

Town of Center Harbor

Board of Selectmen Informational Meeting – Proposed Police Station - Minutes

August 19, 2010

CALL TO ORDER: At 6:30 p.m. Chairman Richard Drenkhahn called the informational meeting regarding the proposed Police Station to order. Selectmen Randy Mattson and Charley Hanson were in attendance. Mr. Drenkhahn introduced Police Chief Mark Chase and Building Committee (BC) members Bob Chance and Steve Condojani. Approximately 60 citizens were present.

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Mr. Drenkhahn reported the footprint of the proposed Police Station has been staked out to help people see what is trying to be accomplished.

Mr. Hanson reported there has been confusion over Morrill Park. He indicated the Morrill Park, Brooks property and Nichols Memorial Library boundary lines. Mr. Hanson reported the proposal would take less than 8,000 square feet of the existing Morrill Park and add a section from the edge of the Brooks property to Morrill Park. Mr. Hanson reported the Nichols Memorial Library Board of Trustees is excited about creating a true park with walkways connecting the buildings. He reported the State of New Hampshire's Attorney General's Office is in agreement with the Town's proposal; the land for the formal park and the bandstand property will be in a charitable trust and will be parks in perpetuity.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS:

- **Building Committee:** Mr. Hanson explained the Building Committee was formed and given the charge of finding a location for the proposed Police Station as cost effectively as possible. They looked at each piece of Town-owned property and determined this site would be the least expensive site. Mr. Hanson reported the Building Committee's charge was to propose a building for the 2010 Town Meeting. Chief Chase explained the Committee only looked at Town-owned property because their goal was not to incur the additional expense of purchasing property.
- **Brooks house & garage:** Mr. Hanson reported the Brooks house and garage will be demolished. There was discussion regarding the purchase of the Brooks property and the discussion, at that time, of the Police Department working from there. Mr. Drenkhahn explained a municipal entity cannot work from the building; it does not meet codes. Dennis Schofield referenced the Building Committee's first meeting and their list of pro's and con's for properties; he reported the Brooks property had been discounted due to its proximity to a residential neighborhood. Chief Chase referenced minutes from a March 2009 meeting when Mr. Schofield reported a new

Police Department would look better than what's there (the Brooks house). Mr. Schofield reported he likes the Brooks house over the Police Department.

- **Jail adjacent to a park:** The Selectmen were asked about having a park adjacent to a Police Station with a jail cell. Chief Chase explained it would be a temporary detention cell, there are no windows and there would not be a jail. He explained a temporary detention cell is necessary for officers and suspects safety. Chief Chase explained anyone to be held would be transferred to the County Jail.
- **Status with the Attorney General's Office:** The Selectmen were asked if the Town was taking the land by eminent domain (non-issue; the Town owns the property). Mr. Hanson reported the Attorney General's Office is in agreement with the Town's proposal and have worked on the court process since last year. He explained there is an intervenor. He explained the Attorney General's Office looks at the values of the properties being swapped. Mr. Hanson explained a public safety building benefits the whole community.
- **Funds devoted to beautify the park:** The Selectmen were asked how much of the \$1,300,000 was devoted to beautify the park. Mr. Hanson reported the Selectmen do not have the exact figure with them, but it is in the budget. He reported beautifying the bandstand park would be with separate funds.
- **Architectural details of the proposed building:** The Selectmen were asked the cost to make the proposed building architecturally handsome. Mr. Hanson reported the building is designed to blend in with the downtown area. Mr. Drenkhahn reported they are not proposing high end costs for the architectural details; the building will have wood siding and shingles.
- **Why this location:** The Selectmen were asked why they are proposing the building in this location and not a more central one. Mr. Drenkhahn explained it was determined building it in this location would keep it in the Municipal Complex. He explained other issues such as site development on other areas would be more expensive; this is a flat piece of land. Chief Chase reported this location is the activity hub for the Police Department; the geographical center of Town is not the activity hub.
- **Value of Morrill Park:** The Selectmen were asked the value of Morrill Park. It is assessed for \$150,000.
- **Value of Brooks property:** The Selectmen were asked the value of the Brooks property. It is assessed for \$172,800.
- **Future plans:** The Selectmen were asked if there was a plan for the future when the Police Department outgrows this proposed building and the Fire Station and Town Offices need more space. Mr. Drenkhahn explained when the Police Station Office is moved from the Municipal Building there should be plenty of room for quite some time; 20 – 30 years.

