

OPM Steering Committee

September 17, 2020 at 6 p.m. via Zoom

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

Absent: Mitch Cichy, Denise Wickland

Others: Kevin Chrobak (architect – Juster Pope Frazier), Jeff Squire (Berkshire Design), Rob Todisco (P3), William Sayre (Select Board), David Mathers (Select Board), Peter Spotts (Country Journal), Charlene Nardi (Town Administrator)

The meeting was called to order at 6:14 p.m.

The Committee moved (J.O. / P.W.) to unanimously vote to accept the September 3, 2020.

Mitch Cichy has submitted his resignation from the Committee effective immediately. He stated it was an honor to work with all the members and he believes in this project but just can't devote the time to meetings due to his work responsibilities.

Test Pits and test borings were completed on September 8th and September 14th respectively. Kevin Chrobak and Jeff Squire gave updates on that work noting that the soil was dense and the seasonal high ground water table is quite high. Most of the soil is native, some of it is fill and that will need to be removed.

A brief summary of what the structural engineers found at the Helen E. James building was given. A full report is expected at the next meeting.

- For public Safety complex use, the building would require extensive reinforcements to meet the seismic code at a significant cost
- If other town government functions were put in the building it would require some floors to be reinforced, but not the same seismic upgrades.
- The building needs roof and truss work

Jeff Squire from Berkshire design noted that siting the building in the area chosen would require wetlands mitigation and restoration as required by the 1996 Wetlands protection act and storm water mitigation. The estimated area impacted is 12,000 square feet which means that 24,000 square feet of mitigation must occur which is a significant portion of the lawn. This poses a significant challenge on the site and would remove the greenspace. The thinking is that we could create a constructed wetland in the south area of the site. It would be a basin with native plantings and require a maintenance program including mowing so the sediment could be cleaned out. Plantings would be those that accept lots of water such as sweet flag, iris, cat tails, grasses, and sweet pepper bush to name a few. Suggested that we should include wood species. If wetland mitigation can't actually occur on the site, DEP can approve that it be done on another town property preferably in the same watershed area as resource area improvements. It was asked if work already done by the town such as the invasive species mitigation along Route 9 would

apply to the mitigation – answer was maybe, although it isn't in the same watershed area. It was asked if the building was torn down would that ease the challenges – answer was possibly, as it opens more area to work with and reduces the pervious area. Suggested that mitigation occur on the Highway Department site as that is in the same watershed area. Before the town moves forward to a special town meeting for construction funding, we would want to make sure that DEP and the local conservation commission approves of or would entertain the plan.

Kevin Chrobak discussed bringing the Conservation Commission / DEP in the loop informally by discussion or inviting them to the next meeting. Kevin and Jeff will discuss in more detail next steps before we proceed. It was cautioned that whatever we do we want to make it clear to departments and the public that no final decisions are being made about the project design, location or the future plan for the James building. The Committee is working to gather all data necessary to present a full picture of the three options for the town to make an informed decision.

The feeling is that the site will work it will just require engineering and mitigation. There aren't other sites available as determined by the exhaustive search both the Public Safety Complex Committee and OPM Steering Committee did over the last 5 years or more. This fact is part of the strong argument that the Committee will put forth to DEP and the Conservation Commission for any mitigation plan.

It is expected to present to the Committee and then the towns people three options with cost scenarios

- Two buildings with joint use - New public Safety Complex (PSC) and James building is used for some PSC uses
- Two buildings no joint use – New PSC with no PSC uses in James
- One new building – James building is demolished
- The Helen E. James building will be discussed in more detail when the structural report is received. It was noted that keeping the building is going to result in significant cost and makes addressing the mitigation challenging and reduces greenspace area. At a past meeting it was mentioned that removing the HEJ building would not change the siting of the new public safety complex in the east corner because that gives the best line of sight for entering trucks; however, it was noted that putting the new building in the area that the HEJ sits now, has a lot of benefits and buses traveled out of there on a daily basis without incident and the fire department trucks would not be traveling in and out as often as daily. If the building is kept, it needs to be addressed in some manner.

Next meeting is October 1 at 6 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.