

TOWN OF BROOKFIELD
SELECTMEN'S MEETING
JOINT WITH THE
TOWN HALL BARRIER REMOVAL COMMITTEE
TOWN HALL, BANQUET ROOM

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 18, 2010

Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, Rudy Heller and Chairman of the Town Hall Barrier Removal Committee, Donald Faugno called the meeting to order at about 9:08 am

Selectmen Present: Rudy Heller, James Allen and Peter O'Connell.

Camera Operator: John David Holdcraft

Town Hall Barrier Removal Committee: Donald Faugno, Clarence Snyder,
Barbara Clancy, John Wild, John David Holdcraft, Peter O'Connell

The Selectmen told the Town Hall Barrier Removal Committee (THBR) that they had set the date for the Special Town Meeting that the THBR requested for Thursday, March 18, 2010, 7:00 pm in the Town Hall. The THBR advised they will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday, March 3, 2010 at 7:00 pm also in the Town Hall.

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss strategy for the Public Hearing, i.e. should the THBR present a plan as specific as possible including costs as opposed to presenting an overview with several options.

After considerable discussion, it was unanimous that the presentation would present the full approximately \$5 million dollar project and the basis for calculating the cost (30 year, 4% interest rate loan). If there appeared to be major objection to this proposal at the Public Hearing, there would still be some time to attempt to "pare down" the project for the voters at the Special Town meeting.

All present, except Mr. Holdcraft, were firm that the Police Station should be included as part of this project and they be housed in the renovated Town Hall basement.

Discussion of finances:

A \$5 million dollar project, with no Stabilization money used, no grant or donations received would make, in a worst case scenario, about \$1.22/thousand increase to the tax payer's tax bill in the first year and about a \$.57/thousand in the last (30th) year; with an average of about \$.90/thousand over the thirty years. This is assuming the Town's interest rate at 4%. Mr. O'Connell noted, however, that because the debt for the schools and the Highway barn would be paid off shortly after the Town Hall project debt service would begin, taxpayers would not see a dramatic increase in taxes. Of course, if the town were to turn down the Town Hall project, they would see a significant reduction in their taxes.

Barrier Removal Portion of the project:

If the project were to be only “barrier removal”, it would include:

- 1) an elevator to all floors (5 stops);
- 2) elevator addition to include code-conforming stairs which would mean less construction within the building;
- 3) changes to door hardware, removing obstacles in doorways, etc.;
- 4) addition of two handicap accessible toilets;
- 5) a lift to the stage;
- 6) two handicap parking spaces;
- 7) some grading and repaving of the parking area adjacent to the elevator
- 8) Elevator installation would trigger a seismic upgrade to the building

Mr. Faugno reminded everyone that this work, which would exceed 30% of the total assessed value of the building, would trigger a total code upgrade of the building, mandating the installation of a sprinkler system.

The Town must also consider the possibility of hazardous waste removal as part of this project. It is possible when borings are done in the area where the elevator addition will be placed and/or the area of the new septic/leach system that hazardous materials could be found, mandating clean-up. \$250,000 has been set aside for this. It was suggested that the Town could expedite the process by paying for the borings now but Mrs. Neylon advised that once the borings are done, if hazardous material is found, the Town must immediately proceed with the removal of the material and, if the renovation project is not funded, there will be no funding for this work.

Mr. Faugno informed the group that if only the basic project is done, the town will achieve only access but not the use of the rest of the building. To get use of the building, at least the following would be needed: septic system, 6 - 8 additional toilets, heating system upgrade; additional toilets, electrical and plumbing upgrades, ventilation, duct work for heating and future air conditioning, etc. Mrs. Neylon pointed out that if only this part of the project were done, there would be even less office space on the first floor.

\$5 million project:

All agreed that this project – the complete project, even with the \$5 million price tag, was a “no frill” project but it was one that would make the building usable for a long time to come and would bring the building back to the “hub” of the community.

Mr. Heller said that he wanted the committee to consider a heat system that does not include the use of fossil fuel and that would be worth the extra expense. The THBR committee members felt this was not part of their scope and would take the total project cost beyond what could be afforded. Mr. O'Connell said that the prospect of geothermal heating could be explored with grant funding and that ideally, the Town Hall heating and cooling system should allow such a heat source to be connected to the Town Hall.

\$4 million project:

This project would mean the project would:

- 1) Give up some significant improvements to the heating system which would end up costing more in the long run;
- 2) Not include reconfiguration of first floor office space – cause lessening office space;
- 3) Not convert the balcony to include meeting space but only toilets – meeting space is sorely needed.
- 4) Give up the reconfiguration of the third floor – this would affect the possible CDBG grant since a condition of the grant is that the town must use each floor if the elevator stops there.
- 5) Not clean the exterior of the building or do re-pointing – this will still need to be done whether or not it is part of this project.
- 6) Not include general refurbishing or repainting inside the building – deferring maintenance.
- 7) Not include window upgrades (storm windows) – will have to be done eventually.
- 8) Not include some plumbing – would have to be added later.

