

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD
EMERGENCY SERVICES FACILITY BUILDING COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2023, AT 4:00PM
VIRTUAL HYBRID (ON-LINE) MEETING

MINUTES

1. Call To Order

- a. B. Porada, acting as Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:07PM
- b. **Committee attendance:** Stephen Seredynski, Bernie Porada, Chief Jon Hall, Chief Mark Fortier, Andrea Llamas, Heath Cummings.
- c. **Consultants:** John MacMillan, CBA; Matthew Sturz, Colliers; Anthony DiLuzio, Colliers.
- d. **Public Attendance:** Jean Hastings, Bee Jacque.

2. Previous Meeting Minutes

- a. Meeting minutes of April 13, 2023;
 - i. Motion made by S. Seredynski to approve, Second by B. Porada
 - ii. Motion PASSES, Unanimous by roll call vote. (Abstention by M. Fortier)

3. Budget, Contracts, Invoices

- a. CBA invoice #6705, Dated 4/12/2023, in the amount of \$53,271.20, was determined to have been voted on and approved at the previous meeting.
- b. No Colliers invoice for Committee review.

4. Town Meeting Vote Review

- a. The Committee discussed the Special Town Meeting where the project did not achieve a sufficient number of Votes to pass.
 - i. B. Porada expressed disappointment with the results of the Vote, and expressed concern about the potential timeline for coming up with a solution the Departments' issues, noting the long time taken for the project to get back to this point after the previous failed vote. S. Seredynski concurred with this sentiment.

5. Next Steps

- a. A. Llamas expressed the importance of moving forward with solutions for each of the facilities' needs, whether or not they are to be combined in any combination of departments. Numerous, and sometimes conflicting, opinions were heard at the Special Town Meeting, but the primary objection to the project seemed to be the cost. The suggested approach was to reintroduce and explore a range of previously-studied options that may become viable after abandoning the premise of combining all departments.
- b. A. Llamas suggested numerous ideas for group consideration, including:

- i. Purchase and renovation of the existing (rented) EMS Facility with expanded bays, expanded office area, and a modest addition to accommodate other programmatic spaces. (A rough sketch was circulated for discussion).
 1. M. Fortier advised that this configuration would need to have at least 3 bays. Behind the building is the location for the septic system and wetlands, which may limit the potential for expansion. M. Fortier further expressed reluctance to expend money on a solution that did not address the underlying problems with the current EMS facility.
 2. Discussion ensued regarding potential costs of an EMS project, and whether a regionalized option might help distribute the cost burden.
 - ii. J. Hall proposed reducing to either a Fire and EMS or Police and EMS combination, removing one of the Departments in order to reduce both square footage and cost of the project as designed for 121 Main St.
 1. Discussion ensued. A. Llamas advised that it was unlikely that further requests for funding in subsequent years would be successful and the Town would likely have one opportunity to correct the identified deficiencies.
 2. In the ensuing discussion, mention was made of an alternative to move the Police into the existing Fire Station once a Fire/EMS facility was constructed.
 - iii. 168 Main St. was suggested as an option.
 1. Discussion ensued. Reservation was expressed about taking buildings off of the Town's tax rolls if it were to be purchased for municipal use.
 - iv. Trinitarian Church was proposed as an option previously and was briefly discussed.
- c. Discussion ensued generally around tax rates and how these costs are perceived by residents based on how services are billed. Additionally, the cost of the ESF project was discussed in the context of the cost of other needed capital improvements such as sewer work, which H. Cummings indicated residents are wary of. S. Seredynski and B. Porada noted that Town-wide attitudes surrounding growth and development seemed to be at odds with the goal of reducing the cost of delivering services.
- d. H. Cummings highlighted the need for further citizen engagement and public participation in the process going forward, citing the number of "No" votes (including some from individuals who would be working in the proposed facility). He further noted that there seemed to be surprisingly tepid support for the project within the Fire Department itself, and that the Committee would need to ensure that the Department was engaged in the discussion of a potential solution. In the ensuing discussion, it was noted that these public outreach efforts could also be expanded to include NextDoor, Facebook, and other social media.
- e. A. Llamas asked if money can be allocated based on previously appropriated funds to continue Designer and OPM services as contracted. Colliers advised that

there should be no issue with reverting back to a Study Phase under the existing Contracts as written. Colliers and CBA were asked to develop proposals for Additional Services.

- f. J. MacMillan advised that although the existing Fire Station could be converted into a suitable Police Station, it would require significant cost to achieve this due to several major issues and would likely either require the addition of an Elevator or a waiver from the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB).
- g. As a point of discussion, it was noted that the Fire Department is a volunteer force, and any proposed changes to the facility that houses the department should account for the impact they may have on the Department's existing culture and tradition.
- h. It was determined that the immediate next step should be to have an in-person sit down meeting between members of the Select Board and the Fire Department to understand any remaining barriers to supporting the project, before determining if additional properties should be explored.

6. Permitting and Local Boards Status

- a. Discussion on this topic centered on what to do about the pursuit of Permitting with the Conservation Commission, MassDOT, ZBA, Historical Commission, and Planning Board given the large-scale changes to the proposed project. It was determined that significant changes to the design of the building would require re-starting the process with each of these bodies.
 - i. CBA asked to confirm what the Committee would like to do regarding Conservation Commission and MassDOT Permits currently in process. This spurred further discussion about continuing the Permitting process – M. Fortier noted that completing the Permitting process would enable the project to move forward and be constructed should an alternative supplemental funding source appear to support the project (it would already be “shovel-ready” and Permitted). M. Fortier opined that if completing these processes did not carry any additional cost, completing them should be considered.
 - ii. It was decided after discussion that the Permitting process with Conservation Commission and MassDOT should be continued to completion.

7. Public Comment Period

- a. J. Hastings asked if there was a time the Committee would entertain opening a meeting for the purpose of receiving public comment on the process and project. A. Llamas advised that such a meeting had been conducted last year at the Pioneer Valley School, for which outreach was conducted through a number of media channels including the Town website.

8. Next Meeting / Adjournment

- a. The next Meeting will be scheduled at the appropriate time, TBD pending next steps.

- b. Motion to adjourn by S. Seredynski, seconded by H. Cummings, 5:55PM,
PASSED by unanimous roll call vote.

AGENDA ITEMS LISTED ARE THOSE REASONABLY ANTICIPATED BY THE CHAIR TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING. NOT ALL ITEMS MAYBE DISCUSSED AND OTHER ITEMS NOT LISTED MAY BE BROUGHT UP FOR DISCUSSION TO THE EXTENT PERMITTED BY LAW.

DRAFT