

**TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE
October 23, 2018**

MINUTES

Present: James Kelly, Bob Hanson, Sarah Steinberg Heller, Leandra MacDonald, Alan Zeller, Johnathan Ericson, Valerie Jenkins, Barbara Miller and Carl Mabbs-Zeno

Also Present: Peter Throop and Laura Norton, Office of Community Development.

Chair Hanson called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Site Visit

Chief Walker began the site visit by telling the Members his ask for the new fire station design (\$300,000) was being moved to FY 2021 to level out the CIP.

Chief Walker then led a tour of the Station noting the building was the former DPW building converted in 1972 for Fire and EMS apparatus. He noted two major projects over the years was the addition of the training room and the additional apparatus bay to the north. He began with the multi-function addition they were seated in (serving as a clean storage area, meeting and training room and bunk room). Chief Walker noted Peterborough is part of a Mutual Aid system covering six towns (Sharon, Hancock, Dublin, Greenfield and Frankestown) with contracted ambulance service providing two full EMS Crews 24 hours a day. He explained a bit about the Transfer Program out of Monadnock Community Hospital (MCH) and how personnel safety was ensured by alternating crews with a *work/rest cycle* policy.

Ms. Miller noted she'd read Emergency Rooms and Hospitals were climbing to the top of the list of dangerous work environments. Chief Walker acknowledged that fact noting "we have been lucky, there haven't been any really serious incidences at Monadnock." He went on to explain the Department's *respond and stage* policy where the crew would respond and stage away from the incident if it were suspicious or dangerous in nature (domestic altercation, any weapon involvement etc.) until Police arrive and clear the scene.

Moving out to the bays, Chief Walker pointed out upgrades that took place in 2016 including the installation of a fire alarm, a vehicle exhaust system, a retrofit of the building's sprinklers, upgraded cooling and heating systems, replacement flooring and a security system with camera surveillance. He showed them the fire apparatus and ambulance fleet as they walked through the building. The members also toured the office area, kitchen and documentation room. When Chair Hanson asked about the size of the new Station Chief Walker replied, "about 18,000 square feet." The Chief also noted several pieces of equipment, including Car 2, the Bucket Truck and 2 equipment trailers were currently stored outside as there was no room for them in the building.

Meeting

Minutes: Deferred

Fire Department:

Facility Design Project: Chief Walker reiterated his plan to move his request for funds for \$300,000 for funds to create architectural plans for a new fire station. "The plans would be used to bid the construction" he said. A brief discussion about the fate of the current building followed with Chief Walker unsure of whether the town would sell it. "You can build on the flat part of the lot, but it *is* in the flood zone" he said. When Ms. Miller asked about the plans for Fire Museum Chief Walker replied, "it is staying there" adding there had been some discussion with the Monadnock Center for History & Culture (the Historical Society) becoming its curator.

Ms. MacDonald asked about the location of the new station and asked "wasn't a Brownfield study done up there? Do they know what is there?" Chief Walker replied "they are 99% sure the site is fine." Ms. MacDonald then asked if some effort could be exerted "not to reinvent the wheel" with an architect's design for building the new facility. Chief Walker replied, "moving forward we will be looking at existing buildings and how they may meet our needs, so we don't have to start from scratch." Ms. MacDonald noted it made sense to look at similarly sized (existing) fire stations "and use their plans."

Replace Portable Radios: Chief Walker told the Members the current radios were purchased in 2005 with a state grant. "Their life span is 10 years and we have begun to see failures." He emphasized the importance of the portable radios as a critical element of life safety for first responders. He noted the preference to

purchase all radios at the same time “so from an administrative standpoint they use one program, one type battery and most importantly they are all the same, all the channels are the same on each radio which is extremely important at the scene of an emergency.”

Mr. Kelly noted the allocation of \$40,000 for FY 2020 through FY 2022 and asked if the total \$120,00 could be moved to 2022 for the sake of leveling out FY 2020. Mr. Ericson asked, “would that work?” and a brief discussion followed. Mr. Throop concluded it could work “but pushing the entire expense forward is risky, you may encounter unexpected expenditures you did not know about.” He also briefly explained the principle of the capital reserve noting the accumulation of funds through the CIP for less debt down the road. Ms. Miller suggested that sort of decision was better suited for the Budget Committee and perhaps Mr. Kelly should think about serving on that Committee (to which) Mr. Kelly replied, “maybe I will.”

Replacement of the Fire Alarm (Bucket Truck): “This has been on the docket a long time” said Chief Walker. He went on to note the cost estimate of the truck decreased from \$150,000 to \$75,000 after an evaluation of the used vehicle market and a decision that the purchase of a good used vehicle would meet the Department’s needs.

Replacement of Ambulance 2 and Stretcher Load System: Chief Walker told the Members this ambulance would be a specialty ambulance designed for the care and transport of bariatric patients. He added “the ambulance and the stretcher will be purchased separately through the Ambulance Enterprise Fund and will have no impact on the tax rate.”

Replacement of Two Mechanical Ventilators: Chief Walker explained that each of the town’s four ambulances has a mechanical ventilator on board. “This is a machine that allows us to breathe for patients that cannot breathe for themselves” he said adding “these devices will be purchased through the Ambulance Enterprise Fund and will have no impact on the tax rate.”

A Fourth AutoPulse (Mechanical CPR Device): Chief Walker told the Members the Department has three such devices “and we looking to equip our fourth ambulance with one.” Chief Walker briefly described how the device works to facilitate high quality CPR compressions and allow personnel to attend to other medical interventions. He again noted “this device will be purchased through the Ambulance Enterprise Fund and will have no impact on the tax rate.”

