Meeting Minutes
November 3, 2021
via Zoom

Members present – Amy Bisbee; Dan Bonham; Jason Connell, Fire Chief; Mary Dudek. Dave Mathers; Jean O’Neil; William Sayre; Daryl Springman, Deputy Fire Chief; Denise Wickland, Chief of Police.

Members absent – Robert Reinke, Police Officer.

Associated participants present– Kevin Chrobak, Juster Pope Frazier Architects; Dick Guzowski, Energy Committee.

Members of the public present –Jennifer Black, Charlotte Meryman.

Meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm.

Review of Minutes:

Minutes from October 20 were approved with changes.

Discussion of floor plan changes as requested by Fire Department:

Mr. Chrobak went over the interior design changes:

• Shifting the conference room to the middle between the fire department spaces to the north and the police rooms to the south. He noted that the ready room is in a good position for viewing the outside and for placement of the radio. There are now several spaces that could be turned into sleeping rooms if needed, with the addition of a cot. Though the meeting room now has two egresses, it still has a limited capacity and is not large enough for the regional trainings. However, it does meet the needs for an emergency communications center. The floor plan change resulted in a smaller ready room but a net gain of usable space.
• The staircase to a mezzanine space is gone, but there is a small storage area above the meeting room, accessible by ladder.
• Creating a gear storage room separate from the apparatus bay, based on NFPA recommendations. This separate space is along the south wall, and is an extension of the sally port, with a flat roof. The wash area is directly off the apparatus bay. Upon return from an event, gear is removed and dropped for washing, firefighters move to the locker area, shower and then change into a fresh set of clothes before heading free of contaminants. Upon arriving to go to an event, firefighters enter, gear up at clean gear storage, head through the SCBA area to the center of the apparatus bay then head to assigned apparatus. This addition would be bid as an alternate. The cost is expected to be low, $200 k or less, since it is just an added 400 square feet. The bathroom and lockers are already included in the original plan. The shell of the extension could be built and finished later when more funds are available.

The final plan would include two add alternates: The radiant heat floor in the apparatus bay, and the separate gear room. Feedback from the fire department will determine which alternate is the priority.

Chief Connell stated that some firefighters leave gear at the station, so storage is needed even if the separate gear room doesn’t get funded. This storage is provided by lockers around the outside of the apparatus bay in the original plan.

The plan cannot be finalized until Mr. Chrobak has met with Chiefs Wickland and Connell to review details. However, only small refinements are expected.

A motion was made and accepted unanimously to approve the floor plan as presented on November 3, not including the add alternates, and subject to further changes as needed.

Discussion of elevation changes:

• An additional doorway to the apparatus bay was added by extending the apparatus bays out a few feet. Access is via a sidewalk in front of fire department offices.
• The interior changes led to elevation changes. On the west side, windows are ganged together, simplifying framing.
• The east elevation is left plain, as a cost saving measure. Chief Connell also wants less light onto the equipment to reduce ultraviolet effects.
• The flat roof over the sally port remains to allow better ventilation to the attic.
• A round window on the west gable caused concern over energy efficiency but got support for providing natural light to the mezzanine.
• Once these plans are submitted to the Planning Board, some changes will still be allowed.
• A motion was made and approved unanimously to approve the elevations as
presented on 11-3-2021 for submittal to the Planning Board.

Discussion of the Energy Committee Recommendations:

The Energy Committee is looking into funding for photovoltaics and Electric Vehicle charging stations.

- That committee has been informed that no funding would be available from the construction budget.
- The intention for a charging station is for future police and fire vehicles, not the general public. Though Williamsburg has no town-owned electric vehicles at this time, it makes sense to get the infrastructure in place during construction.
- A motion was made and approved unanimously to provide conduit to a utility box in the police end of the parking lot for future charging stations.

Discussion of Report from the Tree Warden:

Tree Warden Thomas Por made many valuable observations and suggestions. However he did not have the background knowledge of the very limited budget and siting restrictions due to the proximity to wetlands resulting in the need to remove the large Linden. He mentioned some maples that are being left that are not in good shape, and some trees that are slated for removal that are in good shape. Some committee members would like to do a group site visit to look at the trees with an eye to health and site lines for exiting vehicles. Mr. Por also brought up safety concerns for the general public. A motion was made and approved unanimously to acknowledge the safety concerns, to review them, and to address them again.

Tree Warden Por agreed that tree 9 on the building plan, the large Norway Maple to the east, is in poor shape and needs to come down. Mr. Chrobak stated that removing the tree prior to demolition would make demolition easier and less expensive. The cost for removal could go into the demolition bid.

A motion was made and approved unanimously to change the Berkshire Design plan by removing Tree 9. An explanation of why it is necessary to remove the tree will be added to the PSCB Frequently Asked Questions.

Mr. Por’s report also commented on some of the planting choices. For now, the existing plan will be used for budgeting. Switching out for plants of equal value can be done later. Though this site is not going to be part of the Greenway, some future funding could come from that project, and may lead to more design ideas. The plan as it stands is ready for submittal to the Conservation Committee and the Planning Board.

Helen E. James building winterization:
Western Mass Heating and Cooling, with help from the Highway department, removed the water meter and drained pipe, and they will return to drain water from radiators. They capped the incoming drainage flow so that water is no longer flowing into the elevator shaft and therefore sump pumps are no longer needed. There is still some groundwater in the boiler room, for which a pump is needed. A heavy-duty heater was found in the building. It will get wired in in the boiler room to keep that ground-water from freezing.

Decommissioning the elevator at the Helen E. James building will happen mid-November. The cost of a state inspection will be included in decommissioning costs.

Community Outreach

- The working group is compiling a list of FAQ’s. It is ready to be reviewed by committee members. Members would like to send this list to the abutters along with the newsletter. However, abutters will receive notification from both the Conservation Commission and the Planning Board about hearings on the plan. A suggestion was made to wait to reach out until after those two meetings.
- The latest newsletter shows older, inaccurate versions of the elevations. However, the text reports that the elevations are in process, and there is a cost to updating.

Final points:

Mr. Guzowski visited the Turners Falls fire station and reported his observations.
- The floor was red, with dye mixed into the concrete so that wear and tear was less obvious. This would be an option if Williamsburg doesn’t use epoxy, though it is more expensive than plain concret.
- The station has a work bench with tools, a popular feature.
- They have a truck with a short wheel base, useful for urban navigation.
- Apparatus bay doors have a single row of glass.
- Fire spread doubles every 90 seconds, so does it make sense to send firefighters to the station first to get geared up?

There is a bill pending in the state legislature that would provide funding for some safety infrastructure. However, the timeline for when this funding would be available is unknown. It may be able to be used for furniture and equipment.

Chief Connell reported that the majority of firefighters prefer the red apparatus doors shown at the previous meeting.

Next meeting:
The committee will meet again in four weeks on December 1.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:58.

Documents used:
  • elevations
  • floor plan
  • Tree Warden’s report
  • PSCB newsletter #2

Respectfully submitted,
Melinda McCall