

TOWN OF CENTER HARBOR
Board of Selectmen Public Hearing Minutes
Location and Construction of the Police Station
Saturday, October 24, 2009

CALL TO ORDER: At 10:00 a.m. Chairman Charley Hanson called the Board of Selectmen's meeting to order and opened the Public Hearing. He introduced himself, Selectmen Richard Drenkhahn and Randy Mattson, Building Committee (BC) Co-Chairmen Peter Loudon and Bob Chance, Police Chief Mark Chase (an advisor, not a voting member, of the BC), BC member Trevor Chase (no relation to Chief Chase), Bonnette Page & Stone Construction Manager Keith McBee and Goudreau & Associates Architect Gary Goudreau. Approximately 60 residents, Laconia Citizen Reporter Bea Lewis, Meredith News Reporter Erin Plummer and Selectmen's Secretary Robin Woodman were also present.

INTRODUCTION: Mr. Hanson welcomed the attendees and outlined the purpose of the meeting was to learn about the details and give input about the proposed Police Station. He reviewed the rules for the meeting and how questions would be asked and answered. It was explained that people could ask a first question, then when everybody had the chance to ask questions, it would be opened to a second round and more thereafter if necessary.

HISTORY: Mr. Hanson explained a Space Needs Committee (SNC) was formed in May 2006 with the charge to look at the Town functions and identify issues. In their report, the SNC reported the Police Department was hampered by the lack of adequate facilities. Mr. Hanson explained in 2008 a Building Committee (BC) was formed. Mr. Loudon reported the BC's charges as follows:

Phase I: Determine an appropriate location for a new Center Harbor Police Department space. This could be addition to the existing Municipal Building or a completely separate building on a different piece of property.

Phase II: Develop a final design for the new Police Department Offices that can be taken to bid and brought to Town Meeting.

Mr. Loudon explained the BC began the process by looking at a lot of different parcels. He explained Town-owned parcels were considered because if a Town owned parcel was used it would not be removing a parcel from the Town's tax base, nor would the parcel have to be purchased. Mr. Loudon reported the BC took input from the February 14, 2009 Public Hearing and modified their ideas to comply with public opinion. He reported the proposed building is adequate for today and tomorrow's (20 years) growth; there is no "fluff" in the design.

Mr. Goudreau reported the function needed for a modern day Police Department was looked at. He explained the Center Harbor Police Department uses the Meredith Police Station and other buildings in Center Harbor for storage; in all approximately 3,700 to 3,800 square feet (excluding wall thickness and hallways) are being used. Mr. Goudreau reported the proposed building is designed to keep three (3) populations separate; the general public, staff and prisoners. He reported the proposed training/operations room may be used as a community room, with a separate entrance, during the off hours. Mr. Goudreau explained the proposal includes creating an identified walkway system between the Police Station and the Library; he reported the Library Trustees are excited about the proposal. The cost of the park improvements is included in the total cost.

Chief Chase reported the BC worked very hard on the project; he explained he is an advisor, not a voting member. He reported the BC toured other facilities and looked at the good and bad aspects of the other facilities.

Mr. Hanson, on behalf of the Board of Selectmen, thanked the BC for their efforts and reported they have met twice a month for over a year and have attended extra activities, such as touring other facilities.

It was reported the preliminary cost for the project is \$1,300,000. The Public Hearing was open to public input.

Chris Johnson: Mr. Johnson asked if the footprint of the building could be reduced if there was a basement that could be used instead of the proposed slab. Mr. Chance reported there are water table issues. Mr. Chase reported it would not be economically feasible to construct a basement with the water issues.

David Cutter: Mr. Cutter asked how much has been spent to date; Mr. Hanson reported approximately \$50,000. Mr. Cutter asked who on the Board of Selectmen and BC endorse the proposal; the whole Board of Selectmen and BC endorse the proposal. Mr. Cutter reported he has a problem that every member agrees with the proposal. Richard Hanson reported the BC spent a lot of time researching the proposed building, and he is not shocked that the BC all agree.

