

February 5, 2024

Town Office Feasibility Committee  
Meeting Minutes

**Present:**

Jennifer Baker  
Chuck Comeau  
Patricia Bessette  
Ed Mekjian  
Judith Leggett  
Shannon Sabree  
Robert Sheehan

**Guests:**

Jonathan Beder  
Ed Cifune (DBVW Architects)  
Michael Viveiros (DBVW)  
Kathy McDonald (APS)  
Paul Chapman (APS)

Chair Baker called the meeting to order at 6pm.

Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes from October 18th and November 8th, 2024.

A motion was made by Tricia Bessette to approve the October 18th minutes. Seconded by Shannon Sabree

No discussion

Unanimous vote by members present at 10/18/23 meeting.

Motion carries

A motion was made by Tricia Bessette to approve the November 8th minutes. Seconded by Shannon Sabree.

No discussion

Unanimous vote by members present at 11/8/23 meeting.

Motion carries

The Chair asked if any member of the committee had old business to discuss. Seeing none, she turned the meeting over to Jonathan Beder (JB), Town Administrator for an update on the Architect's progress.

JB noted that there were representatives from Avon Public Schools in the audience because we are discussing some school offices being in the new Town Office complex.

JB noted that there have been some issues in the building with water (stormy this week) and had to pull up some carpets and had to solve a heating problem. Not moving forward with any repairs based on this committee's direction.

JB mentioned that he received a price from an appraiser to look at the current Town Office space in the amount of \$4,000. The appraisal will help us decide what to do with the current space should a new Town Office building be constructed. JB also mentioned grant money that could be obtained that are supporting certain developments and he has spoken with the housing authority about the possibility of housing in this location, they are open to exploring that.

JB also provided a Sewer update: the town is still in discussion with Brockton, trying to set up meetings with Stoughton and MWRA as well. No timetable for decisions was provided.

JB then turned over the meeting to DBVW to run through their presentation. They shared that they narrowed down the choices to the existing property and the proposed donated property on E. Main Street after assessing the pros and cons of each property option. The existing site is 1.6 acres, and the proposed donated property is 2.4 acres. The proposed donated property also abuts Fagan drive and there are benefits to that.

DBVW looked at the previous programming that was completed based on direction from the previous meeting with them and determined the programming would require 24,000 sf (gross square footage) for the project.

DBVW discussed a possible renovation option at the current site. There is currently not enough space to put an addition while maintaining the parking we have. This site wouldn't be big enough to add the school offices. The site is bound with residential and commercial abutters as well as wetlands. The building is not built to the current code. Anything that gets fixed or remodeled would then be subject to the building code so this would be a total gut/reno. It would also need to be phased and offices would need to be relocated to alternative accommodation which would get costly. People cannot remain in the building while work is being completed. You could renovate it to something that would suit modern operations.

Shannon asked: Would it be the existing exterior? DBVW replied no, it must be completely redone roof, skin, ceilings, floors, and insulation which is the most critical component to any renovation.

Ed mentioned that the slab height is the same as the ground so high rain may flood the brand-new building.

It was also noted that the septic system is located by the road and can't be located anywhere else on the property. Sewer would be the only way, which may be available but is still a ways out (years).

DBVW then presented the option of a new building on donated land on E. Main Street. You start with a clean slate, just have to demolish what is on the existing properties. Potential septic system in the front yard and not behind near wetlands. They would try to give the building flexibility in terms of who enters and when. Parking could be maximized and would be able to get 84 spaces on that site. There is some potential to connect to Fagan drive. The Location is good and doesn't require any significant phasing because no one would relocate until the entire building is done. There would be more outdoor space, which is good for the Council on Aging and the Civic Center. This plan does provide space for adding the school offices.

Shannon inquired about the current site of the school offices.

JB indicated that the school is in discussion with MSBA regarding a new school and they would get demolished at that time. They were temporary quarters 25 years ago.

Shannon asked what about the corner lot (E. Main and Fagan Drive)?

JB indicated that it is not necessary for the project to move forward. DBVW was able to get the whole building on one site so we don't need to acquire the corner lot.

Tricia asked about the square footage of the current site.

DBVW answered that the current site, both buildings is about 13,000 sf

Tricia asked; How big is that BOS room? She is concerned about voting and will it be big enough to accommodate voting.

DBVW indicated it was bigger than the current one. Plus, there are other meeting spaces throughout the building in the civic center and council on aging, that doesn't include the various conference rooms etc.

Judith reminded the committee that this design is conceptual, it doesn't have to be that way, the committee can comment and move pieces around.

Ed asked How many kitchens and baths in the program?

DBVW replied that there should be one commercial type of kitchen plus a staff kitchenette. Large toilet banks plus smaller bathrooms by the COA and Civic Center.

Ed added with a commercial kitchen it would need a grease trap like a restaurant.

DBVW added the conceptual design should fit the character of the Town of Avon and look a little more civic and inviting than the current facilities.

Shannon added that thinking forward we should consider charging stations and possibly solar panels and other green initiatives.

