

Minutes of the August 17, 2020 Meeting

Present: Michael Phillips, Chris Wheelock, Jim Weagle, Jim Gibson, Sam Oakes, Peter Pelletier, Robin Irving, Al Rosetto, Shawn Derkin, Richard Dupuis, Tracy Dupuis, Michelle Randall

Building Committee meeting began at 7:20 PM.

Chris Wheelock stated intent is for Town to own its own buildings.

Richard Dupuis said they're willing to sell the 10 Station Square property to the Town. Lot 267 would have been the Town's some ten years ago if the people had followed the selectmen's recommendation at that time. Willing to negotiate price over the next month.

NOTE: Discussion from the 2011 Town Meeting regarding purchase of this property and the asking price at that time is attached at end of these minutes.

JimG explained to our landlords the plan for ambulance to move downstairs after the November elections. Local talent pool is drying up thus need to work with paramedics from Berlin, Colebrook, and even further away. Providing a central place to stay for a 24 hour shift is essential. Upstairs could serve that purpose if offices located downstairs. This also allows us to address need for mutual decontamination space due to the viral pandemic.

The Conundrum

Discussion ensued about an inspection of the building for appraisal purposes. This was not done at time of previous offer. What will the bank require? Will realtors provide an appraisal or do we need a professional service? What is the building worth to the Town if we foresee only an interim use of this space for the next two perhaps three years?

Chris identified the chicken or egg nature of this plan. We need to decide what and where simultaneously. Current office space for police and ambulance sits in the midst of what could be a more substantial lot. Subsequent planning depends on where we can build new police/ ambulance facilities first. Peter added that with the Town poised to grow, we may end up needing even more space than currently envisioned.

Campton has created a "town campus" where town offices, police, ambulance, fire, and tax collector are all located by each other.

Michael spoke how adding on to back of town offices for police and/or ambulance offices preserves the potential of the bigger lot. Sam said the square footage just isn't available to do that there. Shawn ran the numbers. EMS requires 4800 to 5200 square feet, primarily consisting of two double bays for vehicles. The police department requires 3200 square feet, including a single double bay for vehicles.

That puts us at 8000 to 10000 square feet for a combined facility. Sam pointed out that the "Phase 2" footprint drawn up by the architect at the time of town office renovations accommodates 4000 square feet at best. Anything more would be second story. The conclusion is that there's not enough room behind the town offices for all needs combined.

Tracy Dupuis wondered why we didn't just add vehicle bays onto the current office arrangement at 10 Station Square. Discussion ensued about adequate parking and suitability of current office space for modern code requirements.

Traffic Flow Considerations

JimG added his concern that Mechanic Street access would be difficult during the shift changes at NSA and other mill site businesses. Not unlike when children are dropped off for school across from the fire station where ambulance vehicles are currently located.

Robin said the engineering study for mill properties (where the clarifiers had been located) included access to the industrial park on the north side of Route 3. That there would be a 5-way intersection on this side of the bridge; that DOT recommended a traffic circle to deal with the expected flow. All this is on hold until "something" actually comes in the way of business investment.

Warrant Reality

Whatever the plan, the townspeople need to give their approval at Town Meeting. Chris spoke to a series of warrants contingent on passing a first warrant. Purchasing 10 Station Square is not essential to using the old Eagle Hotel lot (0.42 acres) to move ahead with police/ ambulance facilities. The possibility of a more modest hall can still proceed behind town offices.

The design-build construct can save money by allowing local talent to implement reasonable plans. Al strongly seconded the fact that we need to keep this local. Michael spoke about proceeding with Ben Southworth of Garland Mill Construction for an all-encompassing view of downtown options.

Peter offered that the Dollar Tree store will be leaving the Ocean State Job Lot plaza. This opens up 9000 square feet of building space, with another 3000 square feet available in the back. Should we be considering this? Discussion ensued of willingness of townspeople to invest in yet another leased situation, bank involvement in any such long-term agreement, and the value of being located within the town proper.

Richard Dupuis summed up that if we believe in a future for Groveton then that's where we need to make these investments. Chris added people like to walk and see an active town center. Michael added that the Town has an opportunity to take this up a level if we make the Town Hall a special gathering space in which Groveton can take pride. Robin reiterated the vision of a Paper Worker's Hall,

with historic artifacts and some means of recognizing community investment (such as JimW's commemorative bricks). The townspeople recognized the worth of investing in water/sewer infrastructure at the mill site. The town campus approach is a logical next step.

