



# Warner Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, October 15, 2015  
APPROVED

Chairman Hartman opened the meeting at 7:00 pm.

In Attendance: David Hartman – Chairman/Selectman, Clyde Carson – Selectman, Allan N. Brown – Selectman, Jim Bingham – Town Administrator

Others present: Tim Grant – Provan & Lorber

## **1. Public Hearing – Proposed Fire Station Site**

- A. Chairman Hartman explained the Selectmen are required to hold 2 public hearings for public input before purchasing property, the first being tonight and the second on October 27 beginning at 7:00 pm.
- B. Selectman Brown provided a presentation. The proposed site is located on Map 34 Lot 20-2. Because water and sewer are available for this site, the cost for site work figures about \$200K which is far less than the site work proposed at the site adjacent to the river. As of this date, a purchasing price has not been negotiated for Map 34 Lot 20-2.
- C. The audience called for clarification and asked if anything will be voted on this evening. Selectman Brown said the money to purchase this lot, Map 34 Lot 20-2, was approved at Town Meeting. It was stated that it was not advertised in the Town Report. Selectman Brown said in the Town Meeting minutes, second page, the lot was identified as well as in the presentation at Town Meeting. Selectman Brown identified the location of the property on a map. Currently, there is a building committee working on establishing what is needed, the goal is a double sided building that allows the vehicle to drive through.

### Public Comments:

- Rhonda Rood asked for some clarification on the map that was displayed.
- Beverly Heaton asked if there is a home situated on the edge of the proposed property.
- Peter Savlen asked for clarification on the parking area. Selectman Brown said there is 46 parking spaces. The plan is to change the driveway grade for needed site distance and he is hopeful that the drive next to the house can remain so the driveway to the property isn't shared with the homeowner. Someone asked if he has talked to D.O.T about changing the grades. Selectman Brown said yes he has, D.O.T said they would work with town.
- Rhonda Rood asked if a traffic light is planned, she said there have been a couple of accidents near that site. Selectman Brown said that is way out in the future.
- Charlie Albano said there is a petition signed by 65 resident's, the first thing on the petition says "do not purchase property or pay for architectural designs until the State of NH and the Town of Warner Planning Board approves the driveway for the proposed property". This is a major issue the Planning Board has brought up and it's important to receive in writing D.O.T's intent. Selectman Brown said he spoke to the person on the state level that issues permits and told him what the town wants to do. D.O.T said because the town doesn't own the property the town cannot apply for a driveway permit. He received assurance verbally. Charlie said there are many issues with that driveway. The Planning Board has not addressed the illegal driveway that's been sitting there for 5 years. He said the Planning Board recommended a traffic study. Charlie said if he was on the Planning Board he would like to have something to look at so he could give a qualified response. Charlie said the Planning Board also recommended obtaining a variance prior to the purchase; the sight does not permit a fire station. Selectman Brown feels that is open to interpretation, a garage is not permitted and he does not consider a fire station a garage. Selectman Brown said a school and church is allowed and to him that would draw a lot more traffic than a fire station. Charlie said the Planning Board provided a nine point recommendation before purchasing the property and he has not seen the Selectman's response in writing to any of the Planning Board points. The Town Administrator said the Planning Board has received a response that includes the environmental impact study and answers to their recommendations. The Planning Board will be looking at the response at their next meeting.

