

CAPITAL FACILITIES PLANNING & BUDGETING COMMITTEE
PRELIMINARY DRAFT
Meeting Minutes

Thursday, July 5, 2012, Tracy Hall - Multipurpose Room

This set of minutes has not been reviewed or approved by the Committee

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

Absent: John Lawe

Others: Andy Hodgdon, Steve Leinoff, Doug Robinson, Phil Dechert, Christopher Ashley

Tom Gray, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:00 am.

1. Review of Agenda. After minimal discussion the agenda was left as is.
2. Public Comments. None.
3. Update on Communications Plan and Tower. Town Manager Fulton distributed a proposed memorandum to the Norwich Selectboard on the tower proposal. Dechert spoke briefly on Act 250 and the need for an application for the Development Review Board (DRB), which will hold a hearing Thursday, July 19, on the proposed tower. Fulton described contents of the memorandum:
 - Hanover has received a grant covering six towers and Hartford a grant for one tower— The fixed sites are on Hayes Hill in Hanover, Hanover Public Safety Facility, at the Public Works site in Norwich, and on Hurricane Hill in Hartford. The other locations being studied are Hanover Town Hall, Lyme Fire Station, Rogers Hill in Bradford and Moose Mountain in Hanover. The grant pays for equipment, but not for the tower itself.
 - At this point, the remaining costs for the tower are estimated at about \$275,000. This is considerably reduced from the \$750,000 total cost estimated at a Public Forum on the tower in December 2011.

A photo taken from Brigham Hill Road of the balloon test in June to assess the tower's visual impact was circulated. It included an attempted rendering of the tower's appearance as well. Both the balloons and the tower would be viewed against a background of trees (green in the summer, brown in winter). Fulton said there might be some locations along Union Village Road from which the tower would appear against the sky.

Sterling asked if the memorandum could be modified to put the anticipated cost at the front. There was agreement that this change should be made.

Fulton said he had been contacted by a representative of the Ascutney Association. Although it has a very prominently sited transmitter on Mt. Ascutney, there are places that are not covered. They are considering hiring the consultant who performed the Norwich study, and may be looking at a simulcast system.

In response to questions about construction on the Public Works site, Fulton said there is an existing unused road that would be improved sufficiently to allow for crane access. Childs asked about the timeline for an additional grant that is being sought to fund better coverage for the Norwich Police communications system. Fulton said the grant committee will meet August 17.

Sterling asked about using the existing communications tower on Upper Loveland Road. Fulton said the consultant had examined all locations in Town with existing towers. The Upper Loveland tower is 87 feet in height and has existing cellular transmitters descending to the tree line.

Pierce asked about whether there might be another location that would provide better coverage in areas of concern. Fulton said one area is Kerwin Hill Road, and that there would be solid mobile transmitter coverage there, and additional portable coverage provided by a transmitter on Moose Mountain in Hanover. He said the other area of concern is Chapel Hill Road-Mitchell Brook-Tigertown Road, where the watershed drains into the White River (so that the valley faces in a different direction from other valleys in Town). The goal was to keep the tower as short as possible. The transmitter on Hurricane Hill has changed to narrowband, and there is solid mobile coverage in the area, but not portable coverage. It is possible that the simulcast system will improve portable coverage.

Sterling noted that the grants will expire if the tower is not built in a timely way. Fulton said the grant performance date extends to February 2013, but he believes it may be possible to get the deadline extended.

Stucker asked whether any of the partner towns involved in the simulcast system are uncertain of their participation. Fulton said he thinks that for the area served by Hanover Dispatch, participation is solid, and that representatives for the towns involved met several weeks ago and there was no opposition.

There being no further questions from the Committee, Gray opened the meeting to comments from the public. James Tobin said he lives on Turnpike Road at the foot of Tilden Hill Road and wants to know whether other locations in Town were considered. He said people who live in the immediate area of the proposed tower will have to live with it for 365 days a year, and that it looks as though there will be a huge impact in that area. Fulton said the consultant's report, which is on the Town website, addresses the issue of coverage, and that the consultant had looked at every location, in Norwich and adjacent communities, with an existing tower.

A motion was made by Rotman (Pierce second) that the Committee concur in the memorandum (as modified per discussion) to the Selectboard.

Pierce expressed concern about comments from community members about the tower's location. Sterling suggested that further modifications to the Committee's FAQ on the tower might be a good way to address those comments. Fulton said there had never been an intention of bypassing the DRB process.

The Committee voted on the motion and it passed 5-0 (Pierce, Childs, Gray, Stucker, Sterling voting—Rotman had had to leave due to a previous engagement).

4. Update on Public Works, Fire and Police Facilities Deficiencies and Functional Needs Analysis. Fulton said work is continuing on the consultant's report, but that it is not ready yet. He said that there are a number of issues with the existing structures, particularly the "temporary"

facility that houses the Police Department. He said a likely date for completion of a report the Committee can consider is August.

At this point, a Town resident, Becky Damora, who had just arrived at the meeting, addressed the Committee. Damora said she objected to the communications tower, first because her property at 250 Brigham Hill will be visually impacted, and second because she thinks the process by which the tower has been considered is flawed. Gray pointed out that the Committee has held two Public Forums to explain the tower proposal to residents, and other Committee members explained that there is an official Town email list which carries notices and minutes of the Capital Facilities Committee and other committees and commissions to which any resident may ask to be added.

Discussion of the public safety and Public Works facilities resumed. Sterling asked about the potential need for a bond issue for necessary work on the facilities. Fulton said one estimate was that the total cost might be \$560,000, but added that the facility review is still in a very preliminary phase.

5. Sidewalks. Fulton said the Selectboard has asked him and the Public Works Director, Andy Hodgdon, to look at the question of sidewalks. He said he believes the Committee needs to have a Public Forum. Norwich, he said, has a significant amount of sidewalk for a town of its size and has never done an analysis of the cost of maintaining them or created a reserve fund for their repair and replacement. He said the Committee should have a Public Forum on potential changes on Main Street extending to Turnpike Road. While some people like the fact that there are no curbs, that makes the right of way difficult to maintain, and parking on sidewalks increases maintenance costs. Also, it may be possible to extend the new bike lanes further along Main Street.

6. Pool. Fulton said the Town is likely to have a Public Forum on the pool. He said pool replacement has the potential of being a \$567,000 project, but that the Federal Emergency Management Agency will cover 95 percent of the cost. The engineering firm hired by the Town has done topographical surveys and will be providing repair and replacement options.

7. Review Minutes. There were no minutes available for review.

8. Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 9:15 am.

Tom Gray,
Chair

Future Meetings: TBD