

Danbury Public Safety Building Committee

April 9, 2024

Danbury Volunteer Fire Department

Present: James Farmer, David Cummings, Lenny Ryan, Marilyn Godfrey, Anna Hullinger, Jeremy Martin (Fire Chief), Becky Huntoon (Admin PD), Jessica Hatch (Chair), Chris Huyler, Jon Johnson, Brandon Bliss (Deputy Fire Chief)

Meeting Opened at 7:07 PM by Jessica

As we are all aware the vote for the Bond failed on voting day in March- where does this Committee want to go now?

Chris thanked the Committee for all of their work that was put into it.

Since there were several new faces, a brief discussion regarding how the Committee was formed and what had been done.

Discussion regarding concerns/ feedback from the community:

- Feasibility Study was hard to read, the suggestion offered by the community member was for it to tell a better story (how, why, when, and a summary of what was decided) with less pictures of other departments.
- It was asked if any other engineering designs were involved; discussion that the 'plans' were sketches and not the final design and if this group decides to move forward it would grant us more opportunity to get better quotes (and what the rough estimate of a what a single family home was costing to build)
- Given an opportunity for a fresh start- we know the building is needed, let's bring folks to the meetings and maybe construction companies to let us know what they might need for an RFP; invite Community Development (Concord) for a consultation to see how to get what we need and how to fund it.
  - o A concern was addressed that with construction companies being so busy, they may not have time to come out for a pre-quote meeting
    - A discussion about Wallace not giving a full quote until the Warrant Articles were published, when it was asked of them for several months late last Summer/ Early Fall and they gave us guestimate on only the frame.
  - o Funding- earmarked funding and how to get those funds to smaller rural communities like ours
- Statistics needed- town by town
  - o Clarification as to why DVFD does not use their Social Media Platform to not glorify a tragedy- it has been department policy from previous Chiefs as has worked. However, as a department they are considering a monthly update, but are still working out that process

- Discussed using the Social Media Platform for more of a Prevention Aspect
    - Concern that the Volunteers were stretched thin already with the required trainings to maintain certifications and keeping things a float.
- Discussion regarding needing to grow membership, but in order to do that safely, there was a space need.
- Discussion of the path we had talked about previously and how we came to the conclusion that had been presented.
- Discussion regarding that this Committee, the Selectmen, and the Budget Committee all need to be on the same page- going forward; agree on a plan that the Selectmen and Budget Committee can support, so that in turn the Townsfolk will also support.
- Layout- there were several version presented, with no quotes about where the money would be spent in the designs
  - Combined building
  - Building Size
    - Smaller to starts, then add on as needed.
      - Discussion of why we opted for the larger size, without the ‘add-on’ option—build once, prepare the site once; cutting corners as a start hasn’t worked, based on feedback from other agencies that were visited during the Feasibility Study,
- How to better explain the “wants” than the “needs, but with room for future growth, while keeping costs reasonable.
  - Discussion on now being able to possibly get more quotes and better numbers.
    - We had to decide last Fall as a Committee do we try now and present for a Bond or just keep going- it was decided to try for the Bond.
    - There was no communication from the School on what might happen and how that might have affected our decision
  - Discussion regarding how to trim the quotes to build in phases, is there even a way to tier the planning system.
- Clarifications as to what was included in the designs presented.
  - Discussion of how the designs came to be, and it was still a draft, more than a ‘set design’
- Can we get the cost down to 1.5 million, a building w a 2<sup>nd</sup> floor design (not finished- yet) with an option to add the PD if it needed (since we still don’t know what is happening with that)
  - Sell the current Fire Station, get it back on the tax- roll
  - A discussion on a Site View of the Andover Highway Garage and how that came to be
  - Concern if a building was built smaller, in maybe 5 years we may be coming back to the voters to say we need more money to add on
    - A Discussion regarding if a new building of a comparable size was built, addressing the safety concerns that need to be addressed with this building, the Fire Department would not fit in that space.
- Discussion of what a timeframe might look like, can we have a vote on fire- police-combined

- That couldn't happen until March, then we'd be another year again before we could even bring up a bond/ begin building
- This discussion has been on-going for at last 20 years, when Mert was still Fire Chief and maybe Dale Cook was Police Chief and that the Fire Department is NOT a garage to park fire trucks, it is a building to operate the Fire Station.
- Is there a way to get what people want, what the Fire Department and Police Department need and what the town can afford
  - This should not be being sold by the FF/ EMT, it is the job of the Selectmen and Budget Committee.

Start with a CIP (Capital Improvement Plan) and how to use that to better plan for the future needs of town and larger expenses.

- Discussion about how the CIP is prepared now, and how we should be better about making sure that the plan should be observed.

The plans have been looked over several times, the lot has been measured, have a diagram with less 'frills' identified- there was a concern by many that it was a 'fancy building'; the base design is an 80 x 90 box- with adequate floor place, the height is needed to work on top of the trucks, the storage space over the office space would allow some room to grow, without having to add square feet down the road.

- The current meeting room in the DVFD was built in 1977, it wasn't big enough then, but it was what they had to work with.
- Discussion of how the role of a FF/ EMT has changes over the year and how they now conduct themselves outside of the Fire Station (ex. No more take home gear for safety of self and family)
- A basic building that is big enough to work out of safely
- Making sure the building is facing in a direction that makes sense for accessibility, safety, and energy efficiency

A discussion on how a special vote process could happen—it is not really an option without a court order

- Follow-up how to poll the townsfolk as to what they might vote for
- A 3/5 vote is required, so that isn't just 1 or 2 votes that sway it.

A contingency plan if a bond is placed a ballot again, with an question of 'if A fails, B could happen' (all items need to be addressed through the process before they are considered ballot worthy).

Chris offered to get a couple of quotes from his contacts on a basic 80 x 90 building, Chief Martin provided him with a copy of the quote we had be presented (without the company name on it) so that apples to apples could be compared.

Fundraising- is there a way to do this so that when grants are applied for there might be a 'grant match' waiting in a fund ready to be expended. Fundraising beyond what the DVFD already does to offset their expenses for the year.

Grant Process- a Discussion regarding how they work and what they actually provide funding for.

Faults that we feel need to be addressed:

- The importance of visual presentations, and actual representations of what we are talking about is important.
- No Contingency Plan
- Correct Information set Forward (making sure it gets where it is supposed to be)

Meetings going forward will be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the Month at 7pm.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:07 PM