- Rhonda Rood recommended having the property owner apply for a preliminary driveway permit. Selectman Brown said D.O.T would still need to know the various grades and that will require an engineering study.
- Wally Morse said the part that bothers him is there is a closed mind to the solution and the solution is build a new building. He said the property the town now owns could be used to build a building for less than \$250K for excess fire equipment. He would like to see a satellite station down at exit 7 as well. He feels the proposed location is a bad idea because it effects the neighbors, it has bad access to the highway and 2 children have been killed at that location. Selectman Brown doesn't believe the proposed property contributed to the children. Selectman Brown said over 40 sites have been looked at, and after the land committee was recessed the Selectmen looked at more sites, it's hard to find a lot that is big enough to expand. Also, when you locate a fire station out of the village area the insurance rates will increase.
- Steve Raymond, a member of the fire department, said the thought of a satellite station is ridiculous. There will be two buildings that will need to be maintained. A fire station is not a garage, the trucks need to be stored with water in them, you need a water source he feels it would not be efficient during an emergency call.
- Someone (name not audible) asked, did the vote at Town Meeting include the cost of the land? Selectman Brown said yes, \$165K was appropriated. The asking price is \$125K, the balance is for studies. She asked why would the town pay \$125K when the land is worth \$60K. Selectman Brown said the Selectmen have not negotiated on the asking price. She then asked how many times has a fire truck situated in front of the other equipment not start. Selectman Brown recalled one time last year during Town Meeting. She also asked what would be the reason for expansion. Selectman Brown said the building plan that was developed was for 50 years and he feels build what you need now with room for expansion. She then asked what will be the trigger for expansion. Selectman Brown said a full-time fire department or full time rescue. She asked how big does the town need to be to warrant full-time. Selectman Brown said it's not the size, it's when the town decides they want full-time service. She asked how many volunteer fire fighters are there and do they all arrive when there is a call, she feels it is absurd to have 40 parking spaces. Selectman Brown said there are 39 volunteers.
- Someone (name not audible) said to Selectman Brown that he prospectively asked D.O.T for a driveway permit and talked about reconstructing the slope. He said there is more to this than just asking for a permit because the reconstruction would effect a state road, a catch basin would be involved, a highway study, drainage and environmental issues etc. Selectman Brown said that was his whole point, D.O.T would not give a driveway permit by just asking, there will be engineering involved. Selectman Brown asked Tim Grant from Provan & Lorber to address the concern regarding the driveway. Tim said he completed a preliminary analysis of this site. Part of the analysis was to see if the drainage off the site could be handled. The bulk of the drainage would stay on the site and would be infiltrated around the perimeter of the parking area. The additional drainage that would go down the street was checked to see that it would not run across the road onto adjacent properties. Tim said this site is suitable from the standpoint of drainage, sewage and handling site distance on the road. It's actually a better site than the existing one downtown, it's also significantly better than the property situated near the river.
- Someone (name not audible) asked Tim how he did his study in regards to drainage run off. Tim said a standard software, he says he knows the size and grading of the proposed site which is used in determining flow, this software is used for any site.
- Someone (name not audible) asked if the aquifer on this property was identified. Selectman Brown said any thing on this side of town sits on top of an aquifer.
- Rachel DeThomas said the landowner had this property on the market for \$59K and it didn't sell for 2 years and now he's coming to the town asking for \$125K, she said she doesn't understand the discrepancy in the price. Selectman Brown said a dollar figure was needed for the warrant, at this time there have been no negotiations, which he explained at Town Meeting. She asked if this asking price was publicly known. Chairman Hartman said yes, the asking price was publicly known at Town Meeting this year.
- Rhonda Rood said she was told that the property owner was afraid he would not be able to sell the house next to the property for as much because it will be devalued by the fire department. Selectman Brown said the town assessors were asked if a home could lose value being situated near a fire station and assessor's could not find anywhere in the state where property was devalued because of a fire station.
- Rebecca Courser confirmed that the Selectmen have not yet negotiated the \$125K asking price which is not necessarily the price the town will be paying and at some point the Selectmen will negotiate if the Selectmen choose to build on this property, hopefully negotiating for less. Selectman Brown said personally he is hoping to negotiate for less, he said the Selectmen have not had a discussion yet on a price. Rebecca also pointed out if for instance the town is going to pay between \$100K-\$125K for the property, the advantage of it is the property is on town water and sewer versus property the town would be looking at outside the precinct. Selectman Brown said at the original site, water, sewer and three phase power would need to be added, which is another additional cost. Rebecca said the advantage then is to find a piece of property in

the water district where those costs are covered. Rebecca said most towns have their fire station in the center of their community, not outside the community.

