

Town of Danbury
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES
BOND HEARING MINUTES

Thursday January 11th 2024, 6:00 PM

Members present: Chair Jessica Hatch, Tracy Shepard, Ruby Hill

Also present, Maggi Fellows, Administrative Assistant
Lenny Ryan, Anna Hullinger

Jessica Hatch opened the meeting at 6:05pm

- Review of the default Budget / Jessica Hatch Made a motion to approve the Default budget (\$1,520,366) Ruby Hill Seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0
- Review of the Warrant articles / Warrant articles reviewed.
- Discuss upcoming Bond hearing / Board will need to make a motion to put it on as a warrant article, Budget Committee will also have to vote. The committee has looked into grants.

Vote to close additional unused Capital reserve account. (Planning Board Capital Reserve account)

“Planning Board Capital Reserve”

This was established in 2000 by town vote for the purpose of “conservation and preservation”. \$100 was placed in it that year. I don’t think any other money was added since, as the balance currently is \$105.59. Jessica made a motion to add the Planning Board capital reserve account to the list of the capital reserves to be closed. Ruby Seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0

At 6:30pm Jessica. Motion to move the meeting to the Bond Hearing.

6:35 PM Jessica Hatch opened the Bond Hearing, Welcome everybody, We are here to open the bond hearing

Jessica Hatch. so I am going to read the bond article that is proposed to be put on the Warrant article. We don't have an article number, to see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$3,000,000 for the purpose of financing the construction of a new fire station and the improvements and renovations of the existing fire station for the use as the police station, along with related costs. \$3,000,000 of such sum to be raised through the issuance of bonds or notes under and in compliance with the Municipal Finance Act, RSA 33:. One as amended to authorize the selectmen to apply, for, obtain and accept federal, state, and other aid. Any which may be available for said project and to comply with all laws applicable to said project. To authorize the Selectmen to issue, negotiate, sell and deliver said bonds and notes, to determine the rate of interest they're on and the maturity and other terms thereof. And to authorize the selectmen to take any other action or to pass any other vote relative thereto. Then goes on to recommended or not recommended by the Board of Selectmen and Recommended Not Recommended by the Budget Committee. So with that lets open, does anybody

here on this board have any questions or thoughts or comments about the subject?

Ruby Hill asked "Do you know what that would be or how long this bond is for?"

Jessica Hatch. "It is for 20 years."

Jessica Hatch. "I open up to the public for any questions or comments and this is recorded and there are minutes being taken. So please say your name."

Jim Phelps. What's the breakdown between the cost of the new building and the renovations to fire stations for the Police Department?

Jessica Hatch. We are looking at 2.5 million for the new fire station and 500 thousand for the renovations of the old fire station.

Rich Mellow. wondering if we Can we sell the old fire station and include it in part of the new fire station for the police to work out of, instead of renovating the old one? Just get it right off the town's books.

Jessica Hatch. So we did have a feasibility study and quite a few of our members of that Feasibility study is here in the audience and working that out in the square footage and all building everything brand new with the Sallyport and a jail and everything. We were looking at close to another one and a half million in just putting that in a brand-new building when we could, you know, reconstruct what we already have because there's bays and everything. So it works out well for Sally Port and to do that construction in those bays to make it cheaper, you know, less for the taxpayers.

Don Padgett. I think a lot of people want to know at the current tax rate, what's the impact gonna be on our yearly tax bills.

Jessica Hatch. So I just got these numbers from bond counsel today from the municipal bond bank and it's the very first year the three million would be at \$1.69 per thousand. So a \$250,000 home would be \$422.50 for that one year. That's \$1.69 the very first year but as the loan progresses and you have less principal and the interest goes down so at the end of the 20 years we're talking \$0.90 per thousand.

Mark Ramsey. I understand your proposal here that one of the major reasons is the fire trucks themselves, we've been forced to purchase altered equipment which made it unsafe in the current building. Also, it made it unsafe once they pulled out the traffic. Am I correct? What are the plans of these inadequate fire trucks?

