

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

TOWN HALL RENOVATIONS PROJECT BUILDING COMMITTEE

AUGUST 18, 2015

TOWN HALL – AUDITORIUM

**CORRECTED SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

**(Corrections in Bold)**

I. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Alan Bongiovanni at 6:31 PM.

II. Roll Call – Members present: Alan Bongiovanni, Chairperson (left at 7:15 PM); Dave Nagel; Sarah Jorgensen-Bucchi; Rodney Mortensen; and Whit Przech, Vice Chairperson. Others present: Members of the public; Chuck Boos and Freddie Khericha, Kaestle Boos Associates; Joe Desautel and Ed Moriarty, Downes Construction Company; Dave Langdon, Director of Facilities Management; and Jeff Baron, Director of Administrative Services.

III. Public Participation – John Bachand, 56 Maple Hill Avenue. He distributed a handout from the Assessor’s Office data base showing the value of the Town Hall building as \$12,250,000. This figure is from the 2011 revaluation. It identifies 82% of the building as “good”. He is speaking as the public defender of the building. He still thinks that the Committee has to convince the public that the building is not worthy to save. There is value there. He asked for the cost to renovate the building without tearing down walls. If the Town were to be “stuck” with what it has, it would be a valid starting point. It has been used as, and is, a functioning building. The Committee needs to examine that first.

- Scott Greczkowski, 46 Miami Avenue. Looking at the diagrams and drawings to date, the scale of each is not identified. A scale on each drawing would be helpful.

- John Slusarski, 40 Grandview Drive. He was enthused when the Building Committee first started, although it did not seem like people read the work of the prior Building Committee. The current plan is unreasonable. The square footage is crazy. It would fail at referendum. If it does, the Town should apply commercial reasonability when assigning space.

- Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. She went to the presentation that was held at the Senior and Disabled Center. That showed 21,700 square feet as the existing space for the Community Center, with 30,000 square feet proposed within the new building. In past years it was shown as 16,000 square feet for the existing Community Center. Where did they pick up the additional 5,700 square feet?

IV. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – Mr. Przech made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 21, 2015 meeting as presented. A second to the motion was made by Mr. Mortensen. The motion passed by a vote of 4 YES to 0 NO, with 1 abstention (Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi, absent from meeting [sic]).

V. Previously Discussed Concepts and Their Costs - Mr. Bongiovanni stated that budget numbers had been prepared for renovation costs by Mr. Moriarty. The Town is required to comply with all life safety codes for the entire building if the renovation were to cost more than 25% of the assessed value of the building. Mr. Moriarty was asked to present a budget for the Renovate as New concept.

Mr. Moriarty presented a one page conceptual budget showing a total, with soft costs, of \$33,827,350. This would be for 110,000 square feet of Renovate as New space. The concept is somewhat hard to define. Everything in the building would be new. Renovation would be extensive. The Town would still have the basic existing structure. The cost should be considered as a range between \$32 million and \$33.8 million, as Mr. Moriarty was not sure that all the basement space would be renovated, as it had undergone renovation just a few years ago. This budget is \$80 per square foot less in cost than building new. This would be offset by the work that would have to be done if the Town was not building new, such as renovation of the auditorium. It is a conceptual budget and is not based on quantity take offs. Abatement is included.

Mr. Bongiovanni stated that he was comfortable with this number. He felt that it didn't make sense to renovate without addressing any programmatic needs. Mr. Nagel asked if staff had to be relocated, can there be swing space? Mr. Moriarty replied that there had not been any extensive conversation on this topic. He would advise the Town to get out of the building. There is no swing space as the building is 100% occupied. The renovation would be extensive, plus there would be hazardous material abatement. It doesn't seem practical to stay in the building. Mr. Bongiovanni stated that if small parts of the building were renovated separately this would extend the time to complete the work. There will be displacement no matter what happens. Mr. Moriarty added that the \$5.5 million in soft costs included the cost of relocation of Town offices. If there was additional construction time, there would be a hefty cost to that. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi pointed out that there was jump space in the previous referendum's project. The new Community Center freed up space. How long would this take? Mr. Moriarty replied that the Town would be adding at least a year to the project by staying. Mr. Przech asked if hazardous materials abatement costs had increased. Mr. Moriarty replied that they had. \$1.3 million was carried in the referendum project budget and this budget has \$1.7 million.

Mr. Mortensen stated that he has an issue with the Renovate as New concept. He is not convinced that it is anywhere as good as new construction. A new building is only a few million dollars more. He is not convinced the Committee would be making the right choice. Are there any parameters as to how long a renovation project would last? Mr. Boos said he would respond as it was more of an architectural question. The budget presented would be to renovate the structure in place. There would be a lack of flexibility. There are lots of free span areas. Wall locations are a huge impediment to the planning process. The last referendum's project had a huge amount of masonry adjustment. Mr. Bongiovanni stated that the estimated cost was \$33 million, and it did not address the Town's needs today or tomorrow. Developing this was an exercise to show the public how much renovation would cost. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi stated that there are schools that are desperate for renovation. The Town owns these buildings also. You can't just look at one building. Many other Town Halls don't have gymnasiums.

There are other things we can do. Emmanuel Christian Academy is still there, why aren't we using it? The Town has continuously ignored its buildings until they get so bad.

Mr. Bongiovanni thanked Downes Construction for putting the Renovate as New budget together. Mr. Nagel stated that section of the building had been renovated. He asked if this budget took into account that they had been renovated. Mr. Moriarty replied that the budget presented would be to renovate the entire building. Does the Lower Level have its own independent Mechanical-Electrical-Plumbing system? If so, the budget could be reduced.

