**TOWN PROPERTIES COMMITTEE**

Minutes for August 19, 2020, 6:00 PM

The meeting was opened at 6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nancy Butler, Ross MacPherson, Colleen Thompson, John Traynor, Jon Wilhelmsen MEMBERS ABSENT:

GUESTS PRESENT: Selectman Mark Russo, Town Administrator Liz Dennehy

BETA Group, Inc. representatives Tom Loughlin (Principal Planner) and Scott Ridder (Landscape Architect)

NOTES: This meeting was conducted on a Zoom meeting platform with members participating from their homes. Members and guest will be referred to by their initials in the minutes.

ACTION ITEMS: **In bold print**

DISCUSSION:

1. Opening – JW read the Governor’s orders of 3/12/20 and 3/15/20 which allow this Zoom meeting as a temporary change to Open Meeting Law during the COVID-19 shut-down. The meeting will be recorded to provide public access to the discussion. The meeting was turned over to BETA Group.
2. Tom Loughlin – Noted that Stephanie Daniels is no longer with BETA Group. TL will now be leading this project. There are three purposes fo br tonight’s meeting:

* Review the meeting minutes from BETA’s interviews with the principals of the Fire Department, Police Department, and the Library.
* Scott Ridder will review the rough drafts of possible layouts of the center campus.
* Discuss bringing a housing consultant into the project preparation and discussions.

1. BETA Interviews presented by TL. Done by conference call, between 6/23 and 7/1/20
2. Fire Department: Attendees: Fire Chief Steve Silva, Fire Captain John Sjostedt, BETA Group: Stephanie Daniels, Jeff Maxtutis, Scott Ridder

Reviewed Fire Station History/Conditions, Fire Personnel, Current Equipment, and Station Improvement Alternatives.

BOTTOM LINE: Current station needs complete update, including a second-floor addition. The current bays are too small for the new equipment (particularly the new ambulance), There are issues with the water and septic, parking lot, and road access. Alternative sites: Palmer Road at Maple (15 acres), Center Street (4 acres)

1. Library: Attendees: Head Librarian Deb Batson, BETA Group: SD, JM, SR.

Reviewed the Schedule, Staff and Operations, and the Building and Systems.

BOTTOM LINE: There are many parking issues, particularly the low number of spaces and the non-compliant handicapped spaces. The Library has its own well, but the pipes are old, and the water is rusty. Road access is difficult, sight is limited by curve.

1. Police Department: Attendees: Interim Police Chief Matt Clancy, BETA Group: SD, JM

Reviewed Staffing/Station Equipment/Operations, Building Systems, and Access/Circulation/Parking.

BOTTOM LINE: The building and systems are new. They would like an impound lot and a drive-through mezzanine attached to the sally port. They would also like to be able to drive around the building to park in back. Most important is the need to improve the line of sight at the entrance (lower the retaining wall). Safety is an issue.

TL asked if the Committee has any questions for the Fire Chief, Police Chief or Head Librarian. He suggested asking whether there would be any issues with the public safety departments sharing one egress, separate from the public access.

1. Rough Drafts of Possible Layouts of the Center Campus presented by SR. SR presented four separate site analysis boards. The concepts have not been vetted by BETA’s traffic experts.
2. Overview of the site as it is now, including buildings, driveways, septic/water systems, and survey/topographical layover. Of the recently purchased five acres, only one acre is flat and easily used for construction. The only well shown is at the Library. The Committee responded that the other well is in the Town House basement. **What is the source of the Fire Department water – Town House or Library? This will be researched.**
3. Concept 1 – New fire station on “new” land, ball fields remain in place, one shared public safety access road, one shared public access road. Provides redesigned parking with green space while retaining the green space at the front of the Town House and Library. Question – would the new single entrance need to be signalized?
4. Concept 2 – Like #1, but ball fields are replaced by two housing buildings (9-10 units total). Increased parking and green spaces. For the housing section, this also includes gardening spaces and screening from the public areas. JW questioned whether this would require a new septic system and well(s), which would need to be huge. SR said that this has not yet been worked up.
5. Concept 3 – Housing shown as one larger building, rather than two units. Less parking, but still trying to respect the front door of the Library while not encroaching on the road and losing all of the current lawns.
6. Concept 4 – Like #3 but with differently designed parking lots.

