**PLYMPTON TOWN PROPERTIES COMMITTEE**

Minutes, Thursday, October 20, 2022, 6:30 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nancy Butler, Ross McPherson (Zoom), John Traynor, Jon Wilhelmsen  
ABSENT: Colleen Thompson  
GUEST PRESENT: Plympton Fire Chief Silva, PFD Mike Saccone, Jeff Shaw (Principal and President) and Mina Abdelmasih (Project Manager) of Context Architecture and Dan Pallotta and Rebecca Ducharme of P3 (Zoom)

* Committee members and guest will be referred to by their initials in these minutes.
* When possible, action items will be noted in **bolded** letters.

OPENING – This meeting was held in the Dillon Training Room of the Plympton Police Station and by ZOOM. JW opened the meeting at 6:33± and turned the meeting over to JS to talk about the Plympton Fire HQ Space Needs Study (01 Draft, 10/11/22). JS and MA will be the two people primarily working on our project but others from Context will be involved as required. Context Architecture helped design and build the Plympton Police Station.

1. FIRE STATION PROJECT

A. General Discussion - JS said that a small group met to determine what the fire department program needs are and to align those needs with the expectations for the town’s fire station. This will help determine the size of the building and will keep the building viable well into the future. This meeting led to the first draft of the fire station program which was emailed to committee members.

The initial starting point shown in the first draft is 21,000**□**’. We know that this is too much and not affordable for Plympton. From this start we reduce, discuss, eliminate, combine, etc. to reconfigure the geometry. The square footage number will be going down.

Beyond the space needs, Context will be working on site analysis. We already know some of the information from the work down for the police station. This needs to be updated or confirmed and the information for the new site completed. The surveys are currently underway. Context will take that information and lay out where the building will go to fit the site topography and practicality.

After the site design is worked out, Context will look at the outer and inside configurations, and the general look and feel of the building. They will use this to price the building under current cost conditions. The final cost estimate will come at the end of all of the work and be ready to go public. We want to make sure that by the time we get to that stage we haven’t done all of this work for nothing. We want people to see all of the work that has been done and that we have done our best to get the town to the right place to build the fire station. Tonight, we will get committee input to help refine the program and reach some consensus before doing the next draft.

FCS, JW, and JT visited the new Mattapoisett fire station (17,000**□**’) to compare their rooms and areas with our starting point. Mattapoisett has a larger meeting room than our first draft (75**□**’ vs 49**□**’). Mattapoisett also has a mezzanine for storage which is not in our current design. The biggest difference is the size of the apparatus room, which is 3000**□**’ smaller than our design. Visiting Mattapoisett helps us better envision how our apparatus will fit in a smaller space. **JS will send out the Mattapoisett program digitally so that the committee will have it available.** For now, JS is looking for input on the Draft 1 Program.  
  
JT said that the $800**□**’ cost is difficult to take. Is that the cost for everything? JS responded that it is an average cost in eastern Massachusetts for construction only and does not include furnishings, electronics, etc. We know that it is a high number and part of the process for the committee, P3, and Context is to make the building as cost effective as possible and hopefully bring the cost per square foot down. JT asked what happens to the costs in a recession. JS said that the Context estimators were discussing this. They expect that the costs will come down some more, but we don’t know when. It is very unlikely that costs will come down to the pre-COVID level.

JW said that we also have other ways get the costs down. The current design shows eight drive-through bays using eight doors (±$30,000 each). If we change from drive-through, we reduce the doors to four – a savings of $120,000. We also choose our materials carefully – flooring, siding, roofing – to get a good, serviceable, and reasonably priced product. Our work is to design and firm up a number so that we know what we can afford and how we can get there. Our three levers are the size of the building, the materials and how much money we have. It also depends on the current interest rates and how we bond the project.

JT thinks that $8 million is in the ballpark but $10 million is too much. Sysco designed their buildings for growth. The underlayment is in place and their building can be added to on either end. Could we do that? JW said that’s essentially what we did for the police station. We didn’t do the understructure, but we designed the building so that the building could have an addition without disruption to the main rooms. JS said that the caveat is that you have to understand that you aren’t likely to get more money to make an addition in the near future, so you need to make sure that you build something that isn’t immediately full when you move in.

