

## MINUTES OF MEETING

September 23, 2008

Selectmen's Public Workshop with Building Committee  
6:00 p.m. Southwest Harbor Fire Department Meeting Room

The Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. There were 34 Town citizens present. Panel Present: Selectmen: Kristin Hutchins, Chair, Skip Wilson, Vice Chair; Berten Willey, Ralph Dunbar, Jr. Building Committee: Lee Worcester, Dalen Mills, Beth Gaiser, Diane Willey-Ward

Hutchins greeted visitors saying the Building Committee would make their presentation, followed by comments from the Selectmen, and then opening the discussion up to the floor. Building Committee member Dalen Mills clarified that there was one square footage error in the report for the Ambulance Association: the figure for their square footage should be 1700 s.f., rather than 893 s.f.

Lee Worcester introduced the Building Committee and explained the charge from the Selectmen. He reviewed the criteria and said the Committee met once a week throughout the summer. He then discussed the report that was mailed to the citizens of the Town, going through each item that was considered. Dalen Mills said the Elwell Farley building is now on the market, and while it had not been considered previously, Mr. Mills thought it might be worth looking into by the Committee. Mr. Worcester referenced the restrictions attached by deed to the existing Town Office building, saying it may have an impact on what could be done with that building if it were vacated by the Town Offices and Police Department.

Mills discussed the figures just in terms of oil heat savings and the use of the fire station meeting room and removing a meeting room from the design. Both Mills and Worcester discussed the estimated costs of relocation of business while the existing building was being renovated, as figures that needed to be factored into the equation, but were estimated at best. The Building Committee believes the long term solution is building new and recommends that option – one building to house Town Offices, Police, Dispatch and Ambulance. Second in terms of desirability: would be serious consideration to purchase the Medical Associates Condo for Police and Dispatch and renovate the existing Town building for the Municipal offices. Mills said that a 15 year note on \$2million would cost \$26.20/year on \$100,000, or 26cents on \$1,000.

Hutchins asked the Select Board if there were any questions. Hutchins said the best option in her opinion was to build new. She reiterated that the 2006 Sewall report had a \$400,000 price tag for priority one items, and the recommendation was to have that completed in one year. It is now two years after the report. Bickford agreed generally and is sensitive to the tax issues. She said patching over the long term is not cost efficient. Wilson thanked the committee for their work, the report is thorough. He indicated the vote that was defeated previously, and discussed the interest expense that would be added to a build. Wilson felt that moving to Medical Associates doesn't really meet the needs of the Police Department and also said that regarding the Town Office,

the Sewall report numbers come to about \$290,000. He also expressed the opinion that the roof isn't as bad as it was first thought and that the figure of \$421,000 included \$360,000 for Police station renovation and ventilation. He felt that bringing the building up to code would cost \$290,000. He ended this discussion by saying that he believes the Board will put out 3 to 5 choices for the voters and while he likes all options he doesn't know what the Town can afford.

Willey said he has received opinions from citizens on the street who have indicated that building new would be great, and should have been done when the fire station was built. Personally, Mr. Willey said he would take care of the Police Department first, referring to item 4 in the report, and deal with the Town Office at a later date.

Dunbar thanked the committee and the public. He said he would hate to see the Town purchase another building to maintain and suggested his opinion would be to renovate what you have or build new. If you build new, what are you going to do with the old building? Mr. Dunbar further stated that the other option is to get by – there will have to be some updates, but in these economic times, people don't want to spend the money; however, it's up to the Town to choose.

Wilson said the bays currently vacant could be renovated while the Police Department is in its present location. Mills brought up the concern of what to do with Town offices as they are being renovated. Gaiser asked where the Town records would be stored if the bays were taken over.

The public was invited to speak:

Ken Hutchins: He finds it frustrating to come to this meeting and asked Skip Wilson why he was criticizing the work of the Committee, as he would expect some clear direction from the Board of Selectmen.

Mike Magnani: he believes the Town wants consolidation of services – using this (Fire Station) as a meeting room is great and suggested the Town could keep the records at the school. He thought there were more elements that could be chipped away at and use the things we have already paid for.

