

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Special Town Board Meeting for discussion on a Joint Fire/Police Department held at the Ticonderoga Fire Department commencing at 4:00 p.m. on August 20, 2020

Present: Joseph Giordano, Supervisor
Mark Russell, Councilman
Tom Cunningham, Councilman
Joyce Cooper, Councilwoman
Dave Woods, Councilman
Tonya M. Thompson, Town Clerk

Others: Steve Yaw, Jeff Cook, Jeff Burns, Mark Wright, Bill Norton, Jason Parent, Gene Alteri, Tim Rowland, Cortney Brown, Chief Adam Hurlburt, Laura Wright, Paul LaRock

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the option of moving forward with the plans to enter into a joint building project between the Ti Fire Department and the Ticonderoga Police Department.

Mark Wright explained that the Chief wanted to make sure that the Town was still on board before moving forward, there are rumors of the Police looking at the Hudson Headwaters building. So, before going any further we want to know if the Town is still interested in a joint building.

Jason Parent agreed that he was wondering where everyone was at, this has been a very long time and really this whole Town Board has changed since we met the first time. Where is it going? If it is not going anywhere, that is fine, but where are we going?

Jeff Cook explained the process that this proposal has gone through from 5 years ago to present. It has taken so long now that the cost has escalated to a nearly 1.2 million dollar increase, so they had asked the architect to come back with a more recent plan to make up for that difference and what he brought forward to the department was a 4 bay garage for the Fire Department, but not much difference on the Police side of that building. This is not sufficient for the needs of the Fire Department. His personal opinion is the only question that we need to ask, is if the Town Board is still on board with the agreement that was signed a couple of years ago.

Supervisor Giordano noted that we did sign a new agreement last year...

Mr. Cook explained that in the most recent plan, the police department gets a couple hundred more square feet just because of the way he had to do it.

Chief Hurlburt noted that in his world beggars can't be choosers, but he would like to change a few things if he could. He would like to make the use a bit different, an interview room off the lobby, he doesn't know where he would store his tires, 4 wheelers, speed trailer and all the signs that he uses throughout the year. Also, he has been asking for years for a long term big storage so if he seizes a car, for instance with the murder trial that we had, he has to hold that car for upwards of 15 years. He needs to have some place for these things and they could be off site. That is just from him glancing at the layout.

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Special Town Board Meeting for discussion on a Joint Fire/Police Department held at the Ticonderoga Fire Department commencing at 4:00 p.m. on August 20, 2020

Councilman Cunningham asked if the Police Department was not incorporated into the fire building, how much money would that save the fire district.

Mr. Cook stated that this would need to be completely redone. It is designed as a two entity building.

Councilman Cunningham stated that this would give you the space back to add that bay.

Mr. Cook is saying that it would be a completely different building. He doesn't know, cost wise, he doesn't know. It would have to be completely redesigned. It was designed as the Fire Department/Police Department...

Councilman Woods asked if the change in plans would change the price also? Would it increase/decrease?

Mr. Cook again stated that we had a 5 bay in the original plan, we now have a draft plan with 4 bays - anyone can come up and look at these plans. From his understanding it is about the same because they took the old plan and deleted the escalation costs to come up with the new plan of just 4 bays. We are losing one truck bay and some other things that benefit the Fire Department itself. What we have here will need to be moved around any way for practicality.

Paul LaRock asked what the life expectancy of the building and if you go to a 4 bay building would that be enough? He is asking for more stuff and you are spending up to 6 1/2 to 7 million dollars and it isn't even what you need. If you are building something for

Mr. Cook stated that there is no way obviously to be able to store something for 15 years.

Mr. LaRock is not really worried about that, but if you are building something for 7 or 8 million dollars you want to build for the future, you want to build 20 years or 30 years from now.

Mr. Cook stated that this wasn't what the idea was.....without looking... the police portion of the building is significantly larger than what the building is now...significantly, possibly 1,000 square feet larger. You may have to move things around in the structure of the building, but as far as.....

Chief Hurlburt stated yes, we can use the current building now for long term storage, but if he could he would prefer everything on site. He could work with what is there and where it is.

