

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

TOWN HALL RENOVATION PROJECT BUILDING COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

October 15, 2012

TOWN HALL CONFERENCE ROOM L101

- I. Call to Order –the meeting was called to order at 5:38 PM by Chairperson McBride.
- II. Roll Call – Members present: Scott McBride, Chairperson; Myra Cohen; Jay Bottalico, and Sharon Braverman. Others present: Members of the public; John Salomone, Town Manager; Dr. William Collins, Superintendent of Schools; Lou Jachimowicz, Chief Finance and Operations Officer; Bruce Till, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation; Robert Korpak, Director of Facilities Management; and Jeff Baron, Director of Administrative Services.
- III. Public Participation – Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: she read a memo to the Town Council regarding appointing two members to the Committee from the Board of Parks and Recreation. She can see that if the decision is made to build a new recreation center where two additional people might be needed. Do they have to be voting members? Seeing two voting members from a commission that is eventually going to benefit from this, she can't see them saying no. People elected by the residents to oversee the spending of their tax dollars should be the ones that should be making the decisions which way we are going to go with this project. She is curious as to who decided these two people should be on the Committee. She is uncomfortable with two members of the Board of Parks and Recreation voting on a project that is ultimately going to benefit them.

Madeline Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive: She agrees with Mrs. Cohen that this project is more than just Parks and Recreation. They are not the only department that should be considered. As a volunteer to Human Services, she sees that it is not easy to get food into the building. She is curious why two members of the Board of Parks and Recreation would be chosen to serve on this committee and not staff.
- IV. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – Mrs. Cohen noted that Mr. Till's presence at the previous meeting was not included in the roll call. Mr. Baron will make the amendment to reflect his attendance. Mr. Bottalico made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 1, 2012 meeting as amended. Second by Mrs. Cohen. The motion passed by a vote of 3 -0,

with Mrs. Braverman abstaining due to her absence, as she had not yet been appointed as a member of the Committee.

- V. Discuss and take action on Olsen Design Group Proposal – Mrs. Cohen asked what was different about Mr. Olsen’s services. Staff responded that he has the experience to help the Committee select the right architect for this project. He can help the Committee with the architect competition. He is better suited to make that happen successfully based on his experience. Mr. McBride expressed his belief that the Committee needed the guidance of a professional on a project this big. Staff also noted that Mr. Olsen has no horse in the race, with no preference as to who is selected by the Committee. He will remain an objective judge, which is what the Committee needs. The Committee is doing things differently for this project, in order to get a creative and cost effective solution. By getting a better project definition early on in the process, the Committee could save money. There is also a need to hire a construction manager. The Committee needs a construction manager Request for Proposals. The construction manager will be the key to containing costs.

Mrs. Braverman asked how Parks and Recreation got to be the focus so soon. Staff responded that Parks and Recreation had the most unique need in terms of space requirements, as far as whether to keep Parks and Recreation as part of the building, and as far as accommodating the needs of all the tenants of the building. The Committee can link the competition to the two separate sites (one for the Town Hall and one for the Mortensen Community Center). The architectural competitors can go elsewhere if they can make the site(s) work. They will need to incorporate the programmatic needs of the buildings. Parks and Recreation is the focus because that determines how the rest of the Town Hall will be renovated. Parks and Recreation would be out of business for a year and a half if they were to remain in the Town Hall. The Committee should provide direction to the architectural competitors but not limit them too much. The schools could only handle a small part of the demand if the Mortensen Community Center gym were to be closed. School programs are currently coming to the Mortensen Community Center.

Mr. Bottalico observed that the timeline is for a November 2013 referendum. Chairperson McBride said that the Committee will meet as needed to get back on schedule. The Olsen Design Group Proposal is broken out by tasks. If all tasks are selected the total cost is \$73,700. Mr. Bottalico made a motion that the Committee accept the proposal submitted by the Olsen Design Group, and that it be referred to the Town Council for their approval along with a request for a bid waiver. Mr. McBride made the second to the motion. The motion passed unanimously by a vote of 4 YES to 0 NO.

