

Town of Norwich
CAPITAL FACILITIES PLANNING AND BUDGETING COMMITTEE
Thursday, August 30, 2012, 8:00 am
Multipurpose Room, Tracy Hall, Norwich, Vermont

Committee Members Present: Richard Stucker, Barry Rotman, Tom Gray, Evan Pierce, John Lawe, Neil Fulton, Ed Childs

Others Present: Doug Robinson, Steve Leinoff, Andy Hodgdon, Linda Cook, Norm Miller, Becky Dabora, Watt Alexander

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Next Steps on Communications System

Fulton explained that the Committee agenda had been drafted prior to the bond vote of Tuesday, August 28. He said he will be putting a memo together on procedural options for the Selectboard to discuss at its meeting on Wednesday, September 12.

Public Works, Fire and Police Facilities Deficiencies and Functional Needs Analysis

Fulton provided background on the draft consultant's report from Mink Brook Associates that had been distributed to the Committee by e-mail:

- When he had been Interim Town Manager in 2008, there were a number of issues outstanding, and he had prepared Requests for Proposals (RFPs) on communications and on the department facilities.
- The intention of the facilities review was to determine 1) regulatory deficiencies (areas in which the current facilities do not meet legal/code standards; and 2) functional deficiencies.
- An RFP was issued for this work earlier this year, and after bids were reviewed, Mink Brook Associates (MBA) was hired to perform the review. Fire Chief Steve Leinoff has been working with MBA on their report.

The Department Heads then summarized the condition of their facilities:

Fire Chief Leinoff:

- Fire Department has more than outgrown the existing fire station, which was built 40 years ago.
- Meeting room is too small and has a low ceiling, making it difficult to use for presentations that require projection.
- Building is not energy efficient except for roof—windows are single pane, doors drafty.
- Access to Main Street is limited due to shared driveway with the Grange.
- Some electrical code deficiencies.

- One small bathroom, no place to clean up after call.
- Floor drains don't meet standard, drain into soil. Normally we don't produce lot of oil, but trucks get washed inside.
- Significant expense to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Building has alarm, but no sprinklers. Fire in any municipal building has devastating effects operationally. Many fire departments have suffered fires - equipment storage, electrical systems running. While equipment is insured, would be 12-18 months to replace major pieces if lost to fire.

Public Works Director Hodgdon:

- Our building almost identical to fire station.
- Floor drains should have oil-water separator. We don't have, not compliant.
- I have lot of oil on hand - should have separate room - flammable.
- Building doesn't hold 1/3 of equipment we have, most sitting outside. Two graders, backhoe, loader, half of trucks not covered in winter. Value of equipment left outside in excess of \$1 million.
- If fire truck needs maintenance, has to be appointment. If it's going to storm, don't want to leave outside - what if have fire? If couple repair stalls, could handle.
- Director has no office—desk at end of shop, no walls.
- No shower facilities.
- No lunch area.
- No suitable meeting area due to use of chemicals, odors—often use fire station for meetings.
- No fire suppression system.
- When equipment is being painted, a curtain is pulled across shop.

Police Chief Robinson:

- Our building in disrepair. Stick-built house built in 1950s. Police Department moved there in 1990s while Tracy Hall was being renovated.
- Needs new roof, insulation.
- We call exterminators every three months for insects and rodents.
- Single locker room, males only.
- Break room, squad room, interview room all the same. Evidence is kept at table where we eat.
- I have evidence locked up in my office--don't have locker. Have to maintain chain of custody.

Pierce suggested that it would be helpful if the Department Heads could make a list of specific instances in which building deficiencies affected their operations.

Lawe said he isn't sure whether it would be possible to make modifications to the existing fire and public works buildings that would make them suitable for another 10-15 years. It's clear that is not possible with the police station.

Fulton said that if the Committee recommends it, there will be a full, thorough analysis of options for modification of the facilities and attendant costs. He said the consultant's report needs to be finalized and presented to the Selectboard.

Rotman urged that the potential for savings in personnel and in equipment maintenance (e.g., having cover for equipment in winter) be explored.

ABC Dairy Property for Fire and Police

Fulton referred to a letter dated August 23 from David Clem offering to sell the existing property at 198 Church Street (also referred to as ABC Dairy or the Agway property) to the Town. The letter is seeking a decision by September 30.

Fulton said he believes purchase of the property may be worth exploring. The existing parcel on which the police and fire stations are located is small for their needs and has limited access. The parcel is also a valuable piece of property and could be sold or potentially used for affordable housing or senior housing.

Fulton asked Robinson and Leinoff about the benefit to their departments of relocating to the Church Street site. Robinson said it would offer the opportunity to design a police station rather than retrofit a house and would serve the Town for decades to come. He said it would also make more training possible in town, rather than having to send officers to Montpelier or Hartford for training, and that it would make it easier to attract quality personnel (“first impressions are important”). Leinoff said the site is 0.8 miles from the existing location, which would affect response time to some locations slightly. Also, some insurance companies will not insure homes that are more than 5 road miles from a fire station, so some homeowners’ insurance would be affected. Training would be simplified—at the existing location, it’s not possible to pull a truck out into the driveway and train on it, because the driveway must be kept open for residences.

Pierce said he thinks there is a need for a thorough process in light of the recent negative vote on police equipment to be added to the communications tower.

Stucker said that given the scarcity of available properties on the market, there is a need to be opportunistic, but a deadline of September 30 for a decision is not realistic.

Gray said that on the communications tower, the December 31, 2012, deadline for narrow bandwidth from the FCC for public safety communications was compelling. Even though the real estate market is difficult, there isn’t the same urgency.

Fulton asked whether it was fair for him to convey to the Selectboard that, given the compressed time frame that the letter is asking for, there isn’t adequate time to do the analysis necessary to do a fair evaluation. He said his thinking is that the earliest it could be before the voters is the March Town Meeting in 2014. There was general agreement.

Gray urged that an analysis include a description of the desired characteristics of a potential property, so that it could be compared with the Church Street property or any other opportunities that might come up.

Update on Pool Dam Replacement

Fulton provided an update on replacement of the Town pool dam:

- The cost of repair/replacement will be 90% funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and 5% by the state, leaving 5% for the Town.
- The consulting firm (Dubois & King) which is evaluating possible options for the dam has developed three alternatives: 1) Repair – cheapest and probably least desirable, because it doesn't result in a facility with the same life as a new one; 2) New dam with an ogee spillway (efficient but long); 3) New dam with a labyrinth spillway.
- The new design will need input from the state fisheries agency—otherwise it won't receive a permit. There are two scenarios for fish passage, a fish ladder and an emergency spillway.
- Fulton hopes to put the project out for bids in January, sign a contract in February or March, and have the pool finished for at least a portion of the summer of 2013. Hurdles will be securing Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) approval and keeping FEMA engaged.

Review Minutes

There were no minutes for review.

Adjourn

The Committee adjourned at approximately 9:30 a.m.

Approved by the Committee November 8, 2012.

Tom Gray,
Chair