

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Capital Improvements Program Committee (CIP)
Meeting Minutes – April 21, 2014

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the CIP was called to order by Chair Osgood at 4:07 p.m. Members present: Dave Osgood, Charlie Sheaff, Jeff Goller, Steve Bittel, Bruce Bohannon, Board of Selectmen Representative Deborah J. Davis, and Francis Faulkner.

Absent: None

Others Present: Town Administrator Shane O’Keefe, and Recording Secretary Beverly Bernard.

Minutes:

- Minutes from February 19, 2014 were considered. Motion was made by Bittel to accept the minutes. The motion was seconded by Sheaff. Osgood mentioned 2nd paragraph re “Town ambulance service” saying it isn’t the purview of this committee to recommend ambulance service. All were in favor to accept the minutes as read except for abstentions by Davis and Goller. Motion passed.
- Minutes from April 14, 2014 were considered and tabled until all committee members could make a full review of the minutes.

DISCUSSIONS/OTHER BUSINESS

Review draft programs and building assessments for Municipal Facilities Needs and Site Alternatives Analysis.

Copies of the Brickstone Land Use Consultant, LLC Review of Town Owned Property, and Daniel Scully Architects report Building Assessment for Existing Swanzey Town Hall/Central Fire Department dated April 14, 2014 were reviewed by the Committee.

Osgood noted that the mission for today’s meeting is to give the architects some direction. O’Keefe said that the Committee should prioritize the projects, dispensing with ideas that will not work and selecting those that will. There was mention that some members were disappointed that the program for the Police Department wasn’t included. Osgood said the primary focus is the Fire Station downstairs in Town Hall. The building should not be housing both Town Hall and the Fire Department. He recommended the Committee consider a combination Police and Fire Station; the architects have to design a police station and fire station either separate or together, and a Town Hall.

Bittel noted the major challenge is finding a spot for any building since the Town does not currently own large chunks of land that would be suitable. Bittel also said that any capital plan should touch on every need of the Town. He said that he didn’t think the idea could be sold to the public without every facility included in the plan. He also noted that from a financial perspective, it is smarter to plan for all the buildings at the same time. Discussion was held regarding the trusses at Town Hall and the need to replace them as reflected in the analysis by the architects’ engineering consultant. Discussion was held regarding storage capacity and O’Keefe said that he had investigated the cost of locked containers and learned the lease cost is about \$1,000 per year, including delivery and removal, but that climate control is important for Town records.

Bohannon mentioned Brown Field could be a location option for Fire and Police. Bohannon said he hadn't heard any option to acquire property. Discussion was held regarding the Carpenter Home property and whether it could be utilized for the Town. It was noted that the deed requires the property revert back to the heirs if the property isn't being used as a facility for elderly citizens. Goller said the hill where the Carpenter Home is located is dangerous for cars and unsuitable for truck traffic.

Davis suggested consideration of the Town owned field by the Keene Dillard-Hopkins airport runway. Osgood noted there are restrictions to the property due to the presence of the airport and any property used for Fire, Police or a Town Hall has to be free from any hazardous conditions such as those that an airport might pose.

Discussion was held regarding the post office building on NH Route 32 as a possible site for Town facilities, either taking it by eminent domain or buying it. It is private property, but it's in the flight path of the airport. It was noted by Osgood that there is no better fire station location than right in center of town in order to service all sides of town.

Discussion was held about the Historical Society property, but it was determine that there is only one acre on the site. Discussion was held about the size of fire station needed and how much land would be required. Osgood estimated 96 feet needed for 6 apparatus bays. Goller asked if Town Hall were removed, would the lot be big enough for fire station. It was pointed out that leach fields are in the back of the property so there is limited expansion there. Davis mentioned the large property on NH Route 32 and Carlton Road that is for sale. Osgood said it is also worth investigation the availability of the School District-owned Wilcox School property across from the Mt. Caesar Library.

Bittel mentioned that anything built in the center of town will have to be tastefully designed, but if built on Safford drive, a cheaper building could be built because it would out of sight and surrounded by trees. The other Committee members did not actively support the idea.

Davis said the Town needs information about the construction cost per square foot. Faulkner noted that the current Town Hall building is landlocked by the library and the school and there isn't enough land to really develop any of the buildings needed. A discussion was held regarding the availability of the SAU offices neighboring Town Hall and the possibility that the Monadnock School District might be willing to sell it; however even though some school staff is moving out of the building, the school district might still need the building for some of its offices.

Discussion was held regarding the property for sale at the corner of Carlton Road and NH Route 32. It was noted that the property is approximately 27 acres. Some of it is wetlands, so maybe half is useable.

Again, discussion was held regarding the square footage required. Bittel said that a fire house would require enough of a footprint to cover EMS and living quarters, and one more bay than the Fire Department currently has to accommodate growth in town. There was a brief reference to 23 approximate acres that used to be used as a kennel, owned by Jerry Bell, which has a sand pit on it.

Bohannon asked if everyone agreed that a new Town Hall is needed. He noted that there is already an estimate of \$500,000 to bring the building up to meet safety codes, and you still have an old building with failing trusses.

