

**MIDDLE SCHOOL CONVERSION COMMITTEE
AUGUST 4, 2009 7:00 PM
EAST HADDAM HIGH SCHOOL
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Maryjane Malavasi, Dick Everett, Patty Stricker, Sharon Wheeler, Craig Mansfield, Ed Blaschik, Chuck Smith, Beth Dillon, Alan Hanks, Melissa Ziobron

ABSENT: Jim Ventres

OTHERS PRESENT: Everett Herden (BOE -Liaison), Mark Walter (First Selectman), Matt Budzik (BOF – Liaison)

**SILVER-PETRUCELLI
ARCHITECT FIRM** David Stein – Principal – Project Manager
PRESENT: Jennifer Martin - Architect

1. CALL TO ORDER:

- The Hearing was called to order by Chairman Maryjane Malavasi at 7:00 PM

2. PRESENTATION:

- A PowerPoint presentation was presented to the group by Maryjane Malavasi and David Stein. The presentation can be viewed on the committee's website at www.ehmssc.com.
- Maryjane stated that members of the committee will hand out surveys for people to answer based on tonight's presentation.

3. QUESTION AND ANSWER / PUBLIC COMMENT:

- John Pointkowski noted he is in favor of the project but asked if the project could be completed in phases to reduce cost due to the current state of the economy? Maryjane noted that phasing was a charge of the committee and has been looked at by the committee. The committee chose to present a layout that would include use of all the space and include all agencies identified for the project. After hearing public comment tonight, the committee will go back and determine how to present their final project for referendum.
- Carol Parker asked how long the project would take to complete? David Stein noted that the project timeline calls for a 12 month construction phase once the project is approved.
- Carol Parker also asked why we have a space for the Probate Court with the new State requirements for regionalization? Maryjane noted that the committee felt it was important to reserve a space while the new Probate Court process is being worked out. The area does not meet the space requirements of the State for a Probate Court but allows for space if the Judge was to travel from town to town to hold hearings.
- Hank Montrose asked what outside funding is available to put towards the project? Maryjane noted that the committee formed a Grant's subcommittee that is looking at all available grants but based on preliminary findings they are very limited.

- Hank Montrose also asked what is the planned use for the old Town Office and River House property? Maryjane noted this was not in our committees charge and that an East Haddam Revitalization Committee has been convened for that purpose.
- Kandie Carle commented that “Green” initiatives are important. She asked what is the savings to the tax payer by combing all of the town services into one building? David Stein noted that this is a very difficult number to quantify. There are definite savings from an energy point of view. Maryjane added that there is a savings for rent and possibly income from some of the other agencies that pay rent or mortgages for their current locations.
- Ed Ingram voiced a concern about the location of the vehicle building and that the Ambulance traveling through the parking lot to respond to emergencies? He asked if the building would be better located at the Town Garage space? Maryjane noted that the exact location of the building is still up for discussion by the committee, but the committee felt it is important for the Town Vehicles to be located on the office site. She added we will keep his concern in mind when determining the final location.
- Earl Blanchard commented on the Town Garage area off of MT Parnassus. Earl noted there is a lack of space at the site and that it is very busy during the day while the area is in use by the town crew.
- Earl also asked if EHYFS and the VNA would have written agreements and pay rent for their space in the building? Maryjane noted that the VNA currently has an agreement with the town but it would be up to the BOS to negotiate agreements with the “non-town agencies” moving into the building.
- Bob Casner asked a question concerning the cost of renovating the older Ray Portion in comparison to the Hale Portion and since the Ray portion is not essential to getting people from the Town Office building into the space, should we just demolish it? David Stein noted that the renovation of the Ray portion is approximately 40% of the project and as noted earlier in the presentation that it is cheaper to renovate the space then to demolish it.
- Bob Casner also asked if the SQ FT for the BOE has been evaluated? Davis Stein noted that all areas including the BOE have been evaluated against the industry standards for a Town the size of East Haddam.
- Nancy Pincus asked what will be done to address the water runoff issues that exist today through use of storm drains or drywells? David noted much of site work to be completed is required by code and this will be addressed as part of the site work to be completed.
- George Giesey asked when we will know what the offset to the project will be from revenue from the current Town Office Site? Maryjane and First Selectman Mark Walter noted that we really need to look at each project on its own. Revenue estimates from the East Haddam Revitalization Committee are \$1.2-1.5 million. The Revitalization Committee is reviewing options of selling or leasing the property. Additionally the committee is estimating annual Tax revenue of \$151,000-189,000 annually. Maryjane added that we most likely will not have these answers before we go to referendum.
- Laurel White asked if the committee has looked at public use of the building and outside space for gardening projects, holding classes, etc. Maryjane noted that the committee feels very strong that the building be available for public use. Reserving the building for activates would be controlled by the Selectman’s office.

