



Fire Station Building Review Committee

Meeting Minutes
Friday, September 30, 2016
UNAPPROVED

Chairman Allan Brown opened the meeting at 2:08 pm.

Committee members in attendance: Allan Brown, Kimberley Edelman, Howard Kirchner, Peter Ladd, Janice Loz, Ed Raymond, Peter Wyman

Absent: David Hartman (Traveling)

1. Upcoming Interviews

Allan noted that his hope was that upcoming architect interviews would be conducted as non-public meetings due to time constraints. He did not want public questions or opinions during the interviews.. He noted that Warner was contacting the NH Municipal Association to make sure that was legal to do according to RSA 91-A:3. Janice believed the public should be able to read the minutes. Allan said the committee could vote to seal or not seal the minutes. He just didn't want the public using the limited amount of time. However, Allan would be okay about the public sitting in, but not participating.

2. Energy Committee Questions

Allan noted that the Energy Committee submitted questions to ask during the interviews. Copies were handed out to committee members. He noted that the Energy Committee had adopted a new energy policy earlier in the week. He distributed copies of that as well.

Allan said that some of the questions from the Energy Committee may be found in the proposals. Peter Ladd, a member of the Energy Committee, noted that during interviews, it was important to really pin down how the architects view energy issues, noting that even Exxon Oil considers themselves to be "Green".

A short discussion and speculation about LEED certification followed.

Janice said in regards to energy questions, she wanted to know what the initial investment for future energy savings would look like. Peter Wyman agreed that would be a question he would want answered, but would also want to know the bottom line tax impact of any bond.

Allan said he would make sure the other Selectmen get copies of the questions.

3. Interview Methodology

Allan asked the committee how they want to approach questions. For example, would the committee want to ask different questions of each architect firm?

Allan noted that interviews would be scheduled for 45 minutes each. He wanted to avoid having each committee member asking different questions. Ed Raymond noted that unplanned questions may arise as the interview proceeds. Allan agreed that could happen but needs to be limited.

4. Potential Interview Questions

In a working session, the committee covered several topics while compiling a list of potential interview questions.

4.1 Marketing & Meetings

Peter Wyman said he wants to know how much help the architects would provide in selling the need for a fire station. Janice said that in her mind, SMP has a big advantage since they have Warner resident and currently recused FSBRC member Anthony Mento on their staff who would be ready to help sell the project. She also wants to know how the other architects would provide that same service. Peter Wyman said he felt all of the architects will have to do that to insure the bond goes through. Without committing to do that, they would not get his vote. He expects them to help clearly identify and articulate the deficiencies in the current fire station and needs going forward. Janice did not feel all of the architects would be willing to do that.

Ed Raymond said he did not think that anyone in town would have a problem understanding why Warner needs a new fire station; that the problem will sell itself. Selling the solution - a new fire station - will be the difficult part.

Allan said they were never going to be able to sell the whole town on the project. It was the people who attend Town Meeting who need to be sold the project. The best you could hope for is that the attendees come to Town Meeting with open minds, knowing that the Town has needs and wants. With the proper prep work, he felt it would pass.

Peter Wyman said he felt having someone professional from outside explain the situation will help. Peter Ladd said he gets lots of comments from people asking why such a big fire station is needed. He hopes the firm that is picked can help explain codes, standards and requirements.

Allan said he didn't know about the codes. Ed Raymond noted how having Anthony on the committee, the committee learned why certain things were required. Ed added that Allan's views and understandings had evolved.

Allan said he will depend on the fire department to make sure the station is designed correctly. The only thing Allan is concerned about is aesthetics, landscaping, driveways and how the station is going to impact the neighborhood. And of course, cost.

Janice wants a question about how the architect will gather information. Allan wants to know how many meetings and presentations they propose need to take place.

4.2 Working with the FSBRC

Howard wants to know how much the architect is willing to work with the Fire Station Building Review Committee (FSBRC). Allan agrees that is a huge concern for him, too.

Ed wants to know how the architect will feel about working with different contractors. Allan wants the architect firm to help select a Construction Manager.

Janice proposed asking how the candidates view the role of the FSBRC. Peter Wyman liked the question. Allan asked Janice to start a list of interview questions.

4.3 Construction Manager

The committee agreed to use the Construction Manager (CM) project approach. Peter Wyman noted that some of the proposals talked about CMs. Allan said he wants the architect to help select a CM. A question that confirms this was added to the list.

4.4 Energy Committee

It was agreed to add the questions from the Energy Committee to the list of interview questions.

4.5 An Architect on the FSBRC

Howard noted that two different scenarios are possible. One where Anthony's firm, SMP, get the job and Anthony is the lead architect. The other is where SMP does not get the job and Anthony returns to the FSBRC as a committee member. Howard suggested that this should be pointed out to the other three candidates and that they should be asked if the latter scenario would be a problem for them.

