

TOWN OF CHESTER
BUILDING COMMITTEE
MINUTES

September 9, 2019

Committee Members in Attendance: David Pisha, Kirby Putnam, Lee Gustafson, Matt Wilson, Dan Cook.

Others Present: Cathy Hasbrouck, Recording Secretary.

Citizens Present: Rick Cloud, Kevin Racek, Craig Jennings.

Call to Order

Lee Gustafson called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM in the Town Clerk's office. The Committee had a set of preliminary drawings, a document of Outline Specifications and a budget for the Emergency Services and Public Works buildings to discuss at the meeting.

Agenda Item 1 Approve Minutes from the 6/19/19 Meeting

This item was skipped in order to begin the budget discussion as soon as possible.

Agenda Item 2 Citizen Comments

No citizens had any comments outside of the items listed on the agenda.

Agenda Item 3 Discuss updates from Russell construction

Craig Jennings introduced the drawings, outline specifications and budget documents to the Committee. The Committee focused on the budget document. The budget presented was an estimate made with about 50% of the details resolved. This level of detail is generally thought to produce a cost figure that is accurate enough to put before voters for a project bond.

After a brief review of the total project budget for the Emergency Services building on page 2, the discussion focused on the construction costs listed on page 3. Craig Jennings started with the first item, General Conditions. He said both the Public Works and the EMS building projects will need a project manager. The EMS building will require a manager 2 or 3 days a week. The Committee thought this was reasonable.

Moving on to the Sitework item, Craig Jennings said he had gotten an estimate for the site work and the figure includes the cost of the fill. The Committee discussed whether the fill from the proposed town gravel pit could be used for this project. Craig Jennings said the gravel would have to be tested for suitability and suggested Beck Engineering as a company who could do the testing. Craig Jennings estimated that the town might be able to save \$40,000 – \$50,000 on fill if it could use fill from the proposed gravel pit near the new water tank on route 103 South. Lee Gustafson asked Kirby Putnam if the Highway Department could do the site work. Kirby Putnam thought that was possible, since the town now has a roller.

The group discussed the timing of some of the critical events that would allow the town to get gravel from the nearby proposed gravel pit. David Pisha said the town is applying to the Chester Development Review Board for a conditional use permit for the gravel pit. The hearing will be September 30, 2019. Having the conditional use permit in hand will be helpful in the Act 250

permit process which is being handled by Jim Goss. Craig Jennings said that the EMS and Highway building projects will have a bond vote on November 5th. If the bond passes, there will be several months more of work to get a guaranteed maximum price for the project. This is a critical stage because if the guaranteed maximum price is more than the amount of the bond vote, construction cannot start until the rest of the money can be found. If the guaranteed maximum price is less than the bond vote, construction can go ahead. It appears that the gravel pit may be ready in time for the EMS building project. With luck the project would start in the Spring of 2020. Craig Jennings estimated that the project will take 10 months and the building will be weather-tight before winter so the interior work can be finished during the colder months.

The advantages to the town of having the new gravel pit open were discussed. The gravel pit is close to the site of the EMS buildings, which will save on hauling costs and time. Since it isn't certain the new gravel pit will be ready when the EMS building project needs gravel, the sitework was listed at the estimated cost and not reduced in anticipation of using town gravel and Highway Department labor.

Craig Jennings gave the source of many of the estimated costs. He said he had talked to some contractors and used his professional experience and the experience of recent projects to develop other numbers. He discussed ways to save money and mentioned that the Tubular Skylights could be omitted to save \$9,000. It was possible, but not advisable, to add them later. Cutting the hole in the roof after it was built could create a leak. Craig also said the epoxy coating on the concrete in the equipment bays and the Police sally port was not essential and could be eliminated. Matt Wilson said he thought the epoxy coating prevented problems and he was in favor of keeping it. Craig Jennings said money could be saved on painting if materials in the walls and ceilings that already have a finish were not painted again.

Craig Jennings' conclusion about cost of the project is that the building is very simple, but it is large. Kevin Racek agreed that he has designed a simple building with basic materials and finishes. The cost lies in the square footage. Craig Jennings said that if two equipment bays were eliminated, \$300,000 - \$400,000 could be saved. Lee Gustafson said he thought cutting down on the square footage would be short-sighted. Matt Wilson agreed, saying it was essential to get the equipment inside a building to preserve it.

