

TOWN HALL BUILDING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
March 18, 2021

Members Present: Mike Twomey, Jay Butler, Rosemary Kennedy, Darcy Dale, Jack Lawrence (part-time), Tim Olson (part-time), and Patrick Reffett

Members Absent: Jean-Pierre Minois

Others Present: Owner Project Manager (OPM) - Design Technique (DTI), John Sayre-Scibona; Pat Shannon, Assistant to the Town Manager and CPC Coordinator; David Wanger, FINCOM; and Kirsten Alexander, Communication Consultant

Mike Twomey opened the Zoom audio/video teleconference at 1:02 PM. Jay then took a roll call of committee members, determining there was a quorum of 5 members.

Past Meeting Minutes

Jay made a motion that was seconded to accept the 3/12/21 meeting minutes, and mentioned suggested corrections by Jack and John. He then asked Darcy to comment. Darcy wanted to clarify comments she made at the last meeting concerning the differences in voting at Town Meeting vs. the Special Election. She said that the affirmative vote at Town Meeting was a legislative act that provided direction to the committee to keep moving forward with the project while the vote at the Special Election was a vote only for the funding mechanism for the project. She wanted to make the distinction between the two votes clear. **Hearing no other comments, Jay recorded a roll call, unanimous vote of 5 Yes. (Tim and Jack had not yet joined up.)**

Project Status

Mike reported that the BOS voted unanimously earlier in the week to place the project on the warrant for the ATM on May 1, 2021 and have the vote for the bond at the May 6, 2021 Municipal Election. He also mentioned his recent excel sheet distributed to the committee that showed the projected Ask for Town Meeting to be \$3.4M. He asked if there were any questions but received none. Mike noted that there was a minor discrepancy of \$280k between he and John's past calculations, but he explained that he merely adjusted the amount for contingency that John accepted.

Communication Efforts

Kirsten reported that the survey is now live and that she had made one late change in deactivating the link to the previous public zoom meeting as that presentation contained the old financial numbers. She said that she had a comment from Jay on the introduction but no others. She suggested shortening the list of those who need to approve such documents. Mike suggested placing a time limit on responses when she sought approvals with the effect that for those who do not respond by the deadline, she will just move on without waiting. She also mentioned that we need to be consistent in our remarks on the project, especially as regards the \$3.4M Ask, and the \$1.2M or 27% reduction from the previous Ask. She then asked if anyone had spoken with the Chronicle Transcript reporter, Neil Zolot, regarding the press release she had written as a means of correcting Neil's recent inaccurate article on the project. Only Mike admitted talking

briefly with him. A brief discussion ensued as to when we might see Neil's next article and most thought it would be next Thursday, March 25th.

Kirsten next mentioned that she was working on an update power point presentation that could be used when meeting with local groups. She asked for volunteer who would be willing to make the presentations and Rosemary, Darcy, and Mike volunteered. Kirsten then reiterated the need to reach out to community groups to get their support for the project and asked for ideas. Rosemary mentioned the Hamilton Wenham Garden Club. Mike noted the Legion, Fire Dept., and COA. Jay mentioned the Hamilton Wenham Recreation Board. Jay also suggested that since the School Committee had mentioned during recent budget negotiations that they were in support of the Town Hall project, someone should appear before the committee and ask for their formal vote of support. Kirsten said that she knew Anna Siedzik and Chair, Michelle Bailey and she would reach out, although she noted that the committee was quite busy with school opening up for in school classes. Kirsten specifically noted the importance of the Mother's Club support where many school related issues were discussed. Mike also mentioned the Hamilton Historical Society and the Hamilton Historic District Commission and Pat Shannon mentioned that he would ask the HHDC for their continued support at their next meeting. Jay asked why we need to ask for support from committees who have already voiced their support, but Kirsten felt we needed to ask for their continued support. Jay was not sure they would change their support since we have now reduced the cost of the Ask by \$1.3M.

Kirsten next emphasized the need to upgrade all of the materials used last Fall so they reflect the current financial numbers. She noted a lot of old info on the Town website. John noted that he had worked with Tim and Drayton on the presentation for last Fall and would continue to work with them and Kirsten on whatever she needed.

