

CUMBERLAND PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLEX SITE LOCATION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Meeting, Tuesday, April 28, 2015
6:30 PM

Call to Order at 6:30 PM

1) Call to Order - Attendance Roster:

State and Town Officials: Councilman Robert G. Shaw, Councilman Peter J. Bradley, Councilman Scott Schmitt, Councilman Arthur Lambi

Committee Members: Sean Thompson (ex officio), Josh O'Neill (ex officio), John Desmarais (ex officio), Mark Lindgren, Thomas Cabana, Kim McCarthy, Pam Thurlow, Alan Bourgette, Jeff Mutter, Alex Marszalkowski, Tom Letourneau, Dana Newbrook

Committee Members Absent: Frank Matta, Tim Draper

Members of the Public: Frank Geary, George Loft, Jim Coyne. Other members of the public did not sign in or state their name for the minutes.

2) Approval of April, 13 Meeting Minutes: The Minutes were approved by a unanimous voice vote of committee members present.

3) Sites Continued from Previous Meeting

Josh relayed some updates from the Mayor on several sites. He mentioned that National Grid would like to do a long term lease rather than a sale of the property. National Grid has not yet stated if they want a renovation or reconstruction of existing buildings. In response to a question from Kim, Josh indicated that he was not sure of National Grid's position on constructing buildings on the site. The Chairman asked whether we could protect the Town's investment in a building constructed on leased land; Kim indicated that could be done with a right to purchase, right of first refusal, or other protections built into the lease. Josh indicated that Mayor Murray is still in discussions with National Grid about this.

Josh mentioned that the Mayor is in talks with two private property owners at this time and is hoping the properties can come up for discussion at a committee meeting in May.

Josh also mentioned that Tim Draper had a work conflict and could not make tonight's meeting. Tim had drafted a response to tonight's agenda with his thoughts on each item. Josh handed out Tim's response to the committee members for their consideration.

National Grid Property

Alan asked Chief Desmarais what his thoughts were on traffic at the intersection of Mendon Rd. and the National Grid site. The Chief relayed concerns about traffic as well as the presence of the

LNG tank which he still thinks could be a public safety concern if a proposed complex was too close to the tank.

Kim asked the Chief why the fact that the National Grid site is on Mendon Rd. would be problematic if access to Mendon Rd. was one of the mandatory criteria given to the Committee to consider from the outset. The Chief indicated that there could be a backup onto Mendon Rd. from 116 and/or Route 295.

Chief Desmarais then responded to a question from the public about the fact that a fire station is already located even closer to the intersection with Route 116, and does not appear to have any difficulty with traffic. He stated that on emergency calls, vehicles use lights and sirens, and under these conditions the traffic moves out of the way. On non-emergency calls, this is not the case. He reiterated that traffic congestion could be a challenge and he just wants the committee to think about that in relation to this site.

A motion was made and seconded to keep the National Grid Site (Plat 39 Lots 24, 27, and 64) on the table for future consideration. The committee voted by unanimous voice vote to continue this site for committee consideration.

Plat 33 Lots 158 and 188 (Former Lambert Property)

Chairman Lindgren mentioned that he walked the property over the weekend and it confirmed discussions that the committee has been having about the lower parcel (Lot 158) being a challenge for building due to the steep slope and presence of brooks and wetlands. He said other than that he has no new news on the parcels. Chairman Lindgren inquired as to the possibility of combining the two parcels to become one lot, and Kim indicated that this was possible.

Kim made a motion, seconded by Alan to keep this property on the table for future consideration. The committee voted by unanimous voice vote to continue this site for committee consideration.

4) Sites Submitted or Proposed for Committee Review

Sher Le Mon / DropZone (Plat 38 Lots 12 and 13)

Councilman Arthur Lambi was present to discuss his idea for locating a police station only at the site referred to as the "Drop Zone" (Plat 38 Lot 12). The Councilman handed out some maps for reference. He stated this was a way to avoid building at the Monastery. He would like to have the Town house it's EMS at the current fire stations and have the fire, police, and EMS administration at the new police facility.

Tom Letourneau objected to the presentation and asked that it be suspended, stating that Councilman Lambi should not change the buildings specs and propose something entirely different than a combined public safety complex as we had been presented from the committee. Tom said it is not the purpose of the committee to change the spec or public safety complex to something else.

With the permission of the Chairman, Councilman Lambi continued his presentation on the Drop Zone property. He maintained that the site had sufficient space for a public safety complex, and cited the Bellingham Police Station as a possible example. He stated that only 350 sq ft. of office space was needed per sworn officer. This would yield a total space of 16,500 sq. ft. for a new police station. Councilman Lambi stated that we could build a new police station and only need between 16,000 and 18,000 sq ft. rather than the 26,000 sq. ft. proposed by the Kaestle Boos Associates. He also stated that the total cost would be closer to \$8 million rather than the \$12 million proposed.