Councilman Cunningham asked what the Fire Department is willing to do to move forward one direction or another...

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Special Town Board Meeting for discussion on a Joint Fire/Police Department held at the Ticonderoga Fire Department commencing at 4:00 p.m. on August 20, 2020

Mr. Cook stated that this has taken us 5 years, we should have put this out to bond years ago, but because of many, many long term delays we haven't. All it has done is cost more money to the tax payers.

Councilman Cunningham understands this, but moving forward is this still something that the Fire Department wants to do. Would it be better for the Fire Department, since you need more space.....what he is trying to ask is if you need more than 4 bays, which is what this design is, is it better to not have the police department part of this so that you can get your building redesigned the way you need it.

Mr. Cook stated that there he does not know if it makes any difference.

Mr. Parent stated that when this started off as a joint effort is because there was a lot of grants out there for shared money or shared services. That is why we came to the Town Board to see if we can get together. You can sell it to the tax payers better if you had a bunch of grant money. That grant money is gone, so if we are looking at this station now at 8 million dollars, the tax payers and the police department are looking at 2 million, 25% and that building does not fit, we have 5 bays now and they are full, we cannot go down to 4. It is not only that, you start looking at other aspects, it is definitely the Chief and his guys but the drama that comes along with the career of the police, do we want that on main street because that is where it is going to be. It is going to be in the parking lot of the Fire House before it ends up in the police station. Especially the ones that are walking in, our parking lot is on the fire department side, so they are going to be there first. The people didn't want it over on Amherst, so that ended up getting shut down, so now we are going to move it to main street. He is not a cop, but he doesn't know if he wants to be on main street and try to do that job. It is a hard enough time trying to do their job as it is.

Councilman Woods asked if this didn't go through, how much would it cost to renovate this building?

Mr. Parent stated that we would have to look into that....Right now we have done temporary patches, there are other options for the police department and the town in general that would make it a lot more lucrative for the tax payers instead of....we are talking 2 million if you sign right now. The first thing that will need to happen is, he doesn't see that building in front of us getting passed. He won't support it, it doesn't fit our needs. It doesn't fit what we want. He understands the price point, but why spend 8 million dollars on something that isn't going to work. That just doesn't make any sense. That 8 million dollar figure, by the time you go back to re-work this building, go out to bond and start working, you are probably talking 4 more years and start talking 8 to 10 percent on 8 million dollars over the next 4 years. Where are we then, just his opinion.

Councilman Cunningham stated that this is why he is asking these questions. Whether we could have, would have, should have back then - we are where we are today and if this is not the best way forward for the tax payers....that is really what we have to look at. There may be other options for the police department. The police department has to

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Special Town Board Meeting for discussion on a Joint Fire/Police Department held at the Ticonderoga Fire Department commencing at 4:00 p.m. on August 20, 2020

move, there building is shot and we have to do something and like you say if it is going to take 4 or even 3 years for this, then that is a long time for them to stay in that facility that they are in. We have just formed a committee to look at all the different town buildings to see what we can do moving forward, but he agrees he doesn't think this is the right thing to do for the community to build a fire department, forget the police department, but for just the fire department to have a building and they are going to spend that kind of money on it and not have it meet the needs that you guys need. We don't know what those are as well as you do, you certainly know what your needs are far better than we do..

Mr. Cook stated that this is the last integration of what we came up with. The problem is ... in the agreement, the district is the lead agency and because we have this it doesn't mean that this is what we are going with. That is what the point is, we need to get off our butts basically, if this would have been done a couple of years ago that would have been great. We are going to end up in the same situation the county ended up in with the Jail. The jail, it was put off - it went all the way to it being voted on and they decided that they didn't want to do it and 5, 6, 7 years later it cost them millions and millions and millions of dollars more. That is the other part of this, you said you have a committee that you are going to take and look at other places, that has already been done. That has been done as recently as maybe 7 years ago, we looked at the Armory, we found out that we could not put it there, as Police Chief he promoted putting it at the Armory, but we couldn't. We also looked at putting it in the Rite Aid building and the State told us that we couldn't (the Town) purchase a piece of property that we were not using. We could not subdivide the property, unless the law has changed for that, then that is probably still the same thing. When he was made aware of the health center, that would fall under the same category. This has taken so long, unfortunately it is just like anything else that we do in town. We talk about it and nothing gets resolved. We had, Dave asked about renovating this building, we had a water leak that was actually leaking through the wall and into the building where we had to dig out the around the wall to fix the drainage, the foundation of this building is cement block and you can take a screw driver and put it right through the foundation any place you touch it. Just his opinion, he can't imagine that type of foundation is worth....

