

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

TOWN HALL RENOVATIONS PROJECT BUILDING COMMITTEE

March 17, 2014

Town Hall – Lower Level Conference Room L101

**AMENDED SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
(Amendments are in bold)**

- I. Call to Order – Chairperson Castelle called the meeting to order at 5:01 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; Stephen Woods, Mayor; John Salomone, Town Manager; Ed Moriarty, Downes Construction Company; Dave King, Kaestle Boos Associates; Lou Jachimowicz, Board of Education Chief Finance and Operations Officer; Bruce Till, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation; and Jeff Baron, Director of Administrative Services.
- III. Public Participation – Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. She went over the minutes from as far back as 2012. The Committee still needs a plan. She knew how much was budgeted. She is confused if the Committee was committed to a renovated Community Center. On the square footage of the Parks and Recreation building, if it is down to 33,000 that is more than they wanted. The Committee was told originally it would cost more to renovate than to build new. There have been conflicting comments and studies, she still doesn't know. Have the fire department, highway department and library been consulted?

Mady Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive. She is requesting two things she had asked for previously. She would like to see two plans, one for a separate Parks and Recreation building and one with Parks and Recreation in Town Hall. Why is the nerve center of the town relegated to a bare bones philosophy with a Taj Mahal down the street for one department?

Mike Fox, 1901 Main Street. He is here because of his five grandchildren. We need a plan. We need a community center all of the community can be proud of. The Town Hall he considers sick. A lot of things are falling apart. Many things should be changed. Even gutting it down to the studs might not do the job. He doesn't know the cost or how best to address the problems. When you get done you will have a Town Hall and community center Newington can be proud of.

Mike Johnson, 23 Welles Drive North. He is speaking on behalf of a new community center. The process is taking longer than expected. You want to do it right. He is president of travel basketball and involved with other youth sports programs. There is a need for more and better gym space. Facilities are needed for basketball that other sports have. He would love to have more kids participate. The gym floor is warped and rippled. The bleachers are not in good condition. The acoustics are bad. He is a lifelong Newington resident. His children are all in Parks and Recreation programs. The department needs better facilities. The department has excellent programs and deserves to have facilities that match.

Russ Dionne, 219 Meadow Street. He moved to Newington in 1998 for the schools and the community. He has two sons. They have benefited greatly from Parks and Recreation. The Committee should do the project right. He is in support of a community center that benefits everybody.

Judy Higgins, 29 Spring Street. The community center will be a positive thing for the entire town. There is a lack of space. All of her sons sports clinics are out of town at rented space, which increases costs. She has also used the pre-school programs of Parks and Recreation. She was shocked at how much prices had gone up due to an increase in rent at the church. This has an effect on parents' decisions on when their children should start kindergarten. The community center will provide assistance on all levels.

Peter Arburr, 133 Tremont Street. He has been following the project in the paper. He is the former Town Engineer. Why are we here? He doesn't have all the facts. The estimate that shows costs were double reflects a significant change. Why was this not brought to the Building Committee if the costs went up? Why did the project balloon out? Why was the Project Building Committee caught off guard? There are substantial monies involved. Who will pay the consultants? What is the breakdown on bonding and insurance? He hopes the Building Committee can shed light on these comments tonight or at a future meeting.

Len Errera, 7 Edward Street. He moved in to town in 1998. He stated the reasons why he moved here and why he stayed. Other communities didn't have Parks and Recreation programs that were as good as Newington. He wants the same for the next generation of children. Parks and Recreation needs expansion and more space. His kids also went through the pre-school program. He encouraged the Committee to consider all factors.

- IV. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes –Mrs. Cohen made a motion that the minutes of the February 10, 2014 meeting be approved as written. Second by Mr. Vessella. The motion passed unanimously.