Dan Cook asked why there was a jog in the building's façade between the Police Department and Ambulance bay. Kevin Racek said the jog helped break up the mass of the building. It would keep the building from looking like a Walmart. Dan Cook asked if the Ambulance bay could be made 5 feet longer. The longer bay would allow the purchase of an ambulance on a truck chassis, which would have saved \$18,000 on the last purchase of an ambulance. David Pisha suggested a compromise of lengthening the bay by 3 feet. The idea was well received.

Kevin Racek said it was essential to have a conversation about matters like this, but it wasn't necessary to settle these issues before the bond went to vote. The goal for the meeting was to look at the budget figure and decide whether it needed to be cut, and if so, by how much. Lee Gustafson said the building's budget was in the ballpark of what was expected. He was not shocked by the figure. It was close to figures that had been suggested in the past. He wanted to discuss the work the town might be able to do on its own to save money. He said the town needed space for its equipment, the Public Works building needed to be brought up to code, and the EMS building, which is on a main road, needed to reflect a positive image of the town.

Kevin Racek said the cost per square foot of \$270 was very reasonable. It would produce a solid building that was not extravagant. He said a building in South Burlington would cost \$325 -

\$350 per square foot. Matt Wilson said a comparison such as that would be helpful in a public meeting. It would give some context to the budget figures. Kevin Racek said the building was a bare-bones building and value engineering would not be able to cut much cost. Lee Gustafson asked what items could be cut in value engineering. Kevin Racek said some windows could be removed. Craig Jennings said the building could be wood frame with trusses for the roof. He said Castleton has a fire station made of wood and trusses. He thought there was possibly \$100,000 that could be cut from the budget through value engineering.

Lee Gustafson said it was time for the Committee to decide whether they were on the right track with the project. He said he thought the design fit in well and would be a point of pride for the community. Rick Cloud said he liked the design for the front of the building. Craig Jennings said he felt the building compared favorably with the earlier proposal, and the cost compared favorably, especially in view of 3% inflation over 13 years.

Craig Jennings asked whether the Committee needed to find ways to cut the budget figures. Lee Gustafson said it would help sell the project if the budget figure were \$3.99 million instead of \$4.8 million. Several suggestions to cut costs such as the town supplying the gravel fill and delaying the epoxy coating on the concrete for some time were made. David Pisha calculated the impact of the proposed \$4.8 million cost borrowed at 3% interest on the tax rate. It came to \$62.00 more on \$100,000 of property value. It was agreed that the number was not insignificant, but there were other impacts on the town which could reduce the impact.

The Committee continued to review the budget for the project focusing on the Public Works building. The list of additional cost options for the Public Works building was examined. Lee Gustafson asked about the welding and wash bays. Kirby Putnam and Dan Cook said that when welding is done now the building fills with smoke because there is nothing to contain it and the existing fan cannot clear the smoke fast enough. He also said that washing the equipment in the winter was essential. The Committee agreed the wash and welding bays were needed. Kevin Racek said it would be more expensive to add them to the building later. Sprinklers are not required by code, but the Committee felt they were important to protect the equipment that would be stored in the building. The risk to the equipment was not justified. Kevin Racek said the metal siding on the building now is rusted through in many places and needs to be replaced. He said the middle bays, where the offices are would require 3-inch insulation, but the rest of the building could have 2-inch insulation, especially given the presence of so many overhead doors.

The Committee looked for any owner costs that might be missing. Craig Jennings said no environmental permits will be needed for the Public Works building. Building permits from the state were listed. Craig Jennings said the compaction and concrete testing costs are included in the EMS building budget. Lee Gustafson noted that the furniture and fixtures budget for the Public Works building was zero. Craig Jennings said he assumed the existing furniture would be reused. Lee Gustafson and Craig Jennings discussed the purpose, size and use of contingency.

Lee Gustafson asked Kirby Putnam to think about what his department would be willing to undertake for site work on the EMS building. Craig Jennings said he would study the budget and see if he could reduce some costs. He said the worst possible outcome for the project would be if the actual cost came out hundreds of thousands of dollars higher than the bond vote. He didn't want that to happen.