- **Highway Department property:** The Selectmen were asked about constructing the Police Station on the Highway Department property. Mr. Drenkhahn reported there are wetlands issues with that property. Chief Chase reported the Building Committee looked at the Highway Department property and explained that due to the nature of the Highway Department's business (big trucks, heavy equipment) the public should not use the same access. He reported it would be a long access off Route 3 between the tennis courts and Savoie's Lodging.
- **Intervenor:** Dennis Schofield identified himself as the intervenor. He explained he feels he built his house in a nice area, likes the park and feels the value of his house will tank if the Police Station is built across the street. He reported he likes the park as a buffer between Chase Circle and the Municipal Complex. Mr. Schofield reported speaking with the Gilmanton Police Chief regarding the public safety facility that was recently constructed there. Mr. Schofield reported it cost \$870,000 and houses the Fire & Police Departments. He reported he asked the Gilmanton Police chief if it had everything needed to function; the Police Chief replied yes, it was better than what he had. Mr. Schofield reported he feels he can't afford spending \$1,300,000 for one (1) department.
- **Morrill Park:** There was discussion regarding the Dane's contributing the land for Morrill Park. Mr. Schofield reported the Town didn't take care of the park; not one (1) dime was spent on the property. He feels people use the park; it used to be the site of the children's footrace and the egg hunt. The Selectmen were asked what would stop the Town from taking more of the park in the future. Mr. Drenkhahn explained the Attorney General's Office would require the swap of land; he reported if the current plan goes through there will be nothing else to trade. Mr. Hanson reported the deed to Morrill Park does not refer to not having any buildings on the property.
- **Route 25 property:** There was discussion regarding property for sale on Route 25. It was suggested the Brooks property be sold to offset the cost of buying the Route 25 property. Bob Beem suggested the Police Department be located in the hub, not the heart of the community. He reported he feels the Route 25 property would be the perfect location. Mr. Beem reported speaking with 20 – 30 people who feel the current proposal is in the wrong location.
- **Financial impact:** There was discussion regarding resident's concerns about the economy and taking on a huge project which will have a tax increase. Tina Hashem reported the current proposal is the least expensive plan and reported costs will only increase.
- **March 2010 Town Meeting vote:** There was discussion regarding why this warrant article was defeated at the 2010 Town Meeting. Mr. Drenkhahn reported the majority of the voters voted in favor, but a super-majority was needed. Mr. Hanson explained it is not uncommon for a vote such as this to take more than one (1) time. There was discussion regarding residents being away during the March timeframe and unable to

vote. Brian Kennedy explained the Town Meeting is the same time every year and if people chose not to be here, that is their choice.

- **Municipal Building addition:** There was discussion regarding the Municipal Building needing work in the future and the possibility of adding a second floor. Chief Chase explained that could be done, but it would cost more money and is not cost effective. He explained there is no foundation under the Municipal Building and structural engineering costs would be very expensive. Chief Chase explained that would not address the parking issues. A point of interest was made by a resident; in 1968 before the Municipal Building was constructed the land was a park.
- **Location of other towns Police Stations:** There was discussion regarding the location of other town's Police Stations. Bob Chance, a Center Harbor resident, a full-time Meredith Police Officer and a part-time Center Harbor Police Officer) reported people have a difficult time finding the Meredith Police Station. He explained it was built in that location because the Town of Meredith owned the land. Officer Chance reported Moultonborough's Police Station is in the hub of Moultonborough and Laconia built their station on the only property available.
- **Partnership with the Meredith Police Department:** There was reference to partnership plans former Center Harbor Police Chief Andy Faller had with the Meredith Police Department; Chief Chase reported he does not know of any partnership plans.
- **Court costs:** The Selectmen were asked about the cost of a long court battle. Mr. Hanson reported a lot of time has been spent to date on this proposal; there were Building Committee meetings and public hearings. He reported the Selectmen would like to see this matter concluded.
- **Use of Post Office property:** David Schimke, a former U.S. Postal worker, reported there are problems with the Postal Service; he reported he feels the Post Office doesn't need to be in its current location and could move to the Brooks property and the Police Department could be located in the current Post Office. It was explained the Post Office property is not for sale. Bess Hanson reported that when she worked for the Town of Center Harbor the Selectmen sent a letter to the owners of the Post Office property asking to be notified if they ever wished to sell; they never responded.
- **Plan B:** The Selectmen were asked if there was a Plan B. Chief Chase reported Plan B would utilize the entire Brooks property with a two-story building accessed from Chase Circle.
- **Straw poll:** It was requested the Selectmen conduct a straw poll vote. David Johnson reported the straw poll vote is not indicative of the cross section of voters; he explained the vast majority in attendance have an agenda. Mr. Johnson reported no matter where the building is proposed to be built people will say "not in my back yard"; he explained this needs to be eliminated from the discussions. He reported he

feels a Police Station is needed and feels the proposal is on the right track; this should be built for the benefit of all the residents.

- **Chase Circle property**: John Walsh reported he offered his property for sale to the Town last fall; this property abuts the Municipal Building, Brooks property and Morrill Park.

ADJOURNMENT: At 8:00 p.m. the informational meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Woodaman

Selectmen's Secretary