



John Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR STEPHEN WOODS

MINUTES

NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

Town Hall Auditorium

6:00 P.M.

October 13, 2015

Mayor Woods called the Public Hearing to order at 6:05 p.m.

Councilors present:

Councilor Banach
Councilor Borjeson
Councilor Castelle
Councilor DelBouno
Councilor Klett
Councilor Marocchini
Councilor McDonald
Councilor Nagel
Mayor Woods

Staff present:

John Salomone - Town Manager
Susan Gibbon - Council Clerk Substitute

Mayor Woods: Prior to giving the public the opportunity to speak on the new plan he asked that Mr. Alan Bongiovanni who is the chairperson of the Building Committee and make a presentation. We listened to your concerns and questions and comments at our first two public hearings and we have adjusted to that and hopefully we will hear constructive criticism or comments as to what we will do.

Town Hall Renovations Project Building Committee Chairperson Alan Bongiovanni. Thank you Mr. Mayor, members of the council, public, it is nice to see you have a big group here this evening. As most of you are aware, the building committee started on this project November 2014, almost a year ago and we were given the charge of renovating the Town Hall facility to meet the needs of various departments including the Board of Education and Parks and Rec department. We were told to do it in one building on this location and we have done that. Since the last two public hearings, we have refined, we have a couple of options before the public, before the town that we are working towards going down to one and since that last public hearing we have refined our proposal to the council for one scenario and that is to demolish the

existing town hall facility and rebuild it in its current footprint at a 90,000 SF facility. As you will see from our presentation from the architects and our construction manager that it meets the needs of all the various departments for their current programs and some additional programmatic needs that they have wished need for. We looked at the needs assessment, the needs of each department and how many square feet they needed. We then, through our consultant, went through and vetted those needs, met with various departments and refined the square footage requirements. We have come up with three different scenarios over the course of the last 10 or 11 months, we paired it down to this one. You heard conversations about removing portions of the existing building, and new additions and renovations to meet the programmatic needs that was about a \$45,000,000 project, that would require a building approaching about 130,000 SF when it is finished, and at the heart of it you would have a majority of the existing structure at the foundation. We looked at taking the existing facility and a little larger footprint a few months ago at \$37,500,000 basically demolishing the building for a new facility and the comments from the public were loud and clear. The dollar amount may have been out of whack for many of the public, the wants may have taken a bigger place in the scheme of things rather than the needs, so we have gone back and have reduced the footprint by 10%. Across the board, all the various departments, with the exception of the gymnasiums and that speaks for itself. They won't perform their intended function if you make a basketball court smaller than it was supposed to be. The rest of the building was reduced to a 90,000 SF footprint, the dollar amounts are \$32,500,000 for the construction and many of the soft costs is \$2,000,000, figure on top of that and that would handle the town hall functions and departments vacating the premises during the construction period and then returning it to modifications of rental space, things like that and returning at a later date. So we are at about \$34,500,000 in our proposal to the council, about \$87,000 so far has spent on consultants and testing. I would like to have Chuck Boos come up and talk about the design and the plans.

Project Architect Chuck Boos made a presentation of the proposed plan for Town Hall.

Mayor Woods opened the hearing to the public.

Public Participation:

Philip Knowlton, 47 Bayberry Road. Mr. Knowlton stated that he has two children in his town. Volunteer for soccer club in town, serve 100 families in Spring and Fall season combined. Great use for this facility for the kids and families in town. Appreciate that the town got a 10% compromise while maintaining the two gymnasiums.

Lyn Connery, 225 Robbins Avenue. Ms. Connery thanked the building committee. Please replace building with new town hall, it is a fiscally responsible decision that will cost less in the long run, can't keep putting band aids on this building. Will benefit all in town. Comment on gym - my children in their 20's, when they were going through the P&R program, there was never enough space.

Louise Rickard, 108 Littlebrook Drive. Ms. Rickard stated that she support the current plan and do not support a renovation. Talk about effect on taxes. People might think taxes may increase to pay for big project, but Newington has money in a Capital Improvement Fund. My

understanding is that there is about \$30,000,000 in account, more than enough to finance a new town hall and community center as well as other projects the Town needs. The town will borrow the money paid back over time. People my age and older may not get many years of use of new facility but we hope that our children and grandchildren can. Need new town hall, won't raise taxes and urge the council to move forward.

Peter Lozis, 273 Audubon Avenue. Mr. Lozis mentioned that he graduated from NHS, feels that swing space will be a bear, especially moving town clerk's vault. Mr. Lozis feels that building a new town hall elsewhere, leave police station alone, demolish what is necessary and then build new facilities, no reason for police and parks need to be with town hall administration.

Eric O'Neil, 47 Kirkham Street. Mr. O'Neil thanked the council and building committee for their hard work, efforts and time. Need to make progress into getting a new town hall. Economy is good, costs less for gas, trickles down to less for manufacturing, building, this is the time to make the move or it will be too late. Build something that will live for our next generation. Fear that cutting corners, not having enough program areas for kids, will need to come back in 20 years and make additions, improvements. Keep putting it off, building at some point will not viable as is and we won't have any option. Goes beyond Republican and Democrat, need to do what is best for the town. Please move forward with this project, now is the time.

Mary Udice, 26 Dalewood Road. Ms. Udice is here in support of a new building. Need to move forward with project and stop just talking about it, need to be proactive rather than reactive. Current building is sick, has many issues, from water, roofs leaking, asbestos, mold. Time to forward now, not about us, we need to think about our children. Building built in 1950s. Not up to ADA code, not easy to access building. Need two gyms, not a wish list, it is a reality. Ask councilors to come together and vote for a new town hall, something that needs to take place and do it together.

Gary Bolles, 28 Burdon Lane, lifelong Newington resident. Mr. Bolles is back and forth on renovate and build new. Need to renovate. Original footprint was built in 1950. It was reported that the architect looked at one window and brick portion of the building and declared it was deteriorating. How can a building that is only 65 years old be crumbling in and in such disrepair? Where is certified report from structural engineer that can confirm this? In a structural existing condition report by Kaestle Boos dated January 28, 2008, page 3.4.3, they stated "the integrity of the original building structure is good." Original cost to renovate building was \$18,000,000 and parks and recreations building was \$9,000,000. Why is there a significant increase in cost? Why didn't cost decrease? What is wrong with current entrance to building? New RFP, second opinion needed. Renovate in place. Need to tread carefully as project will have a direct impact on mill rate and property taxes that we pay for years to come.

Scott Greczkowski, 46 Miami Avenue. Mr. Greczkowski mentioned that the town is once again holding another meeting in the auditorium, which has been used a lot over the past year. No auditorium in new plan. Something needs to be done with the town hall. Years of neglect have gotten us to where we are today. There are other projects in town that need work as well and we can no longer afford to put them aside. Two schools need major renovations, our library is busting at the seams, and parks need major work. If we go with this project, we will have spend

the maximum amount the town can bond and will have no money for many years to do other projects. Project already over budget by \$2,000,000, which taxpayers will have to pay. What will final cost be? What about Cedar Mountain? So many people fought to save Cedar Mountain and thanks to the leadership of Mayor Woods a deal was announced to save Cedar Mountain. Town looking to purchase property, how, but with what money? \$14,000,000 in CIP account. If you pass plan to build a new town hall, many things will be pushed off into future. Something needs to be done with the town hall. Scrap plan and take a serious look at alternative plans.

Wayne Alexander. Mr. Alexander referenced a 2008 report prepared by Kaestle Boos he said "the integrity of the original building structure is good". At the time of the report, it was known that there was damaged brick, mortar, etc. Seven years later sure, maintenance wasn't up to par, but the recommendation of the architect at the time was to repair the damage. Now 7 years later the recommendation is to demolish and rebuild at an exorbitant cost. Is that necessary? Structure that bad, did something happen to the structural integrity in the last seven years? Can we renovate existing structure? Kaestle Boos to get 6% of project cost. Preference for new building, money higher if new structure. Need a second opinion.