Mr. Bongiovanni stated that the Committee has a budget for a new building of \$37.5 million. This could be value engineered. While the Building Committee hasn't been given a budget, it doesn't want to be wasteful. It can reduce the footprint of the proposed building. If the Committee could get the plan down to 90,000 square feet, with technological changes, the space for departments may not have to grow. This could get the cost down to a roughly \$32.5 million project. At the public hearings, people asked the Committee to focus on department needs versus wants. This would get rid of any excess in the floor plan. Mr. Nagel asked that, while public hearings were proposed by the Mayor, if the Committee could request one in September so that those who were away when the earlier hearings were held could have a chance to speak. Mr. Bongiovanni responded that the Mayor had stated that there would be a third public hearing. Mr. Nagel stated that the next Town Council meeting was on the second Tuesday of September. The public hearing could be scheduled then. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi asked if \$29.9 million had been approved for this project. Mr. Mortensen stated that any approvals were for the prior project. Chairperson Bongiovanni then directed the Project Architect and the Construction Manager to work together to pare down the new building concept and get as close to 90,000 square feet as they can. Mr. Baron was directed to request a spot on the Town Council's Agenda on September 8<sup>th</sup> to provide updated information to the Council. Mr. Przech felt this project has been repeatedly pushed off, and that the Committee should recommend building new.

VI. Any Other Business Pertinent to the Committee – Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi asked if the Committee could meet prior to meeting with the Town Council. Mr. Nagel pointed out that both Town Councilors had other meetings to attend prior to the start of the Town Council meeting. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi would not be available prior to 5:30 PM. Mr. Bongiovanni asked Mr. Boos if he was prepared to respond to the question raised earlier about the Community Center square footage. Mr. Boos said that he was. Mr. Bongiovanni had to leave to attend another meeting and Mr. Przech chaired the meeting from this point forward. Mr. Boos state that in designing the three main components of the project (general government, the Board of Education, and the Community Center) he had used gross area square footage, not net area square footage. The 21,000 square feet for the Community Center is the gross area. Gross square footage would include circulation space that would not be included in the 16,000 square feet of program space of the net area.

VII. Public Participation – Steven Silvia, 45 Basswood Street. He thanked Downes Construction for the shopping list to replace each cost component of the building. Replacement of each item is not necessary. It could be done at half the price. Replace

Renovate as New, it is not necessary. The program numbers keep jumping around. The program calls for offices **for directors**, other than the larger offices for the Mayor (**at 300 square feet**) and Town Manager (**at 500 square feet**), **to be** sized at 240 net square feet. There are a plethora of gypsum walls. Current techniques ask for open planning concepts. This is 1970's architecture. Leave the floor plan as open as possible to reduce the cost substantially. Before asking the Town Manager, he would like to see the Building Committee vote on the program. Employees are not happy with the program. He hasn't seen anything formally from either the Board of Education or the Town Manager. He is asking why the Committee can't get down to 60,000 square feet. He would like the Committee to vote on the program. He would like to see it, be it new, add-on, or Renovate as New.

- John Bachand, 56 Maple Hill Avenue. He also has a problem with Renovate as New. He thinks it is a little inflated. As an approach, it is backwards looking. It should have been done first. The Committee is facing a dilemma, in that the building needs to be right here. The majority of other municipal and commercial property owners renovate but don't relocate. Hospitals don't move people out. This building has a horrible design for an office building, he can appreciate that. One year ago, renovation was \$20 million. How did we get to 60% more? This is an important question to answer. \$32 million for new construction would be irresponsible; it would cost more. What quality of construction would it be?

- Gail Budrejko, 30 Isabelle Terrace. 15,000 square feet for the Community Center is now 21,700 square feet, with a proposal for 30,000 square feet. One department is doubling their program needs. Has the Committee gone over the figures? She doesn't understand how the last referendum could renovate this building in place and now we are being told that this building could not be renovated.

- Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. As the meetings go on she gets more confused. Apparently her interpretation of the chart on the Community Center from the public hearing is in error. When the Committee gives a plan, show the square footage on the plan. What is the multipurpose room for? Come up with a plan, show us the plan and the square feet and the need for that space. What is Parks and Recreation's plan for programs during construction? Why not think about another gym at the High School, until there is a solid plan? She would like to hear from staff and department heads.

VIII. Response to Public Participation –Mr. Mortensen stated that people can nitpick this project to death until the project dies again. There have been two studies on program needs. It is not the Committee's responsibility to decide program needs. That is a policy decision. Those concerned about that should speak to the Town Council. The same with the other buildings. There will always be things that need to be done. People are nitpicking this project to death. Some employees in Town Hall are happy, and some are not. There are private issues in Town Hall that require private offices. This is totally different than say, the Aetna. This Building Committee won't solve the issues of the other buildings in town. The Committee is doing the best job it can. People can't be so critical and need to avoid the poison he saw previously on social media. The longer we wait, we're wasting the Town a lot of money. No one is trying to sneak anything through. People want the Committee to do something positive. The Committee needs to get the Town Hall done. He would like the public to have an open mind and look at the positive

aspects of what we would get. People need to look at the bigger picture to move forward. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi responded to Ms. Budrejko's comments about doubling the size of Parks and Recreation. That is why she is looking at schools. What about using school gyms? She is trying to get her head around doubling the size of Parks and Recreation. Other gyms could be used a greater amount of the time if they were enlarged. Mr. Przech stated that improvements to Anna Reynolds School would qualify for State funding.

IX. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Jeff Baron*

Jeff Baron  
Director of Administrative Services