- David Pitney asked if the ball field is public property and could the proposed Garage be moved down there? Maryjane noted that the ball field is town property but is used and would not be a suitable location for the garage.
- Dan D'Amelio thanked the committee for their hard work and noted that he liked the separation of the core town functions from the food bank, BOE, etc. Dan also noted that he appreciated the use of energy efficiency throughout the project. Dan asked if the issue with the Ray Board had been resolved? Maryjane noted that the Ray Board has turned the building over to the town as long as it is used for Municipal use.
- Tim Carr commented that he has a concern of the financial impact that will be on each household and asked if we had heard anything from the State of CT on what the funding the town will receive is projected to be? Paul Maxwell, Chairman of the BOF, commented that we did not know what the town will be getting from the State at this time.
- Paul Maxwell stated that as the Chairman of the BOF he felt the BOF has not been consulted on the project, although he and Maryjane have been exchanging emails regarding the graphs used in the presentation. Paul noted that the Town has seen "Grand list Stagnation" which means the town saw a reduction in the Grand list last year and another is expect this year. There is a capital Reserve fund but the towns overall finances have been affected by the economy.
- Paul Maxwell noted from a personal point of view that he feels the committee has done an excellent job in presenting the project but he is not sure that this is the time to complete this project due to the financial hardship the town is facing. He suggested waiting five years or so before moving forward.
- TJ Tarbox thanked the committee for a great job. He commented that he was skeptical about the project before coming here tonight, but that now we should "Just do it!"
- Brad Parker thanked the committee for the hard work and creating a project we can all be proud of. Completing this project will bring our town offices to up to current standards. Additionally, Brad noted he had a concern with the number of parking spaces proposed in the plan. Based on the potential use of the facility (i.e. elections) there is a need for a lot of parking spots. Brad added that there is typically reimbursement for the build out of the BOE area at a rate of 25% so by dividing the BOE out into their own area as the committee has done, we can look for this reimbursement. Additionally, by moving BOE services into this building it will free up space within the schools and help offset future cost for needed expansions. Brad also noted that the Fire Department and Ambulance have outgrown the space they currently occupy. Moving the ambulance will free up space in the firehouse for the Fire Department and a new Truck they are looking to purchase. Brad added, even though we need to look at the School Conversion and the Revitalization projects separately they do impact each other and the money from the sale of the town property will help offset the school conversion cost. Last, Brad noted the conversion of this space is essential to the growth of the Park and Recreation Department. Space today is very limited and the use of the Gym and other area is required to allow the program to expand.
- David Nelson commented that this is a concept that he is in favor of. As a member of the Historical Commission he thanked the committee for their hard work in maintaining the historic nature of the building. David also noted that delaying the project makes no sense. The building will only continue to deteriorate and the current conditions of the Town offices are deplorable. David agreed with Brad Parker that additional parking should be addressed. David asked that the committee look heavily into alternative energy sources to cut on the long term operating cost for the building. David also asked that the committee look at the handicap ramp in back and try to work within the natural grading if possible. Additionally, David commented on the significance this building has to the town's history and that this building is not registered as a Nation Historic Landmark or State Historic Landmark but should be. He encouraged the committee to look at these processes as it may be a funding option. Last David noted his concern about the murals and the need to ensure they are

preserved as a focal point to the building. David Stein commented that the cost of construction today will be a much better value than it will in the future. He also noted that renewable energy has a short return of investment of 5-8 years on a project this size.