Dennis Schofield: Mr. Schofield questioned the February 14, 2009 Public Hearing when twelve (12) residents were present. He asked how the BC could get an idea of what the Town wanted if only 12 were at the hearing. Mr. Schofield reported he feels the people who gave the park land want it used for a park. He reported the park has not been maintained; he reported the Town was given \$250 in 1963 to maintain the park. Mr. Hanson explained the Town did not own the park until it received quiet title this year. Mr. Hanson reported there is one (1) member of the Morrill Park Association still alive. He reported the proposed Police Station does not eliminate the park; park area will be shifted and also use some of the Library property. Mr. Schofield questioned if this was the intention of the Trust. He reported he likes the proposed building, but doesn't want to look at it. Mr. Drenkhahn asked if Mr. Schofield would be in favor of the proposal if it is located elsewhere; Mr. Schofield reported he is in favor of a downsized building elsewhere, but not a million dollar building. Mr. Schofield asked Chief Chase where people were held overnight prior to the construction of the new Meredith Police Station. Chief Chase explained they were held either at the County facilities or the Meredith Police Station.

Nat Dane: Mr. Dane reported his family built the Municipal Building and donated the park land; he explained he believes they would not want a Police Station constructed on the property. He expressed his concern about the cost. Mr. Dane asked the number of individuals held overnight per year; Chief Chase reported there are approximately 60 arrests per year. Chief Chase reported the Center Harbor Police Department uses the Meredith Police Department for every arrest and interview. Mr. Dane asked if the new facility would require additional staff; Chief Chase replied no. Chief Chase reported there are three (3) full time officers (including him), five (5) part time officers, a contract prosecutor and a part time administrative assistant.

Mr. Dane suggested the Town consider a five (5) acre parcel on Route 25B that his brother is selling; he thought the cost is approximately \$200,000. Mr. Goudreau reported that size parcel would be big enough. Mr. Dane reported he feels the park would not be used if the Police Station was built on the parcel.

Karen Peranelli: Ms. Peranelli reported she appreciates the minutes being posted on the Town's web site. She asked what sites had been looked at and rejected. Chief Chase reported on the following sites:

- **Town property behind the Center Harbor Congregational Church:** Chief Chase reported building on this site would require a 300 foot access road, which would be at a large cost. He

reported Chase Circle residents had concerns about it being located there. He reported there would also be a problem with visibility; it would be downtown, but no one could find it.

- **Town Highway Garage:** Chief Chase reported two (2) sites were considered; the entrance to the Highway Garage and along Route 3. He reported accessing along Route 3 would require a 300 foot road and the BC was concerned with wetlands issues on the property.
- **Town's Historical Society property:** Chief Chase reported this parcel is too small.
- **Town's Town House property:** Chief Chase reported this is a small parcel, which has dangerous road access.
- **Municipal Building addition:** Chief Chase reported adding to the Municipal Building was the first item discussed by the BC; he reported it would cost more to construct an addition than to build a new building.

Chief Chase reported the majority of the police calls are in the downtown area; he reported 16,000 vehicles travel on Route 25 each day. Mr. Loudon explained sites were narrowed from a larger list.

Ms. Peranelli reported the BC was very open and the members have spent an incredible amount of time on this project. She reported she feels it's insulting for some residents to infer they didn't listen to the people. She reported the perfect solution will never be found. Ms. Peranelli asked if there were any covenants on the park property; Mr. Hanson reported there are none that the Selectmen are aware of.

Gail Ledger: Ms. Ledger asked if the Police Department works after midnight or if the Sherriff's Office or State Police covered the Town. Chief Chase reported the Sherriff's Office has not patrolled the Town since the 1980's and reported there is no third shift, and never has been,; after midnight either the Center Harbor Police Department or State Police are on call. Ms. Ledger reported having to wait 1 ½ hours for response from a call placed after midnight. Chief Chase reported the previous Chief initiated the on-call practice and he has increased the coverage due to people's dissatisfaction with the State Police's response time. Ms. Ledger asked about the proposed cells. Chief Chase reported they are temporary detention cells, not overnight holding cells. He explained juveniles need to be kept separate. There was discussion regarding attendance at meetings. Mr. Loudon explained every BC meeting is posted, the February 14, 2009 Public Hearing was posted well in advance; he explained people cannot be forced to come and if only twelve (12) show up, the BC has to take their input.

Ms. Ledger reported attending a Selectmen's meeting where the type of heat installed in the proposed building was decided; she asked if the proposal is a foregone conclusion; Mr. Drenkhahn explained the architect needed to know the type of heating system that would be installed to do the design of the building. Mr. Hanson explained specifics were needed to show the public the exact proposed plans. Ms. Ledger suggested consideration be given to the two (2) properties which were offered this morning.

