

Third Report To Selectmen
Buildings and Facilities Committee
(3-2-20)

The Building and Facilities Committee filed a Preliminary Report with the Selectmen, dated September 5, 2019; and a Second Report, dated October 17, 2019. This Third Report addresses issues related to (1) the schematic design plans for the Police Department being developed pursuant to the Recommendation of the Committee in its Second Report, as adopted by the Selectmen at their meeting on October 21, 2019; (2) the Recreation Department; (3) the Emergency Management Committee; and (4) initial discussions concerning a building inspector.

1. *Police Department*

In its Second Report to the Selectmen (10-17-19), the Committee noted that Harriman had not as of that date provided information supporting its claim that its analysis of the Police Department space was based on “national standards.” Harriman subsequently responded on November 6, 2019, with the statement that *“there are no prescribed national standards. There are values that are generally understood to support public safety/critical facility operations. Each agency is unique so square footage allocations tend to vary meet [sic] the specific needs of a particular community.” (Emphasis supplied.)*

The Committee also reached out to the seven towns in Merrimack County of similar population (4,000 +/-). Five of the seven towns responded with information on their police departments, and information was obtained from the websites of the other two. The towns ranged in size from 4,056 to 4,970. The smallest police department has 7 full-time officers (“FTO”) and 1 administrator, with a total of 3,124 sq. ft. The other departments were larger, with the largest having 11 FTO, and 1 parking enforcement officer, with gross square feet ranging from 5200 to 5600 total. The Committee also reached out to the Town of Warner, population 2,907, because it has two exits off I-89; a park-and-ride; and a college. Warner has 4 full-time-officers (FTO), plus 1 administrator, utilizing 5500 sq. ft.

Based on this information, and the fact that the physical deficiencies in the Buker building have been remedied by the Selectmen under the 2019 bond

(\$600,000), the Committee concluded that the Harriman recommendation (Option 6) to raze the Buker building and build a new police station on the abutting property (not owned by the Town) was not a course of action that should be pursued at this time. It further concluded that the prevailing issue was not the square feet available in the Buker building for the Police Department, but, rather, the layout and possible inefficiencies of the space available.

The Committee, with input from Chief Andersen of the Police Department and Kim Hallquist, Administrator, compiled a list of firms with the required expertise to develop schematic design plans; and then developed a Request for Proposals (“RFP”), defining the work to be done and the parameters for that work. This RFP was sent to thirteen (13) firms, as well as being posted on the relevant web sites, and there were five (5) written submissions in response to that RFP. The Committee formed a Police Station Subcommittee (the “Subcommittee”) which, along with Chief Andersen and Kim Hallquist, reviewed those responses and conducted interviews with three (3) of those firms on January 9, 2020. At its meeting on January 16, 2020, the Committee selected Dennis Mires, PA (the “Firm”) as the firm recommended to the Selectmen for the work to be performed. The Selectmen, at their meeting on January 27, 2020, adopted that recommendation, and the Firm was retained to develop schematic design plans in accordance with the RFP. Once this process is completed, it will be possible to assess what could be provided and the probable costs in a renovation as compared to new construction (estimated by Harriman, for its recommended proposal, Option 6, to be \$8,953,735).

On January 28, 2020, members of the Committee, Kim Hallquist, Chief Andersen, Lt. Cobb, and Donna Larrow, Administrative Assistant of the Police Department, visited the Sunapee P.D., the Newport P.D., and the Claremont P.D. on an education and information-gathering tour, prior to engaging with the architect on the issues to be addressed. The parties signed a contract on February 4, 2020, and the Firm commenced its work on February 5, 2020, in conjunction with the advice and guidance of the Subcommittee, Chief Andersen, and Kim Hallquist (the “review group”). The parties established a tentative project schedule, and the Firm and the review group will report to the Committee periodically and as needed.

2. Recreation Department

The Committee met with Scott Blewitt, Director, New London Recreation Department, at its offices in the Buker building on February 13, 2020. Mr. Blewitt provided a written response in the form previously requested of the other departments reviewed by the Committee, and made an oral presentation and answered questions. The Committee also took a tour led by Mr. Blewitt of the space utilized at the Buker building and at the sewer department property, and reviewed with him other areas of storage used by the Recreation Department. The space used by the Rec. Dept. at the Buker building, other than for storage, consists mainly of a Director's office, a large work area, and use of the Whipple Hall small conference room for various indoor activities. The Dept. also uses Whipple Hall itself for various indoor activities.