Next Steps

Chris suggested we proceed with two focus groups:

The first to be known as the "Heritage Plan" whereby we look at the big picture of what's possible. Michael will proceed with a feasibility study in this regard with intentions of bringing a modest budget for a professional planning proposal to our next meeting. Robin pointed out that Mitch Ingerson plans to build a timber frame office next to the hydrogen cogen operation, and also has similar rustic ideas for the train station.

The second group will nail down what a new police and ambulance facility looks like. Plans from Twin Mountain, Campton, etc. can be adapted to our needs. This will in turn define a building footprint so location can be determined once and for all.

Meeting closed at 8:20 PM.

These minutes submitted by Michael Phillips.

Next meeting of the Building Committee is scheduled for 7 PM, September 21, following the regular Selectboard meeting that same evening.

2011 Results of Town Meeting

Article 3: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$184,900 dollars to purchase the current Town Office Building located at 10 Station Square in Northumberland and to authorize the issuance of not more than \$122,500 dollars of bonds or notes in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (RSA 33), and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to issue and negotiate the terms of such bonds or notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon. The remaining \$62,400 dollars will come in the form of a \$50,000 grant from Rural Development, \$10,000 dollars from the Municipal Office Fund and \$2,400 from monthly rent payments. If the grant is not received, the money will not be raised and appropriated.

(2/3 Ballot vote required) (Recommended by the Selectmen 2-1)

(Not Recommended by the Budget Committee 6-1)

Motion made by James Tierney and seconded by Mario Audit to accept article as read.

Discussion: Al Beland asked if the Selectmen had a building inspector come to the building yet. Jim Tierney responded that Terrance Bedell was our building inspector and that he had come to the building. Terrance Bedell added that during the construction stages he had been over and looked over the work that was done. Al Beland said that he noticed that the chimney looked like it was ready to come down and added that he thought it was an issue. Terrance Bedell answered that the State Fire Marshal office came and the chimney issue was cosmetic and added that inside of the chimney was fine. Mark Robinson asked if there was a fire system or sprinkler system inside the current building. Terrance Bedell answered that the square footage of the building didn't require it. John Robbins asked why we would want this building and added that the police department should go into the meeting room. Mr. Robbins said that the current building wasn't efficiency based. James Tierney said that Groveton Acquisitions is going to donate the land where the Eagle Hotel used to sit. He added that the paperwork is being drawn up by the attorney giving the town the piece of property. Mr. Tierney said that the school board off the modular classroom and that would be moved to the land given to us. He added that the police department would be moved into that. Mr. Tierney said that the town would own the land and the buildings and that everything would be right there together and would be paying only a mortgage on the Town Hall building. Addison Hall said that the town had already invested \$27,000 into the building so the price of buying it would be \$209,000. James Tierney answered that it was the same as any other business for repairs and such. He added that the owners of the building say "thank you very much" and said that if we moved we would lose the investment already put into the building. Mr. Tierney said what we spend we won't get back. Norman Cotter asked if the town could get the land behind town hall and also asked if the town ever considered a new building and he added that he thought that it made more sense to looking into building new. James Tierney

