

TOWN HALL REVIEW COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2018
LITCHFIELD TOWN OFFICE BUILDING, 74 WEST STREET

A Special Meeting of the Town Hall Review Committee was held on Monday, February 5, 2018 at the Litchfield Town Office Building, 74 West Street at 6:04 pm.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Jeffrey Zullo called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm. The minutes of this meeting will be recorded.

ATTENDANCE AND APPOINTMENT OF ALTERNATES: Jeffrey Zullo, Chairman, James Hilby, Lisa Losee, Richard Quay, Jason Travelstead, Alternate Ann Combs and Alternate Denise Raap. Public present were Paul Hinkel, Advisor, Anne Kalognomos, Leo Paul and Fran Carpentier.

REVIEW OF 2008 TOWN HALL PLAN (EXISTING LOCATION DEMOLISH/REBUILD): Jeffrey started the discussion stating that there was discussion about keeping the Park and Recreation/gymnasium at the Bantam Annex. At this point, it has not been determined if the Park and Rec will remain at the Bantam Annex. From the 2008 report, the scope was larger, 20,375 square feet, the top of the building would be chopped off, restructure the foundation and from the side views, there would be a tower, it would be built into the bank and pushed further back with 2 full floors. Jeffrey then opened up the discussion to members. There was a square foot estimate of about \$6 million in 2008. Richard Quay stated the 2008 estimate would be renovating the existing Town Hall and the 2016 estimate was for a new Town Hall building. The Courthouse would be smaller still with a rough estimate of \$5.2 million. Jason Travelstead did a 3% escalation of the 2008 estimate of \$5.9 million, would be about \$8 million, at 383 a square foot now. This would be on the high end.

REVIEW OF 2016 TOWN HALL PLAN (NEW BUILDING AT REAR OF TOWN HALL LOT): Denise Raap asked if any of these plans went to a town vote, and the answer was no. Jeffrey said that in 2008, there were public hearings, but the 2016 plan did not have any public hearings. The committee finalized the report in September 2016 and just filed it. Leo Paul stated that the previous report that was done in 2014 did not go to a public vote because that was when the Board of Selectmen decided at that point to shelve it because there was a potential in one of the options for a realization plan. Jeffrey said there was the 2008 Town Hall Committee, in 2012, there was the Town Hall Building Committee, in 2014, it was restructured to the Town Facilities Committee in which they were evaluating the potential to utilize a school building as the Town Hall. An educational consultant was hired who knew how to apply utilization factors to the school and looked to see if there was any potential in closing one of the schools. The consultant came back and said the schools were at their capacity and there was a report that was funded by the Town Facilities Committee. Jeffrey said that John Martin was on retainer from the second phase and brought those numbers up to date to \$5.9 million. Denise Raap asked, who comes up with the numbers for the proposed square footage that is needed? Jeffrey said that was an extensive amount of analysis on the space utilization done by John Martin. Jeffrey will ask John Martin if he could come to our next meeting to go over his summarization of the analysis. Jeffrey said the analysis was well done.

REVIEW OF COURTHOUSE RENOVATION/EXPANSION (RENOVATION EXPANSION OF COURTHOUSE):
Richard Quay asked if the 13,717 sq. ft. for the Courthouse would be sufficient. Paul Hinkel stated that they took the 13,717 sq. ft. and gave it to their architect to see what they could do with it. Paul said that they are also working on a second plan. Paul said that they are able to demonstrate from a square foot basis, that it could, and there is also additional space that was unprogrammed in the basement that could be used. Paul said that the vault must be on the main level according to State Statutes and thought that they could accommodate the Town Hall in the Courthouse plan. Jeffrey said that they matched up the numbers very well knowing there were structural limitations inside the building. Paul said that the main entrance will probably be in the rear of the building because of elevator access and parking. Paul said that there are options to build out on some of the sides of the building coming forward to create accessible entrance. Paul said that they want to preserve the exterior of that building.

Jim Hilby asked how many proposals there will be. Jeffrey answered that the Board of Selectmen would like us to come with a recommendation to the board. Leo Paul said that the Board of Selectmen would like to keep it under \$5 million. Jeffrey said that the Board of Selectmen want us to look at all 3 options and if we do any financial evaluations we can look to normalize. Ann Combs asked Jeffrey that in the 2008 plan, there was \$20,000 in moving costs, but what was the plan for housing employees in the transition. Jeffrey said it was \$200,000. Jeffrey said that in the 2008 plan, there were a lot of limitations on how you could do it. Jeffrey said that in answer to Jim Hilby's question, we still have to evaluate it and whatever the outcome to level, load these, bring them to date, bring them to a 2018 assessment of terms of cost and come up with a recommendation. Jason Travelstead would want to understand if whether this program can exist in a 15,500 sq. ft. or whether the program can exist in the proposal from The Preservation Trust of 13,717 sq. ft. There was lower amounts of common area and lower amounts of meeting rooms and conference rooms. Jeffrey said that John Martin can shed a lot of light on the programing since he was the one that took the inputs and developed the program. Denise Raap said she feels the Litchfield Courthouse is the natural place where the Town Hall should be. It is more grand and it is in the center of the town. There is plenty of parking and if everything can fit in the 13,000 to 15,000 sq.ft., it would be a good sell to the town. Paul Hinkel said that they are hoping to reuse many of the wall surfaces and partitions. Jeffrey said that we need to keep an open mind on this and the task that the Board of Selectmen asked for is to evaluate these 3, level them out as best we can and come up with current numbers and if there are any deficiencies size or scope, then we will have to make that statement. That will have to be brought into the discussion. Paul Hinkel said that when they had their board meeting, they asked if the Courthouse committee could come and make a presentation of their latest plans. Jeffrey asked if we could do a field trip to the Courthouse, but actually do it as a meeting. Jeffrey said that we would want to have the presentation from the Preservation Trust and also see it. Jeffrey said that he would like to hear from John Martin about his program, then hear from the Preservation Trust.

