

**MINUTES FOR EXETER FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FAC)
MEETING, THURSDAY AUGUST 27, 2020**

TIME: 4-5:35 pm, Zoom Meeting

Attendees: Rob Corson, Chair; Kris Weeks, Vice Chair; Mark Leighton, Peter Lennon, Clerk; Town Manager Russ Dean; Town Planner Dave Sharples.

Scribe: Peter Lennon

- (1) **Previous Minutes:** The FAC approved the Minutes of the August 13, 2020 meeting by a 4-0 vote.
- (2) **Update on Ongoing Projects:** Town Manager Dean reported that the Library Renovation/Expansion project is scheduled to finish August 20-21, 2020, assuming no delays in supplier deliveries, and that the repairs to the Town Hall Cupola and associated areas began this week. Chair Corson said that the FAC is aware of the status of Parks & Recreation Department projects by way of the draft Fiscal Years (FY) 2021-2026 Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
- (3) **Development of Facilities Assessment Criteria:** Chair Corson stated that the Committee should develop criteria for a common template/methodology that could be used to assess more objectively each town facility. He said that work should begin at the FAC's next meeting.

Mr. Dean asked whether Mr. Corson was talking about establishing criteria to determine which projects are most needed. Mr. Corson said "Yes." and that he was looking for a better way or "scoring system" to assess facility projects. He described his experience with a system that ranked safety-related projects as a high priority, or considered whether there was a "business case" or revenue impacts for a project, or whether a structure's age or condition supported a particular type of action or investment.

Later in the meeting, during a discussion of the Department of Public Works (DPW) garage project, Mr. Corson suggested that one of the criteria should be whether a project "creates flexibility" or provides options for better using Town Offices and other Town facility spaces.

- (4) **FAC Recommendations for Discussion of Public Safety and Public Works Garage Projects in FY 21-26 CIP:** Pursuant to its Charge from the Select Board to assist Town Leadership in setting facilities priorities and budgets, the FAC discussed drafting recommendations to the Planning Board on two high-profile CIP projects.

As described in the Draft CIP, these projects are the Public Safety Alternative Analysis and Design and Engineering (\$400,000 in FY 21, Total amount To Be Determined), and the Department of Public Works (DPW) Facility Garage (\$150,000 in FY 21, \$4,962,000 in FY 22, Total: \$5,112,000).

DPW Facility Garage: Based on the FAC's site walk and discussions with department leaders in July, Chair Corson said DPW was in the initial phase of working with its architects/planners to consider current conditions of all facilities at its main 13 Newfields Road location and of working toward defining a new facilities program for the entire campus. He said they were

considering a long-term, phased approach for campus development and looking at DPW's future missions that might need to be addressed through facilities.

Member Leighton complimented DPW for assessing campus-wide needs and not just considering a single project (the garage). He suggested that DPW needed to examine other sites off the main campus, such as the Parks & Recreation Department building at 32 Court Street, and to explore options for how other Town departments could use the DPW campus. For example, he suggested DPW should explore whether use of its campus could relieve crowding in the Town Offices at 10 Front Street.

Mr. Leighton indicated that the opportunity to build a new facility is infrequent, and that the Town should take advantage of the garage project to examine whether a larger structure might help address other Town space needs.

Town Manager Dean said he was familiar with considerations by other towns whether to collocate planning and engineer functions, and that moving the Exeter's Public Health Officer outside the Fire Department also has been discussed in the last few years. He said the Town staff could be open to different ideas for addressing Town Offices' space challenges.

Chair Corson said that the site walk at the DPW campus demonstrated there was an overall need for the garage project. He cited ventilation issues in general, and structural issues documented in a January 2016 consultant's structural analysis. He said many of the structural and other components of the existing garage had "reached the end of their service lives."

Town Manager Dean asked whether the FAC during its site walk received any impressions about the existing building's capabilities for "asset protection" -- in other words, whether it had room to garage all DPW equipment and vehicles.

Mr. Corson responded that once the new garage plan becomes more detailed, DPW will have to set its priorities as to where asset protection ranks.

Mr. Lennon said that asset protection was not discussed in depth on the site walk but that more information would be useful as detailed plans are considered.

Chair Corson noted that the cost numbers in the draft CIP were just a placeholder. Mr. Lennon stated that, in view of the 1-2 year slip in the date to begin erecting the new garage, (from FY 21 in the current CIP and FY 22 in the draft CIP, to FY 23), the costs need to be updated to at least reflect inflation. In addition, he said, the cost of the fuel island sub-project needs to be updated for at least inflation, since the current estimate reflects FY 18 prices.

Mr. Dean raised the "open question (as it relates to the new garage) as to where maintenance on Parks & Recreation (Parks & Rec) Department vehicles is accomplished."

