Town of Williamsburg

Public Safety Committee Meeting

July 22, 2015

**Present:** members of Public Safety Committee: Bill Sayre and Denise Banister (also Select Board members), Dan Banister, Daryl Springman, Dick Kisloski (also Finance), Denise Wickland (also Police Chief), Peter Mahieu, Michael Wayne, Police Dept.

Also present: Barbara Bricker, Fran Tilley (also COA), John Pohanka and Gordon Allen from the Repurposing Committee; Jerry Roberge, Water & Sewer; Bonnie Roberge, Collector; Nathan Rosewarne, Treasurer; Joyce Muka, Accountant; Paul Wetzel, Chris Morris, Charles Dudek, Steven Romanowski and Eric Cerreta (also F.D) of the Finance Committee; Dave Mathers, Select Board;.; Brenda Lessard, Town Clerk; Charlene Nardi, Town Administrator; Mary Dudek, Resident; (Sherry Loomis, Minutes).

**Guest:** Anwar Hossain, Architect from Drummey Rosane Anderson (DRA).

**Meeting commenced at 6:35 pm**

Bill Sayre opened the meeting, welcoming Anwar Hossain and the Town committee members to the first part of the meeting. Bill outlined that the purpose of the meeting was to get a sense from the other financial committees what the town might be able to afford for a Safety Complex. The Finance Committee could help to determine that.

All present stated their names and affiliations, then a short video was presented showing the apparent need for PS Complex.

Bill introduced **Anwar Hossain** and gave an overview of the James School site and how it evolved. Anwar presented his first draft of a public safety building, stating the total as 8.2 million dollars. The complex would have 15,260 sf, housing police and fire departments, a common area and 8 bays for trucks and equipment. Bill Sayre explained that there were two more studies to be done and that Mr. Hossain is open to developing them according to the wants, needs and affordability for the town. **Dave Mathers** stated the town can’t afford 8.2 mil. The population is under 2500 and decreasing. Development is not growing. Taxes are the 71st highest in the state. If we kept the James Building, renovations might reach 6 mil. Other options such as changing the Haydenville Police/Fire building to police alone wouldn’t work. We need to begin with bare bones to fulfill our current needs at the amount we can afford and add some of the wants, such a more bays, in the future. He suggested minimum bays, common rooms to be used by both departments, etc. **Nathan R.** gave out a chart of rates showing how tax rates will rise (per each $1000 in assessed value) in relation to the cost of the building. This would calculate the borrowing limit. **Denise B.** stated that the current plan would raise taxes from $17.99 per thousand plus $.33 per 100,000. **Joyce M**. said there is over $550,000 in Free Cash and over 1 mil in stabilization available. The Town has a double A plus rating which will help us when we go out to bond – better interest rate. **Eric C.** cautioned to watch the ratio on debt vs. revenue. **Bonnie R.** said that responsible taxpayers are being forced out of town because of high taxes. We need to lower our expectations to meet the people’s limits. The elderly and struggling working class are hurting the worse. She recommends no more than 4% increase. Charlene N.-no comment, Brenda L.-no comment.

**Paul W,** Finance Committee Co-Chair, stated that the stabilization fund and Free Cash and the Town’s overall financial stability have enabled us to get a great bond rating (AA+); however, he thinks we could use 800,000-$1,000,000 of the Stabilization funds towards the project. He said that historically the town has not invested much in infrastructure and we need to catch up. He suggests building modular so it could be added on as needed. **Anwar H**. said there are no national standards based on the number served, number of calls, etc. There is no enforcement or requirement to upgrade. **Chris M.** suggests building a bare-bone facility, built right to last a long time--not to short-change it, but to cut where we can. He suggests a total of $2.5-3.5 mil. **Bonnie R** asks if this is the only site. **Bill S.** states that the site is irrelevant for now, until after the next two studies. **Bonnie** said we need something, but is it necessary to have police and fire together? **Eric C.** suggested a pre-engineered building as a possibility, such as a Morton Building, to get as much as possible for the money. **John P**. agrees with Eric and said that a Morton Building is a metal building with many possibilities for siding. As an example the Blacksmith Shop is a Morton Bldg. which has wood siding. He also asked how much increase in taxes could be tolerated after the increase with the Dunphy School. He recommended comparing this increase with the one from the school ($5.4 mil). **Denise W.** said comparison is a good idea. **Mary D**. agreed with Eric but suggested coming up with a budget first. **Gordon A.** said we shouldn’t try to do more than $3 mil. Especially after looking at the process and situation of Southampton’s P.S. Complex. **Dave M** said that individual police and fire projects would never get approved by voters at Town Meeting. Two buildings will be more costly than one and his concern was that Fire would get approved; but, Police wouldn’t. He strongly emphasized that it should be one project with both departments, as it is easier to sell to the public as one and they are both vital to the town even if residents view them differently. **John P** said that getting rid of the James school is impractical, as we would have to give it away, there would be no revenue stream. It is a building we own and it should be reused.

**Bill S** summarized that what the Committee heard from the meeting. It was felt the building cost needed to be in the 3 to 5 million range depending on how much Stabilization and Free Cash could be used. He thanked everyone for their input. Everyone left the meeting except the Public Safety Committee, Anwar H, Charlene N. and David M.

Meeting resumed:

**Bill S.** introduced motion to accept minutes of 5/19/15. Dan B. moved, Dick K. seconded. All approved.

**Bill S.** stated that the report from Colliers International (firm hired by the Building Repurposing Committee to study the two buildings) estimates that restoring the current town office building could cost 1, 2 or 3mil and restoring the James building could cost 1, 3 or 6 mil to restore depending on the level of restoration and purpose.

**Anwar H**. explained that this is a program-driven project. He said that the police and fire departments need to create new program lists—get the footprint size needed so that he can come up with a range for total costs. 16,852 sf was $6.3 mil. for construction costs, which means about $375 per sf. If the departments can come up with a more modest list he will do another floor plan, maybe 10,000 sf. He offered a few alternatives such as using the James school for police and building a fire department building, or housing both offices in the school. The cost of renovation might be cheaper than new build, but the town would have to maintain the whole building. **Bill S.** said the departments should create a simpler program list for Anwar. **Anwar** suggested thinking about 20-50 years ahead. **Bill** suggested 5-6 bays with room to add on in the future if needed. Right now we don’t have the equipment we need, as we don’t have the space…We may be thinking too much about future expansion at a time when population growth is going down, even though the fire department expects to have more calls and demand is rising. He suggests that Study 2 location be the same site. If another site is found, the plans can be adapted. The size is in direct relation to what the town will approve. **Dave M**. said eight bays won’t fly at this point.

**Anwar** suggested that the departments work on making their list of needs and take one step at a time. Police and Fire need to sit down together (keep under quorum) before the next meeting. Email that list to him and he will come up with new plans to satisfy current needs. **Bill S.** asked them to get right on it and get the needs list to him asap.

Someone suggested that the highway department could be a possible site, Anwar said that the sight lines and turning radius for trucks between the two houses may render it unlikely. He also mentioned that the James school is in good shape. Charlene mentioned that the Berkshire bank has been sold to Dunkin Donuts.

**The next meeting** will be Monday, August 31st.

Motion to adjourn: Daryl S., seconded by Denise W. **Meeting adjourned at 8:35**

Respectfully Submitted,

Sherry Loomis (Minutes)