A brief discussion about the financial contribution formula for the catchment area (“operation, overhead, administration and boots on the ground for the towns served”) as well as need and necessity discounts for ambulance bills followed.

Finance Department: Chair Hanson asked the Members to introduce themselves to Finance Director Brenda Fox-Howard. He thanked Ms. Fox-Howard for coming in noting their concerns about the quality and familiarization of the systems being considered. A brief discussion about the shortcomings of the current system followed with Ms. Fox-Howard telling the Members they had reached an impasse with the existing provider for the Finance and Tax & Utility software. Ms. Fox-Howard noted a verbal estimate of \$85,000 to repair the (crippled) existing General Ledger to meet the State of New Hampshire’s requirements and strongly suggested purchasing a new financial management software package for both Finance and Tax & Utilities.

Ms. Fox-Howard reviewed three companies offering software application systems for municipalities, BS&A Software, Avitar and Edmunds & Associates. She noted she was a “glass half-empty” type and acknowledged “salesmen are there to sell.” Ms. Fox-Howard told the Members she had spoken with the Finance Director in Hooksett (the first town in New Hampshire to purchase BS&A Software in 2013) “and she reported the smoothest transition she has ever had” adding “she said they were they were organized and systematic and spend two weeks with them after installation.” Ms. Fox-Howard told the Members BS&A had been in government finance for 30 years, was not for sale and was not going away. “That is their pitch” she said.

In reviewing the current antiquated system Ms. Fox-Howard reported she had asked for \$50,000 last year in anticipation of the system failing and the ongoing lack of technical support. “In 18 to 24 months we may have no support at all” adding “we have tried to make it work and during this process we purchased a module we cannot use, it was a waste of money.” She reiterated the growing lack of support as the company is sold and resold.

Ms. Fox-Howard went on to reiterate the problem with the New Hampshire State Requirements for General Ledgers meeting their standards and numerical system and the conversions they have to do by hand. “It is dysfunctional” she said adding “only one person (the former Finance Director) could pull reports out of it and when I came on board there were no notes, no guidance.” She noted the need for a crosswalk process over to a new General Ledger to be compliant with the State. “It

is painstaking to piece together reports. The system is only as good as what is put into it” she said.

The Members reviewed the cost of rebuilding the ledger (\$85,000) and the purchase of a new software package (\$200,000 “around the same price for a new software package who will do the crosswalk into the system”) said Ms. Fox-Howard.

Ms. Heller noted her concern about the lack of support and potentially *no* support in a couple years’ time. Ms. Fox-Howard reported spending \$58,000 on support for the tax and utility software alone. “Just support” she said adding “and finance was another \$20,000 and change. My recommendation is to move forward with the new software. We will be spending money either way.” Ms. Fox-Howard also noted she would bring in a representative to review the package selected for the Members and anyone interested as part of her due diligence in replacing the current system. She recommended separate packages for finance and tax and utilities noting “you need to get a software package for what you are doing. Everything under one umbrella does not work” she said and that she recommended doing finance *first*, then tax and utilities. Ms. Fox-Howard concluded by telling the Members she had additional presentations scheduled. Ms. Miller asked, “so software only, no hardware?” to which Ms. Fox-Howard replied, “no hardware.”

Mr. Ericson mentioned their meeting with Tim Brezovec who had likened Peterborough to “fighting above its weight class in terms of complexity” when it came to accounting systems. He asked “why are we so complex? We are a small town.” “That is true” replied Ms. Fox-Howard with Mr. Ericson replying “so why?” Ms. Fox-Howard explained Peterborough’s complexity by comparing it to the town of Sharon. She noted Sharon has no Police Department, no Fire Department and no Town Library. “Peterborough has lots of departments and services offered layer by layer in your General Ledger.” She added “take this with your TIF Districts, Enterprise Accounts (Recreation, Ambulance and Wastewater Treatment Facility), community funds and grants and it puts you on *another* level of reporting not built correctly. This is the way Peterborough grew.” “So, we operate like a big town” replied Mr. Ericson. Ms. Fox-Howard noted “yes, but it is not so much the money as it is how many layers. It is not a bad thing, it’s like how a tree should grow straight up. Our software made the tree grow in a zigzag fashion. It all starts with the General Ledger, we need to fix that first to match the state requirements, that is imperative.” She concluded by noting she should have tangible cost estimates to plug in later this week. Ms. Jenkins noted she’d done a

lot of this type of work and agreed separate software packages was the way to go. “You can’t be all things to all people” she said adding “in my experience you get a package that is good at one thing but does not work well for the others.” She also offered a couple of additional companies to look at noting “I am glad to be a second set of eyes.”

Ms. Miller interjected she felt they were getting a bit too far into the weeds and suggested they move on. Chair Hanson agreed and asked, “is there anyone we want to call back?”

The Members agreed they would like to see Mr. MacLean again for a bit more information on the expansion of the sidewalk program and more detailed information on the upcoming road repair/replacement work and an explanation of how he prioritizes the road projects. Chair Hanson concluded “OK, we should have this pretty well wrapped up by next week.” Mr. Ericson interjected “but we won’t have the Finance numbers for a few more days.” Mr. Mabbs-Zeno suggested they skip next week’s meeting and reassemble on November 6th so that the Finance Department will have had ample time to meet with specific vendors, review software package opportunities and costs and forward them on the Committee for review. Chair Hanson replied, “that is a good idea.”

Ms. MacDonald noted she would speak with Mr. Throop about some inconsistencies with the Debt Service and swapping projected interest rates in the out years.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, November 6, 2019 at 3:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant