

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

TOWN HALL RENOVATIONS PROJECT BUILDING COMMITTEE

January 13, 2014

Town Hall – Lower Level Conference Room L101

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

- I. Call to Order – Chairperson Castelle called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.
- II. Roll Call – Members present: Clarke Castelle, Chairperson; Myra Cohen, Daniel Dinunzio, Scott Soares (arrived at 6:00 PM), Paul Vessella, Bill DeBlasio, and Jen Win-Johnson. Other present: Members of the public; Ed Moriarty and Mike MacDonald, Downes Construction Company; Dave King, Kaestle Boos Associates; Loren Grabinsky, Consulting Engineering Services; Bob Korpak, Director of Facilities Management; Bruce Till, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation; Lou Jachimowicz, Board of Education Chief Finance and Operations Officer; and Jeff Baron, Director of Administrative Services.
- III. Public Participation – None.
- IV. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – Mr. Dinunzio requested that the minutes of the December 16, 2013 meeting be amended to reflect that he had raised the question as to whether there would be separate referendum questions and also that this was a matter that would be decided by the Town Council at a later date. Mr. Baron was directed to make these amendments. Mrs. Cohen then made a motion that the minutes of the December 16, 2013 meeting be approved as amended. Second by Mr. Dinunzio. The motion passed unanimously.
- V. Update on Design Concepts – Mr. Baron stated that the Project Architect had been working on revised drawings of the Community Center and a drawing showing the Town Hall exterior elevation, that they had been meeting with Board of Education staff on revisions to the upper level floor plan, and had circulated MEP (Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing) narratives to staff and the construction manager for consideration. Mr. King presented the changes to the Community Center and Town Hall designs.

At the Community Center the entrance to the parking lot will be off of Cross Street. There will be a drop off area at the main entrance. The project design team is looking to keep the project out of the wetlands area. There has not been any Fire Marshal or Building Official approvals this early in the design

process. At the appropriate time, 8-24 (Town Planning and Zoning Commission) review and Inland Wetlands approval would also be needed. Within the Community Center, the administrative offices and day care are now shown in their new locations. Glazing has been added for improved visibility. The portable bleachers are shown. Mrs. Cohen requested information comparing the lockers and showers at the current Town Hall against what is called for in the new design. Mr. King will provide that, but also observed that locker and shower usage is no longer what it used to be.

Mr. King presented a revised square footage spreadsheet, showing a total of 33,137 square feet. The Construction Manager will be revising the budget based on this figure. Elevation drawings and building sections were also displayed and discussed. Mrs. Cohen asked if the exterior materials could be more definitive and if the Project Building Committee could have samples to consider. These materials would not be finalized until after the passage of a referendum. Mr. Till stated that he is comfortable that the Committee is where it should be at this stage of the project.

The Town Hall revisions were then presented by Mr. King. The entrance plaza at the front of the building has been refined. The site plan was presented. There is a four foot drop that increases to a seven foot drop which needs to be accounted for. Parking in the front of the building shows a re-designed Garfield Street. In the wing where the Transition Academy and Human Capitol Development are located, the Board of Education has requested to capture additional indoor space by moving the entrance that currently faces Mazzoccoli Way. This will accommodate the bus drop off and pick up that occurs daily for the Transition Academy that disrupts traffic at the present time. A median would be set up for the bus to park behind so that traffic headed towards the library would not be required to stop and wait for the bus to load or unload.

Revisions to the Town Hall Lower Level were discussed. The elevator by the Lower Level offices was relocated. That elevator will connect all three floors. The public going to the Lower Level offices could also enter the building through an entrance that is already in place but is not used by the public currently.

Revisions to the Town Hall Main Level were discussed. The public would transit through the front lobby to the atrium to access offices. The current Teen Center area would be used for voting machine storage and training for the Registrars of Voters. The Assessor's Office and the Revenue Collector's Office would share a vault. The Town Manager's Office, Finance Department, and Town Clerk's Office would be off the atrium, with the Central Connecticut Health District Office and the new Town Council Chamber closer to the lobby. There would be seating for 50 or more in the new Town Council Chamber. In the atrium there would be a small platform at the end for

presentations. Toilets were relocated to a space that is currently part of the courtyard. The Information Technology Department would be in a space where the current lobby is located. The servers for the General Government and the Board of Education would be in the same room. The Human Services Office would have a food pantry, entrance, lobby, and reception space of their own. There will also be a receiving area for food deliveries.

