

TOWN OF CHESTER
BUILDING COMMITTEE
MINUTES

April 7, 2020

Committee Members in Attendance: Julie Hance, Matt Wilson, Dan Cook, and Rick Cloud at the Town Hall via video link, Lee Gustafson via video link.

Others Present: Cathy Hasbrouck, Recording Secretary via video link.

Citizens Present: Kevin Racek and Courtney Venable via telephone, Scott Wunderle, Lauren Ingersoll, and Patrick Jarvis via video link, Amanda Silva at the Town Hall via video link.

Call to Order

Scott Wunderle hosted the meeting. Cathy Hasbrouck asked for a roll call to know who was attending. Julie Hance listed Matt Wilson, Dan Cook, Amanda Silva and herself via video link from Town Hall. Scott Wunderle introduced Courtney Venable, via video link. Courtney works out the details of planting plans for Scott's projects. Scott introduced Patrick Jarvis via telephone. Patrick takes a special type of meeting minutes which will be shared with the committee. Scott also introduce Lauren Ingersoll, who was taking care of the meeting's technical process, making sure everyone could see and hear properly.

Agenda Item 1 Approve minutes from 3/17/2020 meeting

This item was not addressed during the meeting.

Agenda Item 2 Citizen Comments

There were no comments from any citizens.

Agenda Item 3 Review Site Plan recommendations from Terrigeneous

Scott Wunderle began the meeting by explaining that he would normally have prepared a few different reconstructions of the site plan, but time did not permit that. His goal was to add to the work being done for the past 2 years on the project in a way that adds value but increases the price as little as possible and reduces the amount of re-work the other designers have to do. Scott explained that he had used the site plan, drone photographs, and a 3-D Revit model to place the building on the landscape and produced line drawings of the building and the land. He added his suggestions for the project in color to the line drawings.

He showed a drone photograph of the site looking toward Bellows Falls from Pleasant Street (Route 11) and superimposed the image of the building, driveways and parking lots on the photo. He then showed the line drawing of the building and land looking at the front of the building from Pleasant Street and his first suggestions for landscaping in water color. Along the side toward Springfield he indicated an area near the proposed propane tanks that could have some bushes, and some bushes near the sally port for the Police Department. He suggested that local rocks or boulders could be piled around the superstructure of the buried propane tanks to protect them.

Scott discussed the steep drop from the parking area toward the maple trees at the property boundary. He suggested some native, low growing plants would be appropriate for that slope to prevent erosion. They would not be woody plants, as the area will be used for snow storage in the winter. Toward the road, Scott pointed out a cluster of existing and native sumac, which he said would be an attractive feature when mixed with some other taller shrubs after the building is complete. Scott said native sumac is adapting well to climate change and is thriving in that spot. Along Pleasant Street he proposed three trees that would not grow tall enough to interfere with the power lines. They could be limbed up high enough so as not to block the line of sight for vehicles leaving the property quickly. He suggested mowed lawn or some other simple, low ground cover under the trees.

Scott outlined the traffic flow and parking space changes he was suggesting. The site plan had two parking spaces in front of the Police Department facing Pleasant Street. Scott proposed expanding the parking area along the side of the Police Department and moving the two parking spaces there. This would allow more room for police vehicles to enter and exit the lot quickly because the geometry of the driveway would be changed from two 90° turn to enter the parking area, to one more gradual turn. Similarly, the entrance to the volunteer Fire Department parking on the other side of the building would be relaxed by reducing the width of the area separating the parking lot from Pleasant Street and widening the driveway space. The proposed turn into the parking lot on the Pleasant Brook Apartment side of the building was even sharper than a 90° turn. Apart from making entry and egress easier, Scott felt that relaxing the geometry of the turns would reflect the rural, agricultural nature of the area, which is bounded on the back and toward Springfield by corn fields.

In front of the building, Scott suggested three areas of ornamental grasses between the Fire Department bays to soften the architecture and help the building blend into the surrounding hay and corn fields. He also suggested planting trees if there was room at the front of the building for larger beds. He said he wanted trees that would not obscure the architecture. He thought elm trees might be a possibility for that area. Scott said if there was agreement about the beds and trees, he thought he could have some drawings ready to go into the bid packets.

