

Municipal Civic Building
Public Meeting #1
June 6, 2013
Thatcher Brook Primary School

Present: J. Grenier, Chair; R. Ellis, K. Miller, C. Nordle, C. Viens, Select Board

The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm and began with a PowerPoint presentation by J. Grenier, who also announced that the next two public meetings on the Municipal Civic Building project will be held June 13 and June 20 starting at 7:00pm in the cafeteria of Thatcher Brook Primary School. This presentation was followed by a question and answer session.

Q: Do we have specific information about these bonds, and can residents purchase these bonds?

A (R. Ellis): The Vermont Municipal Bond Bank provides the bond. We have asked the Vermont Municipal Bond Bank to provide answers, which will be posted on waterburyvt.com

Q1 (John Thumann): What happens if one thing falls through (i.e. the sale of the library or 51 South Main Street)?

A (J. Grenier): There are a lot of moving pieces. The purchase and sale agreement was the first piece between the State and the Town. The bond vote is the second piece. Town voters have limited the amount we can spend to \$5 million. If something falls through, we'll have to regroup.

A (C. Nordle): Darren Winham has interested buyers. The State wants to close in December for the purchase and sale agreement, but this could be extended a little bit. This is the only functional limitation currently. If it takes much longer, we're likely to be looking at other issues.

Q2 (John Thumann): What is included in the site work fee?

A (Barb Farr): The site work includes contingencies, soft costs, and a construction trailer that will be on site. There are a lot of additional costs included in this number. Filling in the hole after the building is demolished is one; raising the building up about 6 feet is another. Landscaping is a site cost but not related to raising the building higher.

Comment (K. Miller): The budget worksheet includes a \$580,000 piece.

Q (John Wulff): Looking at this from a finance background, if this bond is approved, do we have a mechanism we lock into current low interest rates?

A (J. Grenier): We could possibly lock in this summer. If we pass this bond vote, we have a better chance to lock in to lower interest rate now as opposed to if we wait.

Q (Felix Callan): Why aren't we putting this on the backburner until more prosperous times? The economy is not good and we're getting into a big investment in Town. We already pay too much in property taxes, and this project will increase these taxes. I think the project needs to be put off.

A (J. Grenier): We can't predict when prosperous times will come. This is a great opportunity and we have funds that will help reduce the cost of this project and assets to sell and use towards this project. The project is not going to get cheaper; it will be just the opposite. It is a complicated project, but the Board is committed to working to go step by step.

A (K. Miller): Options have been examined for four functions. If the Police Department is removed from the mix, you have other options.

A (J. Grenier): We feel this is the best option for now, and for next 40 to 50 years. This site has the most potential and we (the Board) are presenting the best plan for now and for the future.

Q1 (Linda Balco): I think the issues are why we aren't looking at some of these other options in another manner. Why do all functions stay in one space? Maybe it's a little grandiose. You can do a lot of things without being this grandiose.

A (R. Ellis): The costs we've come up with are very reasonable. We've been working with Black River Design to bring down the cost, and we are still working with them regarding the estimates. We are trying to cut costs further as we go on. We stressed to BRD to keep the limit at the \$5 million bond. This is enough money for us to go forward with the site. Moretown is also building a town hall to include just their municipal offices and their cost per square foot is higher than ours, even with our flood-proofing efforts.

Q2 (Linda Balco): Is this what the proposal needs to be? Are there other options?

A (C. Nordle): This is the question we're putting to the voters now. In the FEMA Long-Term Community Recovery process, the majority told us they wanted all four functions together. This is where we felt it fit the best. We worked with the architects to lower the bond vote amount for voters. If voters tell us this is still too much, we'll have to reevaluate. People that participated in this process told us they want it co-located.

Q (MK Monley): Thanks for the work you've done on this so far. There are many in the community who support this project and look forward to having something like this in town. This is the 21st century and having our municipal offices in an old historic home is untenable, and the same goes for the library.

Q (John Callan): I understand FEMA helped people that got flooded and I think a small group came up with this idea. I don't believe that we came up with this because this was majority decision. I thought Town Meeting Day would be to discuss this project, but it was already all planned out at TMD. I wasn't flooded, and I wasn't involved in FEMA process, and I expected the professionals to handle this. This didn't give me the full scope of what the Town was really deciding. I don't agree with the 8-Step notice and I don't think it was fair.

A (C. Nordle): FEMA did come in and make an assessment of flooded homes. We advertised the community process, and meetings were held to get people together. We asked where they wanted to target energy and efforts. When we talk about the majority of people we are referring to the majority of people that showed up. If there are people that didn't participate, show it in the vote. I feel an obligation to carry out what people asked us to do.

Q (Carol Miller): In the FEMA process and public meeting, the municipal plan was to locate at the library site. If we're going by this decision, the library site is the will of the people. I don't think you can say that the Stanley site is what people want.