Mr. Blewitt stated that the Department would like to offer more programs and have more space available. He suggested that the use of the Buker building in its entirety, if the Police Department were to vacate the premises, would be ideal, and could be shared with Emergency Management. The Rec. Dept. likes its current location and does not believe parking for its activities at that location would be a problem.

The Committee discussed with Mr. Blewitt the possibility that the architect's review of the space available at the Buker building might result in the need for the Rec. Dept. to vacate its current space. If this occurred, the Town would necessarily need to find other space for the Rec. Dept. Based on the current space needs of the Department, this would require an office for the Director, a work space, and at least one room for indoor activities. Future needs would likely require another room for activities. The Committee then discussed possible solutions to this, which included, at least for the extended short term, refitting and using the former library space of the middle school, now the SAU building, at a negotiated rent; partnering with the Outing Club for space in any new building it may construct, should that move to fruition; and possible purchase of the property abutting the Buker building, to utilize the existing structure. Each of these has its challenges, while the last has the added draw of additional land available for use in conjunction with the Police Dept. if it remains in the Buker building. No conclusions were drawn from this discussion, and Mr.

Blewitt was asked to provide information requested by the Committee relating to sq. ft. use and needs for programs, administration, and storage.

The Committee is scheduled to meet with Superintendent Winfried Feneberg of the SAU at the former middle school library on March 5, to view the premises and discuss the possibilities of using that space. It will also meet with Ben Drummond, Chair of the New London Outing Club, at some later meeting, to discuss the possibility of partnering with the Outing Club on shared use of space in any new construction undertaken by the Outing Club. Mr. Blewitt has been invited to those meetings.

As of the date of this Report, the Committee has not formulated any specific conclusions or recommendations on these issues.

3. Emergency Management Team

The Committee met with Louis Botta, Director, Emergency Management Committee, on February 20, 2020. Mr. Botta provided a written response in the form previously requested of the other departments reviewed by the Committee, and made an oral presentation and answered questions. The current operational and space situation is sustainable, and there will be no serious issues over the next three to four years. However, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), currently housed in the Syd Crook Room of the Academy Building, should be separate from other activities and have controlled access. There should also be administrative office space and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) space, the latter of which can be accommodated in existing space available in Town for general meeting purposes. There also should be climate controlled storage space for Meals Ready to Eat (MRE). He estimates that 1,000 sq. ft. of space could accommodate these needs into the future (20-30 years). If the Police Department expands into the space in the basement of Whipple Hall currently used for storage, Emergency Management would need comparable space made available; preferably, all storage space would be in one location, easily accessible.

4. Building Inspector

The Committee addressed the issue of a building inspector for the Town at its meetings on January 30, and February 6, 2020. It reviewed NHRSA 155-A, the State building code, RSA 674:51, related to the enforcement of RSA 155-A and the authority of towns under that statute. It also reviewed the information on the

issue provided by the NH Municipal Assn.; materials provided by Nicole Gage, New London Zoning Administrator; the most recent rendition of the chart detailing the building permits issued, and to what they pertained, for each of the years 2011 through and including 2019; and the input at its meeting on January 30, from Jay Lyon, Chief, New London Fire Department, Peter Stanley, former New London Zoning Administrator, and Stan Morono, who has a family background in and pertinent information regarding what is involved in carrying out the duties of a building inspector. It also reviewed two articles available on the internet providing job descriptions and a range of pay for building inspectors.

The Committee continues its review of what is a complicated issue with many implications. At this point it has no recommendations, and continues to study the issue.

5. Other

The Committee is scheduled to meet with SAU Superintendent Feneberg on March 5, 2020; and is seeking to schedule a meeting with Ben Drummond, President of the Outing Club on March 12. The Committee is scheduled to meet with DPW Director Bob Harrington on March 19; and has reached out to the Energy Committee to determine if a conversation regarding any plans it has for Town buildings would be helpful to both Committees. It continues to discuss the issue of a Town building inspector; and will at future meetings discuss the concept of a building facilities manager. To date, a records retention policy recommended by the Committee has not been adopted. When this has been formalized and actions taken pursuant to it, the Committee may revisit the various expressions of concern regarding records storage space which have been raised in this process.

Respectfully submitted,
For the Committee
Robert Bowers, Chair