- V. Update on Design Concepts – Presented by Mr. King, the Project Architect. At an earlier meeting a scheme was presented that had issues with regards to cost. He presented a revised concept that had been developed, and he showed how the previous concept contrasted with these latest revisions. He started with the site plan, showing the existing site plan and how the site plan with a realigned Garfield Street had been proposed, followed by the latest site plan. In the latest plan, there would not be any realignment of Garfield Street. The parking lot between the Town Hall and the Library would still be renovated to alter the grade change from seven feet to three feet by the front entrance but the parking lot would become a separate project, and the main entrance would be kept where it is currently located. Mr. King presented a parking lot re-grading plan with the footprint of the original High School shown through a faint, dashed line. This also showed how the parking lot will be sloped. The main level floor plan, both previously and with the latest changes, was presented. The atrium was replaced with renovations to create an outdoor courtyard and covered hallways. The new Council Chambers and a number of departments (Building, Engineering, Town Planner, Finance, and Town Clerk) were in different locations. The main entrance off Garfield Street was removed, and an elevator and lavatories were relocated in close proximity to the existing main entrance. The Transition Academy wing would be left as it is. The lower level floor plans, both previous and new, were presented. The Health Department and the Registrars of Voters would still be relocated to the lower level but these areas would not be renovated. The upper level floor plans, both previous and new, were presented. The Helen Nelson Room and the connector off it were removed. The Board of Education will use either L101 or the new Council Chamber for training and meetings instead. Board of Education offices will open onto the corridor by the courtyard. The previous exterior perspective of the front entrance was shown, along with the latest exterior perspective of the building and the latest exterior perspective of the main entrance. These showed there would be some work on the façade and a new look for the main entrance. The previous interior perspective of the atrium was contrasted with a perspective of the courtyard and an interior perspective looking into the courtyard from the covered corridor. The renovations to the outdoor courtyard would raise the current level of the courtyard. The presentation concluded with updated building sections and cross sections. These show that the corridors by the courtyard would be stacked one on top of the other. What is currently the interior gymnasium wall will become an exterior wall.

Mr. Dinunzio asked about changes to the parking. The 65 spaces from the front of the building along Garfield Street were removed. Mr. DeBlasio asked about elevators. One was relocated so that it would be off the main lobby. Ms. Win Johnson asked about the ramp at the front entrance. Since the elevation change is being reduced, it will be more compact, a shorter ramp, much tighter. Chairperson Castelle noted the entrance to the courtyard would primarily be from the current main entrance. Toilets would now be off the

main lobby. Human Services would take over the old Town Clerk vault. The Information Technology servers would be on the main level. There would be a new location for the Town Council chamber. Building and Engineering would now be on the main level. The Town Clerk would have improved public access. Mr. Dinunzio asked what the reasons were for moving the Town Council Chamber. Previously it was not in a good place for access to the general public. It now has direct access. Other offices were relocated to the lower level instead. Mrs. Cohen asked about the location of the rest rooms. They are off the Town Council Chamber and off the front lobby. Ms. Win Johnson asked if the square footage for some departments had been reduced. The square footage is close. There is less new construction. Mr. DeBlasio asked how much of the project is in what is currently Mortensen Community Center space. Mr. King replied he would have to do a take off to determine that. In order to meet the space needs of some departments, he had to take some space used by Parks and Recreation now. The Transition Academy will have an elevator at the staircase. This will replace the chair lift that is there now. Mr. Castelle asked about the Transition Academy doorway status. The entrance will stay where it is with a new bus drop off. Mayor Woods pointed out that the proposed parking lot next to the library is library owned land and the Town would need their permission before it could do anything with it. The Town will not be making any decisions without first discussing it with them. Traffic calming is projected at the two driveway entrances.

- VI. Preliminary Schematic Design Estimate – Presented by Mr. Moriarty, the Project Construction Manager. These are current construction budgets with a 10% contingency. The contingency will decrease as there is more progress made and should end up at 5%. General conditions include staff, the project manager and a superintendent. The estimate also shows costs for insurance, bonds, the Construction Manager's fee, and escalation of 6% for the Town Hall (construction two years out at 3% per year). The Town Hall is more challenging. The Community Center budget has different percentages, such as an 8% contingency. The total project budget is \$26,666,431. Soft costs are not in the budget. The Town Hall budget includes renovations and minor additions, and enclosed courtyard corridors. The full atrium was budgeted, instead of the outdoor courtyard, at \$700,000. Asbestos abatement costs of \$1,259,578 were also included. The costs per square foot are \$266.55 for the Community Center and \$261.52 for the Town Hall. These are very much in line with what buildings cost today. 68,190 square feet for the Town Hall is with the full atrium. The Community Center is new construction. The Town Hall is more complicated. Demolition and asbestos are about \$40 per square foot. There is also roofing. The small differential in cost per square foot demonstrates that the Town Hall is not being treated as a second class citizen.

Mr. Moriarty referred to the Leach Construction Consultants budget to renovate the Town Hall in 2009. This is not an “apples to apples” comparison. That budget was primarily for a Mechanical-Electrical-Plumbing

(MEP) upgrade that was later determined to be a band aid approach. It was for \$12,268,000. The current renovations budget (without the courtyard corridors, atrium, or asbestos abatement) is \$14,142,732. There is a lot of work that has gone into this. There has been input from the departments and four budgets for each building. The Town Hall budget has seen savings of \$5,607,000 (this number includes \$600,000 of site work that is now being considered a separate project). It would cost a minimum of \$35,000,000 to build a new Town Hall, at \$375 per square foot.

