

PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY COMMITTEE
Via ZOOM
JUNE 9, 2020

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Robert Weatherall called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. with the following members present: R. Donahue, P. Polonsky, L. Alexson, K. Carlson, Chief P. Nikas, C. Surpitski, H. Schwartz, R. McShera, J. Fay, T. Jones, and J. Emerson. Absent were Chief A. Theriault and P. Dziadose.

CITIZEN QUERIES

None.

DISCUSSION OF AND PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION
RELATIVE TO THE COMMITTEE'S ADVOCACY OF A NEW PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY

Chair Bob Weatherall greeted all and felt that the Committee should get in touch now that the town government has picked up momentum toward the Spring meeting to be held on June 27 at the HS/MS field. There is a question of how the PSFC should shape our message and advocate for public safety facilities in town. He asked for information regarding the budget calendars from the Select Board and the Finance Committee and the need for the public safety project fit being more important than ever. Linda called times very uncertain and had voted against the Town Meeting in June. The warrant has been reduced to financial articles including reduced capital funding and pushing other articles off until the fall. While agreeing with the need, she is not certain how the message for the big money project will be received.

Jamie Fay stated that Boards were not unanimous, voting 3/2 and 5/4. While other communities are laying off teachers and town personnel, Ipswich's revenue streams are the same no matter what happens. Real estate tax money is really strong and important. Retirees (and there are many in Ipswich) aren't really affected by the economy. Excise taxes and permit fees continue to come in for building additions and renovations, but the State is hemorrhaging with unavoidable costs in welfare, healthcare, etc. and discretionary spending is the first to go including aid to towns. Ipswich has been putting away money for a decade in rainy-day funds. The School Committee put off their override for another year. He feels that there will be a fall Town Meeting.

Bob commented that it is very much about the mood of voters. Borrowing would be happening months from now and debt would be happening many months from now, but this moment is about the politics and voters' frame of mind--raising taxes. Hearing about other town service cuts may worry them. Harvey is concerned that townspeople will feel this is the wrong time to spend money. Rejection now would make it more difficult to come back a second time.

To Linda's question about our architect, Bob said that the schematics have slowed because of COVID and a funded project under her jurisdiction has taken precedence.

Chief Nikas talked with the Finance Director last week re the advantage that construction costs will be significantly lower because of the current environment and fewer opportunities for bidding by construction people. In our favor are the lower numbers for borrowing and commercial construction predicted at an 11-14% decline for non-residential, thus increasing contractor interest in bidding on our project.

Rob spoke of two elephants in the room: the COVID environment which affects the economy and our preparedness in speaking at Town Meeting. The second is the impetus against the police nationally. We can turn that around by talking about our Ipswich police who are so unlike those across the country and their very unwelcoming police station which we can fix. The new building is all about community engagement.

Tammy had spoken with Town Manager Marino re the concern of the church people and the purchase of their property. There was discussion of the Town Meeting article(s) re the project. Charlie urged the development of a plan for marketing and the need for open communication with the church. Charlie also feels that the townspeople need to know that, in the past, we got no land when we asked, and this is the last opportunity to buy this piece.

Consensus for moving forward is as follows:

1. Nudge HKT and try to get schematics on elevation and adjustments to parking on Pine Swamp Road for parishioners (Bob).
2. Produce video tours of Police and Fire Stations by ICAM for viewing by townspeople (Linda).
3. Communicate with the church (Tammy).
4. Meet and discuss schematics with town committees.
5. Have a public relations campaign with the people regarding police officers' "community policing"—truly protecting and serving Ipswich residents.
6. Provide a list of the helpful things that the Police and Fire Departments do on a daily basis. Example: riding on the wave of birthday and graduation drivebys (Therault and Nikas)
7. Check with Moderator Murphy for PSFC presentation at Town Meeting.

NEXT MEETING

A June 23 agenda on ZOOM @ 7 p.m. re the items enumerated above.

ADJOURNMENT

Tammy moved, seconded by Rob, to adjourn at 8:17 p.m. Roll call: Bob Weatherall, Rob Donahue, Linda Alexson, Paul Polonsky, Keith Carlson, Paul Nikas, Charles Surpitski, Harvey Schwartz, Ryan McShera, Tammy Jones, Jamie Fay, and Jean Emerson.