

Municipal Civic Building  
Public Meeting #2  
June 13, 2013  
Thatcher Brook Primary School

Present: C. Nordle, R. Ellis, C. Viens, K. Miller, Select Board

The meeting was called to order at 7:04pm and began with a PowerPoint presentation by C. Nordle, who also announced that the next public meeting on the Municipal Civic Building project will be held June 20 starting at 7:00pm in the cafeteria of Thatcher Brook Primary School. This presentation was followed by a question and answer session.

Q (Tiny Como): Where are the actual costs associated with the Weimann Lamphere designs?

A (C. Nordle): There was no cost attached to the Weimann Lamphere sketches. When we initially began working with architects on this project, the cost projections were higher than anyone on the Board felt comfortable moving forward with. The board cut back on space to reduce the overall cost and the bond vote.

A (R. Ellis): Regarding the 2012 Weimann Lamphere options, only a few of the designs could include all four functions plus the community room. Most designs weren't able to accommodate all the functions we can at the Stanley Hall site.

Q (Anne Smith): I feel like I'm being asked to vote on something that's been predetermined. The first time I saw this was at the Town Meeting Day presentation. Before being asked to vote, I want to see budget comparisons for what it would cost for separate buildings at 28 North Main Street and 51 South Main Street.

A (R. Ellis): The Town started the Long-Term Community Recovery planning process in November of 2011. This lasted 6 months and there were many smaller meetings and two large community meetings. From these meetings, participants expressed a desire to co-locate all municipal functions in one building and have community space. From the flood experience many of us realized that we functioned well out of one space. We were an effective and responsive community after the flood and many felt we should continue this after the flood. We tried to get all municipal functions at one site. The Stanley and Wasson Hall site had capacity for the functions we were looking at, and room for future growth. This is the option that best serves this goal for the best price. We need your input now.

Q (MK Monley): Since August 29, 2011 I have been working for the flood recovery efforts in Waterbury. I am the President of Revitalizing Waterbury and have lived here for twenty-five years, and I'm here because I love where I live. I believe we are that community of August 29, 2011. We haven't stopped yet: we don't have a town office. The library is claustrophobic. I'm tired of having to go through three or four bond votes before having to pass it. Right now there is a low interest rate and construction costs are going to increase. I

say we go forward with this project. The Select Board is working tirelessly to keep costs down; I see them doing due diligence to keep costs down.

C. Viens: Regarding the comparison costs response, I have objected to building in the floodplain. I can't justify putting tax dollars back into the floodplain. Recently, I was asked to go through library. It had been about 20 years since I'd been in the library and immediately noticed the beautiful exterior. When I went inside, I was shocked at the disrepair of the interior of the building. I took a tour, going from the basement to the top floor. I performed a quick evaluation of the cost to gut the building and perform initial renovation work to bring the building back to its pristine original entity would be in the half-million dollar price range. The cost to add on might be about \$1.5 million, so about \$2 million total. There are other possible sites that are out of flood zone. If we used the \$2 million and the \$.5 million from the Police Department, we're not at about \$4 or \$4.5 million. If you're in the flood zone, mitigation costs exceed \$.5 mil. A large structure results in structural issues. To say it's more cost-effective to co-locate is up for argument. Building in a flood zone is an issue. I wouldn't consider not including the library in another bond. The library should get what they've been asking for. The library was next in line after the fire station and the flood changed all that. I'm afraid they'll get the short end of the stick.

Q (John Gallagher): We can't go on the way we have been and operate efficiently. The Stanley site looks like expensive space. We could provide a quality site, but I can't vote for what we're proposing. We're not at end of our rope, and we don't need to do something today. Proposing to use Wasson Hall as a staging site might cost more than it'd save us. Instead, we should rent it. I work for a general contractor doing commercial work. This proposal is nice, but doesn't fit what the town has the means to pay for.

A (R. Ellis): Black River Design has been working with municipal staff, including library staff, to determine the needs and layout of the building. The proposed footprint was given to Merkur Construction for an estimate and then contingencies and multipliers were factored in. We've found other sources of billing and are still doing grant writing, in addition to looking at Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds. We are hoping to do the project for less than \$5 million.