Janice said that all of the candidates all had the opportunity to read the FSBRC minutes and would know the situation. Peter Wyman said that in the best of all worlds, if it wasn't Anthony, he would want another architect on the committee. Allan and Peter W agreed that Anthony's level of expertise was valuable for the committee. Discussion on the topic ended with the question not being added to the list.

Janice did not think disclosure was important. Everything is in the minutes. Peter Wyman said the Selectmen could appoint another architect onto the committee at any time.

Discussion did not result in a question being added to the list.

30 minutes later, Janice returned focus to this subject, agreeing with Howard's original suggestion. Kimberley suggested the committee would have to also disclose the professions and skill sets of everyone on the committee. Howard noted that Anthony's firm is a finalist; a competitor to the other three firms. More discussion again resulted in the question not being included.

4.6 Phase II - Construction

Peter Wyman wants to know what the estimated cost would be for Phase II. He is concerned that someone will come in low for the Phase I - the conceptals, then charge a lot in the next phase.

Ed Raymond wondered why North Branch didn't send in a proposal. Allan noted they do construction management, not architect work. Allan said he wants to make sure the architect hired will help find the CM.

Allan asked who provides the build cost. Peter W said the architect creates the shopping list; the CM figures out the costs. Janice suggested asking what the architect will be during Phase II. Peter W said they usually stay engaged during the build. He added that nothing says that the architect selected for Phase I is guaranteed the Phase II job. Allan wants to plan for both phases, but the "get out" clause is in place just in case.

Allan wants to pick a good firm that the town can stay with in Phase II. Otherwise, he fears any money spent in Phase I will be wasted. Peter W agreed.

Janice asked for clarification about the role of the architect during the construction phase. Allan said the builders can't change anything on the plans without talking to the architect. Allan added that any changes to plans during construction can result in "change orders" which can cost money. Change orders need to be kept to a minimum. Peter Ladd said he had been given architectural plans that were unbuildable.

Howard liked that some of the proposals showed qualifications and resumes of contractors, but not all of them. He suggested that one of the questions for the interview probe for strengths and qualifications of sub-contractors and partners in their network. Peter Wyman said the architect won't necessarily have the contractor who does the work. He added that basically, the architect work is all paper. It will be the CM that brings in the teams who will build. So in the proposals, many of the listed contractors mentioned are involved in the design work, not the construction work. After discussion, it was agreed to add this Phase II related question to the list.

4.7 Landscaping

Allan wants to know who the landscape designer will be. Allan wants a conceptual design that includes landscaping, where the driveways go and where the parking will be. He also wants to know if the architect firm will be willing to use some of the nice trees and shrubs that are already on site in an effort to cut down on the costs. There was some discussion about whether the plants would need to be transplanted elsewhere temporarily while construction is underway.

Allan and Peter W both believe that because the FSBRC will be engaged, they can help ensure local talent is used for some aspects of the construction, specifically the landscaping. Allan said that collecting quotes from various firms will mean more work for the committee.

Kimberley suggested asking architects for examples of when they have previously worked with local contractors, such as local landscapers. She added that she would like to see a landscaping committee with abutters being invited to be members of the committee. Allan said at least 3 abutters are concerned about the landscaping. Peter W noted that while a good idea, moving funding around to cover costs of landscaping could be difficult, especially when a bond is involved.

Everyone agreed the abutters will be engaged at various stages.

Allan said he believes the architect will specify what landscaping is needed, then the committee could get quotes from architects. Peter W did not believe there would be savings going that route.

4.8 Point of Contact

Howard suggested that a question about how would be Warner's primary point of contact be added to the list. Allan said in some but not all of the proposals, the person was clearly identified. Will the interviewees be the point of contact or someone back at the office?

4.9 Services Included

Howard suggested asking what is included in the basic services.

Allan wanted to know about the cost of Phase II change orders.

Kimberley suggested asking questions which help pull out the firm's philosophy about meetings and services.

4.10 Storage Solutions and Use of Space

Janice asked if a question should be asked about how to make efficient use of space, like Anthony had suggested of using hallways that include storage bins for office supplies. She wants every little space utilized. Kimberley warned about asking questions which include the answer.

Ed Raymond said the architects know the square footage. He wanted to wait to see what they design then give feedback.

Peter Wyman recalled the Meredith fire station which had a hallway where the fire fighters' gear was stored.

Kimberley suggested, "We've got a tight budget; we're tight on space; what ideas and experience do you have that address both?"

4.11 Warrenstreet Architects

Janice suggested asking Warrenstreet Architects a question specific to them regarding their proposed fee. Howard suggested there would be more specific questions for them and possibly the other candidates. Janice wanted to know whether WA was married to their quote, even if the committee wanted a lot of changes.

Discussion about the WA proposal and the design shown in it. While different from the design done earlier, some felt it looked similar. Peter W noted that it was different. He added that hallways, although generally agreed by the committee to be wasteful, would be needed if a lot of small rooms are requested. He suggested one way to remove hallways was to have one large open training / meeting space in the middle of the floor with rooms along the perimeter. However, he also noted that during some situations, that kind of open space could pose challenges when privacy was needed.

