

Town of Middletown Springs
Special Town Meeting Informational Meeting
Hybrid meeting held on Monday November 8, 2021
Start time: 6:30pm | Approved Minutes

Town Officers Present: Selectboard members - Terry Redfield, Neil Russell, Heather Grier, Robin Chesnut-Tangerman, Patty Kenyon; Moderator – Kimberly Bushnell.

General Attendance: In addition to project architect, Geoff Metcalfe of Keefe & Wesner Architects, there were more than a dozen attendees present in the meeting room and 17 devices listening via Zoom.

Town Moderator, Kimberly Bushnell called the meeting to order at 6:34 pm. Kimberly welcomed everyone in the room and attending via Zoom. She reviewed the protocols for the hybrid meeting and read the Special Town Meeting Warning.

Article 1: Shall the voters of the Town of Middletown Springs authorize the Selectboard to borrow a sum not to exceed \$800,000.00 to be financed for a period not to exceed 30 years for the purpose of financing the construction of a town office building on the corner of South and East Streets (estimated project cost \$973,000.00)?

Terry Redfield, Selectboard chair, thanked everyone for taking the time to come to this informational meeting. He then gave a brief overview of the need and the process we've gone through to get to this moment in time. Briefly the board looked at options beyond the corner property, concluded the corner was the best option, worked to develop a footprint and floor plan that we feel will fill our needs now and into the future. Terry introduced Geoff Metcalfe of Keefe & Wesner, the town's architect.

Robin Chesnut-Tangerman pointed the folks on Zoom to the detailed plans on the town website as they won't be able to see the drawings that Geoff brought with him.

Geoff introduced the project. First point was to be sensitive to budget and space needs. Geoff described the structure as simple and cost effective. We'll be using slab on grade construction. There was an overview of the vault construction, the aesthetics of the building trying to speak to the local vernacular. Construction above the slab will be standard wood construction, roof framing will be trusses. Exterior will be clapboards and standing seam roof. All exterior finishes will be products that don't rot. Two porches, one at each entry point. Talked a little bit about the building location on the site and the location of the parking area.

Kimberly called for questions -

Question from the floor about the septic system (Nita Burch-Clay)– what is the septic system? Geoff answered the system will be a holding tank that will be regularly pumped.

Follow-up question from the floor – (Nita Burch-Clay) – what is the heating system? Answer from Geoff – the heating system is a ducted heat pump system for heat and air conditioning with a small propane back up unit for the depths of winter.

Another follow-up (Nita Burch-Clay) And Solar? – Geoff, Terry, & Patty answered that Solar is not part of this design but could be easily added if funds are available.

Question from Gordon Godfrey – asked about the square footage of the building – what is it?
Geoff answered – just over 2000 square feet.

Follow up (G Godfrey) – where's the rest of the money for this building going to come from?
Terry, Patty and Neil answered that we have just over \$300,000 in a reserve fund for this project and there is potential to use some of the ARPA funds that we will be receiving. The hope is that the building will come in within the budget and estimate. Geoff added that the estimate was done by a builder who is working now during the pandemic, so he's confident that the build will come in very close to the estimate. The most volatile potential for cost increases is with the site work due to the former brownfield. The building process will be done using a bid which will have a hard number guaranteed for the building. The soft costs, septic and site work, are part of the additional costs beyond the building estimate, those costs will begin to be fleshed out in more detail if the article passes tomorrow. The board will have to reject any bids or shelve the project if the costs are expected to exceed our borrowing limits.

Floor Question from Maureen McCormack – will the building walkway be ADA compliant – Geoff says yes, but the grade will have to be modified to meet the 5% grade required by ADA.

Follow-up (M McCormack) – Emergency access to the building at the front access? – Front entrance will also be an accessible entrance in terms of grade.

Floor Question – Nita Burch-Clay – asked whether a slab is a good investment in Vermont – Geoff answers yes, his perspective is that a basement is not part of the scheme due to the efficiency of the construction design.

Floor Question – Maureen McCormack – worried about the slab in terms of comfort in the working environment. Geoff says this right now is a little bit flexible and will be vetted out in the next phase, but consistent warmth is a high priority in the design.

Zoom Question – Herb Childress – not a question but a comment, he thanked the Selectboard for the work they've done on this project. But also acknowledged that the current design is due to the work that's been done over the course of more than a dozen years by former building committee members, David Munyak, Michael Beattie, Patty Kenyon, Peter & Aileen Stevenson and all the former and current teams – thank you all.

Question from the floor from Jack Clay – concerned about storage and that there's not enough storage room? Also, how big is the meeting room compared to the room we are in now. Concerned we might be building a building that is already too small. Geoff, Neil, talked about the room comparison, roughly they are close in size. There is also potential storage in the attic area above the main floor. Specific storage options will be vetted that will work for the space as designed.

Zoom – Aileen Stevenson – storage follow-up and the size of the town clerk's office is large enough to accommodate some things, there is also a small meeting room that could store some items when not in use.

Floor Comment – Robin Chesnut-Tangerman regarding the work of the previous building committee – they spent a lot of time going on site visits and viewing and interviewing people who work in other town offices around the state. There was a lot of work put into the initial research, that was all passed on to Geoff to draw from. Patty talked about her limited experience as the Town Clerk and her take on storage – she feels this building seems adequate for storage.

Floor Question – Nita Burch-Clay – one of the things that she liked about the previous plan was that it addressed more than one need and we have many other needs that are urgent as well. Would it be better to vote this down and say that we want a combined project? If we vote for this are we not going to get the other projects dealt with. Patty answered by giving the history of our current project. We don't want to continue to be stuck on the town office because it's not the answer to all of our problems. Let's not go backward. The Fire Department is working on their needs, we are working on applying for a grant for a new salt shed right now, there is progress on the other projects. The town office has consistently been the number one project need based on surveys in the past.

Nita urges the board to do more communication with the townspeople through all the mediums available to us.

Via Zoom – Herb Childress – follow-up to the 2019 vote on the bundled projects – that idea was soundly rejected. It's very clear that the community didn't want to do that.

Chat Question – Mike Lamson – it was mentioned that alternate sites were investigated, and it was deemed they were unsuitable – what other sites and why were they rejected? Terry talked about the investigation of revamping and taking over more space at the historical society building, that did not pan out as the cost was likely to exceed the cost for a new building. Other projects were residential houses in town that were for sale that had a potential match, the issues we had to look at is how much would it cost to turn a home into a municipal building. That's how we landed back on the corner.

No other questions.

Voting will take place tomorrow from 7am to 7pm. Please wear masks.

Terry thanked Kimberly for moderating, all the folks who came out in person and on Zoom and especially Geoff Metcalf for coming and helping us answer questions.

The Moderator declared the meeting over at 7:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Patty Kenyon, Town Clerk

Approved by Moderator, Kimberly Bushnell on November 20, 2021