Discussion engendered by these designs:

* Regarding the recently purchased five acres: The severe drop off (roughly 10%) would require a great deal of expensive regrading, retaining walls, stair systems, etc. There is the possibility of some building being built into the hill, but that would require more foundation work. TL asked about the land between the police drainage area and the Highway Department, as well as the other land around the HD. Some of this raises the same issue of slope involved with the “new” land. There is possibly a little more room available on that site but not much. TL suggested that a highway facility or salt shed could easily be built into a hill. While that is true, we are about to put a new roof on the existing building and are unlikely to want to replace it. We are very careful with our money in Plympton.
* There was some discussion about the ball fields vs other possibilities. Other current recreation options were listed. **We need to understand what the need is for the fields and the possible alternative locations.**
* Parking has always been an issue, but we don’t want to create too much unused parking.
* Much of this discussion is predicated on moving the fire station. That would likely not happen for 5-10 years. What can we do in the interim to improve parking and traffic flow without spending funds on work that will need to be redone? How do we stage the entire project? Could we do the Library portion? **We need more conversation with the Fire Chief regarding the access – could it be adjusted with the current building in place?**
* Moving the fire department (building a new station) makes staging the other portions of the project possible. It opens up the area for other uses, improves traffic flow and public safety. There are other possible locations for the FD, but it makes the most sense to keep all public safety services in one location. It is important that this committee fully study the options – refurbish/add second floor and larger bay or build new. Refurbishing would cost less but could still be a short-term fix. It could open issues with compliance with current standards. This building needs many upgrades, it causes a separation and there are egress and safety issues for the center campus. What would a new fire station cost and how does that compare to the renovation costs? **We need to research the possibilities, show the financials for both options, and try to forecast the future needs**.
* Can we create a COA facility – either a new building or by repurposing the current fire station? We could use the current fire station foundation for a new building.
* We are constrained in what we build, particularly housing. We may be challenged by the septic and well needs. We want to avoid needing to have sprinkler systems. How do we build and oversee these housing units? **TL said that someone in BETA Group can evaluate the septic issues.** Are there problems with the current system? Yes, routinely snaked blockages (less expensive than redoing the entire system). Is there any info about the soil, test pits, knowledge of ledge, etc. to help determine the type and expense of any potential new system? To be determined.
* TL - Which is more important to the Town, moving the fire station or building housing?
* Does the Town want to be the owner of the housing, set up a housing authority, hire staff or hire a management company? It would depend on the housing location. In the center, it would probably need to be owned by the Town. It’s a question of scale. A small project would not likely attract an outside contractor. Maybe it would be better to save the center for public services and put the housing elsewhere. The Town needs to think through what housing ownership would mean, on this or any other property. Can the housing project, with its necessary services, be shared with another town that has a public water supply? We don’t want to continue working on putting housing in the center if it isn’t a viable idea.

1. Bringing a Housing Consultant into the Project Preparation and Discussions by TL.

The previous discussion led into the third topic. **TL will speak with a real estate consultant** to determine if a 40B project or other senior housing project is feasible in Plympton at this time. That person can help determine the need for this area and estimate ranges of costs for the project. Are there development companies interested in this type of project? Are there locations that would foster shared services? **We should talk with other towns of Plympton’s size to see who is doing this, how they accomplished it and what problems they have had. LD will reach out to her Small Towns of Massachusetts network, the Community Compact report, and other colleagues to gather this information.** People want to stay in the town they like, so we know that there is some interest in senior housing. The committee discussed some other housing style ideas: small cottages vs town houses, modular homes, etc.

1. **TL said that BETA will look into septic costs, creating new vs connecting into existing. SR will research the size/costs of a new fire station, will figure out the number of parking spaces needed in the center campus and discuss access points with BETA traffic people.**

**BETA will email the concept drawings for distribution to the committee.**

BETA Group exited the meeting at 7:48 PM

1. Other Business

* Town Barn Roof – LD said that she is working on the procurement process. She has been talking with Town Counsel (TC) to make sure that everything is done correctly for good results and a smooth process. TC recommends contacting an architect to develop specs and costs for the project. LD will share the bid package with this committee for review before it goes to the Board of Selectmen and then out for bid. This project is under the umbrella of this committee. The goal is to fix the underlying problem – do it right and do it once.
* Building/Property Project Spreadsheet – JW prepared a spreadsheet of Town Buildings with a listing of the building administrator, the known issues/projects including a description, cost estimate, status and ranking the critical nature of each issue. This master control plan will be discussed in more depth at the next meeting

1. MINUTES: No minutes of previous meetings were discussed.
2. NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 8/26/20, 6:00 PM (Without BETA Group)

With BETA Group to be determined

ADJOURNMENT: 7:56 PM