Steven Silvia, 45 Basswood Street. Mr. Silvia stated that we need to do something. Commended the committee for their hard work. Many more challenges in Town. I have handed out what I call the dirty dozen comparison of just what would it take to do a renovation of building meeting the needs, documented in 2009 and 2008 and recently requirements not formally approved by committee, but was quilted together and presented to professionals. Original plan was for 140,000 SF down that has been moved down to 90,000 SF. Renovate this structurally sound building, make it ADA compliant, fix all that needs to be fixed. We can meet all the requirements of the town in this location for \$18,000,000. Our town, our choice, need to do something. Renovate the building and use the funds that we have available for other items.

Roy Zartarian, 25 Stuart Street. Mr. Zartarian thanked the council and the building committee for these series of public meetings. All agree that this building needs a lot of help. It has been neglected for at least 30 years. First plan for \$30,000,000 went down in flames. Now looking at another plan that will cost the taxpayers even more. Prior to taking any action, should really look at results of poll. People concerned about cost and where money is being spent. Focus group, communication, trust. Communication is a two-way street, heard but not listened to, relying on one source. Need second opinion.

Peter Arbur, 132 Tremont Street. Mr. Arbur is looking at what is being presented. At 9/16/15 hearing, one number jumps out, cost included in budget, not number TBD, hidden costs. BOE looking for 6,000 SF of storage space, where is space going to be, require additional square footage?

Stuart Calle, 641 Willard Avenue. Mr. Calle stated that he saw an ad in the paper regarding this hearing and wanted to come down. Doubtful that plan will succeed. Live next to the high school. Moving into this building was a temporary solution 30 years ago. Price too expensive, especially \$2,000,000 to relocate during renovation/building. Build somewhere else. People frugal, don't want to see building torn down. Leave for social services, board of education purposes. Leave area for resources such as library, community center, etc.

Mark Finkelstein, 272 Candlewood Drive. Mr. Finkelstein is positive about project. I have lived in this town for 42 years, I have practiced dentistry for over 40 years. I was here 24/7. Was on board of Parks & Recreation for 8-10 years, have some credibility in that area. As Mayor Mortensen said, this project can be nit-picked to death and is going to defer farther and farther into the future, really a bad sign. Two main points, one is cost. Long range capital improvement since 2006. Town has a great borrowing capacity as a town; this can be amortized over time and is well within budget without increasing taxes. Made very clear, council really needs to emphasize that point. Point two is quality of life issues. Many have heard, in my opinion, the number one reason young people move to town is because of schools. Schools are number one investment. Nobody looks at a town just because taxes are low, they come because of schools. We have some school issues coming forward, both over 50 years old, will need bonding for Anna Reynolds and John Paterson. Quality of life and facilities we have in town and how town is represented to the public and community at large. Publicity is that the town really doesn't want to move forward in these areas and to do what is best for the future, for the children and the young people in this community, that's what makes a community vibrant. Unless we get something positive out of this, I think the reputation of Newington in the surrounding communities is going to go down. Please be supportive of something going forward quickly.

Steven Lewczyk, 114 Willard Avenue. Mr. Lewczyk stated that his family has lived in Newington all their lives, and was raised coming to Mill Pond Park in summer. Recently moved in to a home on Willard Avenue. My vision is towards the future of this town and my biggest concern has to do with education. Need money going into schools, instead of focusing on lavish things like a town hall, need to think of schools first, put children first. I work in engineering, need to get more than one bid. I believe that this will affect taxes, no doubt about that. Need price/cost breakdown, where is money being spent? No need for individual offices, individual bathrooms; these are lavish needs. CT has highest taxes in nation, anything involving borrowing money will increase taxes. Need to look towards the future; what will taxes be, will schools be run down? My concern is for the future of schools, not lavish town hall.