Q (Bob Johnson): I served ten years as a library commissioner. I commend the public officials. They involved the entire community as this project moved forward to help shape the direction. What you saw tonight reflects what many people said they wanted to do. This is a remarkable opportunity to take advantage of money that's coming in, along with a low bond rate. We can put together something the community can be proud of. Most everything worthwhile costs money.

Q (Frank Balco): There are a lot of ifs, ands, and maybes. Regarding the first batch of options done in 2012, Option 1 could be open to 14,000 square feet with parking. Look at what each function would have. That's a lot of room for expansion. I asked the other night and didn't get an answer: what happens if other fundraising proposals can't be met? At what point will we know if they can produce this money? Vote is on 27<sup>th</sup>, how quickly do you want to start the process? Will you start the building before they come up with that money? We need answers. We would love to have nice buildings, and for people to make a nice amount of money. People are considering leaving Waterbury because of tax issues. Road maintenance to be done and there's the gas tax from the State. There will be cost overruns.

A (C. Nordle): Regarding the timing, the first step is to pursue getting the property under contract, which is set now. Secondly, we ask the Town voters to approve the bond. Then, we will need to go through the permitting process. The Town's permit was issued few days ago and the Act 250 permit in progress. Then we can finalize designs, find a builder, finalize architects, etc. The Village can warn its vote to get the Village vote on including the Police. Pieces will fall into place as we move along. The library commissioners need to undertake their capital campaign. They'll list the property for sale. Need to get to the point where we understand voters want to move forward with this project so the library can go to potential donors saying "this is what we want to fund." They'll have a hard time doing this if the Town hasn't decided to go on with the vote.

Q (Frank Balco): They said they'd produce \$1 million. Why can't that start right now, to have pledges?

A (Harriet Grenier): The library has a \$600,000 trust fund. We didn't pledge it all because we support the library budget each year. The library gives a quarter of a million dollars each year to the Town in support of the library budget. We didn't want to wipe out the trust fund from the beginning because we want to continue doing this. With the sale of the building and the \$600,000 trust fund, we're \$100,000 short of \$1million. We've started the fundraising process, we've been meeting with our capital campaign manager, and we will raise the \$400,000.

Q (Debra Thumann): I also commend the board. I keep hearing that "this is what people asked for", but I'd like to see more iterations of this project. I believe it can be done more cost effectively. We need to look at real basic space requirements for the library and Town offices so they can expand. I keep hearing that this is a "one time opportunity" and it feels like dealing with salesman. If it's a good honest deal they're offering, it will be there when you come back. This is a pressure tactic. We built two large fire stations for \$3.2 million. I'm surprised that we can't get new town offices and library space for less than what it's costing us.

A (C. Nordle): This is an opportunity that won't be around: The State identified these properties as a parcel they wanted to divest itself of. They want to sell the properties to us, but if they don't sell them to us, they'll sell to someone else.

Q (Debra Thumann): If we own the Stanley and Wasson site, we won't have them for the tax base. If someone else owns them, they will be added to the tax base.

A (C. Nordle): The first draft of designs reflected a larger building. The building has shrunk substantially and we've cut out several million. For instance, there was a rounded turret on elbow of building; we've reduced the landscaping component of the plan; we're proposing to reuse portions of the existing parking lot; and we've investigated and decided not to pursue underground parking (which alone is a \$750,000 cost). This is far from first draft.

Q (Bob Dain): I'm confused about the lib issue. We had two libraries and one closed down, which seemed like a wise financial move. Now we're saying we need a bigger library. I'm concerned because my alma mater closed down eighty percent of their library's stacks and replaced it with computers. Libraries are changing, and computers have changed our life. There will be a seven percent tax increase over the next several years from a fed tax. This building will be another huge building back with the state buildings. People won't drive off Main Street just to see our huge building; it won't be an attraction.

A (C. Nordle): The Department of Taxes publishes an overall tax report. Waterbury is sixteenth in Washington County in terms of combined education and municipal tax rate burden. We're on the lower end. The Select Board has been concerned about this and sixteenth on the list shows the Board has been conscientious about keeping tax burdens low. This bond would bring us to number fourteen. At the start of this project, I had similar concerns to those Bob just expressed. Having gone through this process, I've come to see that people are using libraries differently than they used to. Our library has six hundred users per week. The library has a lot of people who come in to sit down and read, or go to programs (both kid's and adult's). Many people go to the library because it's the only place they can get computer access, or where they can be shown how to use a computer. We need more space for these types of activities, even if this isn't how a library would have been used years ago.

