

OLD SAYBROOK POLICE BUILDING COMMITTEE
Special Meeting
August 12, 2013
MINUTES

A special meeting of the Old Saybrook Police Building Committee was held on Monday, August 12, 2013, at the Old Saybrook Town Hall.

Present: Committee Chairman Dan Moran and Committee Members Ben Akin, Jerry Brophy, Carol Hanover, Patrick Maher, John O'Brien, Vito Savino, Lee Sparaco and David Wight. Also present were First Selectman Carl Fortuna, Police Chief Michael Spera and Police Commission Chairman Burnham.

I. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Attendance

Committee Chairman Moran called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

Committee Chairman Moran led the Building Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Recording Clerk took attendance for the meeting. All Committee Members are present.

II. Public Comment

Old Saybrook resident Dr. Corey Borzain of 24 Lynde Street presented several key issues and concerns to the Building Committee on behalf of her family. She began by thanking the Committee Members for their voluntary service to the town and she thanked them for their hard work on the project. She presented the Committee Members with a letter and a list of items that she wished to be discussed prior to referendum. Dr. Borzain briefly reviewed each item with the Committee and delivered her opinion on each issue.

Committee Member Sparaco asked Dr. Borzain if she was representing any other residents in her neighborhood.

Dr. Borzain replied that she was only representing her family but that she would bring any information from the Committee back to other residents in her area.

Mr. Humes responded to Dr. Borzain's comments by saying that many of the items on her list had been discussed at previous meetings. He continued that some of her concerns were operational functions of the Department, while others are design related. He concluded that all design features of the Department are meant to be the least intrusive as possible for the neighborhood and that every effort is being taken to aesthetically add to area, while meeting the operational requirements of the Police Department.

Downes addressed Dr. Borzain's concern about the Department's front entrance being located on Main Street by saying that the front of the building faces Lynde Street because it is the nearest public right of way. This becomes important because citizens sometimes have to visit and utilize the Department, which requires the easiest means of ingress and egress for the public. The representative from Downes also added that there will be a public meeting held before the referendum where citizens can voice their concerns and provide their feedback on the building design.

III. Meeting Minute Approval

a. July 29, 2013 Special Meeting Minutes

Committee Member Sparaco made a motion to approve the July 29, 2013 Special Meeting Minutes. Committee Member Brophy seconded the motion. The motion to approve the July 29,

2013 Special Meeting Minutes passed with a vote of 8 in favor and 0 against. Committee Member Hanover abstained.

IV. Update from the First Selectman

The First Selectman made no comments at this time.

V. Budget Update

a. Fiber Lines/Copper Wiring

Downes announced that they had no new information on this topic. They added that they understand what the Chief wants and are working towards that end.

Committee Chairman Moran asked if Downes was planning to review copper and fiber requirements as they relate to camera specifications.

Downes replied that the plan is to have that discussion with an expert on the subject matter and the Chief of Police so that the appropriate wiring is chosen for various functions.

Chief Spera stated that at the last meeting the Committee debated how the camera wiring would be represented in the budget.

Downes explained that the fiber loop is currently an alternate to the budget but not a bid alternate. Once a determination is made from an expert and with the understanding of the Chief of Police about the type of wiring needed for the camera system, that dollar amount will be added to the budget.

Chief Spera noted that the Department does not prefer one type of wiring over another. The Department wants the cheapest product that will adequately accomplish an operational need.

Committee Chairman Moran asked if there was an update on the tower.

Downes stated that the current fencing is not regulated by any state codes or statute, which means the fencing can be moved without affecting the site plan.

Chief Spera added that the Committee needs to consider a fall zone around the tower area for public safety. Chief Spera noted that ice falling from the wires would be dangerous for pedestrians.

VI. FF&E

Due to time constraints, this item was not discussed.