Janice talked about a fire station floor plan where they had a common area and also an open vestibule. She said it prevented the area from looking claustrophobic.

Kimberley suggested asking WA what their proposed price would be if the committee asked for radical changes.

Peter Wyman suggested asking if WA would be willing to come to Warner for meetings instead of having the committee go to Concord. Janice felt WA would learn more coming to Warner.

Allan wonders if WA wants to deal with the committee. Howard said that question will be asked of everyone.

5. Interview Approach

Peter W asked if the questions will be provided to the candidates prior to the interview. Allan said only the energy questions would be provided up front. Kimberley thought it was an interesting idea to share all of the possible questions to see how the candidates prepare for the interview. Peter W felt that some questions would require some prep work, such as price estimates for Phase II. Allan said those who had recently built fire stations should know what their costs were.

Ed Raymond pointed out that some questions may be answered before the committee ask them. Discussion followed about whether to ask questions that were already answered in the proposals.

Kimberley asked if committee planned to approach the interviews as an interactive Q&A. For example, if the first question was not answered correctly, would the committee make a course correction during the interview in order to keep the subsequent questions relevant and valid. Kimberley did not want the interview questions to feel like an exam.

Peter Wyman asked who would be asking the questions.

Allan said he spoke with the other Selectmen about the upcoming interviews and asked them what questions they had. Clyde Carson said he may not know what questions he would want to ask until the interview is in progress. He wanted to hear the architects speak first. Allan said he hoped the interviews would be open conversations.

It was agreed Peter Ladd would be doing the energy questions. Kimberley was going to focus on minutes. The Selectmen will ask questions that come to mind. Allan did not want to be the one asking the questions. He encouraged everyone to feel free to ask questions if they come up.

Kimberley suggested that running a mock interview might be good to do to see if the interview process was a good one. She said the first interview is also a learning opportunity for the interview team. In the past, she had seen the value of doing dry runs. While a good idea, the committee agreed to pass.

Later in the meeting, Janice volunteered to be the one to ask the questions during the interview.

6. Next Steps

Allan said the four architect firms had been notified that they are in the final four. Town Administrator Jim Bingham suggested two 45 minute interviews be done on two different days, otherwise the committee may be overburdened. The committee agreed.

October 5 would be the first set of interviews. Scheduling of the second date would depend on the availability of the other Selection. Allan said, if he recalled correctly, the Selectmen would be helping interview the architects. Peter W said that the Selectmen asked the committee to select an architect. Howard asked if Jim would be involved. Allan said yes. Kimberley recommended the interviews be held at the fire station.

Janice volunteered to put type up the list of interview questions.

Howard asked what would happen after the interviews. Allan said the committee would have to hold a work session to decide which architect to recommend. The RFQ/P showed October 13 as the date Warner would notify the selected architect. Allan said there was no way that date would be met.

Peter Wyman asked Allan how much weight the committee's recommendation was likely to carry with the Board of Selectmen who get to make the final selection and decision of which architect to hire. Allan said he could not imagine the Board not listening to the committee's input after they had asked for the committee to do all of the work done over the past year.

Allan wants to the committee to provide their thoughts and suggestions to the Board. After the interviews, Allan wants to get the committee together to review the interviews and make a selection. He felt scheduling may be a challenge due to the full calendar of meetings.

Kimberley asked how the committee was going to judge and measure the performance of the interviews. She asked whether the decision would be totally subjective or if there would be some kind of scoring system.

Janice agreed that some sort of rating system was needed.

Kimberley volunteered to take Janice's list of questions and see if she could come up with an evaluation worksheet for everyone to use during the interviews.

The committee discussed again whether 2 or 3 architects should be interviewed on the first night. It was agreed that 2 per evening was enough.

Allan read an email about which architects requested which interview time slots. Two wanted October 5 at 6 pm. One wanted to interview on October 6. Another wanted to be the last one interviewed.

7. Next Meetings

Part way through the meeting, Allan telephoned Clyde Carson. Clyde said that if he misses an interview, he would not be able to make a selection. He could make Tuesday Oct 11 at 3:30 pm.

Allan called Selectman John Dabuliewicz next. John pointed out that there is a full Selectmen's meeting starting at 6 pm that same evening. He also said he didn't want to delay the interviews, so he agreed to go forward with the October 11th interviews.

Wednesday, October 5th, 6:00 pm - The first pair of interviews. Location: Warner Fire Station.

Tuesday, October 11th, 3:30 pm - The second pair of interviews. Location: Warner Fire Station.

8. Adjournment

Peter Wyman made a motion to adjourn. Ed Raymond seconded. Allan adjourned the meeting at 4:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Kimberley Brown Edelmann
Recording Secretary