A (Harriet Grenier): The library has circulated over 40,000 items, including books and e-books, and there is a need for both in our community. We don't have enough space for people to work in the library. The library is important in helping people cross the digital divide. We didn't close the Center library because there was so much space downtown. The library in the Center was in the Seminary Building, which, when it was purchased and redone, was left with big square pillars throughout that didn't allow for programming or for stacks to be placed around the pillars. It became unusable and it didn't work anymore. When the library in the Center was reopened, people didn't come back because they were used to going to the Village library.

Q (Gena Callan): The Emergency Management system was in the floodplain when we were flooded and they had to move. Why do we want to purchase floodplain land? The building will still need to be cleaned up when it floods. Why build at just above the 500 year floodplain? The 1927 flood was much higher than this. If we don't build to get out of 1927-type flood levels, why risk it? If we can't support the tax base by building this expensive building, who are we going to expand to accommodate? The State isn't bringing back all of the workers that left. Why do we want to compete with them? They're also taking a risk when they build in the floodplain. I would like the library out of the floodplain. It still could flood where it's at, so why put it in the floodplain? Maintenance fees for the Police Department would be paid, but not at \$1 per month.

A (C. Nordle): The \$1 per year is the rent the Village would pay. They'd pay interior maintenance costs of their space.

Q (Chuck Kletecka): Was May 15 the deadline for bonding?

A (K. Miller): I called the bond bank. We didn't make this July's bond sale. The next time we can go for it is July of 2014, which is when our interest rate would be set. The bond anticipation note happens prior to that. You borrow this money and then you pay the anticipation note off.

Q (Walter Luce): We're paying for tearing down buildings, we're paying for buying land in the floodplain and we're going to end up with a mess in the future. There's land behind me (the armory) that's not in the flood plain and there's no building to tear down. Has it been worked at to see if it will work? Are we creating a problem with this project? I asked on Town Meeting Day if we're going to heat this building or use the State Office Complex's heating facility. Do we save money by using the existing heating plant?

A (Harriet Grenier): The library looked at "Wissel Mountain" and the armory building on it, which has parking on either side. A new building would take up the whole site and there would be no room for parking. This school has 99-year lease on the parking lot. This land was involved in the land swap and part of the forest that was preserved was used for what the Center Fire Department had to do to build. The land and hillside is also very wet. The Planning Commission said the roads would need to be rebuilt (High Street) and would need to be one way to Stowe Street, and sidewalks would need to be built since there are no sidewalks.

Q (Roy Lloyd): If we don't do this, what are we going to say to those young people, how many generations down? Are we going to miss the bus and live with regret?

A (C. Viens): I'd like to give a quick rundown of what happened with the Fire Station bond. It passed for \$5.8 million. I got on rescind committee and after it was rescinded I took conceptual drawings and refined them with friends and the fire chiefs. We created a

working set of drawings and put actual figures to it. We gave a proposal for the Center fire station for \$670,000, opposed to the original \$2.5 million proposed price tag. Four firms bid on the project, and we ended up coming in under budget by \$2,000. “We need to plan for the future” is double-sided statement.

A (C. Nordle): The Board is committed to finding cost-saving measures. A \$5 million bond doesn’t translate into a \$5 million construction budget.

A (K. Miller): Realize you’re spending \$1million before you put a nail into the wood. We want to be able to live here. Let’s take a breath and look at our options. We should be building a building that’s going to last the community. Your municipal tax is going up fifteen percent just for this project. There are big tickets coming down the road, like the Main Street project and the roundabout. There will be notes for replacing vehicles –for the Town and the fire station. All of this is coming down the line. I want you to be prepared. I want Waterbury to be at the bottom of this list (tax list) for once.