Dick Harlow: Mr. Harlow reported he feels if only twelve (12) shows up, the publicity wasn't broad enough or there was some limitation. Mr. Hanson reported the Public Hearing was posted on the Town's website, the Post Office, Town Office and newspapers; he reported considerable effort was made to inform the public. Mr. Harlow suggested announcements be placed on the reader board in front of the Fire Station similar to the Halloween announcement that is currently advertised. Mr. Hanson reported the Selectmen had discussed requesting a donation of a sign from a local organization.

Tina Hashem: Ms. Hashem reported she feels the Police Department building shouldn't be based on the number of staff. She reported the meetings are public and it is up to the residents to find out when meetings are scheduled.

Barry Borella: Mr. Borella suggested meeting notices be posted at Heath's. Mr. Borella reported he is disappointed to see the park wishes disrespected. He suggested the Brooks house be demolished and the park expanded.

Kent Libby: Mr. Libby asked if the proposed cost includes furnishings and a generator. Mr. Louden explained it does, and also includes the cost for the park. Mr. Libby asked the legality of the park being used. Mr. Hanson explained parks are overseen by the State of New Hampshire's Attorney General's Office. He reported the Selectmen held a public hearing regarding the plan to replace the property with designated park space on the gazebo property; he reported the gazebo property was never designated a park. Mr. Hanson reported the Attorney General's Office is in agreement with the Town's proposal to swap property. Mr. Libby asked if there was a "Plan B"; Mr. Hanson reported plans had not moved beyond this proposal since the Attorney General's Office was in agreement with the Town's proposal.

Bruce Bond: Mr. Bond asked the process for after the Public Hearing. Mr. Hanson explained the BC will meet, discuss the public input with the goal to have a final design and proposal for vote at the 2010 Town Meeting; a 2/3 majority vote will be required for passage.

Roger Kelley: Mr. Kelley reported he considered Dr. Morrill a friend and hates to see his park manipulated. He asked if the Town had received permission to access from Route 25B; Mr. Goudreau reported they haven't heard from the State yet. Mr. Kelley reported there are issues with summer traffic on Route 25B.

Peter Michaud: Mr. Michaud reported he feels everyone agrees the Police Department needs more space, but reported he feels the size and cost are huge for this Town. Mr. Hanson reported changes can be made to the proposal presented at the Public Hearing. He asked if the building could be built closer to the road on the Highway Garage property. Mr. Chance reported that is a narrow piece of land; the BC walked the property and found it to be very wet. Mr. Chase reported there are set back issues with that property. Chief Chase explained the BC did not spend much time looking at the Highway Garage property based on the input received at the February 14, 2009 Public Hearing; he reported the Town has surveyed and had geo tech work performed on the park parcel.

Al Shaw: Mr. Shaw asked if stimulus funds are available. Mr. Hanson explained there are no stimulus funds for Police Stations that the Board is aware of at this time.

Mary Lamprey: Ms. Lamprey asked if the Town could pay to utilize the Meredith and/or Moultonborough Police Stations and construct a smaller administrative area. Chief Chase reported this was discussed with Meredith's Police Chief and Town Manager; they felt it was not appropriate due to liability issues; the agreement is verbal. He reported the Meredith Police Department is a good neighbor. Ms. Mattson reported an important consideration is that the Town of Center Harbor did not pay anything for the construction of the Meredith Police Department, but the Center Harbor Police Department is allowed to utilize the facilities. Mr. Chance, a Center Harbor resident and Meredith Police Officer, explained if there was an incident in Meredith and Center Harbor was using the Meredith Police Station, the Center Harbor Police could be asked to leave. Chief Chase reported the Meredith Police Department is used for more than just arrests; he explained the importance of conducting proper interviews, handling evidence and interacting with people. Ms. Lamprey recommended keeping the park and shifting focus of the location of the Police Station. Ms. Mattson explained the public hearing is part of the process; the Selectmen and BC will gain input from the hearing. She reported if the proposal was a foregone conclusion, they would not have had the hearing.

Robert Coppo: Mr. Coppo asked the square footage used by the Police Department. Chief Chase reported the following is currently utilized:

- Administrative office in the Fire Department member's room: 392 square feet.
- Closet storage: 21 square feet in the Fire Department.
- Evidence storage: 65 square feet.
- Sallie port: 336 square feet (used three months per year).