Mr. Dinunzio asked Mr. King what his biggest challenge was in developing the structural and architectural program. This would be designing to include consideration of the load bearing walls. Some sections of certain walls are load bearing and some other sections of the same wall are not. Mr. King tried to optimize the existing partitions to reduce the cost of the project. The scope of work for the existing auditorium and stage area will be fire code related only. Mr. King and Mr. Korpak will be meeting with Town Hall general government department heads later in the week to discuss the departmental office layouts. The Chair also expressed hope that there would be sufficient funding to be able to clean up the old Newington High School entrance that is on Cedar Street. The Transition Academy wing will have a revised entrance from the Main Level of Town Hall. Access will be by elevator at this location. It would be a front and back (two door) elevator. Access after hours could be restricted for security purposes. The new exterior entrance for the Transition Academy wing was discussed earlier.

Revisions to the Town Hall Upper Level were discussed. In addition to the existing elevator, there will be new elevators from the Main Lobby and also from the Transition Academy wing. The Transition Academy wing elevator would open in front of the Superintendent of Schools' office. The elevator from the Main Lobby would be located over by the Special Education office. Curriculum Development would have both closed and open offices. The Board of Education's mail room would be located near the current elevator. There is provision for a Training Room. Although the Board of Education will share the Town Council chamber, it will still need training space. The projected area for the Training Room is currently a roof area. The Chair expressed his preference that the new Council Chamber also be used as a training area, and only to add a Training Room on the Upper Level if it is affordable. The Board of Education Information Technology Department and the Business Office would be located on the same side of the building above the atrium.

Except for the exterior walls, the walls on the Upper Level are not load bearing walls. New hallways will be in the atrium. They will be enclosed and glazed. There will be two pairs of toilets on the Upper Level. There will be three elevators servicing the Upper Level. The elevator from the Transition Academy wing is not required by code.

A Building Section was presented, showing the level where the grade change is currently. Interior perspectives of the atrium were presented. They are unchanged from the earlier presentation. The “fly through” that will be developed by Kaestle Boos Associates will provide a better feel for how the atrium will look. An exterior Study was presented that provides the initial idea of what the addition off of Garfield Street would look like. In that drawing, the Transition Academy is on the right side. It portrays an entrance portico, with a colonnade. The ramp for wheelchair accessibility is to the left of the portico. Ms. Win-Johnson asked if the current main entrance will change. It will change some. The grades from the parking area will be adjusted to improve accessibility.

Mr. Dinunzio asked, with regards to the Site Plan, if Mr. King would identify the number of additional parking spaces that were included as the result of straightening out Garfield Street. Mr. King agreed to research this and provide the answer. Mrs. Cohen asked Mr. King to compare the size of the new Town Council Chambers with other spaces, both for square feet and occupancy; namely the current Helen Nelson Room, the current room L101, the current auditorium, and the courtyard where current overflow for Town Council meetings would gather.

- VI. Preliminary Community Center Estimate – Mr. Baron informed the Committee that the number of changes to the earlier Community Center design were such that the estimate from November could not be updated in time to be reviewed by staff prior to the meeting. Staff would prefer to be able to go over the Schematic Design budget before presenting it to the Committee. They also want to have an updated, rough estimate of the Town Hall portion of the project to allow the Committee to have a sense of the overall magnitude of the cost of the project. Mr. Vessella requested, as a new member of the Committee, the November estimate. Mr. Baron did not have the figure but will provide it. Mr. Dinunzio stated that cost was a major concern and that the Committee needed to sit down and see a clear picture of what they are working with when moving ahead. Mrs. Cohen felt that the Committee needed to work hard to get a good project done rather than working towards a specific date for the referendum. Mr. Baron recommended that the Committee meet again on January 27<sup>th</sup> to discuss the Community Center estimates. There should be a rough estimate of the Town Hall developed by that time and staff will have had an opportunity to review the MEP narratives.
- VII. Any Other Business Pertinent to the Committee – Public outreach was discussed at the previous meeting and there has been interest expressed in starting to raise awareness of the need for a Town Hall project. Mr. MacDonald of Downes Construction has assisted other Towns on significant projects and shared his experiences with the Committee. The Committee is getting close to the price and content of the project. Public officials need to come together. When they do public work shops will be held, where it will be presented what the program costs, why the project is needed, and why this is a

