

From:  Sandra Curro   
Subject: Fire Stat. Bldg. Comm. Mins. 12/17/03  
To:  BelmontMA\_FireBldingMin  
Cc:

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Approved January 22, 2004

**Fire Station Building Committee:**  
Meeting Minutes of  
December 17, 2003 at the Selectman's Office, Belmont Town Hall

Present: Robert McLaughlin, Chairman, Leo Saidnawey, Vice-Chairman, David Baldwin, Joanne Coakley, John Greene, Linda Oates, William Shea, and William Webster.

Also present: Belmont Fire Chief William Osterhaus, Assistant Chief David Frizzell

Also present from Donham and Sweeney Brett Donham and Peter Brooks.

Meeting called to order at 7:10 p.m.

Chairman McLaughlin: Introduction of the Committee members. The purpose of meeting is to hear what the residents have to say regarding the new Fire Station Sub-Station building on Alexander Avenue in Belmont Center. Provides a brief history of the Committee. Thanks residents in attendance.

Brett Donham presents a PowerPoint presentation of proposed exterior and interior of Sub-Station building on Alexander Avenue in Belmont Center.

Comments/questions/feedback from Residents:

Don Mercier: Have you considered street access to public restrooms so people can walk off the street and use them.

Chief Osterhaus: There will be a unisex bathroom for the public coming off the street. There will also be a convenience booth (bathroom) for MBTA personnel. We can look into the issue of the public restroom being accessed from the street.

Don Mercier: Can the public share the bathroom with the MBTA?

Chief Osterhaus: No. If someone is in the fire station, he/she will let the public in to use the restroom.

Eric Anderson: Can the interior be modeled after more aesthetically pleasing buildings already in the Center? Why move fire station ½ blocks away, spend millions to build and take up parking spaces?

Chairman McLaughlin: The Committee has worked long and hard. We considered renovating the current fire station in Belmont Center. The existing station is 105 years old. A full rehab would cost in excess of \$3 million.

Mary Peterson: Concerned with safety, why Alexander Avenue, why not Claflin Street?

Chairman McLaughlin: The original recommendation of the Committee was that the Headquarters would be located on the Claflin Street parking lot and the sub-station would be in Cushing Square. The recommendation was rejected; a smaller sub-station is acceptable for the Alexander Avenue location.

Chairman McLaughlin: Option 1 has a clear line of site. There will be a signal control to pre-empt traffic at the Pleasant Street intersection to freeze all traffic. The apron (driveway) is just deep enough to get the apparatus off the street and out of the public's way.

Judge Brown: The planning is not compatible with other committee's recommendations. It is not consistent with future planning; committee has ignored advice from other committees.

Chairman McLaughlin: There need to be trade-offs everywhere. The priority is building two new fire stations. The Fire Stations Building Committee has bumped heads with the Parking Committee, which is deathly opposed to using the Claflin Street parking lot.

John Gilman (95 Claflin St): Is there a possibility that the barrier on Claflin Street will be removed? It is very important to have the barrier presence there.

Chairman McLaughlin: There are currently 40 spaces on the Alexander Avenue site; once the sub-station is built there will be 18. It is not the Fire Station's Building Committee's charge to design a parking lot.

Brett Donham: The rear of the Alexander Avenue parking lot will be left exactly as it is.

Sue Bass: There was overwhelming support at Town Meeting to build the fire stations, but the location in Belmont Center was not specified.

Chairman McLaughlin: The vote was to approve \$200,000 to be used in securing schematic designs for both fire stations.

Resident of Alexander Ave: Is anyone looking at the economic impact? If Filenes goes, the rest of the Center goes.

Chairman McLaughlin: Kevin Foley (from the Parking Committee) is here to make sure the merchants are not impacted. There have to be trade-offs. There are trade-offs to minimize the impact to the merchants.

Sarah Oaklander: I appreciate the bind the Committee is in. In regards to the three options, the sub-station needs to be a building we can all be proud of.

Chairman McLaughlin: There are three proposals; the Committee wanted the residents in put prior to voting. We need to have a schematic design in place by mid-January.

