



# Fire Station Building Review Committee

Unapproved  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, August 19, 2015

Selectman Allan N. Brown opened the meeting at 6:05 pm.

In Attendance: Selectman Allan N. Brown, Jim Bingham – Town Administrator, Howard Kirchner – citizen at large, Peter Ladd – Energy Committee, Kimberley Edelmann – Budget Committee, Peter Wyman – Fire Department, Anthony Mento – resident/Architectural Designer, Lois Lord – resident/Land Use Secretary, Janice Loz – resident/Zoning Board of Adjustment Chair

Excused: Sean Toomey – Fire Department

Others present: Varick Proper, Ed Raymond – Fire Chief

## **1. Directives for the Committee**

### WARNER FIRE STATION BUILDING REVIEW COMMITTEE

#### Board of Selectmen Directive

Purpose: This committee is convened to review and assess the facility needs of the Warner Fire Department as the town considers the investment/construction of a new fire station for the volunteer staff of fire fighters and emergency medical technicians. The committee will assess the present and near term needs as well as the anticipated needs for the next two to three decades by considering projections of population and development growth, demographic changes, economic and weather pattern changes. The fire dept. responsibilities for responding to events on I-89 and other related factors need to be considered as part of this assessment. The committee will be investigating these factors by contacting local and state resources, researching local and regional trends, data collection, interviewing what other towns have faced or are planning to do in addressing their growing fire and medical response facility needs, all for the purpose of hopefully of obtaining the best ideas and avoiding costly mistakes.

Among a number of topics and considerations in this report the committee is asked to address the following:

#### Factors and Influences

- 1) What are the present and anticipated future staffing needs? What are the trends and issues affecting the staffing of local fire departments in the coming years and how will the building plans address this?
- 2) What is Warner currently doing or has done in terms of cost containment with regards to fire and rescue vehicle purchases, sharing vehicles and equipment, mutual aid agreements and other inter-town collaboration efforts? Are there opportunities to further explore this area? (Research and justify the fleet size and makeup that is needed.)
- 3) How are the studies and discussions by "Public Planners" such as the NH Policy Institute, towards regionalization of emergency services being considered in the plan for this new facility and what are the benefits and obstacles in regional emergency centers. Why are Warner's plans moving or not moving in this direction?
- 4) How do the economic and population trends in the area affect and influence the issues raised in the matters of staffing and facility size and design?

## Considerations for Building Design

- 5) What should be the anticipated life span of the facility? What is the potential for cost effective expansion of the facility to meet future demand?
- 6) What are the requirements of the building site for the proposed building, parking and vehicle movement and future expansion?
- 7) What are the specific features and functions of the building that are required and/or desired by the fire fighters and their officers to accomplish their charge?
- 8) What is the Facility's capability and obligation to accommodate any additional town services such as Emergency Operations Center, Training space, Community needs such as meeting rooms or offering a warming shelter? Should these additional functions or others be included in the design plans?
- 9) How will the design address and manage maintenance, energy and operation costs?
- 10) What are the committee's recommendations for the 2 existing fire department buildings?

From this work, the Committee will submit their findings and recommendations to the Board of Selectmen by \_\_\_\_\_, 2015.

Committee Membership: In an attempt to utilize and blend relevant knowledge assets with fair and diverse community representation in the committee, the committee membership will comprise the following resident stakeholder interests:

- a) Fire & Emergency Response: Warner Fire Dept. (2 voting members)
- b) Building, Design, Engineering: Warner Energy Committee member, architect/building contractor or designer (2 voting members)
- c) Costs: Budget Committee member, Board of Selectmen member (2 voting members)
- d) Warner Community: Citizen at large member and one alternate (1 voting member)
- e) Administrative Support: Town Administrator (non-voting member)

- A. Anthony asked what is the Committee's goal, is it to provide a report summarizing their findings utilizing the directives as questions and answer points to speak directly to? The Town Administrator said that's one good way of doing it. The directives were put together to answer questions that would come up at Town Meeting. The Selectmen are trying to show the community that this committee looked at many factors and possible issues regarding the design and cost of the building.
- B. Kimberley said when she volunteered to be on this committee, the way this committee was sold was this would be the committee that would finish the design. Kimberley clarified that justification for the building is within the committees directive as well, Kimberley asked if this is true. Jim said yes, the voters need to know why they need it, how it will serve the community presently and in the future, and why it is felt it is cost effective.
- C. Selectman Brown stressed that all committee members will be voting members.
- D. Anthony feels the statement made about convincing the voters the need for a new fire station is inaccurate. Anthony feels it's clear the Fire Department has needs, he feels this work was not done in the very beginning when the current design was created and now the town is doing it's due diligence to answer all the questions, which, is why he supports trying to assist the committee in doing so. He feels the committee should spend some time before the next meeting thinking about what other things should be added to the directives. The committee needs to anticipate the questions that will be asked of them and be prepared. Anthony also feels all the data and discussions need to be tracked and placed in a report, he also feels that as open as the meetings are to the general public, the recordings should be considered to be posted on the town website. Selectman Brown said the minutes will be posted on the website. Kimberley said she also writes for the Intertown Record and could put some articles in the paper.