- VI. Discuss proposed Community Center sites – Mr. Salomone presented a number of the various sites to be considered by the Committee for the location of a new Mortensen Community Center. He started with the existing conditions and then moved on to Scheme D. Scheme D requires site work. The Town Hall would basically remain the same. It would straighten out the curve in Garfield Street that is currently by the Town Hall. It creates new parking out front with staff parking on the sides (where the upper and lower Town Hall parking lots are now). It expands a new parking area by the library. It shows that any addition to the library fits the campus footprint. It does not allow much access to a new atrium.

Scheme A was discussed next. Garfield Street would stay as it currently is. The Mortensen Community Center would be removed from the Town Hall. There would not be any additional parking out in front of the building. There would some parking across Garfield Street. The Mortensen Community Center would be built to the west of the current Mill Pond Park pool, removing the clay tennis courts.

Scheme B was discussed. This would take the Mortensen Community Center off of the Town Hall and put it where the Transportation Garage is currently located on the west side of the property. The Transportation Garage has been removed visually from most of the Scheme concepts, although in most of the other Schemes it would not be affected. Under this Scheme a site would have to be found for the bus garage, adding to the cost. As mentioned at the previous meeting, there is contamination at the corner where the substation was located. The Mortensen Community Center site on this scheme also borders on wetlands. No dollars are attached to these schemes, which is why a construction manager is needed.

Scheme C was then discussed. It moves the Mortensen Community Center to where the library overflow parking lot is now. It doesn't address parking issues. It makes the campus more congested. Summer playground participants would still have cross the street to get to the pool. Chairperson McBride observed that if the Committee went with an atrium for the Town Hall, it would need parking near the main entrance. He felt this Scheme is better if Garfield Street were to be straightened. Mr. Till was asked if there was a problem with children crossing the street to get to the pool. He does have a concern, which is why he has counselors and a crossing guard that he hires for the duration of the summer playground program, who assist in helping the children to cross. Mr. Salomone said he was hopeful that any road reconstruction would be done with Town forces.

Scheme I (New Scheme in the distribution of October 1st) would move the Mortensen Community Center out of Town Hall and would allow access to a Town Hall atrium. It increases visitor parking and accommodates a library addition. The Mortensen Community Center would be moved over

by Willard Avenue. The Mill Pond pool would be relocated to the new Mortensen Community Center site. This could be phased in over time. Moving the pool doesn't have to be part of this project. The Capital Improvement Plan has allocated several million dollars for new pool in the fifth year of the plan. Mr. Till reminded the Committee that he recommends a splash park as best meeting the aquatic needs of the community. He encouraged the Committee to combine things together, such as combining the bathhouse with the Mortensen Community Center as this Scheme does. This Scheme also reconstitutes the entrance to the Town Hall complex off of Cedar Street. This is where the old entrance was by the light for the Senior and Disabled Center. The Mortensen Community Center driveway feeds back to Garfield Street, not off of Willard Avenue. Committee members asked that the enhanced Scheme I, showing the proposed location of the Mortensen Community Center, the driveway and the pool, be distributed to the Committee for the next meeting. Mrs. Cohen asked that the buildings be labeled also.

Scheme F as originally presented by Kaestle Boos Associates is not being considered and was not discussed. Scheme H was then discussed. This would keep the Mortensen Community Center where it is now. It would add parking. It would also limit options for the Town Hall.

Mr. Salomone concluded that there were three main themes to these Schemes: keep the Mortensen Community Center on the side of Town Hall, move the Mortensen Community Center on the Town Hall side of Garfield Street, or move the Mortensen Community Center across to the other side of Garfield Street. Any pool relocation and street reconstruction would not be in the referendum. The project could not schedule the demolition within the Town Hall until the Mortensen Community Center has been built.

