**TOWN PROPERTIES COMMITTEE**

Minutes for December 16, 2020, 6:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nancy Butler, Colleen Thompson, John Traynor,

Jon Wilhelmsen (Chair) ABSENT: Ross MacPherson

GUESTS PRESENT: Fire Chief Steve Silva, Mark Russo

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**

1. OPENING – JW opened the meeting at 6:05 p.m. by reading the Governor’s orders of 3/12 & 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.
2. FIRE STATION – Presented by Chief Silva. The current fire station was built in 1974. It was not designed for the increased size of today’s equipment. The new ambulance, which will arrive within the next week or so, is slightly larger than the current ambulance. We have purchased the smallest brush truck available, delivery of which has been pushed forward to next autumn due to COVID constraints. The length of these vehicles is such that personnel will have to leave the building in order to re-enter on the other side of the vehicles for full access. Additionally, this building does not comply with OSHA standards and will need other upgrades to bring it up to code. The Chief researched three possible options:
3. Option 1 – Push out the rear of the station 5’-8’. The back of the building is cut into the hill and the rear wall is actually a retaining wall. In order to increase the length of the building we would have to cut further into the hill and the height of the new retaining wall would be approximately 8’. This whole project would cost $100-$120k.
4. Option 2 – Push out the front of the station 5’-8’. This would involve removing the entire front wall and would necessitate restructuring the building and roof supports. Again, the cost would be approximately $100-$120k.
5. Option 3 – Build a new station, repurposing the current station into a community/COA center.
6. Find other Town-owned property and build there.
7. Build on the Town Campus on the recently acquired land behind the batting cages
8. Don’t Overbuild! Build a station that will meet the needs of the Town for the next 40-50 years but make it a building that is appropriate for our Town - a reasonable building that has some room for growth as the population of the Town increases. The cost of this is high – maybe $8-$10 million – but perhaps we could reduce that by using prefab or metal buildings. This has worked in some other towns.

What do we do in the meantime? The Center Street building is in terrible condition. The roof has failed, and the slab has cracked. It will not be a safe storage location for any equipment. Some towns have used a military-style temporary fire station. This would be a costly solution with set up and tear down costs, and monthly rent of $5-$6,000. We need to come up with a plan to deal with the space constraints and safety compliance issues that will chart a good future for the station, happen relatively soon and be reasonably priced.

Discussion: JW suggested that we need to get some initial design work done. We need to know what we need and what the costs will be in order to plan carefully and with confidence that we can do this project matching expenses as near as possible with the scheduled debt reduction in town.

Chief S said that there is software available to do design work and pricing. He noted that there is always a change or two in a large project but with careful planning, there shouldn’t be any big surprises. JT would like some more information about this software and pricing. **Chief S will research this software and the companies that use it.**

The committee is concerned that the Town does not wait too long before taking any action. On the other hand, we do not yet know the full impact of COVID on the Town. We will proceed with the planning but not jump into anything precipitous. We need to be prepared with a plan before we are forced into action. It would be good to do some preparatory land clearing and soil testing.

We also have concerns about the septic and water systems. We need this infrastructure information – what we have, what we will need and design something that will be expandable. We should make a start on planning and design now, moving to get some of the prep work done and updating the costs as time passes.

We’ve basically been having this same discussion in Town for ten years and we’re in the same place – aside from getting the police station built. We need to ask Town Meeting to appropriate funds for design work. We may be risking a little, but we need to make a start.

Returning to the current problem of space constraints, the question was raised about whether a temporary bay could be added between the library and the fire station. This is a possibility. It could be sized to hold the smaller fire equipment, leaving the current bays to house the larger vehicles. The bay building could later be used to house the COA van and med. bus which would be better stored out of the weather. **Chief S will get a conceptual drawing for this option, scaled to the size of the med. bus.**

**JT will talk to Representative LaNatra** to see if there are any grants available to cover any part of this fire station project. Grants for any portion of the process would be helpful.

