

OPM Steering Committee

Board of Selectmen

Joint meeting

August 20, 2020 at 6 p.m. via Zoom

OPM Steering Committee Present: Jim Ayres, Kim Boas, Jason Connell, Jean O'Neil, Paul Wetzel, Denise Wickland, Dan Bonham, Brenda Lessard

Absent: Mitch Cichy

Others: Kevin Chrobak (architect – Juster Pope Frazier), Rob Todisco (P3), William Sayre (Select Board), David Mathers (Select Board), Charlene Nardi (Town Administrator)

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.

Minutes for 7/30/20 were amended to note that the question of looking at the James building for other uses was not decided in that meeting. The minutes were approved (PW, JO) with the amended language.

The Committee members do feel there is value to do a test fit of the building for possibly housing the functions of town offices and the senior center which would provide data for a future discussion with the community; however, the Committee members do have two concerns. They don't want to raise expectations for staff in those departments and they don't want the public to feel the Committee is adding scope and direction of this project without their authorization. It was ultimately decided that the work has value and that the data is needed to make informed decisions. The Committee authorized Juster Pope Frazier to do the test fit under the existing contract without additional funding. The conversation will be with folks on the committee and maybe the Senior Center Director. A general cost estimate will also be provided.

Kevin Chrobak stated that RW Hall had reviewed the James building systems and were drafting a report. It is clear that most of the systems are at end of life and need to be replaced and upgraded. The report will be sent out to the Committee prior to the next meeting on September 3, 2020. He stated that the seismic thresholds for a public safety complex building are much higher than for a building for other town uses. In other words, the building has to be hardened for emergency response departments. Updating the James building to meet those seismic thresholds for a public safety complex may be cost prohibitive. It is very likely that putting the police department or any part of the public safety complex or all of the public safety (excluding bays for vehicles) in the James building is not cost effective – it will be less expensive to build a standalone building; however, using the building for another use would significantly reduce the cost. If there was little partitioning, the rooms could be used for town offices or senior center uses as is, which would reduce the cost. However, when you start updating systems you can't just do that on one floor, which is where the cost comes in. The details are not all in, but that is some initial thinking. Juster Pope Frazier will do a space planning exercise using senior center data from the past planning for a new building and reach out to those people on the Committee only. It will be a quick test fit.

A structural engineer will be looking at the James building to assess and document the structural systems. ATC is doing the hazmat assessment. The engineer report of the assessment will then be sent to an estimator. A full report will be put together.

Kevin Chrobak noted that he met and spoke with both Fire Chief Connell and Police Chief Wickland several times regarding the programmatic design. The program will require 7,500 square feet. Based on that, Mr. Chrobak presented two preliminary schematic designs for a standalone building, one with apparatus bays facing north (Rte. 9), the other facing east.

Comments:

North Facing: The bays face Rte. 9

- Based on \$425/sf, estimated cost is \$3.2 million, \$3.8 with soft costs
- Need to discuss whether light is desired on Rte. 9 for emergency vehicle exit, which would then require discussion with MassDOT
- Two curb cuts – allows trucks to come around and back in
- Line of sight for curb cut is good
- Curb cut length 24 feet - 2.5 seconds walkers to cross, 50 feet curb cut - 5 seconds to cross
- Curb cuts need to be discussed with MassDOT
- Allows for addition
- Gables facing the road – presenting the face to the community – highlighting the emergency response departments, better aesthetic look, “civic” feel, has presence.
- Size of building face – large. Does it fit? Some felt it was good, others felt it was too large
- The windows designed to look like bays adds some symmetry to the face – some liked it, others didn’t, concerns were that we would need window accessories to block light and question energy efficiency
- Want to make sure accommodate in reality or a feel of green space on the HEJ
- Don’t like the parking between the HEJ and new building – limits green space feel (although it was noted that it is not often used by residents as a green space.
- Systems above storage rooms – in attic
- Concern with ice and snow in front of the bays because of north exposure
- No direct access to bays from parking area – fire fighters to trucks faster
- Façade is too big, need to break it up
- Functions very well and faces the road

East Facing: The bays face the Verizon building; the side of the structure is to Rte. 9.

- Less ice and snow building up in front of bays
- Lose storage areas but can be put in attic
- Like the parking in the back
- Direct access for Fire Fighters to bays with the trucks
- Access around whole building.
- Looks better on site – smaller, parking area not so prominent, but it was noted building doesn’t function as well

General items & comments:

- Key is to stay out of the 100-foot riparian zone – which is similar to the 100-year flood zone.
- Discussed that green space plays an important part in selling it to the community
- How it looks and fits into the community is important
- Discussed options for reducing the façade
- Discussed ways to have the parking in the rear - issue riparian zone – is it possible?
- Scale is a concern in the center of town
- Presence on the street – some liked it, some were concerned it was too much
- Window symmetry was liked by some, others felt it made the building feel and look too large
- Energy efficiency is important – windows were therefore a concern
- Would like to know if solar is being planned for the building
- Cost is critical – 3.8 million with soft costs is a figure that the community is more likely to support versus anything higher.
- It was asked if the location chosen, north east corner, would have been different if the James building was removed. Answer was no because of siting issues of and for vehicles exiting the public safety complex.

Some items were repeated or ideas contradicted one another which highlighted more work still needs to be done on design, but there was generally consensus on the location for the building.

Work to be done:

Structural analysis of James, Hazmat analysis and cost report, dig two test pits (6x8 feet) with assistance of Highway, conduct test borings and perk.

The Committee thanked Kevin Chrobak for all the work and planning completed in the last three weeks. The Committee and Select Board members were impressed. Appreciation was expressed to both Chiefs for their professional and thorough analysis of their program needs realizing a very tight budget. Mr. Chrobak acknowledged that the chiefs contributed a lot of important information succinctly and shared creative ideas for design, which ultimately made for a very efficient process.

Next meeting is September 3rd at 6 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.