

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

TOWN HALL RENOVATIONS PROJECT BUILDING COMMITTEE

February 10, 2014

Town Hall – Lower Level Conference Room L101

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

- I. Call to Order – Chairperson Castelle called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.
- II. Roll Call – Members present: Clarke Castelle, Chairperson; Myra Cohen, Daniel Dinunzio, Scott Soares, Paul Vessella, Bill DeBlasio, and Jen Win-Johnson. Others present: Members of the public; Ed Moriarty, Downes Construction Company; Dave King, Kaestle Boos Associates; Bob Korpak, Director of Facilities Management; William Collins, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools; Lou Jachimowicz, Board of Education Chief Finance and Operations Officer; and Jeff Baron, Director of Administrative Services.
- III. Public Participation – Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. She thanked the Committee for setting up microphones for the meeting. She encouraged Committee members to speak into the microphones so the public can hear what they have to say. When reviewing the Main Level floor plan, she could not find custodial staff rooms or the location of the mail room.

Dan Shaw, 95 Audobon Avenue. He thanked the Committee members for volunteering to serve on the Committee. He has questions on the Community Center location. What other alternatives are being explored, and what are the costs of those alternatives? What is the plan if the referendum fails? He wants the Committee to explore all possible alternatives. He has read that the traffic will flow out on to Cross Street and then on to Willard Avenue. It is difficult to pull out on to Cross Street or to make a left hand turn from Cross Street on to Willard Avenue. What is the traffic impact? Has the Committee looked at the overflow on to Moreland Street, Wilson Avenue and the adjacent neighborhood? Did the Committee, bearing in mind that Mill Pond Park is the most popular park, think about what development of the park would do to the character of the park? He observed that the Town purchased the rights for the Eddy Farm to preserve open space, he was involved in the opposition to Cedar Mountain development, and now the Town is considering development of part of the park.

Harvey Schiller, 84 Settlers Knoll. Now that the indoor walking track has been eliminated from the Community Center, what are the walking facilities, for indoor walking, that are included in the proposed building?

- IV. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes –Mrs. Cohen made a motion that the minutes of the January 27, 2014 meeting be approved as written. Second by Mr. Dinunzio. The motion passed unanimously.
- V. Update on Design Concepts –Mr. Baron stated that when the Project Architect and the Construction Manager started work on this project, they were told the construction budget for both the Community Center and the Town Hall was \$14 million. From that point forward staff focused on developing what it felt would be the right program, the program that would meet as many of the needs of the Town as possible. The Committee directed staff to consider and address the needs of the different departments, which it did. Once the right program was developed the costs for that program would be estimated and recommended to the Committee. During the program development it readily became apparent that the needs of the community could not be met for that amount of construction.

As staff was starting to determine the costs for the program that was developed it was apparent that those costs were greater than was originally anticipated. Even as some details were brought into greater focus, the sorts of significant reductions in the cost that was needed were not materializing. Staff requested an indication of what sort of funding level the Town Council might be willing to consider. They were told that the project should not exceed \$20 million in construction costs and \$2 million in soft costs. Review of bonding capacity and projected unrelated projects for future years confirmed these cost constraints to be realistic.

At this point staff feels that the program and the budget for the Community Center are substantially where they should be, with a program that meets the needs of the community and a cost that has been accurately identified. That leaves approximately \$11.1 million for Town Hall renovations. The program for the Town Hall that has been presented previously to the Committee was a little less than double that amount. Because the Town Hall program was clearly not sustainable for the anticipated available funding, the Project Architect and the Construction Manager were directed last week to stop enhanced design and Town Hall budget development activity. They have been asked to focus on ways to reduce the amount of construction in order to keep the project in line with the guidelines that have been presented.

Mr. Baron stated that this is not a simple task. This is going to involve looking at a number of options and making a substantial number of revisions. As a result there were not any updated design concepts or preliminary schematic design budgets to present this evening. Staff will continue to work with the

Construction Manager and the Project Architect, and will continue to update the Building Committee with where they are in the process.

Mr. Korpak informed the Committee that the Project Architect had been asked to look at the front entrance, and also to reduce the amount of structural elements in the project. Mr. King stated that he was re-examining the design in order to reduce the scope and the cost. He is in the process of sketching out a concept that will be drawn up and presented to the Construction Manager. He expected to have some drawings in another week and then another week or more would be needed for the Construction Manager to develop some costs. Mr. King had met with a number of department heads a second time. Further changes in the program will require further meetings with them. A meeting has been held where the Mechanical Engineer, mechanical contractors and the Construction Manager walked the building to get a clearer understanding of the existing conditions and issues of the project. Mr. Castle noted that the space needs analysis would also come under review. Mr. Korpak added that, as a for instance, a number of department heads had asked for areas to hold conferences with their clientele. Any conference areas provided now will need to be shared.

Mrs. Cohen stated that the question to departments should be “what is the least they can live with?” The building is being renovated due to problems with electricity, heating, etc., to make this a workable building, and accommodate the needs of the staff as best as the Committee can. Mr. Castle stated, to paraphrase a staff member, that the building was becoming unusable. He asked if there was any way special attention could be given to meet the more urgent needs. Mr. Korpak responded that avenues are available. Kaestle Boos Associates looked at roofs some time ago and the previous members of the Committee made a decision on the type of roofing material that would be called for, after looking at other, more expensive, alternatives. Repair or replacement of parts of the roof could be re-incorporated into the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Some heating and electrical issues could also be addressed through “pay as you go”. The Chair stated that the current preference was to keep the Community Center project as presented and one point of access to departments in the Town Hall.