Jeff Burns stated that we had a feasibility study done and they said it would cost more to renovate this building....

Mr. Wright wanted to see where we plan to go from here, whether the Town is still on board or not on board our plan is still the same and that is to take the Chief and our companies recommendation as to what they need in terms of space and number of bays and orientation of certain rooms and facilities and tell the architect to put those ideas into his final drawing and go from there. This is going to be an expensive building and unfortunately that is out of our control, but this structure is not going to protect that expensive equipment forever. This was just a grocery store, it wasn't built for this kind of equipment. The Town has an obligation, not only to the citizens around here, but for mutual aid calls to surrounding areas. We cannot afford to allow this equipment to get

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Special Town Board Meeting for discussion on a Joint Fire/Police Department held at the Ticonderoga Fire Department commencing at 4:00 p.m. on August 20, 2020

destroyed one day when the roof starts falling in. It is going to be an expensive project, and if the police department is not included then the price will probably go down, but by the time we get to that part the cost escalation will have already gone up too. The next steps are to incorporate the Chiefs ideas with the architect to get a final plan and that is what we need to go out to bond with.

Mr. Cook stated the basic premise is that we have done work on this, the Town has put tax payer money into this, we have put tax payer money into it - we want to bring this to the tax payers. If they decide they want to do this and he hopes they do, but if they decide they don't want to then we are not wasting the taxpayers money any longer.

Mr. Wright added as Mr. Parent said, why put a building out for bond when it doesn't even meet the needs.

Councilman Cunningham stated that we are all in agreement with that.

Supervisor Giordano stated that we did this to bring the costs....

Mr. Wright agreed and stated that we asked the architect to show us something that costs less and this just doesn't work.

Supervisor Giordano continued stating with what the Fire Chief said and our Police Chief said he feels that we need to start with a design to make a building that fits the needs so you start there and you get the cost estimates which is where the tough part comes in and the Town Board needs to look and see whatever that annual payment is going to be and find out how we will work something like that into our budget and the same thing with the Fire Department. This is part of the sale, that is what the architect stated years ago as being part of what the offer was, they do the design work, the architectural work and then they go out and help to sell it to the tax payers. They are still going to do that and those to him are still the elements that need to be worked through. So he hadn't seen an updated cost estimate from before, and the life expectancy was supposed to be for 50 years, so it will exceed the length of time.... so when you go to the taxpayer, you are not just talking about an 8 million dollar building, you are talking about a cost that will be spread out over so many years and that also you will get the utility out of the building which is much longer than that and that is the part of course that is challenging to sell, that is the part that requires the Fire Commissioners, Fire Department and the Town looking at it and figuring ok, this is a big chunk of change and if we were both in agreement to move forward with this mutual building, how does each of us orchestrate that cost into our budgets and then communicate that to the public, who are already seeing several...not of the least of which is the pandemic, rises in potential tax increases from various levies that have been brought forth - school, that really is the essence of this. You guys need to go back and figure out what you need and one of our options here is, with our new Police Chief he needs to look at it and see what his needs are and then be able to present this as an option. We just reinstated the multi-use building committee just to make sure we are looking at all the town facilities to figure out if there is any other possibility. For not just the police, but any department.