Brian Giantonio, 124 Barn Hill Lane. Mr. Giantonio stated that he is not in favor of program being proposed. May have only \$6-7 million in improvements to the town hall, focus on that. Referendum last to spend \$30,000,000 failed 8 to 1. No need to spend \$30,000,000. Need space? You need space, where you put in a lavish town council work session chambers, pull yourself out of there and move back upstairs to Helen Nelson and you will have plenty of room to house people in this building. If you have roof problems, if you have flooring problems in gym, if you have leaks, heating/air conditioning problems, get those analyzed and fixed. No need to build a Taj Mahal that we do not need. I commend you for all your hard work, but this is not the right decision, don't need to do it.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. Ms. Lyons said that when she came in Mr. Silvia, asked if I would take this piece of paper, I asked him if he would take on stack of paperwork I have from three years of listening to what we are going to renovate, build new, have two buildings, whatever. I took part in a focus group, Decision Point LLC, after referendum. Common themes, consistent themes that majority of members of focus group shared. Need in depth needs analysis, that separates needs from wants, have department heads justify needs. My understanding of last 10

months of the new building renovation committee. The only charge of this committee is to meet the needs of departments located in town hall. Not to take into consideration any other needs, such as the schools and the library, the needs of the departments were determined by the architect and, in my opinion, not the department heads. Committee is presenting plan to you, town council tonight, and you are the ones to decide if what the committee is recommending the actual needs of the department. We have been told if have any concerns about the space needs to bring it to town council and they will make necessary changes. You are being presented conceptual plan of what the architect perceives to the needs of the departments. Once the referendum is approved and an actual plan is provided to show the actual location of each department; when I asked about space needs, space I am told "has not been measured or allocated for any individual offices, square feet amounts are by floor only until we get more detailed level of design." The BOE has some many square feet, parks and rec has so many square feet, general government has so many square feet. I would like you to have the department heads give you their needs, not what the town's architect thinks. In closing, why can't we wait another three weeks. Looks like on agenda tonight and action may be taken. What is the rush?

___ King, 53 Crestview Drive. Three things. Thank you to both the council and the committees chaired by Councilor Castelle and Mr. Bongiovanni. I have asked repeatedly for handouts, it is very difficult to follow along the presentation tonight without having something to look at. Concern about the human services department not having the privacy they need out of respect for their clients. At second meeting last November, we had been assured that a new look would be given to getting a different architecture firm. I see that on agenda, action might be taken tonight. I don't know what action this means, I don't understand that.

Mayor Woods clarified that the only reason it says action may be taken, it doesn't mean we are taking action it is there all the time for any consideration.

Mike Johnson, 23 Welles Drive, North. Mr. Johnson is a life long Newington resident and is in support of the plan to build a new town hall. We have heard comments about reports from 2008 and 2009. To me, that says it all. These problems have existed for a long time. The current building not designed to be a town hall, not designed for a community center, it was a temporary solution that became a permanent solution. Time to give something that this town should be proud of and that is to build this community center and new town hall. I have four kids in town, I grew up here, I played a variety of sports. Town has done an excellent job around our schools with academies being built and a variety of other activities. This is a great town, with great people who deserve to have a building they are proud of. Have travelled to other towns that have beautiful facilities that are functional, useful and do what their town needs. Our town needs that and by not doing it now, it will cost much more money in the future. People keep complaining about the money, you wait it will double the cost. Thank you for your job well done.

Lauren Peters, 314 Cedar Street. Ms. Peters commented that Newington is a vibrant community, with very involved people who show up for activities. She is leaning towards new proposal, came tonight to gather information. Concerned about not having a plan b to choose from and worried about money aspect. Other things in town need attention. Need change, town hall feels squished and sitting in his auditorium I smell mold. A last comment is where in the proposal is

an auditorium? We will theatre productions being held? Keep open mind and cover all bases, get more information.

