

**Police-Fire Facility Committee**  
**Tuesday, May 13, 2014, 4:00pm**  
**Joint Meeting with the Selectboard**  
**Hanna Cosman and Selectboard Meeting Rooms**  
**Minutes**

In attendance: Robin Sweetapple, Steve Phillips, Philip Chapman, Kathy Dowd, Tony Farnum, Dave Emery, Sr., Prudence MacKinney, and others who did not sign the attendance sheet or were in attendance for the Selectboard meeting.

Staff Present: Patrick Moreland, Mike Bucossi, Peter Lynch, Gene Wrinn, Michael Fitzgerald, Mark Carignan, and others who did not sign the attendance sheet or were in attendance for the Selectboard meeting.

Others Present: Steve Horton, John Wilmerding, Peter Fallion, and others who did not sign the attendance sheet or were in attendance for the Selectboard meeting.

- A. Sweetapple called the meeting to order at 4:00pm and confirmed that the meeting was properly warned.
  
- B. Prioritize Three Projects, Address Core Life Safety/Structural Issues – Moreland describes to the committee the latest thinking from the Selectboard. The FY15 budget has been rejected by the voters and a new budget must be presented to Representative Town Meeting with hope that it will be in place before the end of the fiscal year. As a result the Selectboard is considering separating the discussion of how best to proceed with the project from the general discussion of the FY15 budget. Accordingly, the Selectboard is considering the removal of any additional project financing from the FY15 budget. Phillips notes that the Selectboard has made no decision about reducing the scope of the project, or the charge of the Police Fire Facility Oversight Committee. Phillips feels strongly that it is wasteful to consider a new scope the project. This committee has been working for fourteen months, and this committee is making progress as a consequence of 20 years of committees that have preceded this committee. Phillips believes that the project should move forward substantially as presented, but that the political winds may have shifted. Some minor reductions should be incorporated and the project should proceed. A total of \$5 Million has already been borrowed, and we must act quickly. Phillips believes that the committee should review the three projects and proceed with one or two along the scope that has been proposed.

Allen believes that the costs of local government is breaking the backs of the local taxpayer. Sweetapple and Phillips offer that no voting group has ever voted the Police & Fire Project down. Chapman sees that the Town should use unassigned fund balance to reduce taxes. The tax burden is taking unnecessary toll on the scope of infrastructure. The project should be reduced by \$1 Million, but should proceed as planned. If the project comes to an end, it will be a mistake. Emery reminds the committee that much of the increase in taxes arises from school spending.

Sweetapple asks Giolitto about the nature the life safety issues at each location. A handout is distributed. Horton walks the committee through the handout.

Plan A: The original plan, as conceived by the preceding Black River Study. The \$14.1 Million budget includes the fix for fire safety costs at the Municipal Center. Should these costs be part of the Police Fire project? Phillips believes that the projects should proceed as contemplated, but that perhaps we should pick one or two to complete now. Allen believes that Central should be the plan to proceed with now. Chief Bucossi reminds the committee that all parts of the project are necessary. Failure to proceed now, will delay the remaining portions of the project for 20 years. Phillips believes that we either phase the project, or the project will die. MacKinney believes that the project should stay as one project.

Plan B & B1: Horton describes efforts to reduce programming and with it the cost of the project budget. Two examples of this activity are presented.

Plan C: Wisely use the remainder of the \$5 Million for basic life safety improvements. This is a 5-10 year plan.

Plan D: All of the life safety improvements and the “must have” programmatic improvements. This is a 5-10 year plan.

Plan E: What if we combined the police with the fire department at Central Station. The site has a number of issue, including very limited space.

Plan F: Follow through with the project as conceived for the Fire Department, and purchase a new location for the Police Department. For the purpose of this discussion, the Lyon Travel building on Putney Road is contemplated.

MacKinney departs.

Plan G: Dowd offers another alternative. What if we locate police to west Brattleboro? It appears that the space is too limited. What if only the police are located in West Brattleboro? Dowd continues to believe that the project is well thought out for the Fire Department, but not at the moment for the Police Department. Other options for the police should be considered.

