



Fire Station Building Review Committee

Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 12, 2016
UNAPPROVED

Committee members in attendance: Allan Brown - Chairman, Kimberley Edelmann, David Hartman, Howard Kirchner, Peter Ladd, Janice Loz, Ed Raymond, Peter Wyman

Others present: Ed Mical

1. Opening

Chairman Allan Brown opened the meeting at 3:02 pm.

2. Missing Data

Peter Wyman pointed out that the fire fighters had to leave during the Samyn D'Elia interview. He wanted to know how they answered the Phase II cost question. Howard recalled that they would work within a well defined budget. Kimberley added that the price would be dependent on what the Town wanted in terms of energy and other features. Peter felt since they design fire stations for a living, all architects should be able to come up with a rough number.

Peter noted that Warrenstreet estimated \$60,000 less than the last time. Goudreau said it was 8% of cost, \$200,000 minus upfront costs. Peter asked SMP. Did anyone ask Samyn D'Elia.

Kimberley noted that the original plan to ask fixed questions did not work out. Two firms gave presentations. Selectmen asked questions.

Janice recalled hearing that estimating Phase II cost was challenging without knowing what the building looked like. Peter argued that the architects know. If the cost is 20% of the project, that increases the overall cost. One of the committee's original concerns was that the architects could quote a very low conceptual fee, then charge a lot more in Phase II. That is why he wanted that information up front.

Anthony from SMP and another architect both said they needed to shave their quotes down to be competitive in the conceptual quotes.

Howard pointed out that the committee could call Samyn D'Elia and ask for the information. No one could find the answer to Peter's question in their notes.

3. Straw Poll

A straw poll / informal tally was done to get a pulse of where the committee stood in terms of their Top 2.

- 1 - Warrenstreet
- 5 - Cowan Goudreau
- 4 - Samyn D'Elia
- 6 - SMP

Moving forward in the discussion, the committee agreed it was important to try to articulate and document why each architect firm was selected or not.

4. Warrenstreet Architects (WA)

Peter Wyman noted that the reason WA was included in the short list in the first place was for political reasons.

Janice said it was important to note that they provided the lowest quote and that the Town had already spent a lot of money with them. Peter said the reason their quote was low was because they would reuse the previous plans. If they had to start all over... a new ballgame.

Ed Raymond noted that the other architects want to view the previous plans. There is a lot of valuable data there. Howard felt WA overplayed the value of those plans. Janice pointed out that Warner paid for those plans.

Janice thought the money with WA was well spent, in that it was a good first step. It got the conversation started. It was a shame it went that far.

Peter Ladd felt the new building is not going to be the same as the first design.

Howard noted that going forward, selling the project to the community, each member of the committee will be an ambassador. The members need to like the plans. Howard likes WA and his impression of the architect improved after his presentation. However, he did not feel dedication from him. Howard felt the architect felt he had to be in the interview.

Peter Ladd had had one meeting with WA. He heard the architect say that the building was built to minimum code. Every other architect claims they build way beyond code. Janice said the architect had directed him to keep costs low. After the interview, Peter felt they were not as progressive as the other architects.

Allan said it sounded to him like WA did not want to deal with a Construction Manager.

Peter Wyman said WA said Warner had to sell the building; that they would not be doing that. Janice added that the marketing piece was not there. Howard was not impressed by the informational session WA did at a previous Town Meeting.

Janice did not feel WA would be open to listening to the committee's ideas.

Allan choked over the money issue. He really wanted to reuse the previous plans and save the Town money. But after the interview, even the very low bid could not persuade him.

5. Samyn D'Elia Architects (SDA)

Ed voted for them. He really liked their tone.

Kimberley liked them and ranked them as her highest candidate. She felt they came across really well as people people; good listening skills, good communicators. She wanted them as the facilitators for meetings and presenters at Town Meeting. Reading the proposal, it sounded like they would train the committee and walk away, but that was not what she thought after meeting them. Instead, they would be facilitators and stand with the committee. She did not find them to be as cocky as some other candidates.

Janice was still nervous about selling the fire station and needs the architect at her side. Kimberley felt SDA will be there.

Allan felt Goudreau was more personable.

