

Town of Northumberland Building Committee  
Draft Meeting Minutes  
January 5, 2021

Present: Bill Caron, Alan Rossetto, Gail Rossetto, Sam Oakes, Jim Gibson, Allan Clark, Michelle Randall, Sean Durkin, Nicole Canavan, Eric Cripe, Roger Boissonneau

*(As per a conversation with Allan Clark, Allan will be referred to as "Clark" in the minutes to differentiate Allan Clark from Alan Rossetto)*

Alan Rossetto opened the meeting at 6:02PM.

Alan asked for a motion to accept the December 22, 2020 meeting minutes. Michelle motioned to accept the minutes, Bill Caron seconded. All in favor. Motion passed.

Alan then turned the meeting over to Allan Clark from REI.

Clark passed out the agenda, his coordination notes, pricing information, and a draft of what the brochure will look like.

Phase One task schedule is updated. We are still waiting on construction hard costs to be able to complete the information to give to the public.

For the budget, Clark has identified the costs for millwork, equipment, furnishings and appliances.

We are exploring financing and grant sources. Once we have that information, we can come up with the impact on the tax rate.

First press release was in the Colebrook Chronicle. Clark is holding off on preparing another press release until we have the hard construction costs. The next press release will deal with the needs of the departments and what the cost impact will be. We need to get the information out slowly and not overwhelm the residents.

The project budget numbers that were passed out are backed up with real numbers and should be approximately \$200.00 per square foot for the hard construction costs.

The Building is as simple as we can make it. It has a simple straight footing, all on the same elevation. It has a simple foundation wall. The concrete slab is a little more complicated with radiant heat and floors that pitch to drains. We have two masonry walls separating the apparatus bay and a truss roof. We have designed the building to be as simple as we can. The roof trusses will go up in a day.

Material prices have gone up drastically. Clark did some research and found that lumber is up 65%, truss prices are higher, and windows have gone up in price dramatically and are hard to get.

Clark is waiting for hard cost pricing from two contractors. Again, these prices are not proposal numbers, they are just the numbers Clark needs to put together the budget that is appropriate for this project. We are not sure of the impact Covid will have on our hard costs. The impact on materials is significant. Clark should have the hard cost estimates by early next week and will be able to develop the numbers.

Clark advised us that both contractors may or may not be interested in doing the job. They are doing this because Clark does a lot of work with them and they are helping him out.

Interest has been calculated at 3% however, it may be lower. If we go the municipal bond route, it may be between 2 and 2 1/2%. Union Bank will not commit to a 20 year loan in this environment. Clark has been talking to Woodsville, Mascoma, and Passumpsic Banks.

Michelle advised that some of the items on the appliance and equipment list for the PD can be taken out of the budget because they have already been replaced since she and Peter took over three years ago. Clark asked Michelle to redo the list and get it back to him to correct.

Clark advised that the budget is still a work in progress but at the next meeting it should be about 95 to 99% complete. Hard part will be the hard construction costs.

Clark asked if anyone had heard from Robin concerning the informational meeting. Bill said he thought the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of February were being considered but there are conflicts with different departments that need to be looked into. Robin is trying for the school to be primary and St Francis Hall to be a backup. We should know after tonight's school board meeting. They are also waiting on the State which will be updating covid restrictions for public meetings. We should have more information by the end of the week. Bill or Al Rossetto will follow up with Jim, Mike, and Robin and keep the members up to date.

Clark advised that the brochure he passed out is only a rough draft to give you an idea of what we had in mind. He is looking for feedback to make sure that this is what the committee had in mind. Not all information has been updated. We want the brochure to have all the information necessary for people to make an informed decision. The brochure was discussed and everyone agreed the layout and format was good. We will keep working on it and move forward to make sure that in a couple of minutes of reading, the residents will have a good idea of what is going on. To be successful, we really need a lot of one on one contact with the voters.

There was much discussion on the PD being out of compliance and the significant code deficiencies that the state discussed with them. Michelle said that the state realizes that, in the building they are in, there is no way to become compliant. One of the huge problems is that the entire PD is carpeted. There is no way to decontaminate the PD at this time. The EMS had to bring down their decontamination gun last week. Michelle can't wash down the floors with bleach like she is supposed to because of the carpeting.

The brochure will have frequently asked questions and we will explain to the residents why they should make this investment in their town. We need to be objective and unbiased and we can't make it like a political campaign. We have to be factual and unbiased in our report. It is being paid for by town money and that is why the brochure is really a report from the committee on what we found and we are reporting back to the citizens.

Clark said that Robin has updated the town website.

Nicole asked if we could have a cost analysis if we do nothing about a new building. What would be the outcome be if we keep the status quo. People will not want their taxes raised but what would be the liability cost if we do nothing.

Alan R said that he thinks we are in an unstable position right now. The ambulance is hanging on by their fingertips. The PD is doing the best they can with what they have.

Major problem is that if one of the ambulance employees or PD employees comes back positive from a covid issue, they would possibly have to shut down and there would be no coverage.

Right now there is no decontamination area for the employees or their vehicles. Sam and Jim advised that the Ambulance has had at least half a dozen proven cases of Covid and it takes them 5 ½ to 6 hours to decontaminate themselves and their vehicles. They need to send one person home to decontaminate. When that person comes back, they have to decontaminate again because they are in their personal vehicles. Every time this happens, you are taking the ambulance and its crew out of service for six hours. They then also have to decontaminate their families and their houses to insure that any contaminants they brought home have been dealt with. In the new building, decontamination would be about three hours.