Financing:

Mr. Faugno pointed out that the elementary school addition, the new Regional High School, and the new Highway Barn are all debt-exempt. Currently the Town spends about \$310,000 toward these debts and 2017 will be the last year of a “real” payment on the schools. In 2005 the Town paid somewhere between \$546,000 and \$691,000 annually for these debts, showing that the Town has carried significant debt in the past. Mr. O'Connell pointed out that in the 2008 Town Audit, the auditors pointed out that current town debt is well below the maximum.

If the Town were to receive the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for the barrier removal part of the project and which it intends to apply for, this would reduce the cost by \$.12/thousand the first year with an average of \$.09/thousand over the thirty years. The amount of this grant is estimated to be about \$500,000.

If money to be received from the State toward paying off the school debt were put into this project “up front” this would also decrease the total project cost by about \$250,000. It is proposed that this money would come from Stabilization and be returned to Stabilization once it is received from the State.

If the \$250,000 set aside for hazardous waste mitigation is not needed, this would also reduce the cost of the project.

After the Special Town Meeting:

If there is a favorable 2/3 vote by the Special Town Meeting contingent on a debt exclusion ballot vote, the Selectmen will need to:

- 1) Place on the May 3, 2010 Annual Town Election ballot the question of whether the town will exclude the debt from Proposition 2.5 limits
- 2) Appoint a Building Committee to replace the current committee which is a “feasibility” committee.

Assuming a successful vote on the May 3, 2010 ballot:

The Treasurer will begin to borrow in anticipation of notes: to pay the architect to complete design and bid-ready documents and to pay for the test borings. This would be at a 1% payback interest rate.

Once the project is ready to start, the Treasurer will continue to borrow in anticipation of notes at the 1% rate to pay for actual construction; .

Once the project is completed, the Treasurer would borrow only the actual dollar amount spent. In the best case scenario (\$500,000 CDBG grant, bids lower than expected, lower-than-expected hazardous waste costs, and some use of Stabilization funds), the actual cost of the project to the taxpayers could approach only \$4 million.

Advertisement:

1. Mr. Snyder has written a story about the THBR Committee's research and it will be in the *Brookfield Citizen*, March Issue.
2. Mr. Snyder has also prepared a hand-out which will be revised to reflect the new costs.
3. Mr. Snyder will prepare a video story board for the Hearing & STM and Mr. Heller and Mr. Holdcraft will work together to create a video tour of the building so that those who cannot or do not want to climb the stairs can sit and watch the video.
4. Mrs. Neylon has already sent out two "gang" e-mails to the press and town officials and others to notify them of the Public Hearing, Tour Dates, and the Special Town Meeting.
5. Mrs. Neylon will add Public Hearing, Tours and Special Town Meeting dates to the Town's website.
6. Mr. Wild and Mrs. Clancy will be asked to work up a call-list that will attempt to educate more people on the project and get them to attend the Hearing and the Meeting.
7. Mr. Heller and Mr. Faugno will work together on a PowerPoint® presentation for the Hearing and the Town Meeting.
8. Notices of the Hearing and the Meeting will be posted at various locations throughout the community.
9. Church Bulletin Boards: Mrs. Clancy/St. Mary's; Mr. Snyder/Congregational; Mr. Faugno/Unitarian Universalist; Mrs. Neylon/Quaboag Valley Baptist.
10. Everyone will send Mr. Faugno their ideas on comments that should be included in the video presentation and the walking tour.

Comments:

Mr. Snyder stated he was in favor of the \$5 million project and felt that the Town should apply for any and all grants and pursue other funding opportunities that would bring the cost down in the end.

Mr. Allen said he would support the \$5 million project only if it includes the Police Department in the basement as this would solve two problems.

Mr. O'Connell said he agreed with Mr. Allen; that the project is so interwoven that you just can't take out; the town needs a gathering place;

Mr. Heller said that the Town Hall cannot be taken down because it is on the historical register, thus, whether it is used as a Town Hall or not, the Town must maintain the building. He felt alternatives would be more expensive for the community. The Town must be forward thinking and do this project now.

Mr. Wild agreed and said the historical value of the building carries much weight; in the end it would be a savings to the Town to do the entire project.

Mr. Holdcraft said that because of the time frame and the economy, he is behind the project except for the Police Station part. He said other towns are moving their Police away from their Town Halls; he is not in favor of an increase in taxes.

Mr. Faugno said that he would support the \$5 million project or a \$4 million project but doesn't think he would support the minimal project.

Mrs. Clancy was not here for this part of the discussion but had earlier stated that she was in favor of the complete project.

Mrs. Neylon said that she felt the entire project should be done because if it is separated into phases, each subsequent phase will cost more that it would if done as the whole project. She also stated that some of the offices are dangerous as they are (no second exit).

ADJOURNMENT:

At 11:37 p.m., Mr. O'Connell, Selectman, moved to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Wild, THBR member seconded; so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna L. Neylon, Administrative Assistant

Date approved by Board: _____