

**MINUTES FOR EXETER FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FAC)
MEETING,
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2020**

TIME: 4:30 pm – 6:15 pm ZOOM Virtual Meeting

Attendees: Rob Corson, Chair; Kris Weeks, Vice Chair; Amanda Kelly, Peter Lennon, Clerk.

Scribe: Peter Lennon

1. **Parks & Recreation (P&R) Department Site Visit Discussion:** The FAC discussed its site visit to the Parks & Rec Department facilities located around its 32 Court Street building. Chair Corson reported that the Department's leadership exhibited the inadequacies of the facilities at 32 Court Street, but that they and the FAC did not discuss the need for any new facilities.

Chair Corson said the Parks & Rec's Community Needs Assessment did not match the proposal for the new Community Center (Renovation/Expansion, 4 Hampton Road) rejected by the voters last March. He also said the Needs Assessment did not reconcile the Department's needs with other already existing resources available to address those needs.

2. **Fiscal Year 2021 (FY 21) Maintenance Projects List:** The FAC discussed the list of maintenance projects totaling \$100,000 proposed for the new FY 21 budget by the Department of Public Works (DPW). The Committee agreed to ask the DPW Maintenance Director, Jeff Beck, to brief it about the projects list and the status of each project at its next meeting.

Mr. Lennon pointed out that one of the key takeaways from the Parks & Rec site visit was that, 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 its first priority, despite it being listed as a "Priority 1" effort by the DPW.** P&R leadership said that, in view of the Coronavirus pandemic, acquisition of portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) purifiers and of ultra-violet air cleaners for program spaces at the 32 Court Street facility was its highest priority, Mr. Lennon said.

The lower priority maintenance project currently on the FY 21 list included renovating second-floor programming room floors and installing ductless split heating/cooling systems, Mr. Lennon said. In view of the P&R leadership's stated position, neither task seems justified in FY 21, he said.

Chair Corson stated that the **Town Hall Cupola maintenance project in FY 20** was complete. The FAC decided to ask Mr. Beck how extensive the repairs ultimately became and what was the final total cost.

3. **FAC Recommendations on the Town's FY 21-26 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to the Select Board (SB) and Budget Recommendations Committee (BRC):** The FAC discussed its recommendations to the SB and the BRC on the Public Safety Complex (PSC) Analysis of Alternatives/Feasibility Study and on the DPW Garage Facility.

In its recommendations letter to the BRC on November 17, 2020, the FAC disagreed with the BRC's then-emerging conclusion to approve \$100,000 for each project for FY 21. (The BRC proceeded to take this action later on November 17.)

The FAC had recommended the **PSC project** receive not to exceed \$150,000-\$200,000. It did not recommend a dollar value for the DPW Garage project due to incomplete information provided by the DPW about the cost and scope of the facility.

The FAC was concerned that the BRC prematurely was deciding that the Police and Fire Departments should pursue a single facilities option even though it might not be the most cost-effective option. It also questioned whether this approach permitted the robust public input that the FAC believed was needed.

Chair Corson indicated that the BRC facilities option, which apparently keeps the Fire Department downtown but re-locates the Police Department to Town land off Epping Road, does not consider the possible operational and cost advantages of a shared headquarters downtown.

He continued that, from a public safety viewpoint, the FY 21 project should be a data-driven exercise that includes community input. He indicated this input was especially important considering new ideas that are evolving about “community policing” concepts.

Ms. Kelly said that the FD and PD operations/staffing/deployment analyses just completed for the Town outlined three possible facilities options and did not specify any one preferred solution. She said the FAC should emphasize its opposition to any approach which “cuts out the public.”

The FAC 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.

Chair Corson suggested that there was no detailed study to support the BRC’s recommendation for the PSC project, and the FAC discussed sending a recommendations letter to the SB that discussed the Committee’s differences with the BRC’s approach.

Conversely, the FAC’s PSC funding recommendation was based on a detailed outline developed by the Committee for the request for proposal (RFP) for the analytical work/feasibility study and on costing feedback to the outline from analytical firms that might submit bids.

Vice Chair Weeks also pointed out that the FAC’s recommended phasing for the project and its recommended RFP outline differed from the process used to develop the unsuccessful P&R proposal to renovate/expand its Hampton Road facility.

The FAC decided that its recommendations letter to the SB should discuss the differences between its and the BRC’s approaches for the PSC project. The letter would highlight how the process and scope of work for the needed analytical work the FAC envisioned would give the Town a better chance for success with the taxpayers. The FAC’s RFP outline would be submitted to the SB with its recommendations letter.

Ms. Kelly volunteered to contact the Police and Fire Chiefs to ascertain their latest positions on future public safety facilities.

Vice Chair Weeks volunteered to draft the FAC's recommendations letter to the SB, in part based on the FAC's previous letters to the Town's Planning Board and Budget Recommendations Committee.

Chair Corson said he would work through the SB's Representative to the FAC, Selectman Daryl Browne, and with SB Chair Niko Papakonstantis, to learn the Board's timetable for considering the FY 21 budget.

At its December 10 session, the FAC was unaware that the Town Staff had provided any additional cost and scope information about the **DPW Garage project** that would justify making any specific dollar amount recommendation.