- Richard Senior asked if there is a second site in mind? Selectman Brown said the Board has looked at other sites and cannot disclose any information at this time. The Town Administrator said the town needs a certain criteria for the land, centrally located, and there is not much land to pick from. There are other sites being looked at by the Selectmen and when the Selectmen go into negotiations, there will be leverage.
- Someone (name not audible) said he is not against a new fire station but he remembers approving \$165K for land but doesn't remember voting on this piece of land at the Town Meeting. He said the town looked at other sites which were not feasible. He asked what would the difference be buying a piece of land down the road for \$30K and put \$200K into it, he said the town would be ahead of the game compared to the property being discussed. The audience member also said the proposed site is a parking area for the Fall Foliage Festival, where will that go. Selectman Brown said this lot was identified at Town Meeting as the lot wanted to be purchased. Chairman Hartman said that is why there is a public hearing on this property. The Selectmen have brought this property forward for public input, to stop or to buy it.
- Rachel DeThomas asked if this lot was identified specifically in the Town Report. Selectman Brown said the lot was identified during Town Meeting.
- Someone said (name not audible) the fact the Selectmen received approval to purchase "a" piece of land is dropped from the equation, and no there was no approval to purchase this piece of land. The Town Administrator said the warrant article clearly states voters at Town Meeting voted to approve a certain amount of money for the purchase of land for the new fire station and design. The voters also approved to authorize the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend that money as they see fit. That is what was voted on. An audience member booed the Town Administrator's statement. The Town Administrator said the 2 public hearings are for public input on the proposed property.
- Carol Cookingham asked if the voters are going to have the opportunity to vote specifically on this piece of property. Selectman Brown said this will be up to the Board of Selectmen. The public hearing is for public input to help the Selectmen decide.
- Someone (name not audible) recommended a show of hands for feedback.
- Harold Whittemore said he feels the towns are trying to build too much in the centers of town instead of building out. He feels there should be an access road built off of Kearsarge Mt. Road.
- Howard Kirchner said to those who are concerned about this site in that there was no notification. He said this site was identified as one of two at a public hearing a month or two before Town Meeting.
- Someone (name not audible) asked why aren't "we" looking at other sites as well, why aren't there other choices for input. Selectman Brown said a committee was put together for a site search, this information has been out there.
- Steve Hall recommended presenting an overview to the audience about the land committee. Steve said the committee had criteria to meet, looked at over 30 sites etc. And, Steve said at Town Meeting this property was proposed, there was a picture showing the voters the location and now all of a sudden nobody knows about this. Steve said there has been all kinds of meetings about this project and no one shows up.
- Karen Raymond said she attended a meeting where the Selectmen showed at least 4 properties. It was a public meeting so this is not the first time that the voters are seeing a proposal. The other public hearing went through all the work completed up to this point.
- Someone (name not audible) asked if the fire department was part of the committee that looked at the sites. Selectman Brown said there were members from the fire department on the committee. He asked if the fire department is happy with the site. Selectman Brown said he has not heard one word from the fire department saying they are against it. The audience member said if they like the property shouldn't we look at them for some assurance?
- Beverly Heaton said in response to what Steve Hall said, we have been to those meetings and have commented and we have expressed our negative feelings about it. She said she is always left with "what difference does it make what we say, your gonna do what you want", because we are right back in same place we were two months ago. Our expressions fall on deaf ears. Selectman Brown said it does not fall on deaf ears. Beverly disagreed. Selectman Brown said at Town Meeting the vote was 55 against 76 in favor, the majority wins. There was a disagreement that the voters were voting on this piece of property. The slides tonight were the same slides from Town Meeting.
- Pat DeAngelis asked how can Warner afford a fire station when all is said amounts to say 2.5 or 3 million dollars, and should we purchase this property not knowing all the numbers involved? Selectman Brown said the building that was designed for the original site is about \$2.7 million, that is why he became involved in this project. Selectman Brown said personally he doesn't feel the town needs to build a building for 50 years. The current station was built thinking it would last forever, 50 years later we are here. The station was built on a postage stamp with no room for expansion. Selectman Brown's goal is to find a piece of property big enough for now and in the future. Pat asked if there will be more public hearings about the

building. Selectman Brown said yes, a committee has been formed and have had 4 meetings so far.