Fire Chief Jeremy Martin. They were custom made to fit in the building that we have. So it's unsafe right now for the guys to get at the equipment. It's unsafe to come in and out of that building with the equipment because they're working basically within, a few feet of the road, right. The Apron is on the roadway. That's only one of the inadequacies with that building. It's just not updated to what to our needs are. It's not enough and we have given thought to altering the building itself rather than spend 3 million. There is no where to do it. That building basically sits on the ground that it sits on. There's nothing you're going to do to rectify the fact that the building sits on the road.

Audrey Pelligreno. what I've heard previously was when they pull out of the buildings, they have to pull onto the country store property to get out of the building. There's not enough room to make that turn without going onto the other property. It's too close to the road. I think that's what Jeremy trying to say.

Linda Wilson, isn't it a lot more expensive to have to buy custom made fire engines instead of a more standard model so that every time we get new equipment, we're essentially wasting money because the standard models can't fit into our Firehouse? This was confirmed by Chief Martin.

Chris Huyler. Jeremy, can you explain any other deficiencies of the building, ceiling height and egress, any other major deficiencies with the current fire department building.

Chief Martin. just the top couple, one of the biggest concerns today is cancer awareness in the fire service ,firefighters are high risk of cancer. One of the ways to mitigate that is some sort of an exhaust system to do something with the diesel fuels in the building. We've looked over the last 10 or 15 years of trying to do something to mitigate that problem and it's just isn't possible due to the space restrictions.

Most fire stations today have some sort of ventilation , along with the fact that we don't have showers, There's no way to put showers in, this is a safety concern for decon after a fire. Size wise it's just not adequate for us. There's there's no office space, we bought a gear extractor which is washing machine and have it stuffed in the closet we built.

Kathy Kearney. Just trying to figure out where the new site is.

Jessica Hatch. So it's right across from Route 104 auto, that flat site. The town owns that.

Artelia Ellis. am I right in understanding from the previous meeting that this new building and the space and other things that it would provide, would also put us on a path to where it might be able to have our own ambulance service as well.

Jessica Hatch. You never know where the growth is going, we are just looking for the space to be able to have the equipment or apparatus we have. When we have mutual aid truck covering your station. No other surrounding towns trucks can fit in this station ,so in the winter if they're covering our station, they're sitting out there parked, just running their truck to keep it warm and going. So that I think is what we were talking about to have that space, not necessarily an actual ambulance service. But in the future possibly housing an ambulance.

Lenny Ryan. Could we park the two police cruisers there inside so they wouldn't be outside parked out here and put them in the new fire station. it'd be great for the two cruisers that are just sitting outside.

Jim Phelps, What grants or federal funds or might be available? You mentioned that in the graph.

Jessica Hatch. We have tried to look at that. I see Marilyn is in the back. She's on the committee, about grants, USDA does not have a grant to build an actual building, but they have grants for stuff inside the buildings. So She's working on that. She actually talked to them. And so there's definitely stuff like that we are working on, but there's not something to actually build the building.

Jim Phelps. What about FEMA grants? I know other times we use FEMA grants for firefighting equipment. I don't know about buildings.

Anna Hullinger. Yeah, there's a few other grants out there for fire departments and from the state of New Hampshire that we're going to try to also take a look at and apply for to reduce the cost. And that could be everything from exhaust systems within the building to other type of equipment that in the fire

department might need that would make it code. So there's still more grant opportunities ranging from 50,000 to 1/4 of a million that we can apply for to help reduce the cost. Eversource also has grants for lighting

Jim Phelps. Does this, the funding amount include whatever necessary inside the building? Is this just for the building construction?

Jessica Hatch. his question was whether or not this 3,000,000 includes to building costs and everything inside the building. I believe Jeremy has said that everything we have would be moving from the old Firehouse to the new.

