

Safety Services Building Committee

Public Meeting

June 29, 2019

Members Present: Bruce Healey, Chair; Dick Wright; Bob Wilkonski; Jim Lord; John Dean; Ken Holmes; Lynn Wallace; Scott Wheeler, Pam Bryk, Members; Hank Thomas; Brad Wheeler, Ex-Officio Members.

Mr. Healey started the meeting at 10:30 a.m.

Mr. Healey asked that the public fill out the opinion polls. The responses are very important to the Committee in determining their recommendations to the Selectboard, when they meet on July 15, 2019.

Committee Introductions.

Mr. Healey presented a PowerPoint presentation which is attached to these minutes.

After the PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Healey opened up the meeting to public input.

Sue Russell asked if the regular budget increases are accounted for in the breakdown of the tax amount impact. Mr. Healey said that with the information from the bond bank and current assessment trends, he was pretty confident the numbers on slide 21 were very conservative. Ms. Bryk pointed out that the Town does not have any control over school and county tax rates.

Ted Jones asked what the other \$560,000 of the \$776,000 site work cost goes to after taking out the costs on slide 6. Mr. Healey stated that the \$560,000 is what would get spent on site work for any site. The numbers of slide 6 are site specific for the Bald Sunapee/Camacho property. Mr. Healey said that North Branch was only able to give him certain numbers due to passage of time and subcontractors have moved onto other jobs. Mr. Healey continued that he thought there was a misunderstanding in regard to the \$776,000 site work cost being for the removal of the hill, when in actuality the removal of the hill is a small share (\$160,000) of the \$776,000 total site work number.

Joanne Lord thanked the Committee for their time. Mrs. Lord continued that no matter where the fire station is located, there will be ice and snow to worry about and in the discussion of the playground, fencing is proposed at the current playground location, but no mention of fencing if the playground is moved in back of the Town offices. Mrs. Lord said that there were still more options available that haven't been discussed at this meeting. Mrs. Lord said that she agrees we need the fire house and, in her opinion, it would be better further up the hill than at the Bald Sunapee/Camacho site. Mr. Wilkonski said that it would create more problems if the fire station is placed on the hill as opposed to level ground. Mr. Wilkonski continued the State would need to change the speed limit, a light would have to be installed to slow traffic down when equipment was leaving or returning to the station. Discussion followed. Mr. Wright said the proposed location of the fire station is safer than the current location in regard to line of sight visibility. Mr. Wright continued that he measured approximately 185 feet from the playground to the edge of Route 103, which is the same measurement from the playground to the edge of the parking area of the proposed fire station, with the fire trucks being beyond that. Fencing around the playground would keep the kids safe.

Jim Miles asked when an estimate and name of construction co./engineer co. could be expected for the renovation of the current fire station. Mr. Miles said that he would like to know that information well before Town Meeting, because the message he feels he is getting is take it or leave it, it is going to be on Bald Sunapee/Camacho or its going nowhere. Marcia Keane asked if the Committee has considered

taking the police department out of the current building and expanding the fire department. Mr. Holmes said the primary problem with the existing location is that it is .65 acres and even without the police department in the building there is not physical space on the site to do what is required for a new fire station. Mr. Holmes said that the Committee has already reached the conclusion, along with engineering firms and architects over previous years, that the current site will not support the fire stations needs.

Jennifer Parkhurst-Smith asked why the Bald Sunapee/Camacho properties were purchased. Mr. Wright said the original intent of purchasing the properties were for the future development for the police and/or fire departments and possible expansion of the library. Mrs. Parkhurst-Smith asked how much is invested in the Bald Sunapee/Camacho property. Ms. Bryk said approximately \$885,000.

Darlene Magee thanked the Committee for doing due diligence. Ms. Magee asked if private landowners were contacted in respect to researching properties. The Committee said that there was one property that fit the needs and the owner was not contacted. Ms. Magee said that there is a piece of property on Post Rd. halfway distance between Town center and South Newbury, owned by the Larson family who would be interested in talking to the Town. Mr. Wright said that topography is the problem. Ms. Magee said maybe other property owners would come forward to donate or sell if the radius was further than 1/3 mile from Town center. Discussion followed.

Ms. Magee asked if a combined fire/police station was a consideration. Ms. Bryk said that a training room would be the only area of the building that could be shared. Ms. Magee said that for cost effectiveness, build a bigger unit instead of building new for the fire department and renovating for the police department. Chief Thomas said a combined building was looked into at one time in the past, but because of the size the building would have to be, it was more money to build a combined police/fire station. Mr. Holmes said that there was a period of time in NH where combined police/fire stations were common, but because of cost savings analysis most towns have gone away from that.