Mrs. Cohen asked that if the project was at \$26,000,000 plus, when you add in Furnishings, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E), plus other soft costs, what would the entire budget be? If the Committee were to just look at Town Hall maintenance, what would that cost be in comparison? This is a huge number. The bonding level is going down. The Town could afford it. Some items would be being paid for out of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). This project displaces other CIP projects. She wondered how the public feels about spending this amount on Town Hall at the expense of other projects, rather than on other facilities. Mr. Baron stated that the latest soft cost estimate was over \$4,000,000, but that it included asbestos abatement. He will develop an updated soft cost budget for the next meeting. The Town Manager's proposed CIP will be considered later in the week. Mr. Salomone noted that some soft costs could be budgeted in the CIP, such items as FF&E. Contingency is at 10% for the Town Hall. When the exact design elements are known, the contingency budget will be reduced. Escalation costs of 6% also seem high. The Committee is closer than people realize. Mr. Salomone showed a table from the CIP request presentation he will be making later in the week. It projected the debt service maximum in 2021 at \$30 million. Pay as you go project funding would still be at \$3,397,309, even with that level of debt. Not that many projects would be displaced. He is projecting \$24 to \$25 million for the Town Hall in two years, plus the pools, and school projects. Mr. Salomone concluded that the Town knows exactly what it can spend. He will cover this when the CIP is presented later in the week. The Town has a dynamic CIP and pay as you go plan.

Mr. Dinunzio asked for a copy of the 2009 Leach estimate. Mr. Castelle said he had a copy and would forward it to him. The needs of the Town, the project and the approaches have changed. Mr. Moriarty noted that in the Leach estimate mechanicals were 65% of the job. It had **new doors but no walls**. It was not changing anything. It was for MEP and finishes only. The project before the Committee is a much different approach.

The Chair noted the project included renovations and minor additions, with some revised office space. If the project were only renovation and no new office space additions, what would the cost be? Mr. Salomone responded that heating, ventilating and air conditioning equipment has to go through ceiling and walls to bring the hot water heat from the boiler room. Each office has to

be disturbed. Electrical upgrades are necessary. Areas are disturbed to such a degree that there is not a lot of difference if you just did this, which would be the least desirable situation. He and the Director of Facilities Management are working on a presentation on the Town Hall infrastructure. The project presented calls for replacing the windows and other things, the concept is much different. There is little point in rehabilitating the Mortensen Community Center. Keeping Parks and Recreation in the Town Hall would cut the program space by roughly half. Also, there are too many entrances at the current time in the Town Hall. The project as presented would allow the Town to keep the main entrance and to put all the other entrances on a more secure system. He feels that we are getting close to the concept he would be comfortable presenting to the Project Building Committee. Mr. Castle noted that the asbestos would have to be abated for this work. Mr. Salomone pointed out that the budget was only \$700,000 for the atrium. He would prefer to find other places to save money and to keep the atrium. If the courtyard corridors and atrium were eliminated, the project would have to keep the corridors we have now.

The Chairperson asked about doing the work in phases over a number of years. Mr. Moriarty responded that phasing depends on the MEPs. You have to do them all. There is so much work being done, you can't cut back on the scope. It is all or nothing. The staff have already cut back on the MEP, with less expensive systems than initially proposed. Mr. Dinunzio asked how Mr. Moriarty got to his cost per square foot numbers. Mr. Moriarty responded that he divided the total cost by the number of square feet of renovation and construction.

- VII. Any Other Business Pertinent to the Committee – The Chairman felt he needed at least a week before the next meeting. Mr. King felt that time would be needed for the Project Building Committee to determine their comfort level. Mayor Woods noted that the project would go to the Town Council as part of the CIP. The Town Council would give the Building Committee direction with how much they are willing to spend. Mr. Salomone assured the Committee he would not recommend a project if the Town didn't have the funds or if it was not a viable project. The Committee agreed to hold their next meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 PM. The Chair urged Committee members to be prepared to make important and difficult decisions.
- VIII. Public Participation – Peter Arburr, 133 Tremont Street. He has two items. There are two budgets referred to in the Construction Manager's hand out, Budget A and Budget B. Is asbestos in Budget B but not Budget A (Mr. Moriarty responded that A and B are the same **budget, just broken down in different formats, and** that asbestos is in both)? The parking lot in front of Town Hall will be reconstructed. He urged the Committee to consider including low impact development process costs.