Sandra Johnson: the mil rate info is good. Can the Town afford to spend \$2million is not the only question. She asked if it was prudent adding to the \$2M, the fire truck request for ¾ million dollars, the storm grating system which needs serious work, as well as roads and sidewalks maintenance. Johnson said she would beg to question whether we can afford to spend that additional money. The Town hasn't grown that much in the past 8 years – how could we have outgrown the space when we haven't grown as a Town? (Hutchins said the space needs were inadequate 12 years ago). Johnson: asked the cost of the Tremont Town Office and was told it was \$1.2. and doesn't include Police or Dispatch.

Meredith Hutchins: please consider the proper storage of the Town records – they should be accessible.

Elwell Farley: he asked how many policemen the Town has presently, and was told there are 5 full timers including the Chief. Farley asked why they would need that much square footage. Chapais invited all citizens to visit the police department – clients/customers/victims often need a private area to meet with officers – there are security issues, safety issues (electrical) – heating issues are huge and the space being requested is in line with other police departments of our size. Hutchins said that the building as a whole needs to be considered.

Laura Shelby: said she was on the building committee for the Elementary school and remembers the cost of renovations for that project was huge – other problems that can't be foreseen pop up. She would rather spend her money on a new building.

Sharon Howard: what about the Pemetic School – vault storage sounds like a good idea. Worcester – it was the Building Committee's understanding that the access of vaulted records is on a daily basis and it doesn't make sense to locate it off site from an operational point of view. Wilson said that many of the records must be available all the time.

Carolyn Ball: has there been any discussion of combining Dispatch with the other communities? Bickford said Hancock County is not able to take on SWH or any other small community because of their lack of space and staff, at this time.

Mike Sawyer: looking over the facility assessment – has anything been done to bring the building up to Code – and why not? He expressed the opinion that it was neglectful to let the building run down and not do anything – who is responsible for that? Why? How much is the Town's bonded debt? We should be trying to work out of some of the debt rather than raising it to \$10 Million.

Hutchins said the Board is trying to agree on the scope of the project. Hutchins referred to the general comments part of that report. Wilson said be careful of the priority one items. There should have been budgeted \$60,000 and the Town did not; and, we should be raising money for the handicapped accessibility.

Farley: doesn't understand why a Town Manager would come in and say this place isn't feasible. Bickford said before putting \$400,000 into the old building they wanted to be sure it was done once. Hutchins reminded the citizens that the Town Manager didn't advance a new idea.

Magnani: He said the Town Manager is doing the long range planning that was never done before. He commended that.

Carolyn Williams: re the storm drainage – it's more than just the infrastructure – it's the fact that we don't have the ordinances that take care of the aggregate of the water.

Sara Corson: one very specific question : she doesn't understand the point about adding to the current fire station – is it two separate lots? Hutchins said the attachment to this building was considered. The Building Committee explained the fact that there is wetlands on one side of the current building, abutting property lines on another side and ledge on a third side, all of which precludes attaching to the current structure. The lot is large enough to build a second building. Ms. Corson's general comment was that the elephant in the room is the "economy" and expressed the hope there would be some fluidity, but cautioned that life might not be as normal in a few months – keep track of that.

Jarvis Newman: the present building is there; if we could remodel the building and use that space, it would be feasible.

Mills: hard times bring hard solutions – looking at things long term, the \$2 million is the least amount of money that will be spent on the needs. Patching and building piece meal will in the long run be more expensive.

Howard: it is difficult to make a decision without the hard figures to look at. How to offset some of this additional expense. Where will there be cuts?

Hutchins: The Town has the money to be able to do the appropriate studies and be able to put two options before the voters with some hard financials.

Johnson: at a minimum, for the people in the Town to vote rationally, there must be financial numbers that are comparable.

Mike Sawyer: what are the options that we will vote on? He said the Town had already voted once to not build new. Vaughn Clark agreed with Mike Sawyer that the voters do not want to keep voting on building new – they've voted that down already.

Steve Homer: questioned the site for a new building and asked if it was ever considered to raze the building and rebuild on the same spot. The committee said that had been considered and there was no way to determine accurately the cost of relocation of the current employees for what might be an extended period of time.

Howard: the Board should not overlook the fact that last year the voters voted against building a new building, and the Selectmen should consider that.

Ken Hutchins: would hope that the next Selectmen's meeting would produce a decision. He said that Wilson and the Board has just added confusion to the whole issue.

Wilson suggested a workshop for just the Selectmen just on this project without other Town business. Selectmen agreed.

Hutchins suggested adjournment at 7:40 p.m.