Mr. Dinunzio asked how the project had taken shape and if it will meet the needs of the community. That is primarily for (Parks and Recreation Superintendent) Mr. Till to respond to. The alternatives would be to reduce programs. Mr. Dinunzio asked about the cost projections. Mr. Korpak responded that originally this was a design and retrofit existing space project. Now you are looking at a much more aggressive renovation. The Chair noted that there is a CIP budget of \$18 million for this project, the vote to move the Community Center was taken in July of 2012, and the vote to select the site was in January of 2013. Mrs. Win-Johnson reminded the Committee of the history of moving the Community Center, that the need to create space led to

the decision to move the Community Center, that it cost more to renovate the gym in place than to build a new one. The Chair encouraged those who were interested to look at the study of the Town Hall done by Kaestle Boos Associates.

Mrs. Win-Johnson asked if each department, after having stated what they wanted, were they now prioritizing? This will be developed as the Project Architect and the staff goes through the process. Mr. Korpak reminded the Committee that the atrium and the corridor space at the Town Hall were not called to be renovated in the initial budget. He also stated that staff members were now prioritizing the mechanical and electrical needs. The number of certain devices is being reduced. The prior Committee had looked at other roofing alternatives. Now other items of the building need to be pinned down. Mrs. Win-Johnson asked if there would be multiple schemes. A scheme is needed that the Building Committee can accept and then identify the cost for that scheme. She would like to see a list of prioritized items to make the project fit a budget. Mr. King noted that changes had a ripple effect, so they could not be presented as a menu, but that staff could enumerate the changes that they made. Mrs. Win-Johnson felt that an open office concept could reduce the cost. Mr. Korpak responded that she would be able to see where the Project Architect had taken that into account. Kaestle Boos Associates is looking at material selections also. The flow of the building has to make sense.

The Chair observed that this would make an early June referendum unlikely. Mr. Vessella then inquired that since the Community Center was agreed upon, were both the Town Hall and the Community Center projects going to be tied together? Mr. Korpak responded that there would be savings in referendum costs to just have one referendum. There would also be savings in construction to have one project. These savings would be based on the size of the project. One project would result in better item prices. Mr. Dinunzio stated that the idea of separating the referendum questions was something the Building Committee should discuss and consider. Mrs. Cohen felt that to put the Community Center ahead would be a disservice. The Town Hall is the priority item. She urged the Committee not to put aside the needs and importance of the Town Hall. There is a need to combine both projects. Mr. Castelle agreed. While the current Community Center is one of the weakest areas, the purpose of the Project Building Committee is to address a Town Hall that is becoming unusable. What was presented this evening is a setback but is also a problem that can be resolved.

- VI. Preliminary Schematic Design Estimate – Mr. Baron stated that there are no new schematic design estimates to present for the reasons identified earlier.

VII. Any Other Business Pertinent to the Committee – The Committee will hold its next meeting on March 3rd at 5:00 PM. Mr. Baron distributed the current financial status of the project, showing an available balance of \$240,012.53.

VIII. Public Participation –Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. She thanked Mrs. Cohen for staying on target on how this project started. She then quoted extensively from the minutes of the Town Council meeting of July 14, 2009, pages 9 and 10. Five years later very little has been done to renovate or repair the Town Hall. She feels the focus has been on building a new Community Center. How many studies have been completed and paid for? She is very dismayed. The Community Center was railroaded through. The Committee should step back. What is the focus of the Building Committee, the Town Hall or the Parks and Recreation Community Center?

Mady Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive. She apologizes if her thoughts are scattered. She is appalled that it has taken this long to realize how much this would cost. No one suggested looking at a new Community Center. The Committee should down size the Town Hall. The Community Center is not necessary. The Community Center is a want, not a need. She expected two designs would be presented, one with the Community Center as a separate building and one with the Community Center as part of Town Hall. She knew as soon as the various schemes were presented which one would be adopted. She is concerned that the Community Center is not being further considered. A community center should bring people together for common things. The Community Center is a want, not a need. The Committee should develop a scheme for Town Hall with Parks and Recreation back in the mix. Previously, it only cost \$500,000 more for a separate Community Center. She doesn't want Town Hall to be considered a "Rent a Wreck" when compared to the Community Center.

Dan Shaw, 95 Audobon Avenue. At the time of the July 2012 vote on the location of the Community Center, he asked what the cost was. He was told it was not fully known then. Knowing what the Committee knows now, this changes the equation and everything should be back on the table. Originally more meeting rooms were needed in the Town Hall and now it looks as though the number of meeting rooms will be reduced. This also changes the equation. The Committee should look at all viable scenarios, including renovating the existing Community Center.

John Slusarski, 40 Grandview Drive. The Committee needs to fix Town Hall. The Town doesn't need a Recreation Center like the one proposed, and it couldn't afford the Town Hall design. He hopes the Committee interacts with other town members as well.

IX. Response to Public Participation – The Chair responded that the Committee had listened carefully and had taken notes. The comments of the public will be

on the Committee members' minds. Mr. Dinunzio stated that during the interview process one architect gave a presentation for the Recreation Center and said it was nearly impossible to do. Mr. Dinunzio thinks he was right. The Chair concluded by stating that there was a lot of work to do and he encouraged the Committee to work together to get it done. What was presented is a problem to be solved. The Committee needs to work its way through it and consider every option.

- X. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 6:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Baron

Jeff Baron
Director of Administrative Services