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Special Town Board Meeting for discussion on a Joint Fire/Police Department held at the Ticonderoga Fire Department commencing at 4:00 p.m. on August 20, 2020

Councilman Russell reiterated that this current design isn't what you want or need, so his understanding is that we have an agreement in place and unless it was discussed and that agreement was dissolved, we have an agreement that was committed to. What he would want to see is what you really need and what the police needs. To your point about the police department being here, is that how the fire department feels, is that the community's sentiment about the police department being here on main street. Some people like the presence of the emergency services being right here, front and center. It makes a statement in the community, maybe there are those that would like it back road in case something happens for a number of reasons. That is part of the politics of it and the selling points, there are options. Part of the reason we have formed this committee is the new board members would like to know the history. He has been looking into the study's that a lot of money and time have been spent on, everyone in here right now knows that these are important to us. We talked about what is the big picture, not just this, not just the municipal building being just a police department. There are some rumors out there about Hudson Headwaters being available, but if you look at this from a tax payer, you've got the fire department having this opportunity, you've got the police department, drive by the town shed - you know, end-of-life - that is being band aided so that is what the committee is about, a more holistic approach to the solution. He doesn't want to get too far down the road, but some of the things that we need to think about is how to have the biggest impact on Ticonderoga in a positive way, best long term for the community and the tax payers and a number of other things such as safety, maybe even incorporate the school, you talk about taxpayers - look at the bus garage. There are a lot of opportunities and if you really look at it as a municipal solution, is there grant money, is there funding - yes, some has gone away, but if we have a really good solution for the community, maybe not throwing all of those under the umbrella, lets advocate for ourselves, let's see what is out there. He was called by Elise Stefanic because he was a new board member and while he had her on the phone, he took the time to advocate for our own projects. Same with Dan Stec, he is running for congress and this is the most opportune time to talk with him as he is looking for support. His answer to this being a new person, there is a contract in place, we need to go back and say this is what we need and how do you sell that, but in the same time - if you read those documents, change the date, they are very accurate to today, population, needs of community, condition of facilities, none of that has changed. His point of view, and he doesn't know what the cost is to have the architect redo this and the timeline for doing that, and wearing his other had of the school board president, when you do those projects, yes, every day you kick the can forward. He raised his hand on the town board and moved the project forward with the water because we postponed that any longer it would cost us a bunch of money.

Mr. Cook explained that the one thing is we had previously discussed at one point was putting the police department and the highway department together. We found out that if you do that you have build the whole structure as a Class 1 building, the highway is a Class 3 so to speak so that was a big dilemma back when he was on the board.

Councilman Russell stated that maybe we don't do that, but if you had a municipal solution and you could go out to bid one time even if there was....and you could get financial benefits, there might be some things that you could structure so you can do it

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Special Town Board Meeting for discussion on a Joint Fire/Police Department held at the Ticonderoga Fire Department commencing at 4:00 p.m. on August 20, 2020

over a compressed time line, you get someone involved in that like GM or whoever it happens to be, it becomes more attractive ...

Laura Wright commented as a taxpayer - drawing as is does not meet the fire department's need, it does not meet the police departments needs so clearly it needs to be re-done, so there is only so much space that can be built out there so there is going to be a limit to what will be put under this building and as Mr. LaRock said, she feels like the design is circa 10 years ago. If she is a tax payer and putting out money to fund this, she wants it to be flexible to expand in the future. If we are already starting out back 10 steps, what is going to be the case in 15 years when we have additional needs that we can't meet because the building was too small and it was too small to begin with. In her opinion, if the fire department is not also built as a community center, it is going to be hard to bill it all out there to the tax payers. Is there going to be a community center/room as this one here in the new fire house.

Mr. Parent said not in these current plans, absolutely not.

Mr. Cook stated that the latest plans are not that large, nothing says that we are going to go with that.