Howard was much impressed by SDA's willingness to work with the committee. That was their strength. They also came up with a good conceptual design of the layout of the station. Kimberley added that they even let the Chief keep the drawing. Peter W noted that SDA had taken the last fire station they did and put it on the Warner site. Allan also liked the layout and thought it fit the neighborhood.

Janice liked that SDA would preserve the site's current landscaping and plants as much as possible.

Kimberley said that all of the architects will design what the committee wants. The fact that they let Warner keep their conceptual design impressed her. Janice concurred; designers don't leave a drawing behind because they would not want another designer to see it. She added that but they have so much business and are such a high class firm, they must not be worried about it.

Peter Wyman asked if anyone asked if they could be ready for a bond vote at Town Meeting. Allan said it was SDA who recommended pushing both phases through and that they could be ready. That is why Jim Bingham asked the question at the next interview.

Allan noted that SDA would help with the CM selection.

Allan said SDA did the I-93 rest stops. Everyone agreed the buildings were impressive, aside from the cupola...

Peter Ladd said at first, he was thinking he would prefer to go with a small company to get their full attention. SDA has big projects everywhere. Peter Wyman said the smallest firm was Cowan Goudreau.

Janice said SDA rose to the top for her because of their experience and design acumen.

Howard noted that SDA was the most expensive in terms of preparing for Town Meeting. But that doesn't mean the total cost of the fire station will be highest with them. He was left with the impression that they would be worth it.

Kimberley noted that the top 3 proposals were only within \$6,000 of each other....

Howard asked if the Phase I costs get rolled into the Phase II costs? Cowan Goudreau said it would. The question was not asked of everyone.

Kimberley liked that the candidates shook everyone's hands and handed out business cards, noting that that was good business behavior. She felt both SDA and Cowan Goudreau looked like they were taking the interview seriously while the other two were more casual and seemed like they felt they were the heir apparent to get Warner's business.

David Hartman did not like the darkness of the Cowan Goudreau card; not a good first impression. He liked the SDA cards.

Allan noted that Samyn D'Elia thought Atkinson was the same size as Warner; its population is twice as big.

6. SMP

David said their architect knows more about the needs of Warner due to being on the fire station committee. He did not know if he was a good architect.

Kimberley said she would prefer to have the architect back on the committee. Howard agreed, saying his value would be in being able to sell the fire station to the Town as a committee member.

Allan said when the SMP architect was asked to be on the committee, it should not be a taint on his firm. Peter Wyman agreed it is not right to say the architect would be more valuable on the committee. Howard added that either way, the architect would still be on the project. Allan said he would be looking out for his own community.

Peter Wyman had SMP in the Top 2 since he did not have enough information about Samyn D'Elia. He would have one suggestion for the architect: Don't sit on a table when presenting to the public. A couple agreed, but Allan felt the architect felt comfortable with the committee. Peter Ladd felt SMP did not try hard enough and wondered if they were bidding on the job as a favor to the architect. He went on to say he liked their work.

Janice recommended looking at the content and leaving the body language beside. She liked that they would act as facilitators and engage the community, breaking down the barriers. Kimberley said Samyn D'Elia offered the same skills. She felt the presentation material SMP would provide was valuable.

Peter W said SMP would sell the project to the public. Janice liked that and said not to underestimate the value of that.

Howard asked what SMP's response was when asked if they could accelerate the schedule. Allan said they said it could be done but felt it was better to educate the public and push it out in the public, more than it was to hurry it through. Ed Raymond agreed to a certain extent but also noted that the committee did not know what the SMP workload looked like.

Janice said SMP mentioned the word charrette.

Peter Ladd asked if anyone noticed they kept talking about Meredith. Howard noted that was one the architect had been involved in. Allan added it was a tough one. Howard said there was one abutter. In Warner, there wasn't just one abutter to win over.

Janice noted that SMP mostly does municipal projects.

When asked if they had done a small town project, they talked about the big Canterbury complex.

Janice felt SMP was the best choice for engaging the public. She also liked that they would have 2 people at every meeting.

SMP will help critique and select a Construction Manager.

Allan liked that with SMP, the Town can hire their own landscapers. He believe that will save a lot of money. Janice likes the idea of hiring local talent. Howard was not sure the question was asked of SDA. Kimberley said Allan and SDA were busy designing the landscape during the interview.

Allan noted that SMP would be happy to break out services and let Warner hire engineers and contractors. No one else offered that option.