Chief Bucossi discusses his reservations about many of the options, and especially about the potential elimination of Station Two. Chief Wrinn expresses his preference for Plan A, but if necessary Plan B or B1 are second choice. If necessary Plan E can be made to work. Captain Fitzgerald confirms that we should be working on a 50 year plan and not on a quick fix.

Phillips would like to narrow the choices under consideration.

- C. Discuss Course of Action for Future - Phillips moves, that the committee recommend to the Selectboard that they not consider a band aid approach and to

focus instead on long term investment. Emery questions if a band aid approach includes Plan C? Phillips agrees that Plan C or Plan D is not a wise investment. Farnum second. The motion passed unanimously.

Gould asks how much money we can reasonably expect to spend on an investment grade project. Phillips suggests that the number is \$14.1 million. Some discussion about asking the Selectboard for how much can be spent on the project. Chapman suggests a \$12 Million dollar budget would be accepted by the public. Gould asks for a motion for a scaled down but not slashed project. Plan E, Gould offers, has the right price and does not eliminate a project for either department. Dowd cannot support a renovation of the Municipal Center. Can we arrive at a unanimous motion? Dowd suggests that we explore a Plan E type of project. Many committee members agree that a Plan E type of project may be worthwhile.

Phillips moved, to proceed to substantially improve our fire station facilities and to improve the existing police facility or build a new police facility consistent with the spirit of the project, that is long-term investment, which has already been approved by the voters, approved by the Selectboard and by the Police-Fire Committee, aiming at the same time to substantially reduce the total project cost, and to explore the possibility of a combined fire-police facility to be located at the Elliot/Church Street location.

- D. Recess – Sweetapple called for a recess and said that the meeting would reconvene at 6:15pm in the Selectboard meeting room.
- E. Meet with Selectboard - Sweetapple reconvened the meeting at 6:15pm with the Selectboard in the Selectboard meeting room.

Excerpt from the Selectboard minutes:

**POLICE-FIRE FACILITIES BUILDING COMMITTEE** – Members from the Police-Fire Facilities Building Committee were present, including Chair Robin Sweetapple, Co-Chair Steve Phillips, Philip Chapman, Kathy Dowd, Tony Farnum, David Emery, and others. Also present was Project Manager Steve Horton. Phillips said that the Police-Fire Facilities Building Committee had just met and discussed various options regarding the police-fire improvement project. He said that the Committee voted unanimously to recommend to the Selectboard not to adopt a “band aid approach”, meaning not to invest on a short-term basis on existing facilities. Phillips said that the Committee also voted unanimously “to proceed to substantially improve our fire station facilities and to improve the existing police facility or build a new police facility consistent with the spirit of the project, that is long-term investment, which has already been approved by the voters, approved by the Selectboard and by the Police-Fire Committee, aiming at the same time to substantially reduce the total project cost, and to explore the possibility of a combined fire-police

facility to be located at the Elliot/Church Street location.” He said that combining the fire and police facilities was a new idea that needed more thought and exploration. Sweetapple stressed that the Committee was strongly opposed to the short-term “band aid” approach. Steve Horton reviewed and discussed options A – F listed on the document he presented to the Committee and the Selectboard entitled “Brattleboro Police and Fire Station Project Options.” Gartenstein said that the State Fire Inspector recently inspected the Municipal Center, and following the inspection sent a letter stating that the State Department of Life Safety required work to be performed to the building to bring it up to code. Gartenstein said that the work was required regardless of whether any improvements were made to the Police Station, and that the preliminary estimate to perform the required safety work was approximately \$420,000. Horton said that the Town had thirty days from the date of the letter to reply to the State with a plan for the improvements. There was some discussion by the Board about the Police-Fire project and the required improvements to the Municipal Center. It was decided that further discussions about the Police-Fire improvement project would take place after the FY15 budget was approved.

**NO ACTION TAKEN.**

There was no further business of the Committee, and the meeting was adjourned.