A (R. Ellis): The LTRC process ran from November 2011 to May 2012. There were a lot of meetings, and one large public meeting had 400 people in attendance. During this process, we didn't know what was going to happen to the State Office Complex. In March 2012 we found out that the State would be returning. Stanley and Wasson Halls were not offered until March 2012 and April 2012 was the first study on this. All four functions came forward at planning process in November 2011 to May 2012. Once the Stanley and Wasson site was offered, the majority of Select Board members felt it was a one-time opportunity to process this site. We would be remiss if we didn't present this opportunity to voters; this type of opportunity may not happen for another 100 years. We can grow at this site. In the February/March survey there was overwhelming positive response which supports our (the Board's) feeling that they should present this to the voters.

Q (Frank Balco): Seeing that the appearance of this is predetermined, the vote will happen and if anything happens, the Board can do anything they please with the \$5 million. This is part of the problem when we talk about not being transparent. There is a large difference between the net and gross square footage numbers. The Library's memorandum has a 30% difference between net and gross. Also, the Village MOU mentions adding in one additional employee at the pumping station. What is the cost of maintenance on this? What other bonds will come up that are emergencies? We have no idea what's going to happen to people in January with health care reform. Liking to have this building and being able to afford are two different things. We don't have answers to many of the components of this difficult project. Why not move back the bond vote? Why can't the village vote before the bond vote?

A (J. Grenier): There is a 30% difference between gross and net because when you're laying out the floor plan, you figure out the number of square feet for the vault, bathrooms, etc., and then add in 30% for things like hallways and broom closets.

A (C. Nordle): The Village will not need to hire an additional employee to do daily or ongoing maintenance at the State Office Complex. There will be an additional number of hours required to accommodate the unrelated phosphorous upgrade. Someone will be hired to do this, and within their schedule they can do the half-hour to one hour at the pump station. The Town cost is a separate one dealing with stormwater swales. There's a pipe that runs between 121 South Main Street and Ladd Hall that drains to Winooski which already needs to be maintained by Waterbury, not the State. Additional swales will handle discharge from the State buildings. We can likely participate with the State in terms of maintenance of the swales. We can change the Randall Street discharge swale to run in a different direction away from Randall Street properties and co-locate this swale with the State's swale.

A (C. Viens): I want to let the public know we're not here to jam this down anyone's throat. We have spent time on this (and haven't all agreed on this). It's been a daunting task for the Select Board, too. We're presenting something to voters that's based on information we've gathered; this is what we were asked to do. The choice is up to the voters; the decision is ultimately yours.

Q (Bob Dain): I have been on the ambulance squad for many years and have seen many people with homes in need of repair and maintenance. I, like them, want to stay in my own home. Taxes have increased over 300% over the past 30 years for me. My concern is that we are ignoring the financial needs of many people in our community.

A (R. Ellis): Regarding income sensitivity, a "circuit breaker" limits the combined municipal taxes and educational taxes to be capped at 5% of income for people with an annual income of \$47,000 or less.

Q (Roger Clapp): I was flooded, and exhausted after flood. My gut reaction was that the Select Board could run the Town services in the fire house and this could work. I have changed my mind. I recognize the differences of opinion on the Board. The Select Board is asking voters if we can float this vote. It is a bargain to get this facility for \$175 per year. I'm in; I'm on board.

Comment (K. Miller): I am concerned about this project because there are other things coming down the pipe, like the Main Street reconstruction project and the roundabout. I am concerned about Wasson hall. Other Select Board members don't know what to do about Wasson hall. There's no money in the budget or in the bond to maintain Wasson. I am concerned about this and about not having a plan. I am not willing to take this risk. This bond alone will raise the municipal tax by 15%. I believe in Waterbury and do this because I love Waterbury and want to stay in Waterbury. I want to look at other options that will give

us a beautiful town office and beautiful library for less money. Can it be done for less money?

Q (Val Vincent): This is a process question. One board member has given her opinion. What are other opinions? Can we keep the meeting open for questions and later see if other board members can give their opinions?

Q (Linda Wulff): I can't imagine the amount of work the Select Board has done. One meeting talked about alternatives. The cost of those alternatives would still be more than half of this project, plus the cost of utilities (the new building will be green and split the cost of shared space). The benefit is having people being attracted to Town because of it, and it will bring in business. This could save money in the long run.

Comment (R. Ellis): Slides of all options can be viewed on the municipal website under the links that include "Planning Options prepared by Weimann Lamphere Architects".

Q (Everett Coffey): Can any of the Boards speak to why 51 South Main hasn't been reexamined? We could put a parking garage under the building to take care of the flood problem, put in an elevator, have two floors, and house the municipal offices and Police Department. I encourage people to not rush down to vote early because more information will be coming out.

Q (Carol Miller): The survey asked us "with additional financial information, I am comfortable moving forward". Now more info is out and I'm not comfortable anymore. The timeframe has been pretty crunched and there are lots of unanswered questions. What happens if the library can't raise the money- does the Town pick up their slack? What about money the Historical Society pledged to raise? I am bothered by fact that we're being asked to vote on something that isn't labeled for being what it is. Things aren't being called what they really are.