Kim stated that this is in line with the questions she has asked previously about the rationale for a minimum 6-10 acre requirement that the committee was given by the Mayor as a minimum criteria for choosing a site, and whether the minimum acreage was a “need to have” or “nice to have”. She indicated that the only consistent answer is that Town officials would prefer 6-10 acres for flexibility for future expansion (for the police station and/or other public buildings). Kim said everyone seems to agree that we need a new police station, that rescue vehicles do not necessarily need to be housed in the new complex, that the specs are not set in stone, and this site would be perfect if it was between 6-10 acres. She indicated that there appears to be no consensus on the need for or desirability of using the complex as a community center, or whether, in the future, a new town hall or other buildings need to be located in the same space as the new safety complex. Therefore, she stated that the “best” location for the complex does not need to be 6-10 acres, but rather the site that is the most economical/cost-effective option for the Town and is most effective for promoting public safety and, based on Councilman Lambi’s presentation, that appears to be the Drop Zone site. She said that the committee should vote to reconsider this property.

Jeff Mutter stated that the committee would be recommending a site for a “public safety complex” and that is what the voters approved as a ballot referendum. Jeff said we can’t ask the public to approve spending for a public safety complex and then build only a police station.

Kim responded that she was proposing the site for a public safety complex and not just a police station. It is not clear what a “public safety complex” entails, since that was not specified in the bond question, and the architect’s renderings are not set in stone. However, it clearly did not include anything beyond a public safety complex, so we should not be looking for sites that are large enough for additional public building, such as a new Town Hall.

Jeff said we should not consider things that are outside of the mandate of this advisory committee, which was formed to select possible sites for a public safety complex, and we are making a recommendation to the Mayor on that basis. Kim agreed, and said that she disagreed that the Drop Zone was outside that mandate, since the 6-10 acre minimum seemed to be arbitrary.

Jeff then asked Sean Thompson and Chief Desmarais what their thoughts were.

Sean clarified that the Jacobs Report focused on a 3 fire station ideal set up; not a 3 site EMS setup. HE stated that if we were going to co-locate EMS at 3 fire stations now you are talking about expanding the EMS service and adding 8 more staff. Sean stated that EMS needs to meet the national standard of 6-8 minutes for response time. If the public safety complex is not near Chapel Four Corners, then the deployment strategy changes. We would likely change from 2

rescues to 1 rescue in a different location, which would change the size and scope of the project. Whatever we recommend, NIMBYism will still be a concern.

Chief Desmarais states that one of his main concerns with Councilman Lambi's proposal for the Drop Zone is that it does not consider future growth needs of his department. He said it was his opinion that the site will not have enough room for a new facility.

Tom Letourneau stated that this site was eliminated from consideration previously and we should vote to consider upholding the committee's previous decision. Kim stated that she believed the Mayor gave the committee an arbitrary 6-10 acre minimum lot size when we could develop a public safety complex on much smaller parcels.

Josh clarified that 10 acres was not an arbitrary figure and explained that the Town planning department and public safety staff had looked at public safety complexes in other communities in Rhode Island and Massachusetts to determine their size and come up with an appropriate parcel size for consideration. In addition to looking at other communities, we established that sites being considered would only have part of their land available for building and that we should allow some buffer room to consider constraints such as soils, wetlands, building setbacks, slopes, access etc. It was felt that a 10 acre minimum would help the committee to filter out smaller sites that would likely have these issues and make sure that the committee proposes sites where these issues would have less of a chance of that arising during the building and construction phase. Kim asked how that rule applied to sites like the Drop Zone, which were cleared, had no restrictions or Superfund issues, and appeared to be buildable. Tom stated that there might be wetlands that restricted the buildable area; Kim said the Mayor told the Committee to submit recommendations to him, even if they have challenges, and allow him and his staff to review and decide whether to move forward.

Jeff asked if the committee criteria began with a 10 acres minimum size, and the committee Press Release stated that parcels less than 6 acres would not get consideration, then why are we considering something that is less than this? Kim indicated that the Press Release was drafted by this Committee, and was not part of the committee's charge, and that no real answer has been given as to why no site under 6 acres could be appropriate for a public safety complex or approved by the committee. In addition, the Mayor indicated that we should submit to him any parcel we feel is appropriate, and allow him and his staff to decide, and to inform the Town Council and the public, why any recommended site is not appropriate.

Chairman Lindgren indicated that the requirement for a 6 to 10 acre lot size was provided by the Mayor at the Committee's first meeting. The Committee used the guidelines presented by the Mayor in drafting the Press Release.

Jeff asked Councilman Lambi if he voted on a ballot initiative stating approval of funding for a public safety "complex" not a police station only. He stated yes, it was for a public safety "complex". However, the term "public safety complex" was never defined.

