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MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS WORKING GROUP (MCPWG)
Beech Street Center – Neighborhood Meeting
MINUTES OF September 28, 2017

Members Present:

Chair Mahoney, Pat Bruschi, Roy Epstein

Members Absent:

Mark Paolillo, Floyd Carman, Phyllis Marshall, Jenny Fallon

Others in Attendance:

Police Chief McLaughlin

The meeting began at 7:04 p.m.

**Meeting with Neighborhood Residents to Present and Discuss
a Long-Term Proposal for the Police Station**

Chair Mahoney began by stating that the goal of the evening is to inform the neighbors of what the MCPWG has been up to concerning the long-term concept for the Police Station. She stressed that the MCPWG is really interested in hearing feedback from the neighbors.

MCPWG

Chair Mahoney reviewed the membership of the group. She noted that they have been meeting since February. The group – an outgrowth of the Capital Budget Committee (CBC) – was tasked by the BOS with finding a solution for the remaining 4 large town facilities that had not yet been addressed: DPW, Police, Library, BHS.

She reviewed what has happened since February, including many meetings and tours of the four facilities listed above. An interim report was given at the June Town Meeting. The BHS is now on a separate track because of its MSBA approval – it is moving forward on its own. She explained that SMMA has a contract with the town and has provided consulting services. She thanked many town employees for their assistance in formulating various plans.

Key Developments

- The BHS is on its own track.
- The Incinerator Site needs capping and was deemed not an appropriate site for a Police Station.
- The Library will request a Building Committee (for fundraising purposes) at the November Town Meeting.
- The DPW and Police Station facilities are both in dire condition.

It was deemed that short-term solutions for the Police Station and DPW need to be identified now, while also planning for the long-term solutions. For the DPW long-term solution, it was noted that the site itself is good, but a new facility is desperately needed.

Impetus for Long Term Solutions for Police Station

Regarding long-term solutions for the Police facility, the following assessments were noted:

- The existing site is too small.
- The existing building, while reasonably maintained, has several issues, including lack of accessibility, inadequate employee facilities, and employee and prisoner safety issues.
- Parking is too limited.
- A Police Station could fit on the current DPW Site.
- A pathway (allowing for employee access) from Pleasant Street crossing over the bridge will be explored with the MBTA.

Long-Term Idea: Building a New Police Station at the DPW Site

One proposal for solving the Police Station issues is to build a new Police Station on the grounds of the current DPW site.

Positive attributes of such a proposal included the following:

- The Police like this location.
- There is ample parking.
- There would be space to host meetings.
- The Police will be close to the DPW.
- The site is closer to the Fire Department headquarters than currently.
- The site is still close to the Center of town.
- The proposal concentrates Police, DPW, Water, and Light in a common campus.
- The proposal increases Police presence at the DPW yard.
- A new station can be built without relocating police during the construction phase.
- The present location is too small for renovation or new construction.
- The proposal frees the Concord Ave. site for sale, development, or other town uses.
- The proposal keeps the Incinerator site available for other uses.
- DPW traffic remains about the same.

Possible disadvantages of the proposal include the following:

- It will increase in traffic on Waverley Street and neighboring side Streets.
- It will increase noise in the area.
- Woodland Street is not currently a public way.

Audience Feedback (Questions, Concerns, Comments):

Chair Mahoney then invited audience feedback on the plan.

Ms. Sue Bass noted that the Police Station would need multiple exits if housed on the DPW site. Instead, she suggested that Trapelo Road seems like an appropriate place for a Police Station: could the Police facility be merged with the relatively new Fire Station on Trapelo Road? Chief McLaughlin provided some reasons why this concept won't work (e.g., unable to build on the culvert, lack of space, lack of town-owned land, etc.)

Ms. Lisa Oteri, Waverley Terrace, raised a concern about replacing some of the existing buildings on the DPW site. She also asked about the employee building. She noted that abutters are concerned about site lines, lights, and noise. Chair Mahoney touched on the short-term plan for the DPW, which will only affect the existing building(s). The Police Station will fit in the available DPW space, she said, but other long-term details for the DPW have not been worked out. Ms. Oteri said that there is a concern about a two-story building. Mr. Epstein elaborated on the fact that the plan is still not fully fleshed out.

Chair Mahoney said it will be important to note that the existing building height works well for the neighborhood and this should be known moving forward.

Mr. Mark Wolman, Woodland Street, agreed that changing the current view is a concern. Right now he sees trees out the window, what will he see under the new plan? He also asked several questions about Police "shift-change" traffic. Chief McLaughlin explained how shift changes are managed.

Mr. Adam Belkadi, also of Woodland Street, stated that many different town trucks use Woodland Street. There is likely to be increased traffic. This street is a private way and has not been paved in 20 years. He asked about the process for turning Woodland into a public way. Chair Mahoney noted that the long-term solution is 8-10 years away, which will give time to solve these issues for the abutters. She noted that there are no alternative empty parcels available for putting a Police Station.

Mr. Joe White, Pct. 4, noted that work shifts both begin and end – therefore the traffic numbers need to be doubled. He said he'd rather have the worst case scenario up front, and later learn that the traffic is better than expected.

Mr. Wayne Messard, TMM Pct. 3, asked who will have access if the overpass happens. Chair Mahoney stated that just employees, not citizens.

Ms. Martha Cohen, Woodland Street, asked about the piece of land where the Clark House had been moved to. Could that not be used? Mr. Epstein and Ms. Brusch replied that that parcel is a part of the high school campus and therefore the BHS will use that space. Ms. Cohen added

that many people visit the Police Station and this will result in increased traffic. Chair Mahoney noted that online applications, etc. have helped decrease the foot-traffic. Chief McLaughlin agreed.

