**TOWN PROPERTIES COMMITTEE**

Minutes for September 23, 2020, 6:00 PM

The meeting was opened at 6:05 p.m.

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

GUESTS PRESENT: Town Administrator Liz Dennehy, Mark Russo

Tom Loughlin and Scott Ridder of BETA Group

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.
2. BETA Group Presentation – TL said that there were three goals for the options to be presented at this meeting: (1) repurposing the fire station into a community center, (2) smaller individual housing units, and (3) adding the basketball court to the center campus.
3. Option 1.1

* Keeps the fire station. but adds a longer bay on the library side to accommodate the new ambulance and a smaller addition on the other side
* Reworks the parking lots and the access roads, adds walkways and green space
* Adds staff parking
* Adds the basketball court
* Creates some additional parking at the library

Discussion: The committee noticed that the driveway to the police station is removed. Yes, this was done to create more parking. The police probably don’t need it, but it could be reinstated.

1. Option 1.2 – Same as 1.1 with the following

* Adds rear vehicle entry to the fire station creating a new driveway that connects to police drive
* Removes ball fields

1. Option 1.3

* Builds new fire station, shared drive with police station
* Rehabs current fire station for a community center
* Adds basketball court

Discussion: The committee asked if there could be a driveway connecting the library and Town House parking lots. Yes, could be done.

1. Option 2.1

* Builds new fire station
* Creates individual town-house type housing
* Creates single entrance to center campus using the current library entrance across from Main Street
* Total of 60-65 parking spaces
* Adds more green space

Discussion: The committee asked if the current fire station could be kept as a community center in this version. Could a traffic signal be installed for the new entrance? Could the entrance be moved to the middle area of the parking lot rather than on the corner across from Main Street? The library parking lot slopes and will need to be regraded to create a level area. It was noted that the Congregational Church is amenable to negotiating a right of way easement through their parking lot to allow a second entrance to the housing units.

1. Option 2.2 – Similar to 1.4 with the following changes

* Moves entrance road to middle location
* Connects to library with a circular road
* Build new community center

Discussion: This may be the favorite choice. Committee suggests that the current fire station be repurposed as community center rather than building new. Using the Church driveway would be a good addition to this plan. It would be helpful to have an overlay plan to show the stages of development for the center campus. It is likely that this project will take ten to twenty years to accomplish.

**We need the** **answers to some important questions: (1) What would a new fire station cost? (2) What would new ball fields cost? (3) What would it cost to renovate the current fire station into a community center? (4) Is this the best spot for the housing?**

TL asked if there are other locations appropriate for the ball fields. There is no room at the Dennett School, but Harry Jason Park has been leveled and seeded. Could we have a version of this plan that leaves the ball fields in the center and moves the housing? Some members like the housing in the center due to the easy access to the Town House, library, and proposed community center. Putting them elsewhere would change the water and sewer issues. It might also affect whether the housing is a public or private concern. Is the Town ready to add a Housing Authority? What would the housing units be like? **JW will look for some floorplans of small houses in Scandinavia to share with the committee.** The housing project is probably many years away which leaves the ball fields in place for quite a while.

The big issue, the thing on which the whole project rests, is the fire station – committing to building a new building that will hold the new larger equipment and serve the Town for the

future. The current station will not work without a great deal of renovation and additions. We will have more discussion on this. At what point do we pay off current debt and use those monies for the fire station?

1. Next Steps – TL noted that the fire station is the driving force with the greatest need. The housing is important for the town, but secondary to the fire station. **The questions about the water and septic systems need to be answered in order to know the limitations of the site.** What can the current systems sustain? What are the issues? What would it take to fix the septic or build a new system? Should we drill a test well? Is there a better source of water? Does the area under the ball fields allow for a better system? What is the soil like? As to the options, **SR will do some overlay plans to show phasing of project.** We will also look at the Housing Plan that LD acquired from the town of Berlin, MA. **TL will put LD in touch with people in the town of Bolton. CT will send the Plympton 2017 Housing Plan to JW for distribution to the committee.**
2. BETA Group exited the meeting at 6:55
3. Town Barn Roof Update – LD reported that the architect has created the specs for the job. There is one section of the building that will need repair and/or supports before the roof is done. We need to confirm this before the project goes out to bid. A structural engineer will be hired (for approximately $2,500) to review this and amend the plan. When this is work is completed the clear and complete spec for the job can go out to bid.
4. Town House Lift Project – LD reported that the State Elder Services Division has reinstated the grant monies ($95k), so we are able to continue and complete this project. The money was provided in one lump sum rather than being a reimbursement grant. We will have to keep good records, and be subject to an audit, which is not a problem. LD will follow up with the State to get guidance on when this project must be completed but feels that we should get this done as soon as possible. LD has reached out to the architect to see if they will honor their original quote. She has also contacted the architect that did the work on the town barn roof. Town Counsel has forwarded a bid package template for this project. It is a more complicated process but with the template, we’ll be ready to go. JW reminded us that there are three parts to this project: (1) the lift, deck, and new accessible door, (2) the sidewalk to get to the lift, and (3) making the Town House main entranceway safer and more accessible. The main portion for the bid is number one. Numbers two and three will be requested as alternates or add-ons to the bids.
5. MINUTES: NB moved that the minutes for August 26 be approved as written. JT seconded. All aye.
6. NEXT MEETING: Tentatively Wednesday 10/07/20, 6:00 PM With BETA Group.

ADJOURNMENT: 7:08PM (NB moved; JT seconded)