He feels that the committee has put in a lot of work during their deliberation on project costs. He mentioned the intense scrutiny on all costs and noted that no one should think that there are any extras included in the design. He wondered if Kirsten could somehow capture that thought in her work.

**Next Meeting**

Mike set the next meeting for Thursday, March 4, 2021 at 1:00 PM via Zoom. He also mentioned the next CPC meeting at 7:00 PM on March 11, 2021 and a follow-on THBC meeting on Friday March 12, 2021 at 1:00 PM.

**Adjournment**

Mike adjourned the meeting at 2:20 PM.

A True Record,

Jay Butler, Secretary