A (R. Ellis): If pledges don't come through, if the Village's \$550,000 for the Police Department doesn't come through, the PD doesn't get included. In terms of dividing up construction costs, there are fixed costs and there are variable construction costs. If town builds, there will be fixed costs regardless of the PD portion and could still build their own portion of the building. The Village would fund their own portion of it. If the Library can't meet their pledge, we would have to go back to project drawings.

Q (Debra Thumann): What's so magical about the PD being part of the Town complex? If the Village doesn't come up with the money, the PD won't be built. What was the discussion, or how did you determine that the Village PD should be a part of the Town complex? Town taxpayers shouldn't pay for the Village. By taking the PD out of equation, other sites can be analyzed. Does the complex have to be so grand? The library does need a new place, it is too small- I'll give you that. The municipal offices also need new space, I'm not debating this. Why decrease the possibility of where we can build because this is only site that can hold four entities? The library is a sanctuary and the Police deals with criminals and drug addicts. These do not belong near each other. People may not be aware of police presence at this location. The PD is increasing costs.

A (J. Grenier): Village voters are Town voters too. The "Us" versus "Them" battle has gone on a long time in Waterbury. We are trying to make a project that fits everyone's needs.

Q (Val Vincent). Thank you. I support this project. The municipal offices have been in inadequate space for as long as I can remember. The Library is inadequate. What's wrong

with reusing old building? Why is it important for the functions to be in a more up-to-date building, as opposed to an old historical house site?

A (J. Grenier): I imagine the new buildings being safer and more energy efficient. You can only do so much to an old building to make it open and more handicapped accessible.

Q (Sherry Knudsen): I am still undecided about where I fall in terms of this project; I am not for or against. So many people are struggling financially and I have two questions. 1) Can you please give a range of where you think this project falls (bare bones to Taj Mahal) and what can you do to scale it back? What would it take, what would it compromise? 2) Regarding different bonds, how does this project intersect with other projects coming down the pike? A visual or graph would be helpful.

A (R. Ellis): We will post a document from Bill Shepeluk on the municipal website. So far, we have cut 5,000 square feet off of the project. We have ruled out underground parking because it is too expensive (\$750,000. We removed the rounded portion from the bend of the building to save an estimated \$150,000. We are also limiting the landscaping in this budget, reusing asphalt in the parking lot, and have worked a 10% contingency into this budget. This project is close to bare bones and there's not much room in the budget.

A (C. Nordle): We used conservative numbers for Stanley Hall's deconstruction. About \$100,000 more was included in the current budget for the demolition. It's also possible that someone may be willing to remove parts of Stanley Hall at no cost. We have been conservative on the other end, as well. The bond is for up to \$5 million. We are committed to keeping costs as low as we can.

Q (John Callan): I have been asking Bill Shepeluk for the last few years to use project management software. We need to know the costs, sub-costs, and projected costs to taxpayers.

A (J. Grenier): We can try to show long term community bonding. The Main Street project was proposed 30 years ago and has come and gone nearly every 10 years.

Q (John Thumann): Does the sale of the library property include the land behind the library?

A: No

Q (John Thumann): Does that land become landlocked?

A: It has a right-of-way.

Q (John Thumann): Does the price of the project include furnishings?

A: Yes

Q (Felix Callan): How are people and employees going to get to and from the building in a flood situation? The complex will be elevated, but how about egress or overnight accommodations?

A (J. Grenier): We will have advance notice to get people out of building if there will be a flood coming. Secondly, we'll have to wait, just like with the fire station, to get back into the building.

Q (Margaret Luce): The Town has done a choke study and the State has done flood mitigation studies. Getting rid of some of the buildings won't impede the flow of water. The whole issue of flooding is being addressed at State and local levels. Raising the buildings will also address this.

Q (Roy Lloyd): There won't be a better time to do this, and we must do this for the quality and quantity of life in Waterbury. I feel as if a bus is ready to roll, and we'll miss that bus if we don't seize this bond opportunity.

Q (Herschell Murry): We need to step back and look at the bigger picture. Taxes are going up and forcing people out. Another thought is that if we're going to keep acting like Podunk Ville, there's a certain portion of us that might just want to move on.

This public informational meeting ended at 8:45pm.

At 8:45pm, K. Miller left the meeting.

At 8:45pm the Select Board assembled for a meeting.

R. Ellis indicated that the organizers of Waterbury Arts Festival have requested the use of an additional 100 feet of Bidwell Lane for this year's event. C. Nordle moved that the Board approve the use of an additional 100 feet of Bidwell Lane for the Waterbury Arts Festival. R. Ellis seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of those present (C. Viens, J. Grenier, R. Ellis, and C. Nordle).

C. Nordle expressed concern about the placement of the Waterbury Record public hearing notice at the very back of this week's edition. The Board discussed whether to publish an additional notice for the upcoming hearings. C. Nordle asked that staff request placement of an additional notice closer to the front of the paper where it might be more visible. C. Nordle moved that the Board authorize a one-half page color notice in the Waterbury Record concerning the upcoming public hearings on the municipal complex. R. Ellis seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote of those present (C. Viens, J. Grenier, R. Ellis, and C. Nordle).

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:00pm.

Approved on June 17, 2013