

**Draft Minutes
Capital Facilities Planning and Budgeting Committee
April 10, 2014**

Present: Tom Sterling, Dan Goulet, Neil Fulton, Richard Stucker, Barry Rotman, John Lawe, Evan Pierce, Tom Gray

Absent: None

Members of Public: Linda Cook, Ann Sargent, Watt Alexander, Ernest Ciccotelli, Ed Childs

Town Employees: Steve Leinoff, Doug Robinson, Andy Hodgdon

Review and approval of agenda

The Committee approved the proposed agenda without objection.

Public Comments

There were no public comments. Fulton introduced Goulet, a recently elected member of the Selectboard who has been appointed to represent the Selectboard as a member of the Capital Facilities Committee.

Review and Discuss Consultant's Report

Fulton distributed schematic drawings from the consultant, Bread Loaf Corp., of several options for the Police and Fire facilities and for the Public Works Department facilities, a spreadsheet containing a summary of Bread Loaf's "order of magnitude" estimates of costs of the various options, and a sheet examining the tax impact of bond debt for two of the Police and Fire options.

He said the documents would be posted to the Town website. They can be found there:

Schematic Site & Floor Plan Options 4/8/14: <http://norwich.vt.us/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/SchematicOptions4-8-14.pdf>

Bread Loaf Order of Magnitude [Cost] Estimates 4/10/14: <http://norwich.vt.us/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/BreadLoafCostEstimate41014.pdf>

Tax Rate Impact 4/11/14 (this is an updated version of the sheet prepared for the 4/10/14 Committee meeting): <http://norwich.vt.us/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/TaxRateImpact4-11-14.pdf>

He said he was not expecting decisions at the meeting, but rather that it would provide an opportunity for the Committee to become familiar with the more fleshed-out versions of the options as they currently exist.

Fulton noted that Bread Loaf has worked on the options previously identified by the Committee as most promising for the two potential Police and Fire sites (the existing site off Main Street and the ABC Dairy site on Church Street). He said there may be more discussion about other sites, at Barrett Meadows and the Upper Valley Events Center. He said Bread Loaf has been working to ensure that the required programmatic

functions could fit within the footprints, and that provided the basis for the order-of-magnitude cost estimates. While the total estimates might not be right on target, the differences between the estimates should be accurate.

Gray asked what the Selectboard envisions (based on its meeting of 4/9, the evening prior).

Fulton said Keith Moran had asked for additional review of the Events Center site and that that would be discussed at the Selectboard's next meeting (4/23). The other site discussed was Barrett Meadows, an area at the base of Bragg Hill Road. Fulton said that area had been donated to the Town by Bill Ballard and that there may be restrictions on its use. He said the assessed value of the Car Store is approximately \$1.1 million. With respect to the Public Works site, Fulton said that siting the Police Station at the Public Works site would require significant excavation and that part of the area required has been previously used for municipal solid waste (MSW) disposal and would require extensive work. He said the cost of acquisition of the Car Store site and of providing municipal water to the site appears too large to make that site a feasible alternative.

Pierce noted that the estimate listed on the Order of Magnitude spreadsheet for acquisition of the ABC site is \$750,000. Fulton said the Town has retained an appraiser to provide an updated estimate of the value of that land.

Goulet asked whether the MSW at the Public Works site wouldn't have to be cleaned up in any event. Fulton replied that the waste is buried. Goulet asked whether the area is currently in compliance with the law, and Fulton said he is unaware of any violations.

Sterling asked whether, if a site is used solely for the Police Station, water would be an issue. Fulton said that fire sprinkler systems would be needed, and that the Montshire Museum, another building in the area, has a large storage tank to deal with that issue. He said it is his belief that a public building should have a fire sprinkler system protection.

Fulton then walked the Committee through the documents:

Main Street #1:

- New facilities at existing site.
- 4-bay apparatus floor for Fire station, fits current and future needs.
- 2-story Fire/Police facility, with an attachment possible for future growth.
- Connection to parking both sides.
- Parking for personnel immediately adjacent to Fire.
- Fulton has examined proposed layout with Department Heads.