good time to construct it. At the public work shops the Committee will see a broad cross section of support or opposition. The Committee would then adjust the project accordingly. The Project Building Committee could answer questions as to why they chose to do certain things. The purpose is to gauge support and to answer points of opposition. The cost is never easy for the public to accept. Once there is a good plan, the Committee should allow two months to get the vote out. The Committee can distribute facts on social media, the Town website, and public access television. In two of his other municipalities the project was not approved until there was a second referendum. The project Building Committee and the elected officials need to be of the same mind on what should be proposed and the cost. When they are, then that is the time to schedule public workshops. The Chair stated that the Committee will have cost estimates in a few weeks. It will then be ready to start talking about the project to the voters. Mr. MacDonald concluded his remarks by stating that the longer the wait to go to referendum, the more the project will cost, as bond rates are starting to rise.

- VIII. Public Participation – Madey Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive: It is unclear to her which grey boxes on the Community Center floor plan are bathrooms. There are regulations on the distance to lavatories from the day care area, and also on the height of the toilets. How many toilets are in the Community Center? Are they unisex? Is there exercise equipment shown on the floor plan for the exercise room? Since all Parks and Recreation programs will not be brought back to the Community Center, which programs won't be going there? She would like an overlay of the site plan showing Garfield Street as it currently is situated. This would give her a sense of what would be lost. For the Lower and Main Levels, the Committee should codify and decide on where they are. She sees lots of shared conference rooms – how many do we need? This room (L101) will become a conference room for whom? On the Main Level Floor Plan, the sage green and the mint green areas behind the new atrium, there are more conference rooms there and she does not know what they are for. There should be more space for the Town Clerk instead. The color legend for that page doesn't pertain to what is on that page. The Board of Education has a lunch room – will there also be a lunch area or areas for the staff on the other floors? She is concerned about the elevator from the Transition Academy to the Upper Level. Is it necessary? She is concerned about the public being filtered through a Secretary to gain access to the Superintendent of Schools' office. The “guardian at the door” philosophy bothers her. The pictures that depict the atrium make it look like a warehouse. The space does not appear warm or inviting. It doesn't make her feel welcome.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: It is hard to follow the color coding on the floor plans. She thanked Jaime Trevethan for putting the Committee's minutes in a more accessible link on the Town's web page. There will be lots of questions on the project. There will be objections and suggestions also, so be prepared. For Garfield Street, is there a plan B if the street is not straightened? Why are

the Town Clerk, the Assessor and the Revenue Collector located where they are? Shouldn't they be in closer proximity?

- IX. Response to Public Participation – Mr. King was asked to respond to a number of the items raised during public participation. Day care at the Community Center does have its own, self-contained, toilets. There are two schools of thought on the height. The height will be discussed with the day care providers. Accessibility requirements will be met throughout the entire building. A third Family Changing Room has also been added. Mr. Till responded on exercise equipment in the exercise room. The floor plan shows that there will be something, not what equipment actually will be there, which hasn't been determined. The programs that are not being moved to the new Community Center are those that are currently held in the schools. Mr. King responded on the number of bathrooms. There are toilets in the locker rooms, a men's and a ladies room outside day care, and a unisex toilet by the administrative offices. The plumbing code dictates the number of toilets, based on occupancy. Ms. Win-Johnson noted that her family attended many events in the current Community Center and has never encountered a line for the bathroom. At the Town Hall meetings have already been held to determine the general layout. The atrium looks bigger than it actually will be. The distance between the Town Clerk's and the Assessor's and the Revenue Collector's Offices is not that far. All are in the same general area. A large space is needed for the Town Clerk's vault. On the Main Level Floor Plan, the common areas are in the darker green. The lighter green is the Registrars of Voters area. Mr. Castelle will follow up on the Garfield Street overlay, although Garfield Street re-alignment is not something the Committee has been charged with. Another lunch room could be accommodated and has been raised by others, but the location and need is still to be determined.
- X. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 6:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Jeff Baron*

Jeff Baron  
Director of Administrative Services