JT asked what the difference would be in cost between the equipment bay and the other parts of the station. JS responded that office space is more expensive, so this is where you reduce and redesign to save space, not in the equipment bays. JT is concerned about the cost. We are not going to do an override to build. We will have to figure out when and where we are going to find the monies to afford to build and outfit the administrative side.

Tonight’s discussion is to optimize the design to create the smallest, most efficient building that meets the needs of the fire department. We have to be able to defend everything we design and then find the money. NB remembered that this is how we worked out the police station design. We started high, chopped, and redesigned until we ended up with this beautiful building. We are confident that we can do this again. JW mentioned that we nearly cut the cost of the police building in half by the time we were done.

FCS said that many fire stations in Massachusetts are old. Communities are building to bring the facilities up to current standards and OSHA requirements. He is hoping that there will soon be legislation and grants that will help to take the burden off the communities. They don’t exist right now but there is talk. We will be able to get some grants to help outfit the building. JS agreed that there is talk about legislation for fire stations but even if that happens, everyone will be seeking the monies. JW said that is why we need to be ready to go. We will be more likely to get funds if we are prepared to apply for them.

FCS affirmed that the fire department folk are realists and many live in this town. They want a building that is functional and appropriate for Plympton. RM noted that this was the same response we got from Police Chief Dillon and the building we built is appreciated by the residents. JW said that people saw this when we held the open house for the new police station. People were proud of it and saw that we had what was needed without much more. This is how we will face this current project.

1. Administrative and Common Rooms Discussion - JW said that the public room does not need to be as large as it is currently designed (75**□**’) and could be closer to the Mattapoisett station (49**□**’). It can be smaller, and remain useable for storm shelter, larger meetings, ESS, etc.

We can save space with the office areas – reduce the Chief’s office a bit, create a multi-use open layout for shared office space. The station does not need a separate conference room. The public/training room can be used when more space is needed to look at building plans and as the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Most computer work is done on laptops now and can easily move between rooms. JW asked what is specific to an EOC. JS replied, a closet for hardware storage, modular/ moveable furniture, and plenty of power jacks. It’s also nice to have a multi-channel screen or multiple screens.

JT asked how many people are in our EOC. FDS said 5-6. JT asked why we need such a large room then. FCS said the room will be used as a training room with a robust IT system. Fire station training sessions are increasing in frequency, are interactive virtual training, and are sometimes done with other towns. The training room would be multi-purpose and available for community use. JT noted that we will also have the old fire station (OFS) to use as a community center but agreed that training space is needed in the new building. RM said that although we will have the OFS for community and other use, the timeline to modify it to be a usable space is further down the road, especially considering the cost of the new fire station. JT thinks that the building could be put into use much more quickly by cleaning and painting.

Moving on, JS said they can work to tighten up the administrative rooms and common spaces. The public side needs two, single-seat unisex bathrooms. One would not be sufficient. JT noted that we do not have deputy chief or fire prevention positions. FCS responded that those positions, likely combined into one, will morph from the Day Captain position. It would be helpful to have a second-in-command type position with more authority [than the captains], if only to have a weighted position to step in for the Chief when s/he is out of range – maybe even on a vacation. JW suggested that we don’t use specific terms to describe the office spaces, other than the Chief’s office. Use “staff” or “common space”.

JS suggested getting rid of the dead records storage space. JT thinks we need it. FCS said that we will need a little. Medical records used to take a great deal of space. but they are mostly electronic now. JW likes the storage combined in the open office space. Then it can expand, or contract, as needed.

1. Apparatus and Support Rooms

JS said that Context needs to solve the geometry problem of fitting the equipment into the space, so this is not ready for discussion tonight. The goal is to reduce the size from Program Draft 1 but make sure that everything fits.

JT noted that we are offered free vehicles from the State or through grants and then we need more space to store them. JS said that one idea is to construct the outer wall to allow for a canopy to be attached if the number of vehicles increases. JW said that any place we can be thoughtful for future flexibility, without much added cost, is good. RM recalled that this is what we did with the police station design. By putting the locker rooms at the back, we constructed the building to allow outward expansion should the need arise. Having the ability to have growth connected, without redesigning the whole building, will pay dividends down the road. FCS noted that we should pour the pad or make other preparations on that side of the building so that it will sustain the weight of the vehicles.