Lee Gustafson said that power outages in the area would be rare, but would last for several days. He thought that one 5,000-gallon propane tank to power the heat and generator would take up less space than two 2,000-gallon tanks. Lee also asked where the proposed sumac bushes would be. Scott pointed out the area near Pleasant Street on the Springfield side of the building for sumac. Scott said he thought the plants already there would survive if the soil wasn't disturbed. He also said a different, shorter variety of sumac would work better on the steep bank at the rear of the building. He also said he thought the elm trees would be great in front of the building. Lee asked about the maintenance required for the plantings next to the building. He also said he didn't think any plants should be added behind the building.

Scott said he would be showing views of the back of the building shortly. He said the ornamental grasses should be cut down annually, about the time the corn was cut in the fall. He was not trying for a garden-type environment that required frequent maintenance. Scott said he could integrate a single 5,000-gallon propane tank in the design if that was what is agreed to.

Rick Cloud said there could not be anything obscuring the view of the Police Department for security reasons. He also thought the beds for grass and trees at the front of the building would make snow removal very difficult. Matt Wilson said the fire trucks will need to park sideways

close to the bay doors to load the side hoses on the trucks. The grass beds would prevent the trucks from doing that. Scott showed the current site plan that had a sidewalk protruding in front of the building on the Pleasant Brook apartment side of the building. Rick Cloud said the small protrusion on the proposed site plan might actually be too much.

Scott asked Rick Cloud to explain why the two parking spaces proposed for the front of the building could not be moved to the side of the building. Rick said the two spaces were for visitors to the Police Department and Ambulance personnel who were responding to a call. He said there was a shortage of parking and he did not want to lose any spaces. Scott asked Rick Cloud if he was concerned about his officers having trouble leaving the parking area on the side of the building given the complex path to the parking lot exit. Rick said he was not concerned.

Scott showed a view of the front of the building and the side facing Pleasant Brook Apartments. He showed taller grasses mixed in with lower grasses along the side of the building at about the same spacing as the grassy areas proposed for the front of the building. He also suggested that the area near the door at the back corner of the building be raised up and graded for a small sitting area with benches for volunteer firemen to gather as they leave the building. Matt Wilson said the area would be nice, but he was concerned about cost and didn't consider the sitting area to something that was needed.

Scott said his crew was working on the lighting details as a way to save money. He was also looking to help with the cost of the fill. When asked about plantings in front of the Ambulance bay, Dan Cook said he would rather not have anything blocking the view of the Ambulance pulling out of the building. Rick Cloud said he did not want anything in front of the Police Department either. Scott asked if plantings along Pleasant Street would be acceptable. Julie Hance, speaking for the group at the Town Hall, said as long as it didn't interfere with the sight lines at the street, it would be OK. Matt Wilson said he hoped at some point in the future to have a memorial near Pleasant Street on the Pleasant Brook Apartments side of the building. He said that the site plan called for conduit to be run to the area for lighting.

Lee Gustafson asked Matt Wilson how the fire trucks would be backing into the bays. Would they be pulling up in front of the ambulance bay and backing in from there? Matt Wilson said they would be backing in off the street. Lee asked if there would be a problem stopping traffic. Matt said the trucks would use their lights, or, in the case of high traffic volume, firefighters would stand on the street to stop traffic.

Scott Wunderle showed the back of the building. Traces of snow on the drone photograph showed a natural path crossing the lot well behind the building. Scott suggested using the path as the limit of disturbance for the construction site. He noted that the site plan had the LOD closer to the building. He suggested that the extra room would be needed for staging some material that would have to be stripped from the site as part of the construction process.

