

Fire Station – Municipal Campus Task Force

Monday, June 28, 2021

Members Present: Bill Kennedy, Select Board; Valerie Jenkins, Capital Improvements Committee; Peter LaRoche, Zoning Board of Adjustment; Matt Lundsted, Conservation Commission; Alan Zeller, citizen-at-large; Roland Patten, citizen-at-large; Jon Hampson, Fire Department; Colin Murdough, Heritage Commission; Rob Fox, Recreation Committee; Beth Alpaugh-Cote, Master Plan Steering Committee; Sarah Steinberg Heller, Planning Board

Others Present: Nicole MacStay, Seth MacLean, Ed Walker,

***This meeting was originally scheduled to be held at the Fire Department but was changed to the Select Board meeting room due to the lack of air conditioning at the Fire Department and the extreme heat on the day of this meeting. Change of meeting location was posted. ***

Welcome and Introductions

Chief Walker called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM and began a round of introductions. The members went around, and each gave a brief introduction of themselves.

Review of Mission and Methodology

Chief Walker explained the methodology and framework for pulling together the committee. He discussed how there was opportunity for the new fire station facility to include other community facilities, such as the Police Department, and so the focus would be framed to look at the feasibility of incorporating other features, as needed.

Chief Walker discussed that the purpose of pulling a representative for each member of all the Boards and Committees was to help relay key information between the task force and their respective Board/Committee to ensure that everything is being thought of. He then stated the current mission statement of the task force and asked the members if they felt there was anything that was missing or felt was not covered in that mission.

Mr. LaRoche suggested that there should be consideration to incorporate a town administration office at the facility, even if it was twenty years down the road. Mr. Hampson suggested that there may be opportunity for recreational space of some type at the site. Ms. MacStay stated that when the group looked at the features of the parcel, such as a wetlands delineation, would help identify the potential for opportunities. Mr. Hampson added that there may also be opportunity to expand the community garden to that space. Ms. Steinberg Heller added that she wondered if there could be space such as emergency shelter, such as 1-bedroom studio that could be used.

Mr. MacLean and Chief Walker felt it was an agreeable suggestion to make. Mr. MacLean echoed that it was a great point to envision “what would this place be?”

Ms. MacStay also discussed the opportunity to utilize federal funds and that the window of opportunity to put together the long-range vision was a very compressed window of time.

Chief Walker then introduced the engineering firm that was selected from the RFQ process and explained the RFQ interviewing process and how selection was made. He added that he felt HKT did a great job at demonstrating successes of commuting the design process and outreach within the community in the past. He also discussed that HKT had worked closely with the communities and assisted them with designing the outreach process and information distribution.

Chief Walker described the tight window of time and the goal to go through the police station and DPW design programmatic study phase, and from there be able to make a presentation to CIP, Budget, and Selectmen for the FY2022 cycle, adding that the goal is to have enough of a solid design done that they can present to the Boards a succinct plan. He explained that he would like to have the tough conversations early on to help address all concerns/issues instead of them being aired on the Town Meeting floor.

Mr. Patten asked about how much space the new lot lends to such a facility. Chief Walker explained it was 26 acres and needed a new wetland delineation to ensure the entire lot has well shown. Mr. Patten reiterated he was curious if this lot was enough space for the proposed used; Ms. MacStay responded that it appears they do.

Discussion of Public Engagement

Chief Walker discussed that Town Meetings can get hairy sometimes because of the most unexpected, unanticipated questions/concerns and, in effort to ensure this would not happen, the goal would be to get them all addresses to the best of their ability ahead of time. Ms. Steinberg Heller recommended a recent traffic study, adding that it tends to be a concern that comes up frequently during Planning Board cases. Mr. MacLean echoed that taking a left off Elm Street onto 101 can be difficult and a cause for irritation. Chief Walker discussed adding a light which flashes only when there are emergency vehicles entering the intersection.

Mr. MacLean discussed that Hoyle & Tanner has an engineer than can assist the town with looking at traffic issues.

Chief asked if any other concerns or things that have been left out that needs to be added.

Ms. Jenkins asked if there was a plan for what will be done with the existing buildings. Chief responded that it has been a question not yet fully addressed or considered mainly because of the many surrounding issues that would go hand-in-hand with the next use, such as parking availability for residential uses. Ms. MacStay added that there is a significant outreach process that has to happen to decide what is to be done with the old buildings. She added that she felt the Town would be better served by no retaining the property and allowing someone else to do something else with it, would support the tax base, and help bring in funds for the new buildings.

Mr. Hampson asked what the timeline for moving through this process looks like and Ms. MacStay explained the general timeline of the process essentially leading up to Town Meeting where at least two-thirds of the community to support it. Ms. MacStay and Mr. MacLean discussed the importance of having a shovel ready project and that at least this project has steps forward where monies have been earmarked.

Ms. Steinberg Heller reiterated the importance of educating the public on the potential impact to traffic and to also educate the public of the existing conditions of the buildings. Mr. Murdough suggested showing a cost projection and if the Town does not do the work, what would that impact look like? Ms. MacStay and Chief Walker discussed that the condition of the Fire Dept is so poor that its not even worth putting any money into. Mr. Murdough reiterated he felt it was key to educate the public on how poor the buildings are.

Ms. Steinberg Heller discussed that she felt they would serve as ambassadors to help share with the community all the work and studies that have gone into this project. Chief Walker agreed and expressed that it is getting harder to do everyday things because of the poor condition of the facility. Mr. Patten expressed that he knew the Fire Dept had outgrown a facility which is crumbling around them. Ms. Steinberg Heller and Ms. Jenkins reiterated that they felt that it was a key to tell this to the public. Mr. LaRoche recommended having a construction manager to help with the process, specifically to help identify all known and potential costs

Ms. Steinberg Heller recommended posting the fires station history onto the website as it was interesting. Chief Walker agreed and discussed that they would make sure it would be posted and they would like at trying to do it in an organized, easy to find way.

Chief discussed that he would send a DoodlePoll out to members regarding the date/time of the next meeting date/time.

The meeting adjourned at 7:23 PM.