

Princeton MA Public Safety Building Committee Meeting Minutes  
October 18, 2022  
5:00 PM, Town Hall Annex

Member present: Ian Catlow, Felicitas Fandreyer

Members on-line: John Zimmatore, Carl Soderberg, David Crowley

The meeting began in conjunction with the Selectboard meeting at 5:01 pm.

A public comment period began with Richard Chase requesting that the Town Meeting vote includes plans and construction documents because of the chance of receiving bond money if we have a shovel ready project. He feels the project has been studied sufficiently. Ed Sheshan would like to know the definitive dollar amount. Karen Cruise said there would be an update on the town's financial forecast today. Helga Lyons appreciates the work of the committee but feels public outreach was not met and does not feel the committee was good with communication. Holly Burgess says that citizens need to be informed of the cost of the PSB in terms of the forecast of the town's finances, reflecting inflation, PFAS costs, and well water remediation. She would like to see the Moody's report regarding the current PSB. Fire Chief John Bennett reported that he met with representatives of the MA Fire Chiefs and that they discussed that money is available for building PSBs but towns need to have plans ready to go. The money is coming through Homeland Security. He suggests having plans ready. Deb Trantolo says that households 'make a decision on issues'. She finds it upsetting that there are so many committees, and they can't make any decisions. Nate Boudreau welcomed her to sign up for any of the available volunteer positions in town.

The Selectboard requests an update on the cost estimate and design of the PSB. Ian Catlow reports that this information has been shared at meetings regularly and reviewed the process of trimming the size of the building. He explained that there are 2 options with similar footprints available to see in the posted minutes. He continued that there is a reason for each space in the design. Revised floor plans and estimate cost \$10K and the total proposed cost was \$12,533,00. He reviewed the options considered for delivery methods: design- bid -build, prefab, modular, insulated concrete forms, stick build for half and masonry for the apparatus bays, steel frame. Members of the committee toured a PSB in NH that was touted as costing a fraction of the previous cost. They found that this building was not built to MA standards and the quoted cost was not accurate as it did not include any interior costs or site prep costs.

Karen asked if the Fire and Police Chiefs are agreeable to the design. Ian suggested that they are generally accepting of the design as there were multiple concessions made to trim as much as possible. Police Chief Michelle Powers and Chief Bennett agreed with Ian's comment. Chief Bennett also stated that the town is facing potentially significant liability costs with the current PSB.

Phil Gott commented that the charter of the PBS committee was to design a building to be sufficient for 30-50 years and that the design includes the opportunity to expand in the future, particularly referring to the mezzanine. Karen stated that the committee has done its work and asks how to move forward and

spread the information. Richard Bisk would like consideration of how to get 2/3 of the vote and how to answer specific questions that voters may have.

Karen thinks it important to let folks know that the town can't guarantee funding but it would be best to be shovel ready to have the opportunity to ask for money. She asks how long the design documents are good for. Per Ian, the documents are good until a significant change in codes occur and even then they can be updated. Using grant funding would require Buy American Build American which would add approximately 20% to the material cost. Building it locally would avoid this extra cost.

Richard asked how long do we want to wait to take care of the problem of replacing the PSB. He remembers how the delay of the high school building cost a lot of money. At this time, we have already missed the low interest rate and we need to advise voters of the risk of waiting longer. He sends thanks to the Police and Fire departments for being patient through this process.

Ian clarified a point brought up by some voters who say we just need an ambulance. He says that the fire station infrastructure and equipment is available to help quickly when you need it most. Everything in the current design meets the readiness to serve requirements and gives emergency personnel a safe place to work. He acknowledges that we need to figure out how to tell folks about the details.

Karen says some points are that we can't trim anything out of the current design, for example, use sheetrock in the cell. We can't cut heat from the apparatus bay and can't make compromises on requirements of code.

Ian pointed out that Holden and Paxton PSBs are twice the size of this design for only slightly larger populations.

Richard noted that there are frequently promulgated rumors about cost. Phill noted that we need to dispel rumors of cost including the incomplete figures of the NH PSB which were of the shell not any interior work or site prep costs. Ian Catlow saw that at the town meeting in 2021, folks assumed the design is the final step before building but it is not and folks can participate in the process.

Karen says that to get this to a Town Meeting vote we need to get information to as many folks as possible and we need a project plan for this and someone to run it. This would include question gathering and answers made available, planning tours, a video posted online, information sessions.

Per Ian, previously the average cost per homeowner would have been approximately \$350 per year. We would need to review the mill rate impact over 20 and 30 years and also consider that there are other debts retiring soon. Karen says that the financial management team will prepare a forecast for those debts by next month. She will prepare a project plan and see who can do each piece of the plan. Richard and Ian agree that this plan would be best run by someone with communication skills like an expert marketer.

John Zimatore asks for the proposed goal of this project plan: to move toward the Special Town Meeting with adequate information to reach as many residents as possible to get this passed.

Karen said that Kim Ferguson and Ann Gobi report that there is money available. There was more discussion regarding what to request at the Special Town meeting- funding for design and construction or just design. Carl Soderberg asked how to avoid debt exclusion. Ian noted that Princeton's debt is lower than peer communities. Karen said that we can fund construction documents through ARPA funds and

free cash and then fund construction through debt exclusion. There was discussion about the debt exclusion vote in 2018. Karen will prepare and send the project plan to Sherri Patch and Ian.

The minutes from 9/12/22 were accepted.

The meeting ended at 6:19 pm.