Ms. Magee asked if new apparatus was part of the new fire station proposal. Mr. Healey said the Committee was not involved in any aspect of equipment. Chief Thomas said that the size of the proposed fire station will last for lots of years and the apparatus will remain status quo. Chief Thomas said that the equipment is on the CIP plan (Capital Improvement Plan) in order to replace equipment because of age not to add new. Ivor Freeman, Chair of the CIP Committee, said the Committee did take into account the equipment replacement in their proposal.

Ms. Magee asked if there is any plan to dedicate money to road infrastructure in the Town. Discussion followed. Mr. Holmes said the roads are not in the purview of the Committee's charge and he encouraged Ms. Magee to attend Selectboard meetings. Discussion followed.

Susan Azodi said that Colby-Sawyer donated a non-functional building that was burned by area fire departments. Ms. Azodi continued that the building went up so fast, five minutes makes a difference and geographical centrality is extremely important. Ms. Azodi said that a well-designed station can be in keeping with the beauty of the Town and a fence around the playground will keep the kids safe. The current fire station is not safe for our volunteer fire people, who give freely of their time to help the community. Ms. Azodi continued that it is inevitable that a new fire station will be needed and will get more expensive the longer we wait.

Jerry Keene asked about the size of the current fire station and the proposed design. Mr. Healey said the current fire station occupies 5,000 square feet of a 6,400 square foot building and the proposed plan in March of 2019 was almost 9,700 square feet. Mr. Healey continued that Chief Thomas and the Committee felt that the current proposed building should last this community for at least 50 years. Mr. Keene asked what the proposed fire station will support versus what's in place today. Mr. Holmes said the PowerPoint

presentation from March 2019 Town Meeting would have that information and it can be found on the Town's website.

Regina Cockerill, a Planning Board member, Library Trustee and currently the chair of the Newbury Public Library Foundation which is the organization that is fund-raising for the library expansion, said that the library has been mentioned a few times at this meeting and she wanted to talk about a few of the points. The library expansion was brought up with the hill removal (slide 8), Ms. Cockerill said the library already has architectural renderings on the expanded footprint of the new library and she does not think the removal of the hill has anything to do with the library. Ms. Cockerill continued that the playground's position is an integral part of the library expansion plans. Ms. Cockerill said that they are working very hard to raise half of the money for the library expansion but wanted to let people know they may fall short of raising half.

Joanne Lord said that Warner moved their fire station from the center of town to the outskirts of town.

Mrs. Wallace said it is not about the money, she wants the fire station and she likes the idea of the top of Ledge Hill because it is still close to the center of Town, a minute closer to South Newbury, a minute further from Mt. Sunapee. Mrs. Wallace continued that she had a dream that the current Bald Sunapee/Camacho property would be a great park and wanted to know if other people were interested in having a new fire station in a different spot.

Mr. Holmes said he wanted to follow up with Mrs. Wallace's point, and that is exactly why the Committee is asking for public input with the expectation of getting something done. Mr. Holmes continued that in conversations with individual people about why they are for or against the fire station proposals, there is inevitably half a dozen different answers, and it is really hard to get to that 2/3rds vote. Mr. Holmes asked for a show of hands (if willing) for those in the past or today that have been against the previous proposals for the fire station at the Bald Sunapee/Camacho site, how many people would vote for it if it went to the Ledge Hill property that Mrs. Wallace spoke about or another property, still reasonably close to the center of Town, understanding that would mean purchasing the property and costing \$500,000 to \$750,000 more. Approximately 7 hands were raised. Mr. Holmes asked how many people who voted yes in the past for the Bald Sunapee/ Camacho property would potentially now vote no because tax impact is increased by \$500,000 to \$750,000. Approximately 12 hands were raised. Mr. Holmes stated that this is the dilemma that the Committee has been facing. Mr. Holmes thanked the public for the feedback.

Jason Perry asked if the Town was increasing its staff and payroll for the fire department and police department. Chief Thomas said no. Mr. Holmes said the fire department is looking for volunteers. Mr. Perry said he wanted to talk about needs vs. wants and in his opinion based on the aging demographics of the Town residents a need would be a quick emergency response time, but putting money towards fire trucks and a police department (in a low crime Town) is a want. Mr. Holmes said that although the current Committee did not work on design, previous Committees did, and their conclusion is that the design proposal are the needs and not the wants. Mr. Holmes continued that there are an incredible variety of calls the fire department gets, and what equipment goes depends on the type of call. Mr. Holmes continued that the proposed fire station that failed the last two years, houses existing equipment only, no added equipment, so the proposed building size is to fit existing equipment. Discussion followed. Mr. Perry said that he would like proof that what was being proposed for the fire station will give the community the benefit they expect with the investment. Mr. Holmes said he understands the frustration, but the Committee was not about the design, but what you see on the floorplan (slide 18) in terms of having an EOC and proving it is needed, it is required by law. Mr. Holmes said the proposed fire station meets code and law and that is it, and the existing fire station does not. Discussion followed.