Rotman asked whether the training room could be used as a community meeting room. Fulton said it could be, but that the access would need to be changed. Rotman said a meeting room would be needed if it could be arranged.

Stucker noted that the pricing and schematics do not include any basement space in any scenario.

Main Street #4B:

- Parking less convenient for firefighters.

Fulton said he has had discussion with the Grange and that their feedback was similar to the past—having a village location is very important to them, within walking distance of Dan and Whit's. Their lot is fairly narrow. To provide something comparable would likely cost in excess of \$500,000, and might not be possible. Acquiring the Grange property would provide better sight lines and access to Main Street, but doesn't really open much additional space for facilities.

Rotman said that a basement could provide storage for bikes. Fulton agreed, and said it would also provide some opportunities for training. Rotman asked about added cost, and Fulton said it would be about the same for all sites. Sterling asked why it wasn't added. Fulton said the primary goal was ensuring that program space needs were satisfied. Rotman said the biggest cost for a basement is blasting, and that if it's not finished, the cost might not be that significant.

Pierce asked whether there is any change to the apparatus bays. Fulton said no. He said that when the original Fire Station was built in 1981, the apparatus was smaller. However, he thinks that 16 feet in width is adequate now and for the future.

Sterling asked about use of the existing station. Fulton said that would be possible, but that it would require renovation and insulation. He said the Selectboard is working on a strategic plan and that the first item on it, Energy, is complicated. At present, a 75% cut in greenhouse gases by 2050 is envisioned, with two intermediate targets. That would require fairly significant modification of existing buildings and any new building would have to be very tight. Buildings may need to use either air-exchange or geothermal heat pumps, but payback would be very slow and may not be acceptable to the community.

Pierce asked whether the greenhouse gas reduction goal would apply across the entire Town. Fulton said yes, it would be a goal for municipal facilities, including vehicles such as graders and dump trucks. He said the Town's two biggest energy uses are diesel and fuel oil.

Sterling said his question was more about incorporating the existing Fire station into Option 4B. Fulton said that option 4B does incorporate the existing Fire Station.)

Sterling asked why a single-story option was not considered. Fulton said it was because the footprint became too big for the Main Street site.

ABC Dairy site options:

- Both single-story - 10-acre site.
- Grass Roots Soccer is interested in staying on as a renter. Rental space would provide additional income.

- Both options use existing structure and add to it.
- There is public water.
- Good access to Church Street, R5.
- 0.7 miles from existing Main Street site.

Fulton said he had investigated the question of changes in insurance costs based on the distance of residences from the Fire Station. He said that currently, if the distance is more than 5 road miles, a residence would go from “protected” to “unprotected.” However, there is a new grading schedule that will take effect 7/1/14 with a new category that would apply between 5-7 miles if there is a credible water supply.

Sterling noted that the Order of Magnitude Cost Estimates spreadsheet had some errors.

Fulton said that the 1-story layout makes it easier to incorporate a community room.

Cook suggested that the placement of Grass Roots and the Police Station be reversed so that the first thing visible to incoming traffic is a Town facility. She said Grass Roots is not a high foot-traffic operation. Fulton said the impact on services would have to be examined.

Public Works #1

- Rehabbed, mirror addition put on for cold storage.

Public Works #3

- New building similar.
- Existing Fire Station.
- Existing Public Works building would be demolished--Fire Station could be moved and used to store critical material. Open-air storage of some other equipment (exposed, but covered).

Public Works #4

- New for both, that's most expensive.

Order-of-Magnitude Cost Estimate Sheet

- Main Street Option #1 = \$3.5 million.
- Main Street Option #4B saves about \$450,000.
- ABC #1 and #2 - difference is ~\$200,000. Fulton said his expectation, when pencils get sharpened, is that costs will come down a little (for all estimates).
- Corinth had bond vote for a simple 4 bay fire station, no land costs, for \$1.2 million.