Richard Quay stated that given the fact that this will go to a referendum, he thinks that the best chance of getting this approval, is to use/renovate the Courthouse. It is a historic building and it is in the center of town. Jeffrey said that we have to do the valid analysis and not to jump to any conclusions. Jason Travelstead seconded that opinion. Leo Paul stated that ones of the things the Board of Selectmen is going to have to review depends on the use of this front piece of property and to do the entire review. Leo Paul commented that the Board of Selectmen has decided to move forward with the contract with the town and the Housing Trust in regards to the Annex property. Paul Hinkel gave the following update on the Courthouse : The main stairs were redone in the 1930's, the main court upstairs has a curved tray ceiling, the original law library has a classical look, actual additions to the building would to be an L shaped piece to accommodate the circulation. A mechanical expert was brought in and will prepare a report/proposal which will be decided upon and the cost proposal from the architect will be updated. Paul said he has a client who wants to be anonymous and would pay for the lighting on the outside.

Lisa Losee asked if the cost estimate is strictly the construction cost and Paul said it is. Jason Travelstead said that you cannot bond the operating cost, you can only bond the capital cost. Jeffrey stated that the Annex is a historic building and there was a 30% historic preservation tax credit. Paul thinks that it may apply to the Courthouse also. Paul said that he should have this next revision ready for the next meeting. Paul said that part of the proposal was to evaluate the mechanical system, the duct work in the attic, the walls. Jason asked how much was spent so far. Paul said that they have spent \$25,000 so far but they have not seen the latest bills. Paul said that the building is structurally sound. Jeffrey said that we will need to have a structural consultant to evaluate the structure to see if there are any deficiencies, a survey of environmental asbestos/lead and a construction manager to do a detailed cost estimate. Jeffrey said that our timeline is to target the end of summer, the first part of September, to finalize our recommendation, bring it to the Board of Selectmen, have some outreach to the public and possibly present it at the November elections as a referendum issue that can be put on the ballot.

Paul said that he has drawings for the Courthouse which are very delicate and very old and require very expensive reproduction. He said that there is a place in Massachusetts that can do the reproduction. Paul added that the Trust meets on the 4th Thursday of each month at 4:30 in the Library conference room. Jason Travelstead updated the 2016 overall project cost: \$302.57 construction cost sq. ft., \$380.46 overall cost sq. ft., with an overall budget escalated by 3% to be \$6,083.890. Ann commented that we don't have many unknowns with the new construction, but with the Courthouse, there are many unknowns and Ann would like to know the operating costs. Jeffrey wanted to give input from the 2 schools. We started, stopped for a while, started back up in 2003 with a \$33 million cap, finished in 2009 and brought in under budget.

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There were contingencies built into the original estimates, what we went through with the bonding with the town and we had a lot of issues. Jeffrey said we have to have contingencies on this because of the fact that, in the schools, we ran into walls that had to be rebuilt and things that we did not anticipate with a renovation that has to be built in. Jeffrey said that what a referendum does, it establishes a top end and what the public approves is what they want to spend. Richard Quay said that we should spend a lot of time on how we are going to present this to the town and come up with good arguments as to why what we have chosen, is the best choice. Jeffrey added that the community is fortunate to have citizens like you, Paul, and the Preservation Trust. Richard Quay added that if our choice is the Courthouse, he will go with that. We have good compelling arguments for the Courthouse, this would be great for the town, it is in the middle of town and will create business. Lisa Losee commented that emotionally, yes, it would be an honor to be back at the courthouse, but then drawback and say that we need to focus on the numbers to make a very conscientious decision. Jeffrey concluded that he will let everyone know with an email if John Martin can attend our next meeting on the 21st to present the program and then we can have more discussions about the 2008 and 2016 designs that he worked on. We will then communicate with Paul, who is invited to all our meetings as an unofficial member. We will also try to schedule with Paul a presentation from the Preservation Trust with an updated plan and try to do a site visit.

ADJOURNMENT: Ann made a motion to adjourn and Richard seconded the motion. All were in favor and no one opposed. The motion was passed at 7:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Barbara L. Balsamo, Recording Secretary
Dated this 10th day of February 2018