

**BUILDING COMMITTEE
MINUTES APRIL 27, 2012
APPROVED**

Present: Jack Petropoulos, Chairman; Mike Bouchard, Clerk; Michael Bouchard; Halsey Platt; Val Prest; Jeremy Januskiewicz, Vice Chairman; Susan Daly, Ex-Officio

Absent: Chief Joe Bosselait, Ex-Officio;

Also Present: Mark W. Haddad, Town Manager; Patrice Garvin, Executive Assistant;

Mr. Petropoulos called the meeting to order at 9:00am

Mr. Petropoulos gave some brief updates and some potential HDC issues. There was also a editorial in the Groton Herald that needed to be discussed. Mr. Haddad requested that the group decide if they wish to continue with Dore and Whittier. Mr. Platt asked for clarification on how bidding would work if they do not go with Dore and Whittier to design. Mr. Haddad reviewed the bidding process. Mr. Haddad noted that regardless the price would need to be negotiated. Mr. Platt stated that Dore and Whittier have done a great job and that he felt they should continue. Mr. Prest agreed that the committee should continue with Dore and Whittier. Mr. Petropoulos was unsure of moving forward with Dore and Whittier at this time due to how it would present itself at Town Meeting. Mr. Haddad disagreed and urged the committee to consider continuing with Dore and Whittier. Mr. Petropoulos did not see the positive making a vote prior to Town meeting. Mr. Haddad withdrew his request.

Mr. Haddad asked the committee for a recommendation of Article 13 if Article 12 does not pass at Town Meeting. Mr. Petropoulos was concerned with going forward with Article 13 without a location. Mr. Haddad pointed out that the Finance Committee unanimously voted to make Article 13 contingent on Article 12 passing. Mr. Haddad asked if the committee has a second site choice. Mr. Januskiewicz asked if the Town would consider Eminent Domain of the LHT site. Mr. Haddad stated that the HDC suggested tearing down the Prescott School, leaving the front façade. That way the optimal program could be built. Mr. Haddad stated that the Board of Selectmen is seeking a request on Article 13. Mr. Platt asked if Article 12 went down where the next optimal site would be. Mr. Petropoulos stated that he was not ready to recommend a second site if LHT was voted down. Mr. Prest asked about the turning radius at Prescott and noted this information needed to be decided before recommending that site. Mr. Petropoulos suggested not supporting Article 13 if Article 12 did not pass at Town Meeting.

Mr. Platt wrote minutes from this point forward.

Bouchard: Offered motion for the committee to withdraw support for Article 13 if Article 12 fails.

Discussion:

- If Article 12 fails, Town Meeting will likely not pass Article 13 unless there is a site.
- It was noted by Mr. Platt that the vote to withdraw support for article 13 is only about the public process for picking a site, not about support for the fire station.
- The Lawrence Homestead Trust (LHT) land is a clear choice. If that site is not approved, then the choice the choices would be Station Ave or Prescott School. There is no other obvious choice.
- In general, the Committee felt that Prescott School was a good site, and has very good potential as a fire station, but the site has not been fully analyzed. Some members felt Prescott School had a higher use potential.
- The Committee would not recommend pursuing the Station Ave site with the prospect of the GELD building being site there as well. Our analysis demonstrates that there is not enough room for both facilities on the site.
- The committee believes that an investment in a fire station should yield an optimum facility, with as few compromises as possible.
- Eminent Domain for a fire station site has not been ruled out by the Selectmen, but is not a preferred approach.

- Delay in building a fire station adds expense - current market trends indicate to expect approximately 1.5% every 6 months of price inflation. This is due to the increase in construction demand and material prices.
 - **VOTE: 3 in favor; 3 opposed**
1. Historic District Commission (HDC)
 - At a recent meeting, the HDC voiced objection to approving the LHT site. HDC approval in the form of a Certificate of Appropriateness would be need. The HDC only has jurisdiction over building design, and can not deny the construction of a building.
 2. April 26 Editorial in the Groton Herald (GH)
 - The editorial made certain statements about which the Committee felt it should be on record:
 - Is recommending that Article 12 not be approved by Town Meeting “to allow for a period of additional public inquiry that will consider other options and encourage a wider range of views”.
 - The GH felt that the building would be best sited on land contiguous to the Public Safety Building for “cost saving and collaborative synergies of building”. The Committee is not aware of cost savings and collaborative synergy opportunities. The Committee is aware that the wetlands on the land contiguous to the Public Safety Building would require more purchasing more land than is available from the LHT due to the extent of wetlands and the wetlands buffer.
 - The Committee “could have adopted a compact and integrated design model for the public safety infrastructure”. The Committee was tasked to site and build a fire station and not a combined public safety facility.
 - Why did the committee offer tours of the Ayer Fire Station, which the GH felt was a less efficient and higher cost model for the delivery of public safety services? Why not tour integrated facilities? “Why haven’t the cost and service benefits of a single public safety campus been considered?” The Committee felt that the Ayer fire station was a representative model of a modern fire station, and its close proximity would make it easier for townspeople to tour. The committee did not explore a combined facility, but it is known that the existing public safety building is too small to house EMS and Police services, and would not be able to accept fire equipment and personnel. There is no room to expand at the current public safety site.
 - “The Committee assumes gradual elimination of Groton’s on-call fire fighting force.” The Committee does recognize that Groton’s trend will the availability on on-call responders has follow a national trend of diminishing personnel. This is due to the ability for on-call responders to work locally and be available for response. People are becoming less available. It is important to note that the Committee recognizes that on-call responders are an important component of our fire fighting response, now and into the future. Even career staffing, like Ayer, rely upon call responders to complement the force. The proposed station would allow for living areas to be used by career and call responders.
 - Why was the location of the fire station building moved to the other side of the field “at the last minute”. The Committee made an announcement of this consideration at its April 4th public hearing. This announcement was made almost as soon at the option was identified.

Planning Board

The Planning Board did vote to unanimously endorse the “Approval Not Required” plan presented by the LHT. These lots are not defined. LHT has not shown any immediate interest in developing this land, but it is within its rights to do so. The land is not held in any conservation restriction. The land is used under Chapter 61A agricultural purposes.

Viewshed

Suggestion was made to attempt to procure a photo of the land with a “white out” of a building space in order to approximate the resulting viewshed.

The committee voted unanimously to ask Jack to deliver the Town Meeting presentation.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 am.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Bouchard moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:55pm. Ms. Platt seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned.

Approved: _____
Mike Bouchard, Clerk

_____ respectfully submitted,
Patrice Garvin
Executive Assistant to the Town Manager

Date Approved: Approved 5-18-12