Asked about the \$750,000 estimate for acquisition of the ABC site, Fulton reiterated that the Town has hired an appraiser. Currently, the site's assessed value for tax purposes is less than \$400,000. The owner has had it on the market for some time, with the last asking price for Norwich of \$950,000. \$750,000 is in between.

Fulton added that the existing ABC building is grandfathered, and couldn't be built today under existing zoning. He said the question of constraints on use of a grandfathered building has to be addressed, as well as the value of the rental income.

With respect to the Main Street site, Twin Pines Housing Trust is very interested in the possibility of affordable housing units, and the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board has offered some funding assistance for a charrette to investigate that possibility.

Stucker said there is a need to take a hard look at the cost of a basement and have it identified early on.

Goulet said the numbers don't seem right—the building in #4B costs more than new buildings on ABC. Fulton noted that the ABC options are not all new. Overall, he said, #4B is \$400,000 cheaper because of not having to build an apparatus floor.

Rotman said he sees three issues: 1) 4B is lowest cost, 2) ABC provides opportunity for affordable housing, 3) 4B has better response time for some residences. If the key issue is cost, then 4B would be best. If it's other than cost, then look at the others.

Fulton discussed the tax rate impact:

- Town has existing debt for Tracy Hall renovation, lease-purchase for grader (ends in 2016), tower (ends in 2018), bond for tower (ends in 2024).
- As that debt is paid off, provides some "headroom" for additional debt (with less increase in the burden on taxes).
- The tax rate impact sheet assumes that construction is staged, so that an additional bond sale for Public Works wouldn't go forward until lease-purchase for tower (and Tracy Hall and grader) were paid off.

Fulton said his recommendation may be to get authorization for the total bond cost required, but only sell part now, part later.

Cook asked about adding a line that lists assessed value, and also what would it save to move the Fire Station. Fulton said he didn't have that number available.

Stucker said there had previously been discussion of additional costs during the transition from current facilities to new ones, and that those costs are not identified in these documents. Fulton said that moving to a new site would make it easier for the departments to keep functioning. If the new facilities are on the existing site, the Police Department would have to be housed elsewhere. For Public Works, he said all three options are set up so that the heated building could be built first, then cold storage and expand.

Pierce said a hot topic in recent years has been regionalization and consolidation of facilities, and asked whether there is anything that can be done to evaluate the possibility of consolidation. Fulton said the managers of the four towns (Norwich, Hartford, Hanover, and Lebanon) meet every other month. The first item on their plate has been fire and police dispatch, which is now pretty far along. Next is municipal solid waste. There would still be a need, however, for a fire facility in Norwich.

Sargent asked about further evaluation of the Car Store site, given that it is already set up for moving vehicles around. Fulton noted the acquisition cost and the fact that water would have to be brought under Route 10A, and that the usable site is only about 2 acres due to topography.

Discussion of 4-16-14 Public Forum

Lawe said as a general comment about the forum that the Committee has done a lot of examination of finances, but that it would be important to get the Department Heads' evaluation at the forum.

Leinoff said that he favored ABC, any of the suggested options could work, and that there won't ever be more land at the Main Street site. He said the ability to pull equipment out and train on it is valuable.

Fulton said the easiest option for Police and Fire is ABC, but it's not clear that's the preferred option. The Town is also looking for space for a solar project, and he has asked Bill Bender from Solaflect to look at the ABC property. It appears that a 2-acre solar project could be sited there.

Robinson and Hodgdon both said that any of the proposed options would be better than their present situations.

Fulton said he assumes that Gray will moderate the forum and that Chris Huston from Bread Loaf will present the information.

Future Meetings

The Committee's current schedule is: Public Forum at 7 p.m. on 4/16, Committee meeting at 8 a.m. on 4/23, joint meeting with Selectboard on the evening of 4/23.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the Committee adjourned at approximately 9:20 a.m.