Chief Martin. advised they would be looking into grants for lighting from Eversource.

Karen Padgett. is this considered a 75 year build.

Jessica Hatch. The committee had planned for a 75 year building

Don Padgett. wouldn't the renovation of the old fire department for the police station give you a place to house the cruisers?

Jessica Hatch. Yes they would be, I think Lenny was trying to say while we were getting that all set up, but I'm sure there's enough room to just park them in there temporarily.

Bill Fraser. how much more is the customization of the fire truck? You know you needed to do the customization in the current place. And when is the next anticipated purchase?

Jessica Hatch. I don't know if we have an anticipated purchase date. What was the cost to construct the last one that you guys, ordered, it was like 380.

Jessica Hatch. I don't think it costs us anymore. They are all custom built anyway, right? I don't think it cost anymore because they're all custom built anyway.

Jessica Hatch. we have the whole feasibility study on the website and there's pictures of actually in there and there's pictures of the firefighters trying to actually get into the equipment. There is NO room. They're right tight into that building. There's no room to be able to even work around them or work on them.

Joan LaPlante. how many fire trucks do you have?

Chief Martin. we currently have 3 fire engines and a rescue.

Joan LaPlante. Do you have a grant writer?

Jessica Hatch. Marilyn is a grant writer. Are you into that too?

Joan LaPlante. No, I am not. No. There's a lot of COVID money floating around. There's still some left. So I think that would be worth looking into.

Jessica Hatch. Well we also have that 124,000 of the COVID money which is the American rescue Plan that was planning to go toward this building.

Jim Phelps. How big is the square footage for both?

Jessica Hatch. I think it's around 8700 square feet and the existing one is just under 3600 if you count on the 2nd floor, it's around 4000.

Chris Huyler. what are your stats this year for how many calls you guys have versus fire calls versus EMS?

Chief Martin. As far as number of calls, in 2023, we probably did 200.

Joan LaPlante. Can I ask another question? . Does that mean that all your three trucks go out every time you get a call?

Chief Martin. No. It depends on what the call is, depends on what we respond to.

Chris Huyler. How many fire calls were in the other question how?

Chief Martin. 20% fire calls

Joan LaPlante. What's the size of this new building compared to what's in Bristol?

Jessica Hatch. I have no clue what Bristol I honestly don't know, Bristol the Combo Police and fire. That's not just a fire station.

Dennis Ruppel. I was just curious, is there a plan B. I think a lot of people are kind of super shocked with 3,000,000. Is there another plan for a cheaper option?

Jessica Hatch. This is the cheap option the the original option was 4.5 to 6,000,000.

Mark Zaccarria. Just one quick question. I presume that the new design involves a double door base so that you can drive in one way and out the other.

Jessica Hatch. Yes, over there on those posters is a basic layout in what we're looking to do and there's enough land , and enough for parking spaces and area to turn around there is a septic design and we have a good well. The state told us we could have two driveways, and there is right three phase power there.

Lenny, Ryan, is that the \$6 million option or the two and a half million dollar option,

Jessica Hatch. that there was the six million option.

Lenny Ryan. So its different than the picture on the top, right. So what what's going to change in that building? Where is the two and a half million dollar option.

Jessica Hatch. We are not going to have that like T part off the front. It will be more squared off. Jessica Cook is working on that design now for us to actually have that picture and everything for deliberative session. So we'll have an actually picture and more descriptiveness of everything at that time. this was one version that was expensive.

Noreen Rollins. How old is the equipment we currently have and are you anticipating any recent needs

for new equipment?

Chief Martin. Well, our oldest engine is 26 years old. We have two other trucks that are within 10 years old. Our rescue is 15 years old. My NFPA standards, the oldest engine should be replaced soon because they have a 25 year lifespan. The truck is still in pretty good condition and we're going to try to get by with it, so we don't anticipate purchasing or requesting any new like within the next two years.,probably definitely in the next 10.

Peg Cooper. just to clarify, So looking at the picture on the bottom, the layout of the actual floor plan, you're chopping off the the bunkhouse portion.

Jessica Cook. We're not going to chop it off. We're just going to make the building more rectangular

Peg Cooper. What would be the purpose of having those I mean it's not a full time fire department its volunteer.

Jessica Cook. They would not be used now, we are planning for the future, this is a 75 year plan.

Jessica Hatch. But it's something that would eventually probably be used and then sometimes could be used for training equipment. Right now they have no space, when there's a call you're have that paperwork that's not supposed to be out for everybody to see. , the Chief only has one room down there with everybody.

The Chief really needs his own office. And we also have an Emergency Management director too. He's not here tonight, but he has a lot to do with a lot of stuff that goes on in the town and it's better to have a small office for him too to have his stuff and everything there.

James Farmer. Just wondering if it's set up so that we could add on eventually if we had to.

Jessica Hatch. Probably. I mean, there's enough land there, but we hope to just do it once and not have to keep going.

James Farmer. I get that. But you know, times grow, things happen. Yep.

Jim Phelps. What is the possibility of not doing the Police Department at the same time? He said what was the possibility of not doing the Police Department and just having the fire department?

Jessica Hatch. Well, I believe that they have a lot of safety issues there. They are in just this one room here. The secretary actually had an incident not too long ago where, she was in the office, and was concerned for her safety when a person came in. It's like a box. You can't even get out if someone comes in.

Jim Phelps. How is the Existing fire station suitable for Police Department, but not a fire department. One of the issues raised is getting in and out of the building, So you're coming out with police cruiser versus a fire truck. There's no different than coming out of there with a fire truck in terms of the road and the access. I really think that the intent or the expectation of a lot of people is this would be a safety services building and I know it was the intent when I was on the board of selectmen and we had a public hearing vote to retain that property. It was very specific that we said it was for safety services building which intended to be Fire Rescue and police. And I think that the belief of a lot of the members of the public was is that should be a combined facility at least on the same site. So I'm not really comfortable spending half, \$1,000,000 on the old fire station, which is not conducive to just easily being converted to.

Karen Padgett. Is it my understanding that adding the police to this building, this fire station, would have cost well in excess of \$500,000?

Jessica Hatch. Yes. It was gonna cost 1.5 to 2 million. So we were looking to do it the best for our taxpayers. That's why we were able to reuse that building because you need less square footage for a police station VS Fire Station. there were two options that we looked at and one actually retained some storage for the town as well.. Our feasibility study is on the town website.

Jessica Hatch. I'm making a motion at 7:04p to close this public bond hearing. Motion seconded by Ruby Hill. Motion passed 3-0.

Jessica Hatch. So I'm making a motion as the Board of Selectmen to recommend that this article be put on the warrant to see if the town will vote \$3,000,000 for the purpose of financing and construction of the new fire station, improvements, renovation of existing fire station for use as the police station, along with related costs. Do you really want me to read the rest? That's my motion. All right, I'll second that. Tracy seconds. That all in favor? Aye.

Ruby Hill. No, But I want to explain it. I think we should have a combined building. I've been in the fire department. I know we need a new fire department. There's this saying that when seconds matter, we have minutes. And it doesn't matter to me if it's an emergency call or a fire. I don't like the fact that they can't get through the doorway. I know they need showers and all of that. I just think that we should have one less building to maintain instead of adding yet another building to maintain. Because every time we need something, whether it's siding on the back of here or painting the Community Center, it's a struggle to get people to agree to spend that money. So that's why.

Jessica Hatch. All right, well, motion carries. 2-1

The next meeting of the Board of Selectmen will be held on Wednesday, January 17th, 2024, at 6pm.

Respectfully submitted, Maggi Fellows, Administrative Assistant

January 11th 2024, Selectmen's Meeting
January 11th 2024 Bond Hearing