Comment: Where will the generator be located? What about the noise level?

Brett Donham: The generator will be located between the Verizon building and the sub-station. It will be shielded as much as possible. It only runs about 20 minutes per week.

Chief Osterhaus: The new generators are much quieter and more efficient.

Mrs. Anderson (548 Pleasant St): I live on Pleasant St and I never received a survey in July. Why does

there need to be a gym in the station? How many fires occur in Belmont Center? Are you already set on this location? What about traffic problems? What about Pleasant Street?

Chairman McLaughlin: The standard is that the fire department should be able to respond in 4 minutes. The ideal spot is Belmont Center. We need these fire stations.

Resident of 58 Farnham St: It would be silly to renovate existing station, why not tear it down, and build a new one on that location or another alternative is to take the Verizon building by eminent domain.

Member Greene: The decision to put the new sub-station on Alexander Avenue has already been made. We want the residents' input as to what direction to place the building on the lot and what the building should look like.

Chairman McLaughlin: We need input as to what the best possible building design will be for the sub-station on Alexander Avenue.

Comment: I can empathize with the dilemma the Committee is in.

Vice Chair Saidnawey: The Committee's charge is to design a building that best fits in Belmont Center.

Chairman McLaughlin: The architect's contract has the money allocated for schematic design. There will be an outside independent estimator who will visit the site 3 times throughout the process. We will be on time and on budget.

Carl Brauer (Precinct 8, Town Meeting Member): It is important to have an aesthetically pleasing building.

Comment: What about the water table.

Chairman McLaughlin: The site is about 205 feet from the brook so the Rivers Act does not come into play.

Brett Donham: We will be doing test borings to find out what is underground.

Kevin Foley: I advocate to preserve the maximum number of parking spaces.

Chief Osterhaus: The current building is in very poor condition. We are in a location where there is the most foot traffic; we are in the direct center of town in a very dangerous spot. Right now, where the station is we pull right onto the sidewalk. We have no apron space; it is blind coming out, the pedestrians cannot see us and we cannot see them.

Sally Alcorn (Pleasant St): The fabric of the neighborhood is being torn apart because of the Alexander Avenue location of the fire station. I am concerned that the neighbors are moving away because of the building of the new sub-station.

Richard Candee ( Precinct 2, Town Meeting Member): The Committee has looked at tough trade-offs and what is the best site for the entire town and that is the Alexander Ave site. I am very attracted by the new design. The new design allows for the recruiting of female firefighters. I am in favor of design Option 1.

Louise Chuli: There is a legal issue in the removal of the barrier.

Chairman McLaughlin: We are not looking into the removal of the barrier.

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Comment: Belmont Center is the Bermuda Triangle of small businesses, the Alexander Avenue location will be the death of the Center.

Comment: You are going in with a package that is going to lose (at Town Meeting), you have put in 3 ½ years and the sub-station will be in Belmont Center. We need a solution for the parking issue in Belmont Center. I know the Committee has worked very hard.

Chairman McLaughlin: We need new fire stations. We cannot rebuild the old ones; we need one on the North side of the tracks. If this does not pass, we will be in eminent domain of taking houses/businesses and we need to know what the best solutions are.

Comment: Channing/Cross Street location is the best solution for the traffic and pedestrian issues.

Comment: There is no doubt we need new fire stations but the Committee needs to re-look at Channing Road and Cross Street.

Comment: What about response time?

Chief Osterhaus: We have taken response time in to account and the average response time for both locations is the same.

Comment: The most compelling reason for the Alexander Avenue site is the slight edge in response time over Claflin Street.

Chairman McLaughlin: It is not as if we are taking some great jewel in the Center, it is a parking lot. We are building a fire station, a municipal building in the Center we can all be proud of.

Chairman McLaughlin: At Monday's meeting, we received a fair amount of good input.

Brett Donham: A decision is needed regarding what design plan is to be used on Alexander Avenue.

It is the consensus of the Committee that Option #1 is the best design and we will vote on it at the next meeting on January 8, 2004.

Meeting adjourns at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Linda Oates, Clerk