Jennifer Wyn Johnson, 23 Welles Drive, North. Ms. Johnson has encountered a lot of energy in creating a new building committee, things were going to get done and the plans were coming back to town all. After working on the building industry for years and sitting on the building committee for two years, I couldn't help but have this feeling that the new committee would end up exactly where we left off a year ago. We have relied on two committees and expert opinions to come up with the current plan. At some point we have to trust a plan. There are not other locations to build town hall/community center, we want to save open space. If concerned about cost, why would we spend money buying privately owned property and taking away tax base to build a new building? There is no need for 4 auditoriums. I believe that every school has gone through some type of renovation while the town has not gone through one. I have four kids in this town who have used all the facilities and have gone to all the schools. The town has great schools- Aerospace Academy at John Wallace, Bio Academy at Martin Kellogg. I believe that this town hall is part of the future of the town. I see it as the heart of house that is safe, functional and handicapped accessible place for the community to gather.

Janet Wagner. Ms. Wagner has been a resident of the town of Newington for 40 years, no children. Very involved with and concerned about education of children in town. Plead with you to read audience, because loudest applause is not to demolish. One architect that has 6% vested interest makes no sense. Want Newington to grow, don't understand why we aren't using other properties as available spaces for dual purposes. I believe if additional gym space is needed, they should be looking at schools. The BOE needs more storage space we don't need to knock done this building and build a big warehouse, we can find storage somewhere else. Don't understand concept of putting a gym in the middle of a town hall area, put the gym/teen center into a school complex. As for parks & rec, I don't see a lot programs being initiated, I am seeing more wants than needs. Need to go back to drawing board, using other space. Need to invest more in future needs of schools and students in this town.

John Kale, 243 Reservoir Drive. Mr. Kale would like to see what the facts really are. Heard renovations would cost more, fact that people believe that here is other space to be used for sports and everything else. There is no space, we do need more space. Putting things off as interest rates go up will cost more. Need to know all the facts and not just hearsay. Focus more on specific need for room, not warehouse for storage, it is a smaller footprint, building cannot be renovated for \$10,000,000 - all of those things, if we can get that type of thing done then people can start making logical decisions, need facts.

Patti Fowley, 51 Crown Ridge. Ms. Fowley thanked the council for the opportunity to speak on this project. June 24, 2014 is public hearing that started this whole thing then September 9th came. I was part of the survey, I was in focus group, attended meetings; keep hearing level of frugality, want palace but can't afford it. Do have responsibility to do this project but for all the project that will be delayed for this project. Library has problems, a bus garage that need to be fixed, schools coming down the road soon, parks that need to be fixed. Need to get things done frugally, sparingly, economically with respect to money.

John Arusiewicz, 69 Centerwood Road. Mr. Arusiewicz has heard that this building has been in a state of disrepair for approx. 30 years. Why did that happen, who is responsible to maintain the building and why hasn't it been done? Continue to ignore it? Wanted new structure, don't feel that way anymore.

Kristen Hallisey, 181 Foxboro Drive. Ms. Hallisey states that she pays more in taxes for her condominium than her friends who have houses in other towns, live alone and cannot afford to have taxes raised.

John Bachand, 56 Maple Hill. Mr. Bachand is proud to turn out at the meeting tonight. Came out a few months back when I first heard of the idea of tearing down this building and was in shock. I asked the council to intervene, I didn't realize how far advanced in planning. Encouraged by obvious consensus not to demolish building. Don't blame building committee. Take action tonight, you have heard the consensus, don't burden next council and mayor with this for their first job they have to do. Don't send it to referendum. Need to start over. Building is not falling down. I wish building committee and engineers would open people's minds at ease about that. This building is very solid, only 60-65 years old. I'm a restoration contractor and this building is young to me, New Britain town hall is 130 years old. Last year this building was a prime candidate for renovation for under \$20 million. There is a credibility problem here now too. Don't understand how cost increased and it seems to all revolve under one extra gym. Don't want two gyms but my compromise is to build a new gym here and put roof over. Circulation is not a trade off for demolishing building. Need to take action and do responsible thing.

