

IPSWICH PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY COMMITTEE
APRIL 16, 2019
TOWN HALL RESOURCE ROOM

OPEN SESSION
CALL TO ORDER

Chair Robert Weatherall called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. with the following members present: L. Alexson, Fire Chief A. Theriault, P. Polonsky, P. Dziadose, K. Carlson, R. McShera, Police Chief P. Nikas, and J. Emerson. Architect Janet Slemenda was also in attendance. C. Surpitski joined the meeting at 7:43 p.m. Absent were H. Schwartz, R. Donahue, and T. Jones.

DISCUSSION WITH BIALEK PARK COMMITTEE RE PARK SITE

Bob W. introduced Kerry Bates, of the Ipswich ReCreation Department and several neighbors of the Bialek Park Committee, citing the need to start talking about pieces of property quickly and openly with others who have a stake in this building process. Obviously, this discussion is important because Bialek is open space and because response times for fire trucks make Bialek Park a good site for a public safety building; however, taking open space is a serious consideration.

Peter D. reviewed the presentation at the March 26 meeting where several potential sites for a combined public safety facility were evaluated, based on the reported need of a five-acre parcel. Included, but eliminated except as single department sites because of their size, were Green Street ballfield and the current Elm Street police station. Bialek Park, at fourteen acres, could support a 4½-5 acre combined facility which would encompass the front section on Linebrook Road for quick egress by fire apparatus. He envisioned a skate park, tennis courts, exercise area, and a bigger playground which would all be “a jewel” to the town if done right, all predicated on the fact that it would be free for the townspeople. “We need the community to sell this”, he said. He further reviewed the history of looking at other sites around town, and Chief Nikas spoke of the concept of Bialek and the Friends of Bialek Park who were looking to make improvements. It would now be possible to provide more parking and public bathrooms. He mentioned other communities, specifically W. Newbury, which have their own public safety facility right next to their public fields.

Bob pointed out, however, that it will take a 2/3 majority vote by the Town, an Act by the State Legislature, and the acquisition of other parkland in town to replace the area taken for public safety before this could be accomplished.

Jack Moon, of 30 Kimball Avenue, urged PSFC to contact all abutters of Bialek Park to inform them if the project is moving in the direction of Bialek Park. Chief Nikas commented that Jeff Putur, Parks/Cemetery Commissioner, wants to be involved in these talks.

Janet Slemenda apprised the group of the fact that there would have to be a long footprint of 20,000 sq. ft. to accommodate the fire and police vehicles. A two-story building is

not out of the question. She gave examples looking at about twenty years out, including fire and police where shifts overlap (double parking). With community rooms, parking grows larger than it might appear. Generators, antennas, aprons in front of the building, a Sally port for police which must have an apron for moving the person and locked doors--all of these things take up more space than a regular building. Five acres is the high point for area. The building would cover ½ acre and parking, two acres. In reference to response time, Chief Andy said that any movement of a public safety building one mile in any direction, would mean that two minutes response time is lost in the opposite direction. He also commented that the crowded conditions at the firehouse currently mean a delay of at least 30 seconds.

Ms. Slemenda asked the Bialek neighbors for their comments. Jack Moon explained that, while some people say that Bialek isn't used much, he (and Tim Donovan of 39 Kimball Avenue) explained that the area is surrounded by condos without backyards and parents bring their children to enjoy the park and picnic there all day. Baseball and softball teams use the park. Bob Gambale (of the Zoning Board) commented that with 40B projects on small parcels of land, there is virtually no space for outdoor activities. The Powder House complex was approved with the condition that the residents could have free membership at the Y behind it. Donovan and Gambale gave support for the PSFC with a rejuvenation of the park.

DISCUSSION WITH THE ARCHITECT

Janet distributed and reviewed her summary drafts of shared, stand-alone police, and stand-alone fire department facilities. A sampling of information follows:

- #1 Shared spaces total: 7,451 sq.ft.
 - Fire grand total 18,141 sq.ft.
 - Police " " 10,396 sq.ft.
- #2 Stand-alone Fire grand total 24,516 sq.ft.
 - Parking for 40
- #3 Stand-alone Police grand total 16,997 sq.ft.
 - Parking for 49
- A shed for other vehicles 2,900 sq.ft.

Space has been allowed for ambulance service.

Population increase in the town is not expected to increase greatly; maybe to 16,000 in time.

Janet said this is not an extravagant plan, and the challenge is looking into the future. She commented on how terrible the current fire and police facilities are, especially mentioning mechanical and storage facilities, without insulation, and ceiling heights which might not be legal. She advised against renovation. The Chiefs will continue reviewing and changes will come when the design itself is done. The feasibility study acts as guidelines.

Janet distributed and reviewed her new schedule for progress. The site assessment is on hold: Elm and Green Streets will only hold one department. Bialek Park on Linebrook Road is questionable. The scenario is political. A phased project and/or splitting to two sites will cost

more. To Charlie's question of site selection in other communities within her experience, Janet answered that in her 40 years, with public safety buildings, the sites are not ideal.

Bob stated that bringing this project to Fall Town Meeting has been reduced to making a report of our status with the goal of going to Spring Town Meeting. Discussion took place re "selling" the project to the Town (October-April), in telling the townspeople that we have a plan, a place without a lot of choices, and we ask for support.

Kerry asked for comparison to the price of a new school. The PS facility would be 36,000 sq. ft. with no State funding and no large grants. Mr. Donovan opined that we are opening the door to public safety at Bialek and beautification of the park would help, but there has to be money for park renovation.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, April 23, 2019, Town Hall Room B2 was set for an Executive Session to discuss sites.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Linda moved, seconded by Paul Nikas, to approve Minutes of 3/26/19. UNANIMOUS.

ADJOURNMENT

Bob moved, seconded by Charlie, to adjourn at 9:25 p.m. UNANIMOUS.