DBVW replied that a job they just did in Norton, some of them are not ready to do things but the bones are there so they can add later. It's a fully sprinkled wood framed building.

JB told the committee that DBVW offered a tour of Norton depending on the Town moving forward.

Tricia noted she would really like to see the second access to Fagan.

Ed asked if we could put solar panels in the wetland area where you can't build.

DBVW indicated that is not an option.

The building Inspector Bob Borden was invited to speak at this time, he mentioned that if you weren't building for solar now you would be forced to do it down the road.

DBVW continued the presentation considering what the current site could be used for. If COA was stuck here, then you are challenged with what needs to be around here. So, they looked at just developing for affordable housing. Mixed use on the bottom and 2-3 floors of housing. It

becomes a parking exercise. 1.5 parking spaces for each unit so only 48 spaces would be needed.

DBVW presented the estimate. Cost estimate: had an estimator look at the plans. An estimated renovation cost would be \$12.7 million hard construction, the estimate for a new building would be \$18.1 million All in costs for a Renovation would be \$16,735,524 vs. a New Building \$24,162,418

JB told the committee they have numbers for renovation and new construction. Part of our master plan is creating the setting, adjacent to Robbins Park, creating more open space and a possible athletic complex on Fagan, then looking to rehab the current site. It has tremendous potential. He mentioned that the Selectboard closes the warrant 2/8/24 for the Annual Town Meeting. Regardless of what this committee chooses we would need funding for design and the Owner's Project Manager (OPM). Need an OPM to be our advocate/representative throughout.

The projected cost for the first piece, hiring an owner's project manager and a design team to design the complete package is \$2.1 million. They need to bring on many consultants to do the work. Schematic design development and construction documents to get these docs ready to be bid. \$1.6 million for Architect & Engineer, the balance is the OPM fee. If passed at Town Meeting, the dollars would be ready July 1 to get to work on this. The process would take 12 - 18 months. DBVW suggests they could be ready for the following Annual Town Meeting in 2025 with the plans for construction to include an article on that warrant.

JB explained if it passed at Town Meeting the Selectboard would have to appoint a Designer Selection Committee to pick an OPM and interview Architects.

Shannon asked if we go forward with the recommendation what is the next step for this committee.

JB explained they would need to provide a narrative to the Selectboard meeting on 2/15/24 as a scheduled agenda item and would be looking to them to vote as to whether they support this.

Ed asked what the chances are at a Town meeting for this article given the state of the economy

JB noted that the Town has a lot of stabilization accounts so we could potentially fund this part without a borrow. It's all about community outreach meetings with all residents and stakeholders. We have a lot of debt that's coming off. Significant debt drop off, so he's pretty sure you can afford this. Work with bond counsel, what would the impact on taxes be at high, medium low and commercial and industrial. That's how we would have to do it.

Ed mentioned the donated lot is free and then we could sell the current lot to help pay for it.

JB agreed and said the town shouldn't kick the can down the road in this building anymore. Bob Borden said the construction costs are going to go up 30% in 5 years.

Tricia asked of the \$2.1 million how much do we have so that we wouldn't have to borrow?

JB rescinded that \$1.5 million is in the Capital Planning stabilization account. However, there are a lot of capital requests this year.

Shannon said her recommendation would be to move forward with a new build. It's a waste to put any more into this building. It's the way to go for the future.

Paul Chapman asked if there is a rendering of the school department suite, they have meetings that have recently been up to 60 people. Will that kind of space be accommodated?

DBVW noted that this is just a concept drawing, but the Selectboard meeting area would accommodate a meeting that size.

Chuck said he thinks the concept is pretty good. It's just a cartoon so we'll have to look at the floor plan. The idea of doing something with this piece of property down the road makes this project viable. Agrees with Shannon that we should move forward with a new build. It's a long process, while the economy may not be good right now, this is a long process. If the economy does slow down the bidding will get tighter if there are less projects. The presentation is good the idea of having a complex over there makes a lot of sense, the effort of rebuilding and paving Fagan drive, the town will be a cohesive scenario.

Shannon Sabree makes a motion to recommend to the Selectboard that they move forward with a new building on the donated E. Main Street site.

Chuck Comeau seconds.

No additional discussion

Vote is unanimous, motion carries.

JB will let the board know about the agenda item and how that is going to work. Not sure about the order but it would be great if this group appeared at the Selectboard meeting on 2/15/24. He knows we've done a really good job exposing everything, bringing it forward and considering new options. He will work with Tricia on the warrant article. The vote will provide momentum to the project. Should the Selectboard vote for it, then we will do outreach.

Chuck added that the Selectboard will vote then this committee's work will be done the Selectboard would appoint a Designer Selection Committee

Tricia questioned whether this committee would be tasked with getting the word out to residents and bolstering support.

JB said Yes, and especially getting supporters at Town Meeting.

Shannon moves to adjourn.

Ed seconds

Unanimous

Meeting adjourned at 7:08pm