- E. Kimberley said she is one who is not in favor of a Taj Mahal fire station, and she knows of a lot of people who keep saying "why do we need a fire station", so she would like to see the final report be so compelling that the majority that are against it will turn around and say "we need a fire station".
- F. Selectman Brown informed the committee that the Selectman's office has received feedback from the State about the site next to the Transfer Station, that site is not available. The letter stating so will be placed on the website as well.
- G. Janice asked anywhere within the 10 items of the Directives, would the committee fit in identifying where the service is for the fire station, and where the majority of the calls are. She feels this information would be helpful. The Town Administrator said there is a call map that has been uploaded onto the Fire Department page on the town's website. Ed Raymond said the majority of the calls (75%-80%) are in the village area itself or the east side of town. The map was generated over a period of a few years. The majority of the fire fighters live either in the village area or on the east side of town. Ed said insurance is a factor as well. If a fire station is situated beyond the village area and it takes longer to get to it, the insurance carrier will dictate what the department needs. Selectman Brown will obtain a list of calls from 1973 to present for the committee.
- H. Anthony said he sees the committee as building a case for the fire department. It should also include the existing facility assessment with photos showing how undersized it is and the poor conditions. Selectman Brown said the current floor space of the fire station is 3,464. Selectman Brown said he has visited some fire stations and has learned a lot from those visits.
- I. The Fire Chief has provided a list of all equipment. Some items are stored at different areas. Anthony said the committee will also need the dimensions for every piece of equipment. Knowing the equipment needs and the future growth patterns the committee can determine what the building should house. Ed reminded the committee that the fire department and police department are not just responsible for the residents in Warner, they are responsible for Warner residents, those who travel the interstate and those who visit Warner, such as the Fall Foliage Festival.
- J. Anthony doesn't feel the current building design should be entertained, this committee should start from the beginning. Anthony said when creating a building an architect will request if there is a program, and that term defines all the spaces that are required by the community. He brought 2 designs, one from Hooksett the other from Meredith as an outline. Kimberley said she was on the first building committee which came up with a long list of specifications of what was required along with projections. Janice asked why is this committee re-doing this. Kimberley said the process was not well documented, but the first committee got to the point of designing a building and established what was needed and then Warren Street Architect designed the building. Ed said he believes there is a book at the fire station that has the list of wants and needs.
- K. Peter Ladd said successful buildings are adaptable buildings that can grow and change. Selectman Brown said he would like to know if it is cheaper to have a 1 story with room for expansion or a 2 story. Anthony said there is a break-point, when a single floor, foundation, a big roof, drive the cost up to the point where it is cheaper to do two floors because what that is balanced against is the cost for an elevator and two stairways. Anthony said for a 2 stop elevator and two stairways the total cost will be around \$65K. He said if a single floor plan starts getting to large, then it's cheaper to buy the stairs and elevator and go up and you will have a smaller footprint, smaller roof plain, cheaper to heat etc. Peter Wyman feels because the town does not have unlimited land available it would be cheaper to build a two-story.
- L. The Town Administrator said the tendency of any committee is to get to the specifics before the big picture is looked at. The committee needs to first look at the initial questions such as "why" a new fire station. Peter Wyman suggested first proving the town needs a new fire station. Selectman Brown added and is it feasible to have two fire stations. The committee agreed to first prove the need for a new fire station first. Janice said population growth may also play into the need. Ed said the focus can't be just on population. For example, how many buildings are in the town now compared to when the fire station was built in 1964 and the building materials used today burn more quickly than building material used back in 1964 and older.

Selectman Brown said another factor is the codes that are not being met in the current fire station. Peter Ladd said another consideration is the mandates that are put on the fire department, and the potential demands that are never faced in Warner, but need to be prepared for, such as an anthrax emergency, radiological emergency etc.