Q (Tom Stevens): I want to put into context some of what we’ve heard are fears tonight. Taxes are intensely personal. It is all public information, but it’s personal. It’s not useful as a tool to talk about what’s good or bad about this project in terms of borrowing. Most of the State Complex was misused or useless because it was a former hospital, and not designed as offices. The employees enjoyed Waterbury, not the building. The core building was built in 1890 to the five hundred year flood level. Stanley and Wasson Halls weren’t built to that level. The 1927 flooding was crazy, and after, dams were put in place to control water. Luckily they didn’t fail. Regarding building in the floodplain: it’s legal; it’s built on standards created by the Town and Federal government. If we shouldn’t invest in a floodplain, it’s a death nail to the Village because it tells people in the Village they did the wrong thing by living and buying in the floodplain. You can invest in the floodplain. Without the State workers coming back, you put a dent in the local economy. People are moving into Waterbury all the time. We can see this even in the increase in kindergarten class size. We are not a backwater town; it doesn’t mean we’re a Cadillac town. Costs are important. States offers to us have been generous and transparent. We will never have an opportunity to get the Stanley and Wasson Hall site again. We’re talking about being responsible about our future. We shouldn’t say we don’t deserve these things; this isn’t looking at the bigger picture. This town is going through ha change. You won’t recognize this town in three years. It will be completely different after the State Office Complex is rebuilt and after the Main Street Reconstruction project. Look at Barre. Additionally, over 90% of the Main Street project is being paid for by the Federal government.

A (K. Miller): I don’t understand what Tom said about fears. If people talk about the cost of a project or the location of a project it doesn’t mean they have a fear. The “once in a lifetime” thing is a fear. People want to know what’s going on.

Q (Tom Stevens): The fear is when you say “you don’t know what’s coming down the pipeline.”

A (K. Miller): What's better fiscal responsibility: building something for \$3 million or for \$7 million?

A (C. Viens): We have the chance to move the municipal building out of the floodplain. This building will contain all of the information about you (deeds, etc.). I can't put it at risk.

Q (Mike Wood): I don't believe we're growing. I can't buy a pair of pants in Waterbury. I need to travel out of Waterbury to get a lot of things I need, including a job to be able to afford staying in Waterbury. We need to get something in here besides office space if we want to grow.

Q (Everett Coffey): I deeply commend Karen and Chris for taking a stand for what they believe in. I want to build at 51 South Main Street, with the first floor being an open garage, and having an elevator to the second floor. I would like to see the carriage house addition on the library, after the Janes house has been restored.

A (Margaret Luce): There is a \$2 million price tag for the carriage house. The library is a 150 year-old house. It is literally falling down from the weight of the books. It doesn't work as a library. It would take a lot of work, even for it to be just a Historical Society museum, and maybe a reading room. The back of the house is much older than 150 years old. There are a lot of issues around reusing this space. It doesn't work as a modern library. It needs room for computers. We could get grants for computers, but there's no room to put them. We have great schools and need better facilities for kids when they're not in school. Often, two kids share one chair at a computer- we can do better than this.

Q (Don Schneider): Boards need to be decided together. What's the motivation for three votes to go forward? Why go forward and present it when not all five Select Board members are on board?

A (C. Nordle): The Select Board vote to go forward was originally four to one. We went through a long community process and asked to look at this site further. It's only 356 out of 5000, but they're the 356 that showed up. We can't read the minds of those that didn't show up. The vote is a way to find out what the others were thinking. I would feel remiss if we didn't go through with the vote if the community voted that this was the project they wanted.

A (C. Viens): Years ago, I bought a 150 year old home, gutted it, remodeled it, and sold it. I saw the beauty of the lib when I walked through it. Why would Waterbury want to rid itself of it? I saw potential in it. I made the motion to move the bond vote forward.

The informational meeting ended, and at 9:23pm, C. Viens made a motion to approve a request for a bridal shower with 30 people and alcoholic beverages to be held at Hope Davey Pavilion on Saturday, June 29 at 1:00pm. This motion was passed by K. Miller and passed unanimously.

At 9:24pm, K. Miller made a motion to approve a request for TBPS's kindergarten field day to be held, with waiver of fee, at Dac Rowe on Friday, June 14 from 9:00 – 1:00pm. This motion was seconded by C. Viens and passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25pm.

Approved on July 15, 2013