Steve Yaw stated that what has been lost in this whole conversation is that we had an architect come in here and tell us, this community can probably handle about 8 million dollars. So he designed a building that could handle the fire department and the police department and we all had meetings to come up with a general plan, that is the old prints and it takes so long and everybody switches here, everybody has new ideas, so it kind of gets held up, gets held up.....pretty soon we have gone 1.2 million over our original plan. So now instead of 8 it will be 9 and he said I don't think (he has done this his whole life-it is his job) it will not sell very well in this community. We would be lucky to get 8, so he redesigned it and reduced it. He is not happy with this plan, no one is so we probably won't use it. So we are just wasting our time arguing about it, we are not using it. We are going to have to go back and spend more money and do the original plan, so the fire department is happy and the police department is happy - that is what we originally had. This has gotten lost in the shuffle because of the cost increases. We have gone down this street and now we know it is not going to work. Hopefully, that ends the round and round about the same thing. We are all against it, so why are we discussing it. Move on, we have been doing this for too long for too many years. Everybody in here is new from when this started, we are wasting the tax payers money dragging our feet, we need to get together, do this correctly and get all of our thoughts together now not a year from now and get it developed and gone. Everything takes time, we will probably have to drill again to get core samples again. We had to put a 60K roof on here that we didn't have to do, get moving.

Mrs. Wright asked if the police was taken off from this and the town found them their own spot hopefully for less money, something they can rehab and save the tax payers money on that side, it allows the fire department to have the 5 bay, it allows to have the community room, because if the tax payers sees this as a building that the community can

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Special Town Board Meeting for discussion on a Joint Fire/Police Department held at the Ticonderoga Fire Department commencing at 4:00 p.m. on August 20, 2020

utilize themselves then it is a little easier to swallow because they know they can benefit from it as well. The Bingo hall has been a huge piece of the community, especially on bingo night, but it is also here for baby showers, simple community events so as a tax payer, her personal opinion is to let the police department go back to finding their own space, you get what you want for the fire house that includes a community involvement and in 10 - 15 years we aren't stuck with a building were we need more space.

Mr. Cook explained various functions of the hall at the fire department - not just a bingo hall.

Mr. Wright stated that we looked at what the architect came up with for a reduction of costs and it doesn't work, and like Steve said, what we want to go forward with is a structure that accommodates the company and accommodates the police department and it is going to be more money and we all know that so we are back to where we were and that is fine if that is what it takes to do the job, so we don't need to discuss doing a building that doesn't meet our needs, that is not the goal. We had to look at that avenue to see what it looked like if we reduced the cost, and it didn't work. The goal is to go forward with a structure that does meet the needs. The purpose of this is to find out if the Town is still part of that or not.

Councilman Cunningham asked the next question, is the original design meeting everyone's needs?

Mr. Wright stated that the answer is yes and no, we know we need 5 bays, we also know that we need to move some of the facilities rooms around a little to make operation more feasible. Other than that there was some slight room size changes and things like that, but other than that...

Mr. Parent stated that all the movement that we did and all the moving around, that was on the pre-plans that we are talking about right now. The other set of plans (the old ones) we have not seen them, so putting it out there that it will work and we only need to move them around ... the only plans that we have seen are the new plans - we have not seen the 5 bay plans.

Mr. Wright stated that you told him that we needed 5 bays - yes or no, the answer is yes... that is what you have said

Mr. Parent said so we are just going to take those plans because they have 5 bays on them...

Mr. Wright stated no, ... but we don't need to have these conversations now, but you have conveyed to us some of the things you need from an operational standpoint and that is what we heard and what we want to go to the architect with to make that happen and one of the things you said is 4 bays doesn't work so we have gone back to 5 bays..... what he said was the original plan with 5 bays and some of the ideas that you have had of where

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Special Town Board Meeting for discussion on a Joint Fire/Police Department held at the Ticonderoga Fire Department commencing at 4:00 p.m. on August 20, 2020

you want to put certain storage rooms and changing rooms sizes, what is not correct about that.

Mr. Parent stated that the room sizes that he has looked at are not the same room sizes that are in the structure with the 5 bays, so he hasn't seen the other plans for the building.... anyways....