Maria _____, Old Farms Drive. She has lived in Newington for about 44 years and both of her children graduated from high school, now living in New York. She loves this town and this building is not old. Fix this building, this is a good location. Don't believe in tearing down the building. It should be fixed. What needs to be done is fix route 175, it should be so that people that have business in Newington people will stop. I live here and many times don't stop because are going 50 mph, this is where you should spend your money. Make this town more livable. Fix the schools, without education nothing is good enough. Renovate the building.

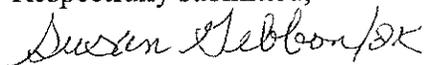
Mayor Woods. Anyone else?

Chairperson Bongiovanni. Thank you Mr. Mayor. Just one thing stands out in my mind and I am trying to be impartial as I can be are some of the not so factual facts that have been brought up tonight. The building committee received a charge from the council, we carried out that charge and this is the proposal we came up with. We have an architect, a construction manager and all architects work on a percentage basis, so if you believe that this architect is getting a favorable deal that nobody else gets you are wrong, these are industry standards. Not fair comment to the architect. We looked at renovating this facility and addressing the needs. The BOE has needs, human services has needs for expansion, as well as parks and recreation. Current building is approx. 110,000 sf. In order to accommodate the needs of the programs with dysfunctional space, a former school that has been morphed into a town hall, taking this existing building and moving parts of it and then creating new parts to address the needs gets it up to approx. 130,000 sf. That is basically the nuts and bolts and that would cost \$45 million. When you spend over 25% of the book value of the building, the book value of this building is about \$11 million, then

you have to address every code, like safety codes, ADA requirements for the entire facility, it would be about \$33.8 million, not expanding this footprint, not addressing any new programmatic needs is about \$33 million to fix his building. There were reports saying that this building is in terrible shape. It's not so much in terrible shape, but components that have failed. There are roof failure, brick failure, you have pcb caulking in the windows that require a lot of the windows be removed, there are a lot of things that have to be done that I don't want to see mischaracterized as we said the building is useless. It was useful as a school in 1950, it wouldn't even meet the criteria for a current school design today. This auditorium does not meet ADA requirements and could not be reused in its current state. One of the things we did as a committee was look at what people wanted, what the towns concerns were and what the library is anticipating. We opted not to include an auditorium in the town hall because the library is looking for a 250 seat community room, no duplication in efforts. The idea is to create and entire campus for the town center. Personal opinion is that this goes a long way towards that. Because there are so many hazardous materials in the building, because is no significant swing space, it was determined that the best way to construct this project and reduce the construction time table was to vacate the town hall completely, do the demolition or renovation whichever proved to be more cost effective and proceed that way. We are proposing a facility that is 90,000 sf, a facility that is 20,000 sf less than what exists today. It is purposely designed for the functions it is intended to serve for the next 100 years. Our children and grandchildren, their children and grandchildren. The design of this building creates floor space that will allow for standard sizing of the structure so that it can be adapted as time changes. There are spaces allocated on these plans, based on what the needs are for the various departments and various agencies. These are industry standards based on the number of employees and given functions. Heard comment that we don't want to short change the future of the building. We felt after the last public hearing, in order to reduce the cost we could reduce the footprint of the building by about 10%. We can do that and have a clear conscience that we wouldn't be shortcutting future growth in the town hall. A lot of hard work went into this and would hate to see it be minimized by misstatements. There are records of meetings, documentation of plans and reports and I welcome you to read them.

Mayor Woods closed the public hearing at 7:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Susan Gibbon
Council Clerk (Substitute)