4. **Raynes Farm Site Walk:** In response to an invitation from a representative of the Town's Conservation Commission, the FAC decided to tentatively schedule a site walk at Raynes Farm near 66 Newfields Road for Friday, December 18, 2020 at about 9 AM. The site walk was intended to review the current status of the Farm's facilities and proposals for any significant maintenance projects.
5. **Facilities Condition Assessment (FCA) RFP and Funding:** The FAC noted that the FCA RFP still had not been posted, although its only missing elements were dates for a response deadline and for proposal reviews. The FAC noted that Town Staff were responsible for providing those dates and posting the RFP.

The FAC had requested the BRC to fund the FCA with \$25,000 in FY 21. Further information about the funding request had not been provided by the BRC.

6. **Required Report to the SB on 2020 FAC Accomplishments and Room for Improvement:** The FAC discussed the required report on its 2020 activities that is due early next year to the SB. The Committee approved the attached list drafted by Mr. Lennon. The Committee also discussed ways it should address its Room for Improvement items:

- (a) Regarding funding for the FCA, Ms. Kelly stated that the FAC needed to summarize the justification in a different way. She said the issue is that without the FCA, the Committee lacked the foundational analysis and evaluation tools to enable it to do its work. Without these tools and analysis, the FAC could not evaluate the merits and timing of proposed Town facilities projects, she said.
- (b) Regarding following up FAC recommendations and information requests, Chair Corson said the Committee needed to act more quickly and to establish a tracking system for incomplete business.

He also said that the FAC needed to get "buy-in" from the SB and Town Manager as to the value the FAC brings to the community.

- (c) Regarding outreach to other Town Committees and Commissions, Vice Chair Weeks said the FAC needed to improve its efforts in this area. Mr. Corson said there are many facilities-related actions taken by these groups and the FAC, but that they lack coordination among them. Having the groups talk more would be one way to begin such coordination, he said.

He said that ZOOM virtual meeting technology would enable a joint session among the FAC, BRC, Energy Committee, and Sustainability Advisory Committee.

7. **Next FAC Meeting:** The next FAC meeting (by ZOOM) was scheduled tentatively for January 7, 2021 unless an earlier session is needed to finalize its CIP recommendations to the Select Board.

Attached: **Facilities Advisory Committee 2020 Accomplishments and Room for Improvement**

Exeter Facilities Advisory Committee 2020 Accomplishments and Room for Improvement

The Exeter FAC respectfully submits to the Select Board (SB) this report on its 2020 activities.

Accomplishments –

- (1) Prepared and Submitted to the SB a Report and Recommendations against the FY 20 Exeter Parks & Recreation Department proposed Renovation/Expansion Project for 4 Hampton Road – January 17, 2020; Town voters agreed with FAC opposition and rejected project in March;
- (2) Adapted committee meeting format to accommodate ZOOM virtual meetings during coronavirus pandemic;
- (3) Conducted Site Visit to Department of Public Works (DPW) Complex: Main Garage and Storage areas, Water and Sewer Garage, Fuel Island, Administrative Building – July 30, 2020;
- (4) Conducted Site Visit to Public Safety Complex (PSC): Fire and Police Departments, Dispatch Center – August 13, 2020;
- (5) Conducted Site Visit to Exeter Public Library Renovation/Expansion now under construction – October 1, 2020;
- (6) Conducted Site Visit to P&R Facilities at 32 Court Street: Senior/Multipurpose Center, Administrative/Classroom Building, Equipment Garage -- November 12, 2020;
- (7) Drafted and Submitted Recommendations Letter to the Exeter Planning Board on the FY 21 PSC and DPW Garage projects in the FY 21-26 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) – September 9, 2020; Planning Board accepted FAC recommendations for project phasing and reduction in proposed FY 21 spending from \$400,000 to \$200,000 for PSC project;
- (8) Drafted Outline for RFP for PSC FY 21 CIP project to accomplish a detailed analysis of alternatives and feasibility study of several FD and PD facilities options – October 14, 2020; Town Planner used RFP Outline to develop firmer cost estimate for FY 21 effort;
- (9) Finalized RFP for Facilities Condition Assessment (FCA) to establish baseline and evaluation tools for physical status of Town buildings from which to track and decide among options to maintain, repair, renovate or replace facilities – Early to mid- 2020;
- (10) FAC representatives met with BRC representatives to discuss how both committees can collaborate during the annual project and budget review of major CIP projects – November 6, 2020;
- (11) Drafted and submitted Recommendation Letter to Exeter Budget Recommendations Committee (BRC) on the FY 21 PSC and DPW Garage CIP projects – November 17, 2020; BRC disagreed with FAC recommendation;
- (12) Drafted and submitted Recommendations Letter to the SB on the FY 21 PSC and DPW Garage CIP projects.

Room for Improvement --

- (1) Lack of sustained follow-up on major recommendations in FAC Report to SB on the FY 20 P&R Renovation/Expansion project at 4 Hampton Road;
- (2) Lack of sustained follow-up on information needed from the DPW on the FY 21 Garage project;
- (3) Inability to identify funding for the FCA;
- (4) Insufficient outreach to other Town Committees and Commissions.