Peter Wyman said anything that the CM does, he gets paid for with a markup. Anything Warner does itself will save the 10 or 20% markup. Peter Ladd noted that someone in Warner would have to manage the work not done through the CM. Peter W agreed it would take up a lot of time; managing the landscaping after the construction, however, is possible. Howard noted that not everyone was asked about this; other firms may be as flexible. Allan said no one else offered that option whereas SMP did. Kimberley said the architect knew how to appeal to Allan. Janice said everyone could read the minutes.

7. Energy Committee

Howard asked Peter Ladd to give his opinion about the Top 3 architects from an energy perspective.

Peter felt it was clear that most of them considered energy efficiencies to be part of the standard package.

Peter said he had CGA at the top of list list. He felt they did a lot of good projects in that field, whereas the others did not have as many specific answers.

Howard felt CGA was the most prepared to talk about energy. Allan said they CGA had read the meeting minutes.

Janice said SMP brought a good list of energy work.

Howard liked that CGA talked about bringing one the State's top energy experts to the project.

8. Cowan and Goudreau Architects (CGA)

The discussion soon focused on CGA.....

Janice like that CGA had done 5 fire stations in the past 4 years.

Peter Ladd reiterated that CGA was the most responsive to his energy questions.

Kimberley said CGA would do energy ROI calculations.

Peter Ladd said SMP had a good attitude about energy, but not the specifics CGA had.

CGA gave Phase II pricing. CGA does not do reimburseables. There are no add on expenses.

Kimberley liked that CGA gave detailed pricing about the Milton Fire Station. \$226 per square foot. Peter Wyman said he tried to get that kind of information from others.

Janice felt CGA contracted out a lot of work, but wondered if that was common in the industry. Peter Ladd liked that they were a small firm. Kimberley said it seemed like all the architect firms partnered with contractors to do the mechanical, electrical, plumbing and that was why some of the proposals were so thick; they included resumes of the firms used.

Allan said he believed CGA uses Eckman. Peter Wyman felt that if Warner wanted them to use someone else, they would be agreeable to it.

Howard felt CGA had an impressive time line in the proposal.

Janice said it sounded like CGA was very patient. The 3 year Milton project was an example.

Janice was still not sure CGA would help sell the project. She felt SDA or SMP would be better in front of the public. Allan agreed the SMP architect would not be as casual at Town Meeting.

Peter Ladd said it sounded like CGA uses Construction Managers for all of their jobs. They work with NorthPoint and Eckman.

Peter Wyman said it was good that CGA was out of Concord.

Peter Ladd liked the fact that CGA talked about a more interactive process; not going off and designing the building and then bringing it back to the committee later.

9. Criteria and General Discussion

Peter Wyman suggested having another vote now that they had discussed the candidates.

Kimberley asked what the key criteria was when making our votes.

Janice said her for, it was how much help the committee would get in marketing the project, facilitating listening sessions with the public, listening to the FSBRC, taking feedback from the committee; the whole marketing piece.

Howard felt working with the FSBRC was the most important. A good design, he said, should really sell itself. You don't always have to have the architect there to sell a good building. The price has to be good, too.

Allan said he felt towns people respond better to a resident instead of an outside suit and tie. Janice said that is why SMP is a good choice, keeping the architect who had been on the committee engaged involved the project. Kimberley reiterated having that architect on the committee, someone who understands architects, could help prevent the blanket from being pulled over the committee's eyes. Janice likes that the SMP architect will be vested in the solution. Allan added that if not for the SMP architect, he would have ranked CGA and SDA as his top picks.

Ed Raymond interjected that Aktinson is a small town on the Mass border. The Bartlett project in the North Country and Holderness were more comparable to Warner.

Janice liked SMP for the marketing piece. However, she liked all top 3.

Peter Wyman asked Allan if it was feasible to go for a full bond at Town Meeting in 2017, and whether that was important in the selection. Peter Ladd said he expects the Town to say two or three times, so why not start in 2017? Howard felt going for the bond was a good idea. Allan said there was no way he wanted to go to Town Meeting thinking the vote would fail. He wants to go in totally prepared and ready to have the vote pass on the first time. Failing is often due to not having enough information up front.

Janice recalled when the Middle School failed in the first vote. This resulted in more listening sessions and more engagement of the public.