The above issues are not just isolated to Covid. There have been times when an employee has had to drive home in his personal vehicle covered in blood, fecal matter, or anything that could carry disease. It doesn't matter if it is Covid particles or anything else. They still have to decontaminate at home using personal vehicles and personal laundry facilities and that is not right.

There is a major risk of lawsuits on the town for liability from any of the above issues. We need to make sure that the residents understand that this particular environment is a dangerous situation. We are putting the people that we depend on to take care of us at risk.

Clark said that to answer Nicole's question about a cost analysis if we do nothing, it is hard to quantify in dollars and cents what would happen if we do not go forward with this building. There is a huge liability out there and it is just a matter of time until an employee brings something home to their family, they get sick, and they sue the Town. It is not just the ambulance, it is the police also. There is also a financial impact if employees are hurt. The Town is not subject to OSHA, they are subject to the State Labor laws. There is a whole series of requirements that mirror OSHA. The risk to the Town is from the liability standpoint, lawsuits from all forms of blood born and air born diseases and right now there is no opportunity for the ambulance or pd to decontaminate themselves.

Alan R advised that we need to articulate the fact that the building that now houses the ambulance and pd is putting both departments in an unstable and dangerous situation.

Clark discussed the stairs to the ambulance department are an accident waiting to happen. Think of the financial impact if Sam or Jim takes a header and becomes paralyzed?

The new building will be highly efficient and we will own it. We will not be paying rent. We are already paying for heat, electricity and other utilities in a very inefficient building.

We need to talk to people one on one about the liabilities that we have just discussed. Talking to people

will be better than in writing.

Sean asked about the tax impact of the new building. Clark advised it would be approximately \$90 per \$100,000 of property value.

Clark advised that the Initial needs for the building came out to be 12,000 square feet and we brought it down to 8,000 square feet.

Sean questioned the need for the large ambulance bay. We had discussed previously that it would be used as a room for voting, town meetings etc. Sean wanted to know if there was any way we could have meetings elsewhere and cut down to the size of the bay. We already have a high tax rate and people are not going to want an increase.

Bill advised that we can't use the school for meetings or voting. Clark said that both the Police and the EMS need a training room. Right now they use the room we are in now when it is available.

Michelle discussed the number of people that come for training. Before Covid, the Police Chiefs meetings could have been thirty people. Jim said that the EMS classes could be 20-25 people.

Sean asked how we can get this information out to all the residents so that they understand why all of this is really required because what they will look at is the bottom line and what it will do to the tax rate.

Al R said we don't want to cause fear but, if the residents say no in March, they need to understand that the liability issues and the instability in both departments is a ticking time bomb.

Clark advised that Twin Mountain's first vote for their new building was No. The Building committee then worked very hard at explaining their situation to their residents. They had two people at the Transfer station every weekend talking to the residents there. They worked really hard to get the information out. That was what made the difference, the one on one discussions that allowed the second vote to be a Yes.

Alan R asked if we could take a video of what the pd and ambulance departments look like now and the liability issues that we are facing. Clark advised that in Twin Mountain they did a video and put it on the town website.

Bill said we really need to sell this to the town. We need a 2/3 vote at town meeting not just a simple majority.

Michele discussed an incident at the Pd where an individual was arrested and was covered in his own fecal matter and urine. They had to traipse him through the "carpeted" police station and use the only bathroom, which is the Town and Police bathroom to be washed down completely. The occurred 2 or 3 days before Min had to set up for voting. There was no way to decontaminate the floor that he walked on or the area he walked through.

Al R asked if we could do a video interview of some of these issues and get it onto the town website.

There was much discussion on how we could do this. Sam, Jim, and Michelle agreed that it was a good idea and thought we could get this done. They would try to get it done before the next meeting.

Sean said we should also show video information on a modernized PD and ambulance that Clark has done before and show the differences between them and us.

Bill agreed that right now we are opening up the town to major liabilities. Safety is number one for all employees. We could show the safety aspects that we are lacking in both departments. The town is placing huge risks on the people who are protecting us. The building they are in is highly inefficient and creates high costs to the town for heating and other utilities.

Nicole said that with a new ambulance and PD building we can attract more businesses and more residents. New people coming in could fix up some of the dilapidated buildings which could help increase our tax base and lower our tax rate in the long run.

Clark said we are not sure when or where the town budget meeting is going to be. We are not only facing challenges from the dollar impact but we need a 2/3 vote to pass the warrant article at Town meeting. Along with the Covid challenges and the inability to have any initial meeting to get the residents on board, it is going to be a very hard sell. We need more people on the building committee and we need to preach our information to the public.

Clark is working with the ambulance to get answers to what will be the frequently asked questions. We need to talk with the fire department and get their support as well. Jim will get the phone numbers and emails for the Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief to Clark. Clark and Alan R will talk to the fire department.

Michelle discussed how the pd and ambulance have been working together to help each other out to lower their budgets.

Discussion on the cost of contracting out ambulance. It will cost more to contract out and the delay will be detrimental to patient survival. Clark thinks we need to make the residents aware that the survival of Groveton Ambulance is very important to the community. We need to let the public know that this new building will be cost effective to the town.

There was much discussion on how we get the per capita numbers and that we are getting different numbers from different people. Jim said we need to all be on the same page. We need a unified message. Rumors can run rampant and we need to stop them.

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 6:00 PM at 10 Station Square.

Alan asked for a motion to adjourn. Michelle made a motion to adjourn. Eric seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:20

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Rossetto, Secretary