- John Heaton asked if one of the sites considered was the one next to the current station? Selectman Brown said the building committee talked about that, he said the building next to it is assessed at \$300+K, there is the cost for demolition, and he said you would be lucky to get three quarters of an acre by removing all those buildings next to the fire station. John said all he's asking is if a study has been done that considers the entire cost relative to all the other proposals. John feels the current fire station area is feasible and as town citizens we need to hear that story with some detail. He said the objection with this proposed site is we have been over this a few times, for those who keep coming to the meetings and we see it again and again and quite honestly the Selectmen do not care what we say, that is the perception.
- Charlie Albano said the fire station will probably be the most expensive cost ever, the 2 public hearings is the start for dialog. He recommended to the audience to go on line and sign up to receive the meeting minutes to see the work that is done in committees. Charlie said although 2 meetings are required, there is a lot more to discuss before the land is purchased. He said he attended the last building committee meeting and they work hard and are asking the right questions. But, what he heard at that meeting and based on projected square footage the building cost was estimated at \$1.8 million. This cost does not include engineering costs, the interior fit-up and the cost for a 20 year bond, the purchase of the property which brings the total cost to about \$2.75 -3.25 million. Charlie said in the end the town purchases the property, and he feels at this time the town would not approve a bond today. Charlie feels more time is needed to deliberate with more public hearings, he thinks there will be a body of people that will become more interested and come to more meetings. Charlie feels the cost is too big.
- Someone (name not audible) asked why was the task given to the site selection committee to look for a 3 acre parcel when a 2 acre parcel is being settled on? She also said to build the station where the post office is and make them move. Selectman Brown said the committee had to set a guideline, so the committee came up with 3-5 acres. He said it is harder to find than it sounds. Her point is the guideline implies that's what is needed to build on, but in fact, it's not true. Selectman Brown said the proposed site has more usable land than most others in town and he doesn't feel the town should commit to a piece of property that does not allow for future expansion.
- Someone asked if a satellite station has been considered, they recommended the D.O.T site past Exit 9. Selectman Brown explained that the fire department staff does not recommend being situated beyond Exit 9 and the town did inquire to the State about that site and was told it would not be placed on the surplus list.
- Brian Monaghan, Captain on the Fire Department, said the bottom line is we need a new station. The site has 2 parking spots, the reason there is 39 members is because we all work different shifts and we try to build our roster in a way to have coverage. Someone said they all don't show up at the same time. Brian said at least half or more show up. He said we need a station, the trucks need to be custom made to fit into the current station. Brian said there was a fire, the truck didn't have enough hose to go up the 200' driveway and had to wait for the next truck to come in. He said we need the trucks situated so they can do what they do. Brian said the bottom line is the town is going to need a new fire station.
- Richard Senor said he was the one who proposed looking into the D.O.T site. He said he spoke with the Fire Chief the other night and what he told him sounded logical, so he won't be asking about that site anymore. The proposed piece of land he feels is the right size because the fire department wants a drive through bay. His issue is the price for the property, what he wants is transparency, he would like the Selectmen to provide a breakdown of what each piece is going to cost. And let's see if another piece of property could be used for negotiation purposes.
- Someone (name not audible) agrees a bigger station is needed. His concern is the town purchases the land and then the town doesn't approve the bond to build the station because those who are apposed show up at Town Meeting and vote it down. Do we then look for another parcel? Selectman Brown explained that it took 3 years to pass the bond for an addition on the Library. The audience member said the land and the fire station together should be presented. Selectman Brown said every year less than 100 people vote on a \$3 million annual budget at a well advertised Town Meeting. And it's common for more people to show up and vote on bond articles.
- Rhonda Rood suggested having the seller complete the engineering studies on the property.
- Steve Bridgewater agrees a new fire department is needed. But, Steve does not believe a hand shake no problem regarding the D.O.T driveway permit will end up as a hand shake no problem. He would like to see formal approval from D.O.T before our money is spent.
- Ken Milendar said if the property owner has postulated \$125K to save the depreciation of the house, where's his cut because he lives next door. He has talked to many people from all walks of life and all said the fire station will depreciate the value of his home.
- Richard Senor said to Ken then his taxes will go down and his insurance will cost less. Ken said that is not true, his broker told him it's not the location of the fire station it's the location of the fire hydrants.
- Harold Whittemore asked if there is an advantage where the fire station will be versus the roundabout.