answered that the building was built in 1930 and added that the building committee looked at new construction and recommended buying the current building at this time. Mr. Tierney also added that the town could buy the building and sell it at a later date to build new as an option. Tierney said that it would be the same with the piece of property that is going to be given to us. Tierney said that there would be no increase in what we are paying for rent right now. Sally Pelletier asked who was approached in the school board because she didn't recall it being approached at any meeting. James Tierney answered that this offer had come from the school board to the building committee. Paul Bouchard asked what the time frame was for all of this to be done. James Tierney answered that the rent was month to month and the modular was going to be free after June. Deborah Weeks said that Dave Peel wrote her personally that the school board would be done with the modular this summer and would like to set it up with the selectmen to turn it over to the town. Uldric Bernard said that the price of \$182,000 for the building and then maybe spending \$10,000 to put the modular into the empty lot and probably would need some maintenance as well and then the chimney on the current building, the leaks in the bathroom were all a bunch of band aides. Mr. Bernard added that the town would be further ahead with building a new building. Karen Grant asked why the town was considering purchasing the building for a higher price than the assessment. James Tierney said that the price was higher than the assessment and that was the owners asking price. Ron Caron asked if the building committee was aware of the free land and if they had gone to the Mayhew building. Alan Rossetto answered that the building committee came to this conclusion to purchase the town complex where it is now because the Mayhew building, Groveton Paper Board office and others talked about were inadequate without any parking or extra land. He added that with the gift of the land the building that we are currently in was very adequate. He said that building a new building for about \$200 per square foot that met the requirements was too much. Mr. Rossetto said that the building that the town is currently in has an appraised value of \$155,000-\$160,000 and that's what the building committee suggested to put in for an offer and that was without knowing about the land as part of the equation to make it all work. He added that this was for a municipal building and he wanted to see it all work. Amanda King added that if this doesn't work what happens to the money that we spent? Alan Rossetto said that he wanted to negotiate that off of the price and it was reasonable to ask the current owners to do that. Tracey Morrill asked if the money was in the budget to move the modular. Marcel Platt told him that it was not. Kathy Wiles asked what moving the modular to the new location would save. James Tierney said that if we bought the building it would save \$1200 for rent from the town and \$500 for rent of the police station. Kathy asked if the total was \$1700 which James Tierney confirmed was correct. James Tierney said that the payment would be less than \$1700 for the new building as the loans are roughly 4% for 10 years at #1225-\$1250 or 12 years for about \$1200. He added that as we are paying now could be paying a mortgage and that the town could own the building in 10-12 years. Barbara Wheelock said that there were too many "ifs" and what if the modular were not up to code and also

wondered why we offered more than the assessment of the current building. Arnold Tilton added that we would still have operational costs. James Tierney answered that we pay for all of that now. Dave Auger said that he supported this article but that the modular were still being used and he had no answer yet on them. Carl Coulombe asked what the age of the building was and how much heat was costing. James Tierney ran the math and said about \$600 per month. Nancy Merrow asked if there was a lien on the Groveton Paper Board office building and stated that it was a viable building that we could also look into using. James Tierney said that in 2012 we could take that building for the Tax Collectors deed for nonpayment of taxes but they had declared bankruptcy so we can't touch it. He added that bankruptcy would have to release it before we could take it and it was the judges call. Alan Rossetto answered that the committee went and looked at the paper board office and it would need a small addition to meet the needs of the town and that the money that was already put in the current building and with some grants thought the current building was the best place. He added that he thought the modular was available until tonight's revelation that it wasn't which puts a monkey wrench into the plans because he was under the impression that it would happen. Mark Robinson asked about any negotiations and said that this building was way overpriced. He added that it needed to be reassessed and bet that the building was only worth \$50-\$60,000 and we keep putting money into it. He suggested that we did not purchase this building. Ron Caron said that the budget committee approved this warrant if they were sure that they got both lots. He added that the town pays the taxes now so if we were to build our own new building the owners would have to pay taxes if we moved out. James Tierney said the building committee recommended the building plus 1 lot, the old Eagle Hotel lot. He added that the L shaped one the selectmen brought up but Groveton Acquisitions wasn't willing to give that away at this time. John Robbins said that the mill was only assessed at \$1.3 million so the current building we are in must only be worth \$30,000-\$40,000. Rae Hurlbutt said that deciding on this would be premature. She added that she felt the building committee and the select board needed to do their homework and it made sense to wait. Addison Hall said that the ambulance office was upstairs and thought it needed to be handicapped accessible. He also stated that we are paying \$1500 a month because we also pay the taxes on the current building. James Tierney said that the downstairs is handicapped accessible and no one was allowed upstairs. He said that if someone comes in they call up and the ambulance personnel comes downstairs. Beverly McFarland asked that if all state buildings had to be handicapped accessible. Barry Colebank responded that the ground floor was handicapped accessible. James Tierney added that no handicapped person was being denied services which is exactly what the law states. Kathy Wiles made a motion to move the question. Richard Cotter seconded it. No further discussion.

This is a 1 hr secret ballot vote. (7:50-8:50)

Ballot vote: Yes 23 No 166 Article 3 failed.