Mr. Coppo asked about adding to the Municipal Building. Mr. McBee reported there had been discussion regarding renovating the Municipal Building which would involve moving the Town's functions to the front (closer to Main Street) and renovating the current space to a Police Station; he reported this two-fold process would cost well beyond \$500,000. Mr. Goudreau reported there would be setback issues with constructing an addition to the back of the Municipal Building and reported it would be difficult to separate the three (3) populations; this would not be an ideal situation.

Mr. Coppo asked about the trust fund; Mr. Hanson reported it was established in 2006 and \$175,000 had been appropriated to it.

John Schlemmer: Fire Chief Schlemmer reported he supports the construction of a Police Station; he explained the Police Department is currently utilizing the Fire Department's members/meeting room. Chief Schlemmer reported he is conducting firefighter training, but has to use the Meredith Fire Department's meeting room because the Center Harbor Police Department is using the Center Harbor Fire Department's member room. There was discussion regarding the generator's capacity. Mr. Chase reported the current generator would not be able to handle the additional functions of a new Police Station and it would be costly to run underground lines from the generator to the proposed building. Chief Schlemmer reported the current generator is running at 15% capacity.

Richard Hanson: Mr. Hanson thanked the BC for their work. He reported he feels Center Harbor has gotten a free ride far too long, the current facility is inadequate, the Police are staffed with a few, very dedicated people who give an inordinate amount of their time, he is embarrassed by the situation and the construction of a facility is overdue. Mr. Hanson expressed his support for the Police Department and the BC.

Jan Hooper: Ms. Hooper referenced John Walsh's property on Chase Circle, which he is willing to sell to the Town. Mr. Walsh reported contacting the Selectmen's Office and expressed his willingness to sell his property to the Town if the Town was interested. Mr. Loudon asked what Mr. Walsh would be willing to sell his property for. Mr. Walsh reported he has not had it appraised, but it is assessed by the Town for \$215,000. Mr. Loudon explained purchasing this property would be an added cost to the project.

Chuck Burns: Mr. Burns reported everyone agrees that the Police facilities are inadequate and asked how many were in favor of the proposed building's location.

Karin Karagozian: Ms. Karagozian asked how much of the park would be used by the proposed plan. Mr. Goudreau reported 15% to 20% of the footprint of the building would be in the park and including the pavement areas 35% to 40% of the existing park would be used.

Stephen Brem: Mr. Brem asked the length of payment and tax impact. Mr. Hanson reported the Selectmen have received information on 15, 20, 25 and 30 year loans; he reported the impact on a \$300,000 assessed property would range from \$51 to over \$100 per year. Mr. Brem reported that is not a tremendous amount of money and reported the Police Department needs support. Mr. Brem reported he feels the project would cost twice as much if not constructed for ten (10) years. Mr. Hanson explained the Selectmen were concerned given the current economic times, but explained now is a good time to build; savings will be realized. He reported the

Town is receiving Federal and State aid for the replacement of the High Haith Bridge and explained the engineer expected the project to cost approximately \$500,000, but the lowest bid was just over \$300,000.

Richard Adams: Mr. Adams reported he feels it is obvious people want to leave the park alone and asked about alternatives. Ms. Mattson reported there are strong feelings to keep the Police Department in the center of Town. Mr. Adams asked if there are any funds left to go on with the process. Mr. Hanson reported there is approximately \$120,000 in the fund; approximately \$50,000 has been spent.

Mr. Adams reported attending some BC meetings and being the only citizen in attendance. He encouraged people to attend the BC meetings.

David Schimke: Mr. Schimke feels good points have been made at the Public Hearing and understands the tremendous amount of time spent by the BC, but they volunteered to serve. He reported the BC should not have expected more than twelve (12) people to show up at beginning hearings. He suggested purchasing the Post Office property be considered.

Armand Leroux: Mr. Leroux asked the cost of the drainage issue on the proposed location. Mr. McBee reported the total site work, including drainage, is \$155,000.

Gene Manville: Mr. Manville reported this is the first time he's heard how beautiful the park was. He reported he feels the park did not honor Dr. Morrill. Mr. Manville reported he feels the proposed plan is a much better set up than the current use.

Chief Chase thanked the citizens for their direction. He reported the next BC meeting is the first Thursday of November.

At 11:53 a.m. Mr. Hanson closed the Public Hearing.

ADJOURNMENT: At 11:53 a.m. Ms. Mattson motioned to adjourn the Board of Selectmen's meeting. Mr. Hanson seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.