Polly Lowe asked with a full tanker of water how many roads can you not get up. Chief Thomas said that private driveways not maintained are his biggest fear. Chief Thomas continued that the highway department comes out to help the fire department get to their calls when needed. Discussion followed. Mr. Holmes said the fire trucks can get to the driveway of every house in Town.

Cynthia Trudeau asked about a fire department open house of the current fire station so that people can see what the fire department is working with. Chief Thomas said that he will try to have an open house after Old Home Day. Ms. Bryk said that there are also pictures of the inside of the current fire station on the Newbury NH Safety Service Building Project Facebook page.

Robin MacRitchie asked if there was any possibility or has it been looked at that the police department be moved out of the existing building and the building renovated to meet legal requirements for the fire department and have the police department move somewhere else. Mrs. Wallace said that it has been looked at, but there is not enough space in the existing building.

Craig Sweitzer asked if there were any other source of financing other than the Town, money from the State for Safety Complexes or Homeland Security. Mr. Sweitzer also said he thought the cost numbers were a little low for a 10,000 square foot building to be put up for \$400 a square foot including site improvements. Mr. Healey said that the Warner fire station, which is 11,000 square feet was just built with North Branch as the construction manager and even with different site work costs Warner came in way under the \$400 a square foot. Mr. Sweitzer said that he didn't want to budget too small of a number and find out we are short. Mr. Healey said that he is confident with the numbers.

Mr. Perry asked if the Town had looked into federal grant money. Mr. Holmes said that the Town had applied for a grant in the past, but it was denied, Newbury was not even close to being on the short list. Mr. Holmes said that he understood that there is no grant money available for buildings, but there is grant money available for equipment, but until something passes there is no point in applying for the grant. Discussion followed. Mr. Wheeler said that the Committee could make a recommendation to the Selectboard to apply for grants in the future if a fire station proposal is passed.

Michael Bedard said that he voted yes for the fire station and if Bald Sunapee/Camacho is the only location he will vote yes again, but he is concerned with what he has heard that it will be the same thing all over again. Mr. Bedard continued that he is disappointed that the Committee didn't provide a separate parcel as an alternative. Mr. Wright said that nothing was found. Mr. Bedard asked what if the Town didn't already own Bald/Sunapee/Camacho, could the fire station not be built some place else. Mr. Wright said that is why the land was purchased 10 years ago. Discussion followed. Mr. Bedard said there has to be something different that you take to Town Meeting or you will get the same result over and over again.

Denise Mitchell said that she had gone to one of the Committee's meetings where they discussed the Ledge Hill property-the fact that the Town does not own it and it is not for sale as well as the topography. Ms. Mitchell continued that the subdividing process and costs are hard. Ms. Mitchell said she works in Property & Casualty Insurance and playgrounds are inherently dangerous and this playground is a bit isolated. Ms. Mitchell said she thinks the library and the fire station is a real plus with the playground there and the fire station doesn't add any risk near the playground.

Marion DeRoche asked if anyone had considered cutting the fire station down by one bay. Mr. Holmes said that it was evaluated but for the savings of \$85,000 now but \$250,000 plus to add in three years it was decided to keep the bay.

Mr. Wilkonski wanted to clarify that the fire department can get their apparatus to all calls.

Mrs. Parkhurst-Smith asked why you wouldn't want the rescue right next to the playground to respond to any injuries.

Russ Coleman asked if the Town Meeting could be a month later, so the people who leave Town in the wintertime could make it. Mr. Holmes said that State law dictates the date. Discussion followed. Mr. Wright said that Town Meeting can be moved but it is a complicated process. Discussion followed.

Jim Schultz said that he was frustrated with some of the questions being asked because the Committee was not charged to take a look at those topics. Mr. Schultz continued that response time is very critical and if the fire station is in South Newbury, the responders would be passing the Bald Sunapee/Camacho property on the way to the South Newbury site, which adds to the response time.

Shannon Perry said she is bothered by the 20-year impact of the bond, and this will put a burden on people's children. Ms. Bryk said that she thought you would want to look to the future, and she would like for her kids to have a safe fire station. Ms. Bryk said the Town could do a ten-year bond, but that would cost even more money, so with the 20-year bond it spreads it out, so it is not a huge impact. Discussion followed.

Ms. Mitchell said that distance from a fire station is a factor for homeowner's insurance coverage. Discussion followed.

Darrin Finneral said that if you build the fire station smaller, you will need an addition, let's build it big enough so you don't have to hear about it for 25 years. Mr. Finneral continued that if the Town is not using Town owned land sell it.

Ms. Perry asked about the fire pond on Southgate Rd. and the issue of people parking in front of the fire pond. Discussion followed.

Meeting adjourned at 12:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tiffany Favreau

Recording Secretary