Kirsten noted that the timeline moving forward involved the information sessions and a "get out the vote" campaign especially since the state had recently extended the "Vote by Mail" provision so it can be sued for the Municipal Election. Publicity efforts will continue as well. She is awaiting word back from HWCAM on her planned videos. She then asked about the offer made by Karin Cale regarding a potential open house at Town Hall on April 9th since the Town Clerk's office will be open into the evening for voter registration. Rosemary, Darcy, and Mike thought it was a good idea. However, Kirsten was not sure how it would work other than it might be a guided tour with a limited number of people. She promised to write something up for review.

Mike asked Kirsten what we should be doing moving forward and what we will do during the days between the ATM and the Municipal Election. She responded by saying that we should just be reaching out to others or committees. Rosemary asked if Kirsten would be sending post cards and using yard signs, but Kirsten had not planned on either. Kirsten said she would investigate a budget for doing so. Mike said that he had a quote for signs that he will provide to Kirsten. Rosemary suggested having 25 signs that read, "Please help save our Town Hall".

Kirsten mentioned that if quite a few people embraced the Vote by Mail provision such that they may likely vote well before Town Meeting. Mike noted that we need to be aware of this fact in our efforts. She also offered that Absentee ballots were different as they required more documentation for their use.

OPM Report

John reported on the exchange of letters between Joe D. and Castagna confirming that their bid is good until late May. He felt that the need for extending the start date for the project until August to allow Tim enough time to coordinate the move should be left unsaid at the moment. He has been in touch with Drayton and Mark and confirmed they are ready to help where needed but he didn't see any need for them to attend these current meetings. Kirsten asked if she should be naming Castagna in her communications but John thought not in case someone had some previous issues with them. Mike said that he did not give their name to Neil Zolot.

FINCOM Comments

David Wanger noted that the FINCOM commentary on the warrant article for the ATM will be sent out with the warrant approximately 10 days before the ATM. Pat Shannon will check on that fact. He also mentioned once again that the FINCOM had invited an individual to their next meeting to hear his opposition to the project. He wondered if anyone else had encountered anyone else in opposition to the project. Mike offered that he will seek out Doug Trees for his comments on the project and report back. David advised the committee should appoint one or two individuals to be the only ones to speak to the media in order to keep the facts in order.

Jack noted that we needed to do the tax rate calculation to understand the effect of the reduction in our cost. Tim suggested after briefly conferring with Dyan in Finance that it was an approximate \$0.16 increase vs. the previous \$0.20. Both Jack and Mike thought the number should be much lower. Jay said it was \$0.15 based on the municipal bond interest calculator that Phil Stearns and Marisa Batista had earlier developed for use by the committee. He also mentioned that it showed the decreasing payments in each of the 30 years of the bond. John thought that showing how the bond payments decreased over time was a good selling point for the project. A discussion then ensued about having Jay provide a copy of the interactive excel calculator tool. After Jay cautioned its use by noting that municipal bond payments consist of two payments per year and that depending on when the bond is issued, the second-year payment can be much higher than the first-year payment, he agreed to send a copy to all. (Immediately after the meeting, Jay sent the calculator tool to all meeting attendees.)

Town Newsletter

Tim mentioned that he just realized that he needed to develop a 2-3 minute video for the Town Newsletter by tomorrow that would show highlights of what is happening within the DPW. He said he would briefly mention the Town Hall project. After determining that Pat Shannon sends out the Town Newsletter video every other week, Mike asked if the next version in two weeks could have a larger segment on the Town hall project written by Kirsten. Pat agreed.

Next Meeting

After asking Kirsten how often she wanted to check in with the committee, and based on her response, Mike set the next meeting in two weeks for Thursday, April 1, 2021 at 1:00 PM via Zoom. Mike offered that he could always call for a meeting earlier if necessary.

Adjournment

Jack made a motion to adjourn at 1:47 PM that was seconded, and then voted by roll call vote 7 - 0.

A True Record,

Jay Butler, Secretary