Supervisor Giordano stated that in his experience this is the first time that we have had everyone, the commissioners, the Chiefs and the Town Board members all together to have a meeting to have a conversation. Why don't we just agree to have some kind of set timeline moving forward so we can have these continual conversations as it sounds like you have to have conversations about your needs and yes, there was a needs assessment done originally with both the chiefs at that time, if you have a copy of those we can refresh them with our current chiefs and that way we can start from the beginning in terms of rehashing what was anticipated as the need at that time. Then we can come up with an expedited schedule so this doesn't linger for years, so we can get to a point of go or no go in terms of.....in the past there was discussion of who was leading this from the town let's not go back and just figure out from here, going forward what needs to happen and meet on a monthly basis or whatever it takes to kind of hone in on what it is going to take to communicate it to the community what the proposal is. In the end, it doesn't matter for us, necessarily that are in this room, but it matters to the community and that they feel it is worth while for both entities to be in the same building and to have the measures that they need to be able to provide the services that we want them to provide to the community. That is all that matters. That was the take home from the architect from the very beginning about selling it. Take the price tag, put it aside and sell it for what it is going to be, a one time shot investment that will last us three quarters of a century or longer. That is where we are at, this is a unique juncture to be in because, new buildings don't come along very often and they are very herculean efforts to get them up and off the ground, so this is not uncommon. We need to reign people back in, set up a time line that we can agree with, let the town discuss with it's chief what we need, you guys do the same for the fire department and we come back with the architect again to share his knowledge. Ultimately, you have to go to a referendum, the town has to vote on it, but we both have to make sure we can include it realistically to the tax payer in our budget. The needs and the fiscal responsibility to our tax payers.

Councilman Woods asked if this wasn't a shared service can it still continue?

Mr. Cook stated that we cannot use the plans for this structure, it is designed for a two entity structure. No matter what happens, in his personal opinion we are going to put something out to the public for a fire house. The reason why this was done was to try to be efficient to the tax payers. Grants, money from the state there was money available, but that has now dried up. Whether there is money now from the state, god only knows, this structure is just going to fall down on us. The police department when he left 13 years ago is falling down, nothing is getting fixed and the longer we put them off the more money it will cost us.

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Special Town Board Meeting for discussion on a Joint Fire/Police Department held at the Ticonderoga Fire Department commencing at 4:00 p.m. on August 20, 2020

Councilman Russell stated that it is in the best interest of all of this together, we started this committee not to separate, but to have these conversations because we can use this as the conduit to get together. We may come to a decision that it is two different buildings but the bottom line no matter what the solution is, we are advocating together because of our community. Personally he feels it is a good solution to have the emergency services together, but the first step is what is the want and need. Fine tune those things and then meet with the architect in September. There are shared services grants out there, the best success getting money is when we have a plan for a project. Let's advocate for us now.

Mr. Parent asked about Class buildings - highway and police- if fire was separate from pd would we still need a class 1?

Mr. Cook understands fire, hospital, police all need class 1 since 911.

Mr. Parent believes that is if they are classified disaster structures.

Mr. Cook is going by what the architect told him...

Mr. Parent believes this will reduce the price on our end significantly if the truck bay was not up to a class 1...

Mr. LaRock stated that back when we started this and he was involved a great concern was the cost and what they had to do with the bingo hall would be the same as the truck bay....

Councilman Cunningham asked our Chief of Police to take the original drawings to look into our needs, the fire needs to do the same, we will separate back to our corners look at needs and then reconvene at the multi-use building committee and then we will meet with the architect to update the drawings and come up with the cost.

Chief Hurlburt wasn't saying that none of these plans would work for him, obviously they are bigger than what he currently. His concern was a 2 point something million dollar price tag. If we are going forward, he is good either way, but if we are not then there is other options to look at.

Councilman Cunningham added that if the police are not part of this, does this save you money for the tax payer and we do not know without the drawing and talking with the architect.

Mr. Yaw guaranteed that you can come up with the perfect plan for both and two years later they will find issue with the plan.

Mr. Parent asked the Chief how he felt if he was on main street?

Chief Hurlburt stated that if he had a choice, he would not be on main street, the presence would be nice, but feels it would be more trouble for him....

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Special Town Board Meeting for discussion on a Joint Fire/Police Department held at the Ticonderoga Fire Department commencing at 4:00 p.m. on August 20, 2020

Mr. Yaw stated that just for a selling point, when a taxpayer drives up main street they want to see that beautiful building, they want to be proud of it. Seeing is better- better for tourists, you don't want to be hidden away.

Meeting adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Tonya M. Thompson, Town Clerk