

**MINUTES FOR EXETER FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FAC)
MEETING,
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2020**

TIME: 4:00 pm – 6:15 pm Socially-distanced Meeting and Tour at Parks & Recreation (P&R) Dept, 32 Court Street, Exeter, NH.

Attendees: Rob Corson, Chair; Amanda Kelly, Mark Leighton, Peter Lennon, Clerk; Greg Bisson, P&R Director, Melissa Roy, P&R Assistant Director.

Scribe: Peter Lennon

1. **Parks & Recreation Department Discussion and Tour Key Takeaway:** In response to questions from the FAC, the P&R leadership stated that the Maintenance project proposed for \$25,000 in FY 21 was not their first priority, despite it being listed as a “Priority 1” effort by the Town’s Public Works Department (DPW). P&R leadership said that, in view of the Coronavirus pandemic, acquisition of portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) purifiers and ultra-violet air cleaners for program spaces at the 32 Court Street facility was their highest priority. The lower priority maintenance project included renovating second-floor programming room floors and installing ductless split heating/cooling systems. Neither task seems justified in FY 21.

Additional observations from the FAC’s P&R facilities tour are presented in Section 4 of these Minutes. Sub-sections VII and VIII also address the lower priority FY 21 maintenance project.

2. **Informal FAC Reps Discussion with Budget Recommendations Committee (BRC) Reps:** On November 6, 2020, two representatives (reps) of the FAC met informally with three BRC reps to discuss the need for regular, ongoing collaboration between the two committees and to outline recommendations about two major FY 21 projects in the Fiscal Year 2021-2026 (FY 21-26) Capital Improvement Program: (a) the Public Safety Complex (PSC) analytical work/feasibility study (\$200,000), and (b) the DPW Garage Facility (\$150,000).

At its November 12 meeting, the FAC agreed that the two Committees should work together on facilities projects but that such sessions should comply with the state’s “Right-to-Know” statute. The statute’s requirements include advance public notice of meetings and provisions for public attendance.

The FAC reps also reported to the full Committee that the BRC was proposing \$100,000 for each of the two major CIP projects in FY 21, in part based on the BRC’s assumption that Town Staff could accomplish some tasks originally assigned to outside consultants and in part based on the understanding that the Police Department (PD) and Fire Department (FD) already know what future public safety facilities they desire.

The BRC reps said the FD was willing to remain downtown in the current PSC if it was renovated and if the PD provided it three bays in whatever PD facility was constructed. Two of the three bays would be used to store FD vehicles and the third bay would house an active ambulance and EMT personnel, the BRC reps said. They also said the PD was willing to move to a new facility to be constructed on about two acres of Town land off Epping Road and to provide the three vehicle bays to the FD.

3. **FAC Recommendations to BRC on Public Safety Complex and DPW Garage:** With the informal discussion with the BRC reps in mind, the FAC discussed its formal recommendations to the BRC on the two major FY 21 CIP projects. It decided to send a letter reflecting the following considerations to the BRC for its November 17, 2020 meeting on the CIP.

Public Safety Complex: The FAC expressed concern that it was premature to select the facilities option reported by the BRC reps because it might not represent the most-cost effective option for the Town. In addition, it was pointed out that focusing on only the one option would deprive the community of the opportunity to weigh-in on whether residents preferred both the PD and FD to remain downtown near the central business district.

The FAC decided to continue its support for an analysis of alternatives and feasibility study that would validate the PD's and FD's program needs as well as evaluate the three facilities options identified early in 2020 in the operational, staffing, and deployment assessments done for Exeter by the Center for Public Safety Management of the International City/County Management Association in Washington, DC. The three options are: (a) renovating the current PSC for the PD and building a new location for the FD; (b) renovating the current PSC for the FD and building a new location for the PD; and (c) building a new combined facility for both departments.

The FAC disagreed with the BRC's funding recommendation of \$100,000. It decided to support the \$150,000-\$200,000 amount identified by the Town Planner as needed to conduct the analytical work/feasibility study as outlined previously by the FAC based on its extensive experience as architects, engineers, facility managers, and project and program analysts and evaluators.

The FAC outline called for a comprehensive analysis of several options to develop a firm, independent cost estimate for the most affordable, feasible, and cost-effective option. It also specifically included robust community participation in the effort to give the taxpayers much more confidence that the project's value merits their support at an annual Town election.

The FAC included its recommended outline in its letter to the BRC.

DPW Garage: Despite having submitted questions to the Town Staff, the FAC discussed the continuing lack of information available to it about the DPW garage. The information the FAC requested is: (a) a detailed breakdown of the tasks to be completed in FY 21, (b) an updated cost estimate for all phases of the entire project, including the fuel island, from the estimates presented in the FY 21-26 CIP, and (c) a detailed explanation and justification for the apparent growth in one of the garage options being considered from 15,000 square feet to almost 40,000 square feet, including an updated cost estimate for this much larger structure.

Due to the incomplete information available, the FAC initially decided to recommend zero funds for the project in FY 21. It later decided against recommending any dollar value for this project in the FY 21 budget. The FAC's stated this latter position in its letter to the BRC.

4. **Additional Parks & Rec Tour Observations:**

- I. Adjacent to the main building at 32 Court Street is a small garage that houses P&R Dept mowers in the summer and trucks and small-scale snow-removal equipment in the winter. Prior to about six months ago, the department accomplished vehicle maintenance in the garage. Its trucks are now repaired by DPW.

- II. The P&R Dept assists DPW with snow removal in the winter. This is accomplished with blade- and snowblower- kits for the P&R's larger trucks.
- III. **Despite ongoing planning by DPW for its new garage, there has been no discussion between the two departments about accommodating P&R needs in that new facility, according to P&R leadership. This appears to be an unwise oversight.**
- IV. The main P&R building at 32 Court Street has first-floor offices renovated in the 1990's and a second-floor office. The ramp to the front door does not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the P&R leadership reported.
- V. The rest of the building uses steep staircases that prevent wheelchair use on the second floor where most programs are offered.
- VI. The only public bathroom is on the first floor and appears difficult for the disabled to use.
- VII. The second floor consists mainly of two, larger and smaller program rooms for karate, yoga, arts and crafts classes, etc. The larger room has a window air conditioner that will be replaced with a ductless split unit when that becomes a higher priority to the P&R Dept.
- VIII. The vinyl tile floors in the two program rooms appear adequate and do not require replacement at this time according to the P&R leadership.
- IX. The main building basement is dry with very rough, uneven cement floors and low ceilings. It is used for storage.
- X. The building's boiler and hot water heater appear fairly modern and in good condition.
- XI. Also nearby to the main building is a Senior Center. In addition to processing meals for the Meals On Wheels program to help Exeter's elderly to extend their independence and health as they age, the center also was used before the pandemic by quilters, women's clubs, sports teams, Girl and Boy Scouts, and even Alcoholics Anonymous. Party rentals produced some limited revenue.

The center is comprised of a large open room on the first floor, with Meals on Wheels processing space and equipment occupying about 1/3 of the room. According to P&R leadership, the center's only ventilation is provided by windows, and there is no fire protection (sprinkler) system. The center is the P&R Dept's only fully handicapped-accessible building.

- 5. **Next FAC Meeting:** The next FAC meeting date is TBD due to the Thanksgiving holiday. Agenda topics include procedural matters and individual Member taskings.