- Selectman Brown said the insurance rates are cheaper if the station is in the precinct.
- Fire Chief Ed Raymond said he checked with insurance companies and if the station is placed outside of any precinct that has fire hydrants the rating will increase that's why we want it in the precinct plus the majority of buildings are in the center as well. He said people have suggested buying the TDS building for parking. Ed said that building stores millions of dollars of equipment and if it is moved those rates will go up. Someone else mentioned the Post Office, Ed said that building is falling down on the back side. Ed does not feel the proposed location will effect anyone's value, Ed feels it's an ideal spot. Ed said at the current location the trucks need to run for a while before they head out, and when cold the brakes lock up using across the street would not help. Plus the current location has the worst intersection in town.
  - Someone (name not audible) feels a fire station at the proposed location will impact how people are living in that area.
  - Someone (name not audible) asked what the proposed property generates in taxes. Selectman Brown didn't know the answer.
  - Jim McLaughlin said he lives within 4 houses of the current fire station and he can honestly say in 41 years living there he never experienced any problem with noise or lights from the fire station. Most times they don't run their sirens, they are good neighbors.
  - One audience member said he feels the solution is to go back to square one and figure out a better solution to the needs of the fire department. This proposal is not a good solution, and he thinks at the end of the day when you put a \$3.5 million bond issue before the town it will not pass. He thinks the town needs to engineer a solution to the needs of the fire department that the town can afford.
  - Mike Amaral was on the site committee primarily because he was opposed to the site the town already owned along the river. Mike is absolutely confident out of the 40 plus parcels they looked at they didn't miss one better than this. Mike said having a bond voted down doesn't concern him as much as being 10 years down the road and finding no place to put it.
  - Matt Boyer lives in the neighborhood that will be impacted by the fire station and he is a member of the fire department. He said there is no perfect place for the fire station and the station needs to be within the precinct, you have to start someplace and this is the starting point. Matt is also building a house on Split Rock Road and he's not complaining about the new location for the fire department, it's part of life, you also have a highway that runs through town and there is noise associated with that. There has been multiple meetings on this and he thinks it's crazy that we are at this point battling, we need a new fire station. You want to volunteer your time and risk your life getting run over like the rest of us, come on down and look at the fire station, it's tiny.
  - Beverly Heaton said in response to Matt, when you buy a piece a property in a quiet residential section and then a fire station comes in, that's a lot different from buying next to a highway that you know is noisy at the time of your purchase.
  - Someone (name not audible) expressed concern about the asking price for the property. She said she doesn't trust the Selectmen in their judgment.
  - Someone asked what are the plans for the old station, will it be sold? Selectman Brown said a new fire station is needed before it can be sold, but at this time it is unknown, he personally would sell it.
  - Fay Vadnais would like to know if she is correct but she understands that the current station is on land that was gifted and built by a lot of volunteers. She would hate to see it sold, she thinks the property can't be sold. She also said she would be proud to have a fire department in her neighborhood. She lived next to the old State shed and it was nice because you knew your road was going to be plowed.
  - Chairman Hartman at this time closed the public hearing at 9:00 pm and encouraged the audience to attend the second public hearing on October 27<sup>th</sup>. He said after the hearings if there is an overwhelming negative vote against the property, that would impress him to really think about buying this piece of land. A decision will be made shortly after the October 27<sup>th</sup> hearing. He encouraged the audience to recommend another piece of property at the next meeting.

## **2. Adjournment**

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn at 9:07 pm.

Board of Selectmen  
David E. Hartman – Chairman  
Clyde Carson  
Allan N. Brown