Kim made a motion to reconsider the Drop Zone as a site for the future public safety complex. Kim and Dana voted yes; the rest of the Committee voted no. The motion failed by a 7 – 2 vote, and the site has been removed from further consideration.

Grove Rd. (Plat 27 Lot 195)

Josh explained the background on the state owned property off of Angell Rd. It is roughly 3-4 acres in size and is state-owned land that was once set aside as part of the right of way for the building of Interstate 295. Tom explained that he proposed this site because his thinking was that it was near the Monastery land, which is a central location, and if private property north of the site was included either through purchase or eminent domain then you would have close to 10 acres to work with. Several committee members stated that they did not support the idea of eminent domain being used.

Motion was made to remove the site from further consideration. Kim and the Chairman voted no; Tom abstained; the rest of the Committee voted yes. The motion passed 6 -2 (with 1 abstention), and the site has been removed from further consideration.

Water Department Property Adjacent to the Monastery (Plat 22 Lot 13)

Josh mentioned that this property was proposed by Tim Draper who is not at the meeting tonight. Josh said he put it on the agenda and did not review whether it was covered by the Monastery Conservation Easement until he had already sent the agenda. He stated that this lot is indeed part of the Monastery Conservation Easement, and that he recommends the committee hold off on discussing it until the May 11th meeting when the Town Solicitor's office will share its opinion on what the Town can do with the Monastery.

A motion was made to continue consideration of this site at the May 11th meeting of the committee. The committee voted by unanimous voice vote to continue this site for committee consideration.

Ball Fields at Nate Whipple Highway / Diamond Hill Rd. Intersection (Plat 70 Lot 2)

Jeff stated that moving the ball fields to another part of Town would be tough. Thomas stated that he had been involved with youth baseball previously and the league had looked into adding concession stands on the site. The restrictions on building were pretty tough because it is a drinking water supply area and it was assumed that Pawtucket Water would say no.

A motion was made to remove the site from consideration. Kim and Jeff voted no; the rest of the Committee voted yes. The motion passed 7-2 and the site has been removed from further consideration.

5) Other Sites for Consideration at Future Meetings

None Proposed

6) Public Comments

The Chairman then opened up the meeting to public comments.

Frank Geary

If someone donated property of 2-3 acres would you turn it down? Building on the Monastery land will hurt residents. He stated that he believed traffic problems would get worse. He thinks more people will agree that open space is valuable in Town.

George Loft

He stated that the Town should make an offer to the swim club to purchase their property. If that parcel were combined with the Drop Zone, you may have enough land.

Unidentified Resident

Did the people know they were voting on building on the Monastery land when the bond issue was presented? The unidentified woman stated that the Verone report makes clear that Fire EMT's can do the job that Rescue is doing. We don't necessarily need extra rescues or rescue department personnel.

Sean Thompson

Sean clarified the difference between Fire Department EMT's and the paramedics trained personnel with the Cumberland Rescue Department. He stated how his personnel were trained at a higher level than the Fire Department personnel for emergency medical response. Her interpretation of the Verone report was inaccurate. Cumberland Rescue and North Kingston Rescue are the two in the state with this paramedic level of service which is the highest in the State of Rhode Island.

Unidentified Resident

It looks like there are few practical sites due to the minimum acreage requirement. What does expansion mean? Why do we need so much land for a public safety complex?

Thomas Cabana

Thomas stated that we were given parameters and guidelines to help us find appropriate parcels of land for consideration. The Mayor and the Town's Public Safety officials were clear in the emphasis on a centralized location and ideally 10 acres or more to work with.

Mark Lindgren

The reason that the Committee is only looking at sites that are 6-10 acres is because the Mayor provided this as one of the search criteria at the Committee's initial meeting, along with other parameters such as the geographic box in which the complex should be located. . For the Committee to consider anything less than 6 acres, the Mayor would have to change the criteria presented at the first meeting.

Jim Coyne

Jim stated that he is a retired Cumberland Police Officer and he retired two years ago when this project was first being proposed. He stated that placing the police too far north or too far south will affect response times for emergency calls and also put officers in danger who are on single duty response to a violent incident. Jim stated that the Town absolutely needs a centrally located facility. Single officer response is very dangerous. He stated that people would complain loudly if response times were closer to 20 minutes, which could happen if the facility is placed outside of the parameters given to this committee. Jim stated that he was not pro or against building on the Monastery land but that folks should consider how the location will affect response times and officer safety.

End Public Comment

8) Adjournment at 8:15 PM.

The next meeting is currently scheduled to be held on May 11th in Meeting Rooms 1 and 2 of the Cumberland Public Library at 6:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Josh O'Neill, CFM, MPA
Staff