Scott's suggestions for the back of the building included three trees. The trees could be left out if they were seen as interfering with the helicopter landing area. He indicated the proposed sitting area on the Pleasant Brook Apartments side of the building and said the grading for that area would make the slope to the back of the building steeper. He suggested bringing in native plants to stabilize the slope. He also suggested that the road that comes around the building from the volunteer firefighters' parking lot may not need to follow the building so closely and could slant away from it. He said he knew the road had been discussed quite a bit and was ready to accept whatever agreement had been worked out for it.

Matt Wilson said he thought the lights needed to light up the area behind the building would be blocked by the trees. Scott said he thought the lights would be placed between the trees. Rick Cloud said the area behind the building would be used for training and would probably be cleared of everything but grass. Matt Wilson concurred, saying they would be mowing the area to maintain a good working field. Scott pointed to a tree in the middle of the rear field, well back from the building. He said it was called a silver maple in the documents, but he doubted that it was actually a tree of any value and it could be removed immediately. Lee Gustafson asked how much space would be needed for a heliport. Matt Wilson said the minimum was about 100 feet square and a bigger space would be preferred.

Scott Wunderle showed a series of drone images and photographs which illustrate some of the task details he would like to see included in the Civil bid packet. He started with a drone image of the site from directly above it and superimposed the engineer's site plan over the photo. He then showed the engineer's proposed site plan with his suggestions added in another color. He pointed out where the two parking spaces moved from in front of the Police Department would be included and showed how changing the islands that separated Pleasant Street from the parking areas would make it easier to drive in and out of the parking lots. He agreed that the memorial would be well-placed near Pleasant Street where the public could see it. On the boundary with the Pleasant Brook Apartments, he said plantings would be needed under the existing pine trees because their lower limbs fall away as they grow taller and headlights from the volunteer firefighters' parking area will sweep the apartments. He also pointed to a part of the boundary further back from the street that had nothing to shield the apartments from activity such as training in the field. He suggested that screening be started in that area.

Scott pointed out the exit from the building into the Police Department parking area on the Springfield side of the building. It had a simple concrete pad and sidewalk running along the building. He suggested that the sidewalk be pared down to reflect the path people would normally walk and not be laid out with rigid right angles. He suggested using local ledge stone to fill in and add interest to the area.

Scott Wunderle then discussed how the existing landscaping assets can be preserved during construction and specific tasks he would like to include in the Civil bid packet. He began by showing a photograph of the row of mature maple trees that mark the boundary on the Springfield side of the property. He indicated that the fill would be creating a 1:2 slope which would end very near the trees. He suggested that the smaller trees growing on the building side of the line of mature maples be grubbed out with an excavator before construction starts. That will make it easier to avoid disturbing the root crowns of the maple trees when the needed construction fill is brought in. He did not think anything further would need to be done to protect the roots. He said that some of the maple branches will need to be pruned so they don't interfere with parking vehicles in the parking lot. He suggested a note be made in the bid packet to wait until the end of sugaring season before removing those branches so the sugar maples will not bleed.

Scott suggested that all the ash trees be removed from the lot before construction begins. The emerald ash borer is killing all the ash trees in the area and it will be very difficult to remove the dead trees after the building is built. He said there were also some large maples that have died and should be removed before construction begins. There were a few stone posts at the property boundaries which Scott suggested be left in place as they represent the history of the area.

Scott pointed to some boulders in an old pile of fill toward the back of the lot. He said the boulders could be used to stabilize the steep banks, could be used decoratively to add character or placed around the propane tank superstructure as protection.

He showed a picture of the hedgerow between the training area and the cornfield. He recommended leaving as much vegetation in place as possible to provide screening, with one exception. He recommended cutting the grapevines at the base and applying Finalsan, an organic herbicide to the base to prevent them from overrunning the trees and choking them.

There is a gap in the screening between the field and the apartment building toward the back of the lot and Scott recommended addressing that gap to meet the bylaw requirement for screening. The next slide showed the edge of the property on the apartment side. Scott had added an image to the slide showing the guard rail that will border the volunteer firefighter's parking lot. The lower branches of the pine trees will need some pruning to keep them from interfering with construction. Scott said if done carefully, enough live branch could be left to screen the apartments from the sweep of headlights in that parking lot. Additional plantings will eventually be needed to screen headlights as the pine trees grow taller.

