

**Selectmen's Minutes**  
**Essex Elementary School Cafeteria, Story Street**

**May 15, 2018**

Present: Chairman Lisa J. O'Donnell, Selectman Andrew C. Spinney, Selectman Peter D. Phippen, Town Administrator Brendhan Zubricki, and Selectmen's Assistant Pamela J. Witham.

Also Present: Finance Committee Vice-Chair Benjamin Buttrick and FinCom members Rob Fitzgibbon, Michael Flynn, and Richard Ross; Town Building Committee members Wesley Burnham, Dan Doucette, Peter Levasseur, and Peter G. Silva; and, approximately 50 spectators.

Chairman O'Donnell called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. in the cafeteria of the Essex Elementary School, 12 Story Street, and announced that the Board would hear Public Comment after the business of the meeting was concluded. However, the Chairman made an exception for Ted Marshall, who had to leave to attend another meeting. Mr. Marshall owns property on Pickering Street next to the Senior Center. He announced that a property adjacent to his is coming up for sale in the near future. Mr. Marshall suggested that the Town consider buying his property and the adjacent property to use for the future site of one of the following: 1) a combined police and fire public safety building; 2) a Fire facility; or 3) a Police facility. Mr. Marshall left the meeting.

Chairman O'Donnell said that the purpose of tonight's meeting was to discuss whether or not to pursue purchase of the Village Restaurant property for the future site of a new fire station. The Chairman said she had talked with the Village Restaurant owners today and they have not yet listed the property for sale or asked for bids. If a decision is made to continue to try to purchase the 55 Main Street property, a Special Town Meeting could be called by the Board of Selectmen or a group of residents could petition the Town for a Special Town Meeting to vote again on the purchase of the Village site. Alternatively, the matter could be placed on the Fall Town Meeting Warrant, or if not, a group of residents could petition to have it placed on the FTM Warrant.

Chairman O'Donnell introduced newly elected Selectman Peter Phippen who is replacing Selectman Doane, who chose not to run for a second term.

Chairman O'Donnell led off the discussion by stating that she was not in favor of pursuing the acquisition of 55 Main Street and would like to focus on other viable options for a new fire building. She noted that all through the process of the Village proposal, although it ultimately failed, residents seemed to have a general agreement about the need for replacement or upgrade of the public safety facilities. And, this, in and of itself, represented a significant step in the conversation regarding this topic. Consensus regarding the need for replacement had been a long conversation and now that this seems to have general support, she did not want to lose or squander this momentum, by backtracking to revisit the Village site. Following Chairman O'Donnell's comments, Selectman Spinney and Selectman Phippen each stated that they would also prefer to move forward and consider other suitable sites.

Finance Committee member Rob Fitzgibbon weighed in by saying that the Town has always voted no on major issues, but eventually approves the recommendation of Town officials. He cited school regionalization with Manchester and the sewer as examples. He stated that the Board and committees had spent 9 years carefully researching the best solution for a new public safety building and had unanimously recommended the Village site as the most advantageous and most cost effective site.

Town Building Committee member Westley Burnham said he was disappointed about the vote for the Village, but was in favor of exploring new options. He asked if the Town property on John Wise Avenue would be available and/or suitable as a future site. Board of Public Works member Scott DeWitt, who was in the audience, stated that his Board would be willing to release some of the cemetery property (or Memorial Park property) if the Town decided that it was needed. The BPW has recently become aware that there is less space available at the cemetery, since some of the property is in a flood zone and therefore unsuitable for burials (and a safety building as well).

Town Building Committee member and Fire Chief Dan Doucette said that while he believes that the Village site is the best site available, he is not in favor of continuing efforts to obtain the site for the Town.

Finance Committee member Richard Ross said that recent events have highlighted the fact that there is a dire need for a new fire station and he would like to continue to explore new options.

FinCom Vice-Chair Benn Buttrick said that he was not in favor of pursuing the Village site, and FinCom Chair, Michelle Dyer, who could not be at tonight's meeting, had told him that she also, was not in favor.

Police Chief Peter Silva agreed with those present about exploring new options or re-examining old options for a new facility. He said the Police Department also needs an adequate space to operate out of and that he would like the Department to be more involved in the site selection process.

FinCom member Michael Flynn also agreed that it is time to move forward and explore other options for a fire building.

And finally, Board of Selectmen Chairman and Town Building Committee Chair O'Donnell read an email from TBC member Stuart Pratt, agreeing that the Board and Committees should move forward and explore alternative options for a site.

BOS Chair O'Donnell asked for public comment and several members of the audience offered their views on the matter, as well as suggestions (which were not solicited at this time) for alternative sites.

Chairman O'Donnell said that the Board of Selectmen is meeting on Monday, May 21, and items for discussion will include discussion relative to continued consideration of a solution for building renovation or replacement for the fire and police departments, on existing Town land, or otherwise; further consideration of the use of a portion of Memorial Park; discussion relative to possible Special Town Meeting and/or addition to the Fall Town Meeting of article(s) dealing with soil testing at the existing fire/police site and/or other Town property for the eventual renovation or replacement of the existing fire/police building and engineering, architectural, and owner's project manager services to design and cost estimate said renovation or replacement at any site; and consideration regarding the possible issuance of a Request for Proposals or other appropriate method of determining if private property owners are interested in selling property to the Town for future fire and/or police building construction.

There being no further business before the Board, a motion was made, seconded, and unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:15 p.m.

Documents used during this meeting include the following: None.

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Pamela J. Witham

Attested by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Andrew C. Spinney