VII. Cost Reductions/Reallocations *(Discussion and possible action on final recommended budget)*

First Selectman Fortuna acknowledged the Department's need for storage space and the vast amount of equipment in custody of the Department. He continued that he is not disagreeing with the Space Needs Assessment, however, he commented that he is satisfied with the design of the Main Building and does not want to see the design of that building change. With that in mind, the First Selectman proposed that the Building Committee investigate and discuss other temporary storage options for the Police Department in an effort to reduce the cost of the project to less than 10 million dollars. The First Selectman suggested that a possible storage property on Bokum Road might soon become available and could be an option for temporary storage through lease or by purchase. The First Selectman concluded that the Main Building design should be left intact and that the storage building could be built on the property at a later time through Capital Planning.

Police Commission Chairman Burnham responded that no one on the Committee was pleased with the total project budget but there was no point in building a Department for 9 million dollars if the Department needs a building that costs 11 million dollars. She added that if the storage building is going to be removed from the project then the Committee needs to know where those items will be stored before a decision to eliminate the storage space is made.

First Selectman Fortuna reiterated that there is a way to make the project work by exploring alternative storage options. He added that the project would be better received by the public if the Committee could state that creative solutions were being explored in an effort to keep project costs down.

Committee Chairman Moran stated that the First Selectman is not implying that the Police Department doesn't have storage needs; he is simply stating that this entire project cannot be funded all at one time. He added that multiple solutions needed to be entertained but that the process needs to continue to move forward in a way that meets the Police Department's needs.

Committee Member Savino stated the importance of passing the project through referendum on the first try because it is likely that future attempts would also be unsuccessful. He added that he doesn't want to lose the progress that the current Building Committee has made because of a storage outbuilding. He concluded that the Committee will continue to work towards all the needs for the Department but that the main building needs to move forward to referendum.

Chief Spera reminded the Committee that the total budget number had been given to the group three meetings prior and that two meetings ago, a motion was made and unanimously approved for Downes to remove one storage bay from the outbuilding and to keep the rest of the project budget intact. He added that he has demonstrated a clear need for the storage space that has been confirmed by two independent Space Needs Assessments and approved by the Building Committee. Chief Spera added that he has no objections to developing a plan that utilizes alternative storage options for the Department but that he could not support a proposal that does not include a firm price and location for the Department's storage needs.

Committee Chairman Moran responded that when the Committee voted to approve the project budget, they were also counting on the First Selectman to be able to sell the project to the public based on that number. He stated that without the First Selectman's full support, alternatives need to be examined so that the process can continue. He concluded that he is still committed to making sure the Police Department gets everything it needs operationally but also that he does not want to see the project fail because of a storage building.

Committee Member Sparaco stated that the best course of action is to build the central building and build the storage building at a later time. Committee Member Sparaco added that he is willing to adjust or reconsider his motion from the previous meeting but that a plausible storage option for the Police Department needs to be developed. He concluded that he did not want to see any changes made to the main building.

Chief Spera responded that by eliminating the storage building, changes would have to be made to the main building because some essential police functions were moved to the outbuilding as a cost saving effort. Chief Spera again stated the need for Departmental storage and pointed out that the state building on Bokum Road was not confirmed as a possible storage alternative. He concluded that if on moving day the Department had nowhere to put valuable town assets then the Building Committee has failed.

Committee Member Maher replied that the Committee was not disagreeing with the Space Needs Study or denying that Department assets need to have suitable storage.

Committee Member Savino added that he doesn't believe that the Committee can be deemed a failure if the Department doesn't have everything it wants on moving day. He continued that with new information, the Committee is simply altering its course of action so that the project can continue into the next phase.

Chief Spera stated that he respects the Committee's point of view but if the Department arrives at the new building and does not have suitable storage space then there will be an issue. He added that if the plan is to build a storage building in two years on the property then a plan needs to exist on paper before the Department can fully support the proposal. Chief Spera added that the budget for the project has not been brought to the public so the Committee has no idea what the public is willing to support. He concluded that at the last meeting he asked Downes if they could support the project budget that they presented and they affirmed that they could. First Selectman Fortuna was also asked if he could sell the project to the town and he said that he would go with the Committee even though he was not entirely comfortable with the budget number. Chief Spera finished by saying that a decision to remove the storage building would completely change the scope of the project.

Committee Wight asked what the Department has gained if the storage building is included in the referendum and the town does not support the project.