- M. Kimberley said she is hearing justification for the number of firemen and for equipment and is the current building sufficient and if not, why not. Ed said the current building is too small, it cannot house all the equipment, equipment needs to be special ordered to fit in the building, and it's not ADA compliant. Janice asked how as a committee do we determine if it is adequate, what are the factors. The Town Administrator suggested using best practices, federal regulations and codes that a fire department has to meet. Peter Wyman said another factor is the safety of the crew that uses the building, such as, where the gear is to be put on for a call, Peter can't turn around without touching an engine, he said the area is no more than 2 feet away from an engine that is pulling away to answer a call. Anthony said that is why pictures are needed in this presentation. Ed said another issue is the air quality in the building when the engines are started up for a call and because of poor air ventilation there is a mold problem. Peter Ladd said the current building is also not energy efficient.
- N. Janice asked Ed if he could locate the needs assessment from the prior committee. Ed said he will bring in what ever he can find. Kimberley said there has been no mention of adequate sleeping quarters should it be decided to move to a full time fire station. Ed said he doesn't see the need for full-time as of yet. The need for a rescue to cover medical emergencies would be the first step towards a full time staff. The initial cost to start a full time rescue would be about \$500K which would include an ambulance, equipment and staff. Anthony said he has seen other communities that are larger than Warner struggle with overnight accommodations, this needs strong justification.
- O. Anthony said another consideration is the building code for a fire station, which he is sure the current building does not meet a lot of those codes. He said most important is fire stations and police stations are seen as a building of essential use, during emergencies those are the building the first responders will go to so those buildings have a higher code and structural requirements. Selectman Brown said the fire station is also the Emergency Management Command Center. Ed said the command center is at the fire station at this time, but that could be situated at the police station as well.
- P. The Town Administrator said once the committee obtains the first answer, "why is a new fire station needed", he asked the committee what the next step is in terms of analysis. Anthony asked why can't the current station store all the smaller equipment and create another building that would be smaller than originally designed for the larger equipment. Anthony said he keeps hearing that same question and feels the committee should analysis it. Peter Wyman said the question is, is it cheaper to build new space than to renovate what is available. The fire station will still have ADA issues, still not energy efficient, etc. will it be cost effective versus building new.
- Q. Kimberley said she thinks the committee is jumping ahead. Step 1 is to look at the current building and assess why it does not meet the needed requirements and step 2 could the building ever be sufficient and if so what does that look like. Janice said another issue is if the committee finds the current station to be inadequate the next question is what happens to the current building? Can it be sold as is, will it need work before selling it etc. Ed feels the current station has served its purpose, there are too many things about the building that need to be updated and the vehicles need to be custom made in order to fit in the station.
- R. The Town Administrator said the committee has just spent a lot of time answering the first question "why", and now the committee is moving towards is the building adequate or inadequate for any aspect of the fire department. He said another area he feels the townspeople will want an answer for is the high cost of maintaining services in a small town with limited resources. If you look at other areas of the country, the south and mid-west, they run a more regional county system so that they are consolidating their resources a bit better than what is done in New England. He was on the New Hampshire Public Policy Studies website which has everything from demographics to trends in the economy because one of the things the committee will need to do is to think about what has been heard and thought to be fact and to either support it or discredit it. For example, Warner is the oldest town in the state, this is not true according to the website. People will ask why isn't Warner combining with another town, why do we have to have so much equipment

ourselves, what does mutual-aid mean. Factors and influences is another aspect of dealing with the adequacy and inadequacy for the questions about the building.

- S. Selectman Brown asked Ed what are the present and anticipated future staffing needs? Ed said 40 firefighters combined EMTs per the Bylaws which has been in existence is 1830, currently the staff is at 38, 30 firefighters, 8 EMTs. The second part of the question is what are the trends and issues effecting the staffing of local fire departments in the coming years and how will the building plans address this? Ed said the issue is getting people who want to volunteer. The Town Administrator asked Ed what does he think is obstructing potential volunteers from stepping up. Ed said there is a lot of training involved to become a EMT firefighter first responder, people do not want to give up their time to do this. Peter Ladd said it is valuable to point out to the townspeople that if the town was hiring out for these services the town would be paying millions; the town has a lot of dedicated people putting in free time. It takes 6 months to train for firefighter I, which involves a Tuesday, Thursday and 3 weekends per month (Saturday & Sunday). Peter Ladd added that there are fewer people working in town as well.
- T. The Town Administrator asked if it would be helpful to obtain information from towns that have transitioned from volunteer to beginning to staff. Ed explained what happened to Bradford's ambulance, they had to revert back to using Hopkinton's services because of staffing issues.
- U. The Town Administrator told the committee members to begin talking to other people, think about what they have heard about the fire department, website links will be sent to the members regarding trends. Documentation from the previous committee will be obtained for the next meeting and then the committee can move forward. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, September 9 beginning at 6:00 pm.

## **2. Adjournment**

A motion was made to adjourn at 7:38 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary Whalen  
Recording secretary