

Minutes of the July 6, 2020 Meeting

Present: Michael Phillips, Chris Wheelock, Jim Weagle, Jim Gibson, Sam Oakes, Al Rosetto, Shawn ____

Building Committee meeting began at 7:00 PM.

Chris Wheelock summarized where we had left off with options for an Emergency Services Building to house police and ambulance. Those options include:

- New building entirely
- Purchase of existing rental (the old moose club)
- Emerson's building (downtown hardware location)
- Catholic Hall
- "Phase Two" add-on to Town Offices

Al Rosetto and Sam Oakes toured the Methodist Church buildings this past winter as yet another option. This construction dates back to the 1960s so not as old as some. JimW had concerns with proximity to school and issues the fire department has when children are coming and going.

Discussion ensued of whether renovating an older building has merit for the defined purposes of emergency services. Chris pointed out we will never make a building like the Catholic Hall energy efficient. Committee also noted hopes for a revamped retail sector downtown make town use of Emerson property less than ideal. The current building was also not deemed a wise investment as a permanent home for emergency services.

Funding Considerations

Michael asked are we looking to do this for one million dollars? One-and-a-half million dollars? Two million dollars? Sam pointed out that Twin Mountain has spent something like 15 million to build its town complex, both administrative offices and emergency services. Committee feels if we keep this to straightforward construction, clearly identifying *needs* from *wants*, then can accomplish new construction on a doable budget. Funding sources were discussed with the conclusion that local banks would be friendlier bet than so-called grants which impose additional cost requirements and often preclude local contractors. Group consensus was to just say no to the USDA as a funding source.

Current town parcels

The Town acquired several lots from former paper mill properties in lieu of taxes back in 2012 or so. The Town Office Building was part of this acquisition, along with parking area across Mechanic Street, the former Eagle Hotel property, and all the parking areas completely surrounding the old moose club.

Chris suggested constructing garage space for town vehicles (including highway) in parking area across from Town Offices. So-called Phase Two to add a meeting hall and EMS facilities to Town Office Building was tight with respect to vehicle bays. On the other hand, need for public parking in vicinity of a town meeting hall makes that Mechanic Street lot valuable as currently being utilized.

Discussion ensued as regards how the current leased building at 10 Station Square sits in the midst of all our lot options. The desire to keep the former Eagle Hotel lot available for retail development (and tax revenue) may have to be let go as this is the more sizeable lot that the town has available for an EMS building with garage space attached.

Michael suggested perhaps we look at 10 Station Square as an interim structure instead. That we could set up the ambulance in the current meeting space, undo the plumbing fiasco upstairs above the police offices, use that space instead for living quarters for a paramedic (with new plumbing) . . . knowing this building would eventually be taken down a few years from now . . . in order to make better use of the lot behind 10 Station Square. Committee discussed construction of garage facility running parallel to railroad tracks, designing into the layout the ability to add a facilities wing for police and ambulance. Combining all these lots into a cohesive whole makes possible a more sensible layout overall. The Town might better afford transitioning to a full-fledged EMS building in stages. Banks will likely look more favorably at financing new construction as well. JimG pointed out new ambulance vehicles are now on a truck chassis; that this will no longer fit in space leased from fire department; that need for vehicle space is becoming even more critical. Town Meeting approval of a garage plan would make this construction possible in 2021. Shawn and others will look at design aspects for what's needed. Train Station lot lines may affect future office wing layout so have to confirm all boundaries.

Chris will look into creating meeting space in the current town offices, predicated in part on moving administrative aspects upstairs. The "extra office" was envisioned for this purpose, allowing for 12 to 16 or so people to meet at a time. (Board meetings anticipated to be larger will have to be held in school or town library space in the interim period; space for elections may require leasing Catholic Hall if school decides against use of gymnasium for this purpose.) JimG and Sam will work with AI to come up with a modest renovation budget for bringing the ambulance offices downstairs. Question was asked if Government Building CRF could be used to finance renovation work in a leased building? Price needs to be gotten from landlords as regards purchasing the old moose club. The quarter million price tag asked several years ago was not realistic, all the more for a building slated to be torn down. Sam wondered how much had the Town already spent on renovating this building for current use by police and ambulance (and before that as town offices). Agreement has been Town responsible for interior work, landlords responsible for exterior. It's quite possible

the Town has spent nearly as much as the building was purchased for by the current owners . . . details we need to consider in going ahead with this option.

We spoke about making architecturally pleasing structures. The EMS building does not need to serve as a town hall; that aspect could be the sole part of "Phase Two" tied to Town Office Building as originally envisioned. A proper hall with bathroom and kitchen facilities could be leased for events and thus become a revenue-generator for Town. Proposed municipal construction has influence on the look of our downtown and the vibrancy of Groveton as a whole.

Meeting closed at 8:00 PM.

These minutes submitted by Michael Phillips.

Next meeting of the Building Committee was scheduled for 7 PM, July 20, following the regular Selectboard meeting that same evening.