- Marybeth Mordecai thanked the committee for the time into the project. She questioned the size of the office space for some areas and she suggested the committee look at dividers to make the space more adaptable. Maryjane commented that the committee has tried to work within the existing walls of the school to reduce cost. David Stein commented that the rooms look big but once they have furniture into them they will fill up quickly. The furniture can also be used to divide the rooms. David reminded the group that the drawings shown tonight are conceptual only.
- Chris James thanked the committee for their work and noted he supports the project. He noted that as the chairman of the Ambulance Board of Directors, they have some of the same concerns about access out of the driveways during an emergency. Chris asked about space changes that were discussed with the ambulance that were not shown on the plan presented tonight? Maryjane assured Chris that the changes were noted but did not make it into the revisions for tonight's presentation.
- Charlie Farrow commented the project is an "Economical Engine for Moodus." This conversion takes an historical building that is falling down and brings it up to today's standards. Passing of this project will only help the entire town in the long run.
- Will Brady thanked the committee and agreed with all the previous comments on the use of renewable energy as well as doing the project today and not delaying it into the future. Will felt there was not enough handicapped parking spaces, and was concerned about the location of the garage and the look of the ramp in the back of the building. Will also asked if the committee had considered space throughout the facility for displaying the town's history. As the Chairman of the Town's open Space Committee, Will noted that he did not see adequate storage space for records for the town's Boards and Commissions. He recommended shrinking the probate court and creating an additional file room. Maryjane assured Will that the committee had looked at file space throughout the facility for Boards and commissions. She thanked Will for the suggestion of the displays throughout the building, and said that the committee would ask him and others to work with them on that concept.
- Richard Parker asked if we had talked with our State Representatives about available funding through the stimulus program. Richard added as a member of the Ray Board, the Board never wanted to keep the school it was that the transfer had to go through Probate that it took so long. Maryjane noted that the Grants Subcommittee had looked at funding. Melissa noted that the town has met with representatives regarding other issues and that to qualify for the stimulus money the projects need to be "Shovel ready" which we are not at this time.
- David Carpenter asked what the committee will do to ensure the project supports the local businesses/contractors. He pointed out there is a town ordinance that allows for local trades to match bids if within 10% of the winning bid. David stated there are a lot of local businesses that would be interested in bidding on and performing work on this project as subcontractors. Maryjane assured him that the information will be made available to local contractors and we will work with the architects and the general contractor to the extent we are allowed by law to use local contractors. David Stein pointed out because of the size of this project all contractors will be required to meet certain requirements such as prevailing wages to qualify.
- Karl Stofko stated his concern about the Vault location and not having direct access from the Town Clerk's office. He also asked about an office for the Town Historian. Maryjane explained that the drawings are conceptual and there would be clear access to the vault by the town clerk. An area for the Town Historian can also be addressed.

- Art Merrow stated that there is no reason in waiting to do this project. As an example, he pointed out the difference between the cost of building the New Middle School and the High School, and how quickly costs can escalate. He also pointed out that we really don't start paying for the bonded part of the project for three years and one would hope the economy will be better by then.
- Bob Scherrer thanked the committee for their work and questioned the numbers that had been presented for the project. He asked how we have come up with the \$8 Million number? Maryjane explained that that is the goal of the committee at this time. Once we are able to move forward with the project moving from conceptual to design, we will be able to refine the numbers better.
- Tim Carr asked for clarification on whether or not the LEED cost were include in the numbers presented tonight? David Stein ensured the group that the cost of the LEED requirements are included in the numbers presented tonight. Maryjane noted that the question on the survey asks if residents would support LEED initiatives over and above State requirements.
- Laurel White asked if the concerns raised tonight would be address and a final project be present prior to the Town referendum to approve the project? Maryjane note that the townspeople would see the final product prior to voting.
- Carol Parker stated her feelings on the Historical importance this project has to many individuals and the town as a whole.
- David Pitney asked to review the cost of the project per household? After review of the numbers that had been presented in the slides David pointed out to the group that this \$8-9 million project will cost each household less than \$10 a month in additional taxes.
- First Selectman Mark Walter suggested that people stop by other town halls throughout the area to see what their facilities are like. Mark noted that when he stopped at the Old Saybrook Town Hall the one area that was consistently busy was the gym. Mark stating that he agreed with Brad Parker that this project is key to growing the towns Park and Recreation activities.
- Selectman Pete Govert asked when the committee thought the project would go to referendum and if the committee would do a town wide mailing? Maryjane stated the committees goal was to have the project go to vote in the Fall and that a mailer would be sent to each household.

With there being no other questions, on behalf of the committee Maryjane thanked everyone for attending and assured them that their input would be reviewed and considered.

Hearing was adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
 Craig Mansfield
 Secretary MSCC