Scott Wunderle showed photographs of some of the grasses and other materials he was considering for the site including the stones that were too big to be processed in the gravel crusher. He said that if the stones from the town gravel pit were used, he recommended putting down a cap to prevent knotweed from taking over the site. He thought there was knotweed behind the lot by the river but not any on the site itself.

The presentation finished with before and after photographs of the Weston Playhouse, one of Scott's projects, to illustrate the type of change he was envisioning for the building. He also showed photographs of Chester's native stone which can be broken into flat slabs. He suggested slabs could be used for steps or landings where needed to add local natural character. Scott said he would put some thought into the memorial area.

Lee Gustafson said Scott had given the committee a great deal to think about and he looked forward to the next iteration. Julie Hance said the department heads were firm in not changing the parking from what had originally been designed and in not having any plants next to the building in the front or back.

Scott asked if the town was planning on maintaining the landscaping itself. Julie said it was. There are no plans to increase the town staff to maintain the landscaping.

Scott asked Matt Wilson how the fire hydrant on the island on the Pleasant Brook apartments side of the lot would be used. Matt said the trucks do not fill from that hydrant; the hydrant is there for emergencies in the neighborhood. It was possible that a truck from another town giving mutual aid would fill at that hydrant to respond to an emergency. Matt said it could also be used during training. Lee Gustafson asked whether the hydrant had to be in the location where it was shown or if it could be moved closer to the apartment complex. Kevin Racek said the hydrant was placed where it was because that is where the water main runs and it could be moved further south if wanted. Matt Wilson asked if the hydrant is already there or if it's proposed. Scott Wunderle said that hydrant is proposed, not existing. He said he would consider where to put the hydrant based on snow plowing needs and the memorial request.

Lee Gustafson asked Kevin Racek about the plans for propane tanks. Kevin said he planned to have 3 1,000-gallon tanks. Lee asked if one 5,000-gallon tank could be placed there instead and if that would take up less space. Kevin said he would need to check with his engineer for that information. He said the plans called for two 1,000-gallon tanks for daily use and one 1,000-gallon tank which would be piped directly to the generator to cover an extended power outage. Lee said he hoped that by reducing the space needed for propane, more parking could be provided. Kevin said he would have to talk it over with his engineers.

Scott said he would make changes to the sketches and get back to the group as soon as possible. Kevin Racek said the next group of drawings, which included the civil set, would be due on April 15th, the Wednesday following the meeting. He did not think these landscaping plans could be included in that set, but he said changes and adjustments could be made later. He said there may be some cost associated with the changes. His understanding was that the landscaping would not be included as part of the project until the full cost of the project is known, after May 15th. He did think the maintenance of the trees should be part of the bid set for May 15th. The rest of the landscaping can be added as a separate package after the full cost of the project is determined.

Kevin Racek reviewed his key dates for the project:

On April 15th foundation and civil plans will be ready for bid

On April 20th a set of plans for permitting will be ready

On May 15th a bid set for all except foundation and civil will be ready

Some time after May 15th the finishes and refinements specifications will be ready.

Julie Hance asked when the bids will be due after the bid package is released. Kevin Racek said that is up to Craig Jennings, but he thought it was generally two weeks. Matt Wilson asked if a site work contractor had an obligation to start the work by a given date once the contract was awarded or if that was up to the discretion of the contractor. Kevin said the time frame was negotiated. Kevin said he didn't think construction would start before mid-summer. Rick Cloud asked if the "dirt work" would start before mid-summer. Kevin said he thought it would. Kevin said the most important step was getting the bid package out and pricing finalized. Once that task is complete, scheduling could be done. He said that a lot depends on when the state will let the project start. The only new construction currently allowed is for hospitals. Repairs to existing buildings are allowed.

The next meeting of the committee was set for Tuesday April 21, 2020 at 10:00 AM.

Agenda Item 4 Adjourn

Thanks were expressed and goodbyes were said. The meeting was closed.