Chief Spera replied that the Department has gained the public's trust by presenting all of the information and allowing them to decide what they are willing to support. Chief Spera also explained that the Department simply can't get rid of the items that need storage as many of these items are essential during times of crisis and emergency. Chief Spera noted that most of these items were used during Hurricane Irene and Hurricane Sandy.

Committee Member Savino stated that he supported the First Selectman's recommendation in the interest of moving forward with the project.

Committee Member O'Brien stated that the First Selectman has to be able to sell the project to the town and therefore, he also agreed with the First Selectman's proposal.

Chief Spera responded that the Department will not support a building that does not meet the Department's needs.

Mr. Humes stated that if the Committee wants to set a project total for the building then he will try to satisfy all of the Department's needs within that number. He also stated that the Department will not have everything that is on the current site plan for less than 10 million dollars.

Downes stated that the space for the storage building will still be on the site for future construction. Electricity and piping will be run to that location so that a storage building can be built at some point. Downes pointed out that the only cost being eliminated from the budget is the construction of the storage building.

Chief Spera stated that it would be beneficial for the Committee to see update site drawings based on the suggested budget number. He stated that it is important for the Committee to understand exactly how this decision will impact the building.

Committee Member Savino asked Downes if the project could be reduced to less than 10 million dollars and still construct the storage outbuilding.

Downes replied that this would not be possible. There is no way to rework the storage building into the main building without affecting the design of the main building.

Chief Spera asked what the Department will lose for fleet storage without the storage outbuilding.

Mr. Humes responded that one of the fleet storage bays will be lose to accommodate other Department functions.

Chief Spera asked if it was possible to create and RFP for the storage building separately from the rest of the project.

First Selectman Fortuna stated that he would be willing to do an RFP for the storage building.

Chief Spera stated that the decision to eliminate the storage building is taking away from the needs of the Department and without a plan in place for a storage alternative, the Department cannot endorse the project in its current state.

Committee Member Sparaco moved to reconsider the following motion, which passed on July 29, 2013 with a vote of 8 in favor and 0 against:

“Committee Member Sparaco made a motion to approve the current design of the building but to remove one bay from the storage outbuilding and include it in the project as an alternate. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Wight.”

The motion to reconsider was seconded by Committee Member O’Brien. The motion to reconsider passed with a vote of 8 in favor and 0 against. Committee Member Hanover abstained.

Committee Member Savino made a motion to endorse the Police Building at 9.925 million dollars, given the First Selectman’s comments and recommendations. The motion was seconded by Committee Member O’Brien. The motion passed with a vote of 9 in favor and 0 against.

Chief Spera asked what will happen at future meetings if members of the public state that they want a storage building on the Department property.

First Selectman Fortuna responded that he or any member of the Committee can field those concerns during a public meeting.

Committee Member Akin suggested that a reduction in project contingency from 8% to 5% could also lower the total cost of the project significantly.

Downes responded that they are not willing to reduce the contingency at this time.

Chief Spera asked why the budget numbers for the storage building aren’t being left in the project as an alternate.

Downes responded that if the storage building isn’t going to be built right now then the design cost should not be included in the budget. Downes also stated that while the Chief’s point of view is understood, it is alarming that he cannot support the project because of the storage building elimination. Downes then stated that many residents will ask where the Department stored these items at the Old Police Building.

Chief Spera stated that many of the Department’s current assets were not owned while at the old police building. Chief Spera concluded that it is his hope that a plan for the storage building can be developed and implemented quickly.

VIII. Schedule Update

Downes prepared a presentation on pre-referendum public meetings for the Building Committee’s review. Time did not allow for this presentation to be viewed and this topic was tabled for a later time.

IX. Comments or Concerns from Committee Members

Chief Spera stated that he believes the Committee made a mistake by eliminating the storage building from the referendum budget number and he hopes the project can recover before information is given to the public.

X. Adjournment

Committee Member O'Brien made a motion to adjourn. Committee Chairman Moran seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn the meeting passed with a vote of 9 in favor and 0 against.

The meeting minutes for August 12, 2013 were prepared and respectfully submitted by:

Trent Gerbers
Recording Clerk for the Old Saybrook Police Building Committee