O'Keefe repeated that the Committee needs to give the architects direction as to the number of rooms, amount of storage, etc. because that can drive the overall costs. He asked, for example, if the Committee wants a large meeting room in the Town Hall plan to accommodate Deliberative Session and ballot voting, because if so it could not be accommodated at the current Town Hall. Davis stated that the Town Hall should allow for this type of space. Bittel suggested that if a combination police and fire station were to be built then the vacant police station could be repurposed for administrative space for Town Hall. The current Town Hall structure could be fixed up as a ceremonial center for the Town and use downstairs for storage and a meeting room. The group of folks moved to the old Police Station would take their files with them.

Osgood suggested approaching the owners of the post office property. O'Keefe noted the United States Postal Service (USPS) rents the building and has full say on what goes into the building including the right to sublet the building. He noted that there was some research done in the past to utilize parts of that building for the Town Clerk and Tax Collector and it was found to be expensive to upgrade the space to make it compliant with access and infrastructure requirements.

Bohannon agreed that the Committee has to determine the program and therefore the size of the buildings required before cost can be determined. Bittel suggested a municipal complex, either one building or a group of buildings, be considered. He suggested pricing out the land that is available on the corner of Carlton and Route 32 since it might be large enough to accommodate a complex of buildings for the Town. He noted that the land is thought to have an asking price of \$499,000. He went on to suggest that Option #1 would be to build a complex for Fire, Police, and Town Hall, then selling off the existing Police Station, and selling off the Town Hall building. Option #2 would be moving the Fire and Police Departments, and keeping some uses at Town Hall. Osgood said he didn't like the latter idea. Bohannon said option #2 would be confusing to citizens as to where to go to conduct their business if some of Town Hall business was done at one location and the rest at a different location.

Davis suggested using the Fire Department for voting. Osgood noted that use of a fire house was done in Keene a while back and it really doesn't work out if there is a fire. He said the Keene folks were lucky that there were no fires to respond to that day, and it was eventually decided that a Fire Department is not the best location for voters even if it is only once a year. You cannot rely on there being no need for a turnout.

Davis suggested that all three municipal buildings could be built on the Carlton property and the property is close to the center of town. Bohannon said that the Brown Field could be considered also. Osgood suggested that Brown Field is not central enough since it is in West Swanzey and a central fire station that may someday have full-time staff should be located in the center of Town to be able to reach all sections of Town. Response time to the east side of town would be higher from a Fire Station located in the west side of Town.

Faulkner asked about the possibility of privatizing the Fire Department, which would mean the Town would hire someone to give the Town fire protection. Osgood said he would not be in favor of that.

Goller referred back to a facility with a big meeting room – in Town Hall. Goller said the Town Hall building should be sold. A discussion was held about three parcels to consider: the post office property on NH Route 32, the Carlton Road property, and Safford Drive property. Osgood, Faulkner, and Davis said Safford Drive is a bad idea for a fire station due to its location. Osgood suggested adding the Wilcox

building property to consider, which is owned by the Monadnock School District. Bittel mentioned that there might be enough land next to the Keene State Camp to consider in the vicinity of Page Drive. Osgood said the Committee should request consideration of the Wilcox building property, the post office property, and the Carlton Road property. O'Keefe said that he thought that stage should come later, but Davis said much of the size of the building depends on location.

Discussion was held regarding the size of a fire department building. Bohannon estimated that 16,000 square feet would be required. Osgood said square footage doesn't work for him and he would like to know length by width by height dimensions. Bittel said he needs to know the cost. Discussion was held on the number of bays that would be required. Osgood suggested asking for six bays and possibly cut it back to five if it is determined that a larger station is not required.

O'Keefe referred to the documentation provided by the architect based on input from the Committee and various Town Hall staff saying the program for Town Hall created by the architect works. Goller asked if the Committee can all agree on the Town Hall program. Further discussion continued.

Discussion was held regarding mapping response times for the Fire Department. It was noted by Osgood that the Master Plan has said all along to build a Central Fire Station. Discussion was held about the number of apparatus in the various fire stations. Davis said she felt that there isn't any redundancy in the fire apparatus the Town has at this point in time.

Davis summarized: this building (Town Hall) cannot be rehabilitated.

Discussion was held about the Public Works Department and its needs. Davis said that there isn't as dire need with Public Works as other facilities in Town. Sheaff agreed that given a large enough parcel of land, the Committee has enough information to have the architect move ahead with a three building complex, although the price tag will not be cheap.

Discussion was held regarding the Police Department building and the ownership of the land which the Town obtained from the local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). With some research it was determined that the deed states that the land cannot be sold and must remain the property of the Town. Bittel said those terms could be amended by a court of law. Goller suggested that the building could be rented out to be used for municipal purposes. Osgood said that the Town could probably negotiate a change in the deed.

Motion by Bittel to request Daniel Scully Architects to develop a 3-department building plan for Town Hall, Police, and Fire complex on proposed Carlton Road/Route 32 using the program they have already delivered to the Town and to include costs. The motion was seconded by Goller, and all were in favor.

NEXT MEETING

It was agreed to hold the next meeting at Town Hall on April 28, 2014 at 4:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Davis, seconded by Bittel with all in favor. **Motion passed.**
Adjournment occurred at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Beverly Bernard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary

Approved on April 28, 2014.