RM asked if this is a one or two-story building. JS said that this is still being discussed to determine which is most cost effective and most attractive to a potential contractor. It can be designed either way. JS discussed building code laws surrounding stairs vs elevators and the possibility of getting waivers. The gray area is that FD personnel have to be able-bodied but the second floor may still need to accessed by cleaners, school children/public tours, etc.

RM asked if there is a labor vs materials savings. JS said that there is not necessarily an actual difference but there is a perception by the contractors that a single story may be cheaper. They won’t have to build staging, get in materials and personnel lifts, etc. JS said that the question will likely be answered by the size of the building and the site requirements. From a functional perspective for the FD, it doesn’t matter.

JT said that a small footprint may be better for us. JS replied that all of the space that makes the building work – mechanical, electrical, sprinkling – will be as small as possible. We don’t want to build more than we need. FCS reminded us that we can’t compromise on the hot (contaminated) to cold (clean) areas. The target is to get under the 17,500**□**’ of Mattapoisett which means cutting 4-5,000**□**’ by reducing the bays, training, and administrative areas.

RM would like to see the IT room reduced to better meet our needs. JS said that this space often ends up being used as an additional closet. FCS said that much of the equipment needed is already in the police station. Is this system sufficient to cover both buildings? JS said likely not. JS asked about the radio system. FCS said that we don’t need a radio or repeater room. JS said that was what they needed confirmed.

JW said that more open spaces doesn’t cost more. Walls and doors add to the costs. Could we reduce the size of the bunk rooms and move the space to the day room? JS said that the bunk rooms are at their smallest. RM thinks the dorm space looks realistic and good.

JT wondered about our size compared to Mattapoisett. If they are 17.500**□**’, why wouldn’t we be at 14,000 **□**’? JS said that that would seem reasonable but smaller towns have fewer stations and thus have to house more equipment. Bigger towns spread their equipment around to multiple stations. Plympton also needs to have water and water trucking equipment that bigger/urban towns don’t need. JT asked if we need all of the apparatus that we have. RM said that he thinks FCS and has done a good job at paring down. JW noted that although we are thinking about the outside overhang/canopy, we can’t keep equipment there that should be inside.

NB asked if we are taking into consideration that the vehicles may continue to increase in size. FCS said that we are good with equipment now but we do have to look to the future. The next ambulance (to replace A1) will be larger, like A2). We will never need to buy and store a ladder truck. We give and receive mutual aid successfully.

Context and P3 left the meeting at 7:50±. Context will amend the design to incorporate tonight’s suggestions.

D. Other Fire Station Related Business

* NB moved that we approve a $1,200 invoice from Context. JT seconded. Motion passed 4/0.
* JW moved that we approve a single signer for the payment of bills after they have been vetted by P3 and Liz Dennehy. Any invoices approved in this manner will be reported to the committee at the next meeting. This will keep the project moving along and is how we handled the process for the police station. NB seconded. Motion passed 4/0.

1. OTHER ACTIVE PROJECTS
2. Town House Entrance - BETA sent a proposal for $7,500 to redesign the entrance. JW moved that we accept their proposal. JT seconded. Motion passed 4/0. JW will let LD know so that the project can get moving. The design proposal will likely be paid out of this committee’s fund. The work will likely come out of ARPA funds. BETA’s proposal is that they will:

* Modify the previously provided plan
* Work with a lighting vendor to provide three options
* Provide estimates for construction (likely under $50k)

1. Old Town House Roof (+) - We have a place holder on the Special Town Meeting Warrant to do the roof. That work will not likely happen until the spring. We will need to do something (tarp, temporary repair, etc.) to prevent more leaks and damage, but we need to know where to do that work. The roof will be done with stock shingles so no special order will be necessary. The plaster has been severely damaged by the leaking roof. The blown-in insulation is wet and will likely not dry.

* We expect the roof replacement proposal by next week.
* There is now an issue with bees that will be addressed.
* We need to get Service Pro in to assess what is wet in the attic.

JW said that we need to spend some time to determine what to do with this building. Could it temporarily house the COA? It needs a general clean out. Junk needs to be removed and valuable materials need to be cleaned, protected, and stored elsewhere. RM has never been in the building. Some committee members may do a walk-through.

Minutes – There were no minutes discussed or approved at this meeting.

Next Meeting - Tentatively scheduled for November 10th

The meeting adjourned at 8:20±

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