Matt Wilson thought it would be important to separate the design fees from the actual construction costs so the public will understand that the EMS building will not actually cost \$4.1 million dollars, but rather \$3.6 million in labor and materials and \$500,000 in fees. Craig

Jennings said that was an important point. When a building is fully designed and then put out to bid, the design costs are seen separately from the construction costs by the public, and the building itself looks less expensive to build because the design costs are not included. The design-build process Chester has chosen folds much of the design cost into the construction cost, which makes the construction cost of the building look higher than it would in a design and bid process. Craig Jennings agreed that point should be emphasized in the public discussion. Craig said Kevin Racek had gotten proposals from all 5 design consultants and the \$343,392 cost for design and engineering, 9% of the total, was reasonable.

The Committee then turned to preparations for the bond vote. Kevin Racek said a strategy for the 9/25/19 public meeting and the discussion of the project was essential. He felt an agenda listing the speakers and their topics would be useful. Lee Gustafson said he had a power point presentation he had made for the Selectboard. He offered to use that as a framework and add detail to it. David Pisha warned against bogging down in too many details because the audience begins to lose their focus.

Lee Gustafson listed the key points he felt belonged in the discussion:

The Emergency Services building will:

- move all equipment under cover
- meet all current building and safety codes
- be a building that reflects well on the town (utilitarian, but not ugly).

The Public Works building will:

- meet all building and safety codes and relieve the town from the state threat to close the building
- put more equipment under cover
- save the cost of a new building (\$700,000 for a renovation vs. \$3 – 4 million for new construction).

Other advantages include:

- it is possible the town can do some of the site work
- local sub-contractors will have an opportunity to bid on many parts of the work.

David Pisha brought up the proposed brochure for the project, which was also distributed at the meeting. Craig Jennings said the sample he brought to the meeting was not intended for distribution to the town, it was a starting point for the Committee. The Committee agreed that an estimate of the cost to the homeowner would be needed as well as overall project budget figures.

The brochure had a rendering of the proposed EMS building on the front. Rick Cloud said the Committee had already talked about changing the signage on the proposed front façade. Matt Wilson said the picture on the brochure needed to be changed to reflect that. The Town of Chester words should be changed to Fire Department, and the Emergency Services words should be changed to Ambulance. Kevin Racek said he could photoshop the change in a few minutes.

Lee Gustafson asked whether the Committee wanted to name the building after Mark Phelps or dedicate the building to him. Rick Cloud said that Mark was one of many people who had dedicated his life to serving the town of Chester, and Mark had not died in the line of duty. He

and the members of his department favored putting a plaque with a photo on it in the Police Department to commemorate Mark's life. Kirby Putnam agreed that a plaque in the Police Department area makes sense. Matt Wilson said the Fire Department was thinking about a commemorative memorial stone or bench on the property. Rick Cloud suggested a walkway might be appropriate.

Shawn Cunningham asked if any decisions were going to be made at the meeting. Lee Gustafson and David Pisha said no decisions were being made, the purpose of the meeting was to keep the project moving forward toward the bond vote. Shawn Cunningham then left the meeting to attend another interview.

Lee Gustafson asked Craig Jennings to write a short paragraph about the bidding process in a design-build project. Craig Jennings said he would. He also said he will look at the budget numbers to see if they should be adjusted downward to meet Lee's request that the EMS building be below \$4 million. Craig said some windows could be removed from the estimate because they were going to be in the way of the hose drying racks. Kevin Racek double checked the changes requested for the lettering on the building.

Matt Wilson proposed that all town employees be given a summary of the project so that everyone would know the practical and financial details. Lee Gustafson said the brochure will fulfill some of that purpose. Matt Wilson suggested a social media presence was needed. He also said the engine company was going to have some signs printed urging voters to approve the bond. Lee Gustafson said he was not in charge of the town's Facebook presence but thought it was a good idea to put the message out on social media.

Agenda Item 4 New Business/Next Agenda

No new business was discussed.

Agenda Item 5 Adjourn

Matt Wilson moved to adjourn the meeting. Kirby Putnam seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the meeting was adjourned.