Chief S exited the meeting at 6:51

1. TOWN BARN ROOF UPDATE – Report by JW. We received three bids ranging from $105k to more than double that amount. The lowest bidder was accepted. Recommendations and references were checked and proved favorable. The contract documents are being pulled together for signature. Upon signing the contractor will have 150 days to complete the work. If the weather cooperates, this could happen this winter, otherwise it will be done in the spring. The cost of the project and the design work already completed will be done within the appropriation with a small portion used from the Buildings and Grounds fund.

Discussion: We again want to note the importance of having professional help (engineer and architect) prior to completing the bid documents. This allowed us to have documents that showed the scope of the job. Companies did not have to overbid in order to plan for unknown contingencies. This kept the project from having to return to Town Meeting for additional funding.

1. TOWN HOUSE RAMP Project – Report by JW. The BOS signed the design service agreement with BETA. BETA will provide a few design choices within the next few weeks. This project should be well within our grant funding.
2. TOWN HOUSE WASTE PIPES, SEPTIC, DRAINAGE – Report by JW. LD contacted Budge It Drains Inc. This is a company that has previously worked on the blockage issues. They scoped, videoed, and recorded the entire set of lines under the Town House for $450. They also snaked the drains again while they were there. They found problems at two T and Y fittings under LD’s office and under the COA room. The problem areas have been marked on the floors with tape. Fixing the problem is not simple since the pipes are encased in the cement slab, but we have no idea of the possible cost. **LD will seek a formal written report and estimates to either fix the problems or a maintenance schedule to keep the lines flowing freely.**  This information will help us decide which option is most cost effective and least disruptive at this time.
3. FLAGPOLE – The Town Green flagpole is 62’ tall. JW located two companies that do restoration work. As previously discussed, replacement with a same height fiberglass pole would be near $20k. Complete restoration, including stripping, painting, and re-rigging will cost $3,800, will last approx. 10 years, and can be completed expediently. We will need to develop a maintenance schedule so that it does not need to be stripped again. Perhaps this can be added to the Highway Dept. budget

Discussion: The question of the Rte. 106 flagpole was raised again. This is a shorter pole which also needs repainting. **JW will ask the restoration company to give an estimate on this pole as well.** These projects seem perfect for either a small community grant (Walmart?) or in-town fund raising. **MR will pursue the fund-raising possibility. CT will look into grants.**

1. DENNETT SCHOOL SOLAR AND POWER OPTIONS – The school committee, like this committee, is in favor of proceeding with the roof solar portion of this project. The BOS has executed the Letter of Intent. All feel that removing the 12 trees will be a benefit to the school. There will be no visual impact of this removal since these trees are merely the tallest (and most threatening) members of the nearby forest.

The solar company will proceed with their procurement to lock in their tax credits. JW will meet with them and Principle Peter Veneto to look at the roof again. We will need to join the Power Options Consortium. This is a consortium of non-profits and municipalities. Membership will give us other discounts on our utilities and will provide us with consultants to help with future energy related projects, including exploratory design work.

1. TOWN CAMPUS PLAN – JW will contact BETA in hopes of scheduling their presence at one of our January meetings.
2. OVERALL REVIEW OF TOWN PROPERTIES -
3. Library Lighting – Head Librarian Deb Batson met with a lighting consultant company in the library to look at the lighting situation. We are hoping to put together a plan for the lighting which may be funded out of donations made to the library.
4. The Dennett School recently had an HVAC unit fail. Its replacement was funded by the C.A.R.E.S Act. JW asked Principle Veneto about the other HVAC units. The school has 5-6 additional units of the same age as the failed unit. These are systems that will need replacement eventually and the C.A.R.E.S Act funds may no longer be available. Additionally, there are other issues at the school – such as replacing the siding and the larger roof. How will these projects fit into a plan and be funded?
5. What other properties and systems in Town will need attention?

1. MINUTES: JW moved that the minutes for December 2nd be approved as written. JT seconded. Roll Call Vote: JT aye, JW aye, CT aye, NB abstain.
2. NEXT MEETING: Wednesday1/6/21, 6:00 then likely the 20th. JW will check with BETA to get them at one of those meetings.
3. ADJOURNMENT: 7:30 PM (NB moved; CT seconded)