Mr. Messard asked for the number of walk-ins to the Police Station on a daily basis. That information will be provided.

Ms. Judith Ananian Sarno, Waverley Terrace, offered support for moving this project up on the list. She said the neighbors do not want "mechanicals placed on the roof". Also, the height of the buildings is a concern as regards sightlines. Lighting is another concerning issue. She asked about the Pleasant Street access. Mr. Epstein provided some information on the access concept.

Ms. Mary Stearns, TMM Pct 3, asked about the difference between short and long-term plans for the Police Station. Chair Mahoney explained that the short-term improvements will be at the current station and that the long-term concept is what is currently being discussed, e.g., building a new Police station at the DPW site.

Mr. Tony Alcorn, Woodland Street, asked about the timeline for the long term plan, as well as for the access to Pleasant Street. Chair Mahoney stated that, while this is a priority, it is still 8-10 years down the road.

Mr. Wayne Messard, Pct. 3, asked about the Community Path. Mr. Epstein provided some information on his contact with the CP group as well as potential sites (in this area) for the path.

Ms. Lisa Oteri suggested that there should be a buffer along the residential property lines. This will help with the noise of the trucks, traffic, etc. Mr. Epstein noted that this is a very preliminary conversation to merely explore this concept as a possibility. He said this plan is to show that there is a "light at the end of the tunnel" for the Police Station. Chair Mahoney stated that the idea is not fleshed out, but it is important to present it to neighbors before going to the STM.

Mr. Sarno noted that South Pleasant Street will be under development and therefore should be apprised of this concept. He stressed that entrance and exits should be on Pleasant Street, as a default.

Mr. Keith Plamondon said the buffer zone for the residents is an idea he is very interested seeing in the plan.

Mr. Mark Wolman stressed that the neighborhood feedback is an important part of the process. Mr. Epstein stated that the short-term plan (repair work at the current Police facility) is separate from the long-term plan.

Mr. Adam Belkadi said he supports the short-term plan but remains concerned about the long-term plan.

Ms. Lisa Oteri reiterated that a buffer will be needed and no mechanicals on the roof, but still she can hear conversations from the DPW yard. Noise issues need to be a priority as well, as the site can be noisy.

Mr. Austin "Butchie" Bennett, Grant Ave., said that repairs are needed and that the building height should not need to be changed. He noted that money is being spent on a new heating system and that the heat goes out the windows as fast as it goes in. He noted that the traffic has increased in the area. The Library, Rink, and Incinerator site are all coming down the road. Mr. Epstein stated that the broken windows will be fixed.

Mr. Joe White shared some thoughts on windows. They could be boarded up and LED lights could be used. Traffic is inevitable, he said, as people drive more than they used to.

Ms. Elaine Alligood, Pct. 5, asked about the access road over the tracks. Mr. Epstein explained the access road to Pleasant Street. Ms. Brusch said that trees could mitigate the noise. It was noted that all of this (buffer zones, trees, etc.) will be studied in the future.

Ms. Judith Ananian Sarno asked if the slides would be made available. Chair Mahoney said that they will be on the website.

Chair Mahoney noted that the money being requested in November is ONLY for the short-term fixes (specifically design work). Tonight's meeting is about asking for neighborhood input about the long-term proposal. In November, design money is being sought for the short-term fixes. This is step one in a long-term multi-year process that will get us to the long-term, she said. Mr. Epstein added that \$300K is for the design and the scope of the short-term work. That short-term work will likely cost about \$4M.

Mr. White asked why he has not heard about a DPW plan. Ms. Brusch explained the process that led to the development of the short-term and long-term plans. The DPW and Police Station are both in need of short-term solutions now. The long-term concept explores putting the Police Station at the DPW.

Mr. White expressed frustration with the process. This plan will not be turned to for 10 years, he said, why discuss this plan tonight? We should be discussing the short-term plan if that is what will be presented at Town Meeting. We will not get a chance to talk on TM floor, so tonight is the chance to talk. Town Meeting has turned into a rubber stamp process. Chair Mahoney stated that the charge is to deliver long- and short-term solutions and that tonight was to impart a long-term plan for the Police Station.

Ms. Oteri clarified that this long-term plan is not being voted on at the STM. She said everything that was talked about needs to be kept track of, going forward. Chair Mahoney assured her that notes were being taken.

Ms. Cohen said that whoever is selected to move forward the long-term design needs to be in close contact with the residents concerning, noise, traffic, trees, etc. The abutters want input on the design.

Chair Mahoney said that on October 19 there will be a meeting exploring the short-term and long-term plans for both buildings. Mr. Epstein stated that there are three things to impart to the neighborhood tonight:

- that the DPW buildings can be re-built
- that a new Police Station can fit on the DPW site
- that there may be Pleasant Street access for employees.

Mr. Wayne Messard summarized the neighborhood feedback as follows:

- put a buffer around the town yard and residential houses
- the plan must include employee access to Pleasant Street to mitigate traffic
- trees, sight lines, and other neighbor concerns must be attended to

Chair Mahoney agreed and noted that the *goal* is to create access to Pleasant Street, but there are guarantees at this point.

Chief McLaughlin explained that the current Police facility is no longer appropriate to serve the employees. It is a challenge to work there every day. They do good work and with a good working environment they will be happier and more productive.

The meeting ended at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Gibalerio,
Minutes Recorder