



November 21, 2014

John Salamone
Town Manager
Town of Newington
131 Cedar Street
Newington, CT 06111

John,

In order to help the Town leaders, the members of the Town Council and The Building Committee organize the information gathered during the Focus Groups, we offer the following Executive Summary.

In addition, we are providing an additional document that consolidates all of the input gathered during all the individual Focus Group sessions according to major themes surfaced during the group interaction.

We hope the enclosed information will help the Building Committee and the Town leaders use the information to accomplish this most important work.

Respectfully submitted,

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***Town of Newington
Focus Groups Report
Executive Summary***

Common Themes:

The following were consistent themes that a majority of the members of all Focus Groups shared:

- The process should begin with an in depth needs analysis that really separates needs from wants
 - Start with a total needs assessment- not a wants assessment.
 - Have department heads justify needs.
 - Perform gap analysis for all issues/needs presented before building plan is discussed
 - Keep in mind – this is an office building – build/renovate to the needs of an office building
 - Discover needs – build and renovate to that
- First consideration should go to renovation, moving departments, and/or expansion of existing buildings rather than mostly a build new solution
 - Process – did we as a Town investigate renovation? If so, where are the reports to support reasons renovation not selected – cost estimates, etc. People need to know if there is a report about the Town Hall condition. Public need to see reports about cost of renovation vs building new.
 - Need to change mentality to “fix” rather than “buy new” as a starting point
 - Consider “Build up”: more floors to Town Hall, second floor at Senior Center – move CT Health District and Human Services to this space, etc.
 - If additional space is needed, renovate and build an addition on the front of the Town Hall building...a 3 story addition starting at the top step of the front staircase to the front of the building actually matches exactly or slightly exceeds the floor plan and square feet of the original proposed plan
 - Consider moving departments out of Town Hall to other locations
 - See what we can do with Town Hall building – enhance and expand – beautify (up to code)
- The Town should be creative, inclusive and collaborative in its solutions.
 - Consider Solar energy – get Federal Grants for every building with solar power
 - Renewable resources – e.g. Energy for heating and cooling, Geothermal heat pumps, ice chilling systems
 - Consider "One Newington Complex" for building/renovation
 - Utilization would continue no matter where the buildings are located, but would prefer if we could be a “one campus/one complex” environment – must consider ultimate cost
 - Include Board of Ed, Fire Dept., Library, etc. in plan
 - Community resources and regional resources can be shared
 - Regional solutions need to be considered
 - One Community thinking – share our capacity/facilities/gyms and all assets with each other and with other communities and Towns
 - All these groups say they need “their space” - should be “One Newington”
 - Town Hall - Plan needs to address layout of all offices
 - Reconstruct space– utilize space better.
 - Community Center needs space for sports, the arts/music, and general community uses.
 - Community Center - gain space by building onto current buildings, e.g. Senior Center, Schools
 - Community Center - gain space by demolishing current building and build new
 - Community Center - needs its own building and space
 - Community Center should not be in the park

- Financial impact should be minimal, including long term maintenance costs
 - Consider cost of every option and look for cost saving options
 - Look at “whole picture” – if we have to “fix” things like ADA compliance in other buildings – need to look at cost of all of those costs before deciding how much is really available for this project
 - Building Committee needs to be informed of the other decisions made by the Town that could impact decisions made in their plan, e.g. Town is considering adding Two-Tier buses so need a bus garage that can fit two-tier buses
 - Ensure the budget includes a budget for maintenance of building and all mechanicals. Do not depend on product warranties to cover the costs of long term maintenance of new products (e.g. HVAC equipment)
 - Remain skeptical – look for reasonable cost-effective options
 - Outsource services to reduce asset needs - save space & money
 - Spend today to save tomorrow
- The project should be consistent with the Town’s 2020 Strategic Plan
 - 20/20 Conservation and Development plan needs to be required reading and needs to be adhered to going forward
 - Building Committee needs to look at 5/10/20 year building plan...and then ensure that building plans are addressed in this initial plan
 - The project should maintain the character of the Town and the beauty of the Town
- Communication has to be consistent, honest and interactive.
 - Building Committee Specific requests - interactive communication
 - Town Hall meetings with Building Committee members present – so trust in both groups is built
 - At certain intervals, have public meetings – “milestone meetings” or “Toll gate meetings” – gives feedback to Building Committee on how they are doing, before they move forward in a direction that would not be acceptable to the electorate
 - Current Building Committee needs to create a sub-committee specifically responsible for communication
 - Building Committee Specific requests - outbound communication
 - Hartford Courant, Rare Reminder & Town Crier – Building Committee should use these resources to share progress and share calendar of events – e.g. next meeting dates, etc.
 - Publication of minutes
 - Building Committee Facebook page
 - Post in library – special bulletin board
 - Asking for more transparency and more explanation of information
 - Taxes – show real total cost
 - No tax increase - Paid by CIP –assumes no other things would adversely impact CIP in the future
 - Create Town website Page on Town website dedicated to this issue - publish every pertinent handout, etc.
 - A lot of people in Town don’t use Town Hall or the Community Center, so they don’t know or understand why we need to do anything
 - Choose several methods of communication
 - Town Meetings - Asking for more Interactive communication
 - Public statements need to be addressed and/or responded to
 - Questions and suggestions not answered or addressed – at meeting time or any later date or method. Council not listening. Felt ignored.