Mr. Leighton asked how other towns treated this question, and Mr. Dean said practices likely differed, with some towns using DPW maintenance and others keeping it in their Parks & Rec departments.

Mr. Lennon said that, as DPW is considering a larger garage to house its full administrative staff, it also should be tasked to include Parks & Rec vehicle maintenance. Mr. Dean said he would like to build that into the scope of the project because it impacts the Town's options for the future of the Parks & Rec main building at 32 Court Street.

Vice Chair Weeks asked for a cost breakout of the FY 21 CIP budget request of \$150,000 identifying the amounts for doing the campus-wide master plan and for a specific building design. Mr. Leighton said the FAC “needs clarity as to what the \$150,000 provides as deliverables.”

There was general agreement among the FAC members present that the \$150,000 request and the overall garage project merited the Committee’s support.

However, various FAC members gave their opinions as to what the \$150,000 would or should be used for, including a master plan, a site plan, specific building designs, a project feasibility study, and a preliminary cost estimate.

Planner Sharples added that the DPW Director, Jen Perry, also intended to assess campus traffic patterns as part of this effort.

Mr. Dean expressed the hope that the Town would “get a deliverable that charts the course for the next phases of the project.”

There was disagreement as to whether the \$150,000 would or should provide a firm construction cost compared with a preliminary cost estimate, and how much actual structural design could be accomplished within the \$150,000.

Vice Chair Weeks and Chair Corson agreed that a feasibility study would be a starting point for estimating costs and would describe garage options that could be presented to the public as part of later deliberations on the project. Mr. Weeks suggested that the \$150,000 could finance both a feasibility study and a long-term campus-wide site plan.

There was a discussion whether the draft CIP should include a total cost estimate for the garage project. Planner Sharples pointed out the difficulty of arriving at any estimate without the campus-wide Master Plan.

Mr. Lennon suggested that the FAC should support moving ahead with the garage project but that it should warn the Town that the numbers in the new CIP are outdated. Mr. Leighton said the FAC should support the project but state its understanding that total costs will be in a range somewhere “at least” between \$5 million to \$6 million.

Public Safety Project: Mr. Leighton said that the process used for the Public Safety project should be similar to that the FAC is urging for the DPW garage.

He said that the first phase of the Public Safety project in FY 21 should be reduced from the \$400,000 in the new CIP to \$150,000, that the lesser amount be used for an analysis of alternatives (AOA) and feasibility assessment, and conceptual design of the alternative selected,. He said that the Design and Engineering phase now combined with the AOA in FY 21 should be a separate, following phase.

Mr. Leighton said the AOA and the feasibility study, together with the conceptual design, also would produce a useful project cost estimate. He said that the results of this revised first phase of the project would enable Town leaders to seek community input on the proposed option, with the objective of securing voter approval of a Warrant Article in an annual Town Election.

There was a consensus among all four FAC members at the meeting to support this differently phased approach as the best way to define the public safety facilities options and to obtain public endorsement for the option ultimately to be recommended.

Mr. Dean said that the Town had used a similar, three-phased approach in acquiring its new Wastewater Treatment Facility. Mr. Weeks suggested that the FAC recommended process was different in that it allowed for more public input into any new public safety facilities, and that “the public might have other ideas” about a chosen option.

Mr. Dean suggested that the FAC-endorsed approach might be developing a different way to undertake CIP projects in the future.

Mr. Sharples expressed concern that separating Design and Engineering into a second phase might delay the public safety project since it deviated from the chronological CIP and budget process.

Vice Chair Weeks responded that the feasibility study can be accomplished in 6-9 months (FY 21), which would permit funding for the Design and Engineering to be requested for the following fiscal year (FY 22).

Mr. Sharples pointed out that 6-9 months brings you past the start of the budget season, so if the feasibility study does take that time period, then it is likely a future funding request is not until FY23.

Chair Corson said further that FAC members could share their experiences as to how a feasibility study can be done to avoid any calendar delays.

- (5) **Next FAC Meeting:** Chair Corson said the next meeting would refine the FAC’s recommendations on the DPW and Public Safety CIP projects to the Planning Board, as well as discuss developing the project rating criteria.

Clerk Lennon said that, based on this meeting’s discussion, he would draft the recommendation letter to the Planning Board. Planner Sharples said he would recommend to the Planning Board that it postpone its CIP deliberations until September 10, 2020 and that the FAC would submit its recommendations for that session.

- (6) **Other Business:** Mr. Corson and Mr. Weeks reported to the FAC that the Request for Proposal for the Facilities Condition Assessment (FCA) was ready to be issued by the Town.

Mr. Dean offered to arrange a tour for the FAC of the Library Renovation/Expansion project.