Mike Fox, 1901 Main Street. He apologized for not attending prior meetings. He was impressed with the presentation and the work of the Committee. He didn't realize how much of a band aid the 2009 budget was. He wouldn't mind paying for the Town Hall if we got what was talked about this evening, with the building being gutted and asbestos abated. He agrees this project, with reduced costs, is good.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. She requests answers to her questions. The entrance to the Community Center was moved to Cross Street so that Department of Transportation approval would not be needed. Will there be a traffic study? Where are the Health Department and Sanitarian rooms? She is not against the Community Center, she is only against it if it will sacrifice what goes in the Town Hall. There are many openings in town for day care. Where are the custodial rooms? The plans need to be easier to follow. Her mind is boggled by the figures being pushed around. She looked at the CIP from years past and there was nothing until this year. What happens to the dollars for the Garfield Street realignment tomorrow night now that it is no longer being considered?

Len Errera, 7 Edward Street. The renovations, original and revised, both take space from the old Community Center. Is there a plan if the Community Center doesn't move?

Erika Ganley, 145 Pfister Drive. The budget numbers, are they contingent upon approval of both projects? She is in support of a Community Center. There is no room for the pre-school program to grow. Mr. Salomone responded that the two designs are integral to each other. The Town Council has to set the referendum question. The projects are integral. He will recommend that there be one question on the referendum.

Tom Bowen, 22 Woods Way. He has been on a number of Project Building Committees. He has concerns regarding open space. The Town spent a lot of money on the Eddy Farm to create open space in the area around the park; also Cedar Mountain. Newington is the third most densely populated Town in the Hartford area. This project will dramatically impact our open space. He inquired about the thought processes for a separate Parks and Recreation Department building. He moved to town for the schools and for Parks and Recreation. We have wonderful Parks and Recreation programs. He would like to see a plan for keeping the Mortensen Community Center intact. He wondered why there would be a vacant space where the gym is. He understands the differences between new construction and renovation. Mrs. Cohen made him laugh with her ability to get to the essence of the matter when she asked if this is what the people wanted. This is a loss of opportunity costs. There is constantly a need for new building in this town; roads also. He urged the Committee to keep the gym and the Mortensen Community Center in Town Hall. He urged the Committee to think of other towns in this area that

most people respect. They all have mediocre town halls. Renovations make buildings more efficient. The mechanicals have to be addressed. The population has not changed much and the number of children is not going up. Yet you are adding space to the Community Center to meet needs. He urged the Committee to save open space and keep the Community Center where it is. You can still add square footage to the Community Center and Parks and Recreation programs. The Committee is addressing 68,000 of the 90,000 square feet in the Town Hall. There are other options to optimize space.

Mady Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive. She has four items. Why is there a disparity between the budget figure presented this evening and the original budget of \$10,496,000 in the CIP? She agrees with Mr. Bowen's comments about open space. Could Parks and Recreation be kept at Town Hall? Will the Town Hall be taken care of when it is done? We should change the name of whatever we do. This will not be a community center. Change the name of the building to Parks and Recreation Department.

Gail Budrejko, 21 Isabelle Terrace. She is advocating for more space for parks. She wants to age in place in Newington. This concept is lost in the budget process and in this process. There are few places for walking or sitting on a bench and reading. There are only two parks and Mill Pond is the showpiece. The proposed building will reduce open space enjoyed by all and by people of all ages. What about environmental damage? What damage will this do to the falls? The Committee should build up rather than build out. This will destroy the park.

- IX. Response to Public Participation – Mr. Salomone stated that the Committee has gone through a lot of discussion on where the Mortensen Community Center should go. This was discussed and debated by the Project Building Committee when they decided to go with a two building concept. This was part of the evolution of discussion by the Committee. People can ask questions when the project is referred to a public hearing. Open space has been discussed and trade offs considered. Recreation programs are not just for youths. The gym can also be used for meetings and multipurpose space. The Building Committee discussions have evolved over at least three years of activity. The comments made this evening do a disservice to the Committee. What is being proposed will be the most cost effective and least exclusive. Mr. Till stated that the Parks and Recreation Commission unanimously felt that this was the best location for this facility in order to operate all the programs. Mr. Dinunzio concluded that it was important to address the concerns of the public. There are more members of the public here now. The Committee needs to come to a consensus and make sure that costs are in line. Whoever speaks brings merit.
- X. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM.