

Building and Facilities Committee

Minutes of 11-5-20; Zoom

Members Present (taken by roll call, and each announcing that no other person was present with that member): Bowers, Cardillo, Beasley, Cross, Hoglund, Sherman, Bianchi; Absent: Cannon

Also present: Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator; Frank Anzalone

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

1. *Approval of Minutes*

The minutes of the previous meeting of October 22, 2020 were approved.

2. *Presentation of Administrator's Amended Report: Kim Hallquist*

The Chair introduced Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator, who discussed developing potential needs at the Academy building for office space and meeting space for other purposes, as outlined in her report to the Committee, attached hereto and made a part of these Minutes. She stated that there was not an immediate pressing need, but that these issues should be kept in mind, and that there would be a need to address them at some point in the future. She did not include any of these items in her budget request for this year. There is a concern regarding a waiting area for those doing business at the Tax Collector/Town Clerk Office; but with the Covid epidemic, it is hard to predict what the issue will be in the future. She also feels there is a need for space for committee/volunteer use, such as for records storage and meetings.

Mr. Beasley inquired whether the steps and changes to procedure which have been taken related to dealing with Covid might be helpful in alleviating future needs for space for Town residents' usage of the offices. Ms. Hallquist responded that that would likely be true. Mr. Beasley also inquired regarding earlier statements Ms. Hallquist had made at the Selectmen's meeting on October 14, 2020, regarding use of the Buker building. She responded that there would likely be a need to shift office space in the Academy building, which would result in the need for additional office space. The Buker building would be one possible solution, as would use of the Syd Crook Room for offices within the Academy building.

There followed general discussion of these issues, and a conclusion that there is a need to immediately do upgrades to Whipple Hall to make it useful and accommodating for Committee meetings, Board meetings, general public meetings, training sessions and the like, so that the Syd Crook Room might be used for offices if needed. Mr. Cardillo stated that it was incumbent upon this Committee to move this matter forward and to let the Selectmen know it is necessary to begin at once to make the necessary improvements to Whipple Hall. He also suggested that the Committee should ask the Selectmen to delegate that task to this Committee to undertake the necessary review and actions to accomplish this.

After further discussion, the Committee asked the Chair to send to the Selectmen a Memorandum, stating, in essence: (1) it is a priority for the Town to make the necessary improvements to Whipple Hall for Town use; (2) the cost of these improvements should be included in the current budget cycle; (3) the Selectmen should take the appropriate steps to make available approximately \$10,000 to hire the necessary professional(s) to determine what is required to upgrade Whipple Hall for appropriate and adequate Town meeting space; and, (4) the Selectmen should give the Building and Facilities Committee the authority to take the necessary and appropriate actions to retain and expend up to \$10,000 for professional assistance to determine what is required.

3. Presentation of concerns re Building Inspector/Permit Issues: Frank Anzalone

Frank Anzalone came before the Committee to inquire about and offer some thoughts regarding a Building Inspector. He noted that there is a fair amount of commercial building activity in Town, all of which is governed by the State Building Code; that contractors are bound by the Code, but that it is extensive and detailed, encompassing several separate codes related to different aspects of construction. He noted that the State Code separates 1-2 family building construction from commercial construction, and that residential construction related to more than two-family construction is considered to be commercial. He expressed the thought that although contractors may mean well, they do not always have the expertise and knowledge to fully follow the Code, and that, in fact, it would be extremely difficult for a part-time building inspector

to effectively carry out all the duties of compliance. In the alternative, he noted that he has been involved in projects in other towns who utilize the State Fire Marshal to function as the town building inspector for commercial construction, and that it has worked quite well. He stated that the Code authorizes this, and the State Fire Marshal has reacted timely to town requests, and the process has functioned well.

The question was raised and discussed whether the Town can appoint the State Fire Marshal to do only commercial inspections, and not 1-2 family inspections; or, whether the Town must adopt an ordinance that includes both categories. In that case, the Fire Marshal could do commercial inspections, but the Town would have to have its own building inspector and process for 1-2 family dwellings. After much discussion about the need for inspections of commercial building construction for safety reasons for the good of the Town, and the concern as to the legality of appointing the Fire Marshal for solely commercial buildings, without a separate enforcement mechanism for 1-2 family dwellings, it was moved, seconded, and unanimously

VOTED: To recommend to the Selectmen that they retain the State Fire Marshal to act on behalf of the Town of New London to do building inspections and issue building permits for proposed commercial building requests covered by the State Building Code; provided that it is legally permissible to do so under the Code.

The Chair will send to the Selectmen a memorandum outlining this request and Vote, and asking that they seek the opinion of Town Counsel.

4. *Old Business*

The Chair reported he had met with Chief Cobb and John Cannon as requested by the Selectmen, regarding those items of safety and security which the Chief felt needed immediate attention; and a means to define the potential cost of those items for Town budget purposes. John Cannon offered his knowledge of the issues involved. He has prepared a memo to the Selectmen outlining their conclusions, but it has not yet been reviewed and approved by the Chief and John, so is not available for review by this Committee at this point.

The Chair also reported that he met with SAU Supt. Winfried Feneberg and

Justin Garzia, Chair of the Recreation Commission, in response to the request by the Selectmen to pursue the option of using SAU space for the Rec. Dept., in order to acquaint Justin with the space at the SAU building which has earlier been reviewed by this Committee. The next step would be to determine potential costs for modifying the space for Rec. Dept. use, and the Chair requested that the Committee authorize Mr. Cross to contact North Branch Builders to determine if they would view the premises on behalf of the Town and prepare an estimate of costs. Mr. Cross agreed to do so, and the Committee authorized him to proceed.

The Chair then noted that he had attended the Selectmen's meeting by Zoom on October 26, 2020, regarding a request to use as a "home" base space in the Rec. Dept. area by the Center for the Arts; and a request to allow the Emergency Management Team to use the Rec. Dept. space. The Selectmen did not grant either request.

5. Other items to come before the Committee

Mr. Cross reported that he had been contacted by Chief Cobb and asked to review with her the possibility of the Town purchase of the "Stahlman building" on Pleasant Street for use as a new Police Station. He stated that the asking price is \$1,000,099, and the gross square feet is 7,320. This compares to 9,321 GSF available in the Buker building. He noted that it would require putting on an addition, and that there were many issues that would have to be resolved, including the need for an elevator, and the nature of the right of way granting the property access to the rear of the building.

Mr. Beasley stated that any suggestions of this nature, for acquiring buildings or land for Town office or department use, or other uses are within the charge of this Committee, and should be referred to this Committee in the initial instance, before discussions are pursued regarding such purchases or uses. In particular, it is important that any such suggestions for Police Department purposes be first reviewed, discussed, and analyzed by this Committee, since it has already performed that function with regard to the present situation of the Police Department, potential new construction, and the square foot needs of the Department.

After further discussion, the Committee requested that the Chair

prepare a memorandum to the Selectmen advising them of this concern, and asking that all requests of any Department (or other Town function) submit any requests for consideration of the purchase or other form of use, or change of use, of buildings to this Committee in the first instance, for its review and analysis.

Action Items.

The Chair will prepare Memoranda to the Selectmen (1) regarding actions to upgrade Whipple Hall as stated above; (2) requesting action by the Selectmen based on the Motion related to a Building Inspector as stated above; and, (3) requesting that all requests for consideration of purchase or change of use of existing land, buildings, and facilities be submitted in the first instance to this Committee for its review and analysis.

Mr. Cross will contact North Branch Builders to ask if it would review work required to modify the SAU space for Rec. Dept. use, and provide to the Committee an estimate of costs.

The meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Bowers, Chair