Ed Raymond said the fire station is not the usual kind of building. It's a special building.

Peter Ladd said the fire station needs to say something positive about the Town. Howard added that it should be a beautiful building.

Ed said there are many things that will need to be explained to the public; why so many specific features are required.

Howard asked if the committee was agreeing that going for the full bond should not be pushed. Allan said another bond would be presented in 2017. Having two would not go over well. Ed asked if that bond fails, would it be presented again in 2018?

David Hartman said he felt the process was working just fine. He said all four architects were good. He even liked Warrenstreet Architects, however he was not sure how the Town would embrace them. Howard said he knows some people had a bad taste in their mouth regarding the previous project and that impacts WA. Kimberley said WA did exactly what the Town requested.

Dave liked both SMP and SDA. He felt the P in SMP came across as a bit of a California hippy. Both architects have done nice work. David wants a nice looking, functional building that does not impact the neighborhood any more than it needs to. It will be a big building. He likes the Hopkinton Library designed by SMP. He likes the buildings SDA designed, even the one superimposed on the Warner fire station lot. Dave was not as impressed by CGA in terms of being able to stand up at Town Meeting, although he has been surprised by how some people are able to do just that.

Janice asked if references should be checked. Allan said he wanted to narrow the list down to 2 architects first.

The committee reiterated that they will be staying involved in the project.

Allan asked if was SDA who said they would support the committee but expected the committee to do the selling. Kimberley said they said the committee needs to be prepared to answer questions from the public; they would help prepare us to do that. Howard and Janice added that SDA would answer technical questions.

David asked where the architect for SDA lived. The answer was Henniker. David likes the proximity.

Proposals came in at:

CGA \$18,500 flat.
SMP \$19,500 +
SDA \$24,700 +

Warner is doing the geo-technical.

10. The Vote

The committee discussed what they should deliver to the Board of Selectman. They agreed that they should try to narrow the list down to two architects.

The committee debated whether to vote by hand or put their names against their votes. It was agreed since the committee is acting as one voice, a hand vote would be done.

Peter Wyman suggested that all four architects be considered again.

David noted this was how some States select presidents. Caucus!

The votes for architects in the Top 2 of each committee member :

0 - Warrenstreet
3 - Cowan Goudreau
6 - Samyn D'Elia
5 - SMP

Some people did change their ratings after discussion. Ed only voted once. Peter Wyman wondered if Kimberley remembered to count herself. Peter Ladd called for a recount. Peter Wyman kept a close eye on the voting. Results of the recount :

0 - Warrenstreet
3 - Cowan Goudreau
6 - Samyn D'Elia
6 - SMP

Allan wanted to know who should check the references. Kimberley suggested that the Town Administrator should speak with the Town Administrator of other towns, or the Fire Chief could talk to other Fire Chiefs. Allan said Fire Chiefs might not know about the finance side. Peter Ladd said no chief was going to say they didn't love their new station.

Allan said he'd speak with Jim even though he didn't want to dump more work on him. Kimberley asked what the priorities were? Peter Ladd noted that Jim was the only one being paid to do the work. Janice said it was only a couple phone calls. Allan said he'd like 3 references per architect.

Allan said Jim would be good at it. He's a good listener.

11. Previous Minutes

September 21, 2016 and September 28, 2016 minutes were both approved.

12. Next Meeting?

Howard asked where the committee goes from here.

David asked Allan if he felt the Selectmen would be able to make a selection. Allan said yes.

The Board of Selectmen would be told who the Top 2 were at the meeting tomorrow's work session. And it will be on the record.

Kimberley said the committee should accept the possibility that the Selectmen may not decide to go with one of the committee's Top 2 architects. The committee did what they were asked to do.

Allan promised to email the committee with information about a future meeting.

13. Committee Membership

Howard asked... if SMP is chosen, the committee would not have an architect on the committee. Would the committee want to replace him?

Allan was content with the committee as it stood.

Kimberley wondered if the abutter to the east would want to join. Allan mentioned another abutter who might be interested.

Janice worried about having to bring a new member up to speed.

Howard noted that there was a member of the public who attended all the meetings; maybe he could be a new member....

14. Adjournment

Allan adjourned the meeting at 4:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Kimberley Brown Edelmann
Recording Secretary