Mr. Bottalico noted that utilities were not an issue under Scheme I. Mrs. Braverman felt the public would need the total cost, even if the pool were to be phased in. She asked if it would be possible to build a walking bridge over Garfield Street. It would not be needed if the pool is next to the Mortensen Community Center. Pedestrian bridges are not cheap. Mrs. Cohen asked what the justification was for moving the Parks and Recreation staff to the Mortensen Community Center. Staff replied that it would want to put the people where the programs are, that there would be no room for them in the Town Hall if the community center is relocated, and that it would cost less money to keep the entire department staff together.

Mr. Salomone stated that the next step is to determine the charge for the competition, after the Town Council takes action on the Olsen Design Group proposal. Mr. Bottalico stated he felt there was a need to have a

meeting to determine what is going into the new Community Center. Staff responded that once the competition starts the competitors will have guidelines and square footage. They will complete conceptual designs. Then it will be time to sit down with the Parks and Recreation subcommittee to determine needs. All departments have already been asked about what their needs are. Mrs. Braverman asked about other Towns locally with new community centers. Each Town and each community center is unique. Much is on line now and can be viewed over the internet. The Committee will fine tune the community center when they start working with an architect.

The question was asked as to how quickly staff can take what they have now and put it in a format so people can view it. It could be done in short order but better conceptual designs are needed before the Committee introduces the project to the public. The Committee does not want to show things that it may not build or be able to afford. Staff advised putting the renderings received through the competition out to the public. The finalist for the competition could also be asked to generate a model.

The Committee anticipates eliminating a few of the Schemes at their next meeting and then perhaps narrowing the list down further after that.

- VII. Any Other Business Pertinent to the Committee – The next meeting will be on the first Monday of November, November 5th, at 5:30 PM in the same room.
- VIII. Public Participation – Madeline Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive: She really appreciates the maps on the screen. She feels welcome at the meetings of this committee. She would like to see the bus garage put back in the pictures. It makes an important visual difference. Scheme I received the most positive attention; where would the expansion be and what would be considered? Where is the overflow parking projected to go? In the case of other departments such as Human Services, how can they be assured most of the money won't go to one particular project? Who assesses the needs of the departments? Are the departments represented when that comes to pass? Will they be an integral part of the planning and what is the time frame? What is the time frame to address the needs? There is a need for privacy at Human Services. She wants the Human Services clients' needs treated with respect.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: Scheme I is where the Committee is leaning. Who owns the property by the library? She believes the Friends of the Library bought the property. She would like to hear from the library. It is tough to see the screens, particularly if more people were in the room. There is no consistency with the use of Mill Street and Mazzocoli Way; the right name should be used. Has the Conservation Commission been

shown the plans? They should be on board. The Mortensen Community Center is a mess. The Teen Center is a mess. Maintenance should have been kept up through the years, such as the on the gym roof. She urged the Committee not to focus all in one area as they will then fail to focus on all needs. She would like to see what the plan will be for the actual building. An indoor pool may not be in the Mortensen Community Center. The recorders should be replaced.

- IX. Committee response to public participation – Mr. Bottalico believes that the questions about Human Services and whether they have enough office space fall under the purview of the Town Manager; it is for him to determine if they have enough space. The Committee is looking at every department. Many decisions will be the Town Manager's. This will be discussed in more detail in future meetings. It is anticipated that every department will be reconsidered. If Human Services and Parks and Recreation were flip-flopped in terms of their current locations the Committee would be discussing Human Services. One concept called for a separate entrance and wing for Human Services; that would meet their privacy and delivery needs. As to the overflow parking question, the Town owns the parking lot on Cross Street. The empty lot next to the library is owned by the Friends of the Library. What is on the various Schemes is what the library proposed two years ago. The indoor pool was a request from Parks and Recreation; the Town already has one at the High School. The Committee hasn't gone over Parks and Recreation's list of desired items. The Committee doesn't want to get ahead of itself.
- X. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 7:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Baron

Jeff Baron
Director of Administrative Services