

MINUTES
Sanbornton Building Construction Committee (BCC)

Meeting Date and Time: Thursday, December 1, 2020 at 7:00 PM

Meeting Place: Online in accordance with Emergency Executive Order #12 (via Zoom)

The Committee was meeting in joint session with the Budget Committee. Budget Committee Chair Craig Weisman called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

The preamble about the conduct of the remote reading was read by the Budget Committee.

Roll Call of Members Present on the Phone

Regular Members present: Nina Gardner (Citizen Rep - Chairman), Steve Cobb (Citizen Rep – Vice Chair), Brendan Morrison (Citizen Rep), Chuck Flanders (Citizen Rep), Ken Carleton (Employee Rep), Jim Dick (Selectmen’s Rep). None of the members had anyone else present with them.

Regular Members absent: None

Others Present: Budget Committee Members, Chief Steve Hankard, Chief Paul Dexter

New Business

- a. Chair Weisman welcomed the members of the Committee and thanked them for the work they have put into developing the proposals. Nina Gardner presented the history of the Committee and an overview of its charge and efforts to date. She provided a summary of the efforts to date and the results of the public engagement. She noted that several of the residents who participated preferred the 10-yr bond option for a project because it resulted in a lower overall cost and provided the Town with more flexibility for undertaking future projects. Nina then presented the two design options from the August report. She reviewed the other options under consideration, including the siting of a new PD directly behind Old Town Hall in Option 3b, and reviving Option 4 for a standalone Town Office behind Old Town Hall and conversion of the current building into the PD. She also discussed the option and cost savings to eliminate the fire suppression system from any standalone Town Office.
- b. Jim Dick presented the financial analysis, including the cost methodology, assumptions, and assessment of the BPS cost estimates based on the H.L. Turner designs. Ralph Rathjen asked what the Budget Committee’ members’ feelings were with respect to a 10-yr versus 20-yr bond. Craig Weisman said he preferred the shorter term to reduce the overall cost and provide greater flexibility for future projects. All of the other Budget Committee members indicated a preference for a 10-yr bond. Ray Masse commented that he still had trouble seeing the options as 20-yr plans.
- c. Jim presented some of the other items that could reduce the tax impact, including use of the Unassigned Fund Balance (UFB) and the other Town bonds expiring in the next few years. He presented a summary table that showed the cumulative effect of all of the cost reduction/tax rate reduction items. Ray Masse asked if any commitments had been made when the bond was approved with respect to the use of the State reimbursement for the Lower Bay Rd project. Jim said that the bond does not allow early payment, but he would have to check to see if any other conditions had been applied. Ralph Rathjen noted that while the final rates in 2025 and beyond were very good, he wished there was a way to reduce the impact in 2023 and 2024. Participants agreed that the tax rate impact would be a concern, but that finding other ways to reduce it would be difficult.

- d. Jim Dick asked what the Budget Committee's view was of using the expiring bond payments to reduce the tax impact of the project. Craig Weisman said the 2019 project was not presented well to the residents and the price was too high. He felt that this project would stand on its own merits without a long discussion about expiring bonds. Craig asked which option the Building Committee preferred. Nina Gardner said that no decision had been made, and opinions had moved back and forth through the public engagement. She said she felt that any recommendation going forward need unanimous support from the Board of Selectmen, the Budget Committee, and the Building Committee. She also pointed out that the proposal from Justin Howe was focused solely on the PD to try to create a tax neutral option. Jim Dick noted that some of the resident feedback was that people wanted a chance for voters to select the design option. He said that although a bond article could be written without the specific design selected, that voting for the design could get very difficult, especially if there were three options where no single design might get a majority of the votes. Craig Weisman said that the process this time has been fair and open, and that he thinks a project that has the support of all three bodies will get the support to pass. Ray Masse said he believes the voters will trust the judgment of the Board of Selectmen, Budget Committee, and Building Committee. Ralph Rathjen said there should be one option presented with an up/down vote.
- e. Steve Cobb asked Craig which option he preferred. Craig said that he likes Option 1 because it keeps the major Town functions centralized in one place and helps preserve the cozy feel of a small town. Ray Masse pointed out that Option 1 avoids the debate between people about an appropriate architectural design to fit with Old Town Hall.
- f. Nina asked the Budget Committee members for feedback on how much of the financing discussion should be presented at Town Meeting. Craig said that he thought it should be kept to the basics: contrast the proposal with the 2019 plan, provide the tax rate impacts and the plan to use the expired payment from the highway garage bond to reduce the tax impact, and beyond that the Board and Budget Committee will look for other opportunities to take advantage of extra savings in the future to reduce the tax burden. He believes that given the work that's been done and the cost that the bond would pass without the discussion of the future bond expirations.
- g. Chief Hankard offered a brief endorsement of the plans and noted that any of the options provide an excellent solution for the PD. Ray Masse asked him which option he preferred as Chief, and he said that he hasn't selected a favorite. He reviewed some of the pros and cons of each option and reiterated that any of them would be a good solution.
- h. Nina Gardner thanked the Budget Committee members for their time and feedback. She noted that the Committee plans to brief the Board of Selectmen on December 23, and it would be helpful to have a general statement of support from the Budget Committee if they were willing to provide one. Craig said the Budget Committee would discuss it, and thanked the Building Committee members again for all of their work.
- i. The Committee agreed that the next meeting will be on Thursday, December 3 via Zoom.

There was no specific motion to adjourn, since the Budget Committee was continuing their meeting. The Building Construction Committee meeting ended with the departure of the members at 8:30 PM.