

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Committee on Community Services Committee - 04 March, 2024

Meeting Recording:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/ohqEc7OKGIV0INO5hCm0cb60RLzo8VhusKs9RIW6QnX-dH-lxp1QINRzipuZjXL.gg02azUqibAWwZkr>

Members Present:

Cllr. Connie Preston (CP), Chair - present
Cllr. Ben Harman (BH) - present
Cllr. Jennie Donahue (JD) - present

Other Participants Present:

Cllr. Wright (MW) (via Zoom), Cllr. Zeid (SZ), Cllr. Khan (AK), Cllr. Granas (HG), Cllr. Cameron (EC), Nicole Whelan (NW), SPM Turner (KT), CoS Levine (AL), Dir Egmont (AE), Dir. Port (AP), EGA Architect Scott Hall (SH)

Agenda:

- APPT00468 Nicole Whelan 12 Lafayette St. Public Arts Committee
- ORDR00537 Youth and Recreation Center Design Approval (COTW)

Meeting started at 5:00pm

- [APPT00468](#) Nicole Whelan 12 Lafayette St. Public Arts Committee, Parks Commission representative
 - Member of the Parks Commission for 2 years. Local teacher with an arts background. She is interested in the line between public art and memorials.
 - JD - elaborate on line between art and memorials
 - NW - Parks Commission has struggled to draw the line between what is art and what is a memorial
 - CP - Parks Commission has struggled to deal with art in public spaces and that lead to the need for the formation of a team with expertise on art to handle these requests
 - BH Harman moved to approve the appointment, JD seconded and the committee voted 3-0 to approve the appointment.
- [ORDR00537](#) Youth and Recreation Center Design Approval (COTW)
 - KT, SH and AE presented slides on the design of the proposed recreation center at 59 Low St which can be viewed on the recording.
 - CP told the committee that she is hopeful to focus on design at this meeting but keep the order in committee so that they could have a chance to discuss the cost and debt capacity at another meeting since Dir. Manning was unable to attend. The budget and debt capacity is important to discuss because the design drives the budget and this order is the only opportunity to discuss design.
 - JD asked about the involvement of the planning department. KT told her that the planning department was involved in the beginning of the project to discuss the necessary report from the energy advisory committee. Jennifer Blanchet was also a member of the building committee.
 - BH asked about adult recreation programs. AE is working to get feedback from the community about new programming for the community.
 - BH asked about the project at 59 Low St being available to the community as a center similar to the senior center. AE explained that their programs run from 8am - 10pm and therefore may not be as available as the senior center is in the evenings but they will work to make it accessible whenever possible.

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- BH asked about a traffic safety study. KT responded that they are working with Dir Amaral to get a study done and what that study would look like.
- AK asked about efficiency in the new building. SH said that they haven't gotten that far but they are working on it. Details will be in the construction documents.
- AK asked about the ability to reserve the space for parties, etc and how to work out timing. AE explained that their programs are planned out for 6 months in advance and priority will be given to programming. However, the teen space will be dedicated to teens and wouldn't be available to the general public.
- AK asked about the anticipated costs for utilities and programming. AE answered that they anticipate the utilities costs being about the same as when NYS was at the Brown School. She added that programming is self-sustaining and therefore would not incur a cost to the city.
- AK asked about whether the bathrooms would be gender neutral. AE answered that there will be one family bathroom that will be gender neutral and the other bathrooms will be gender specific.
- AK asked about the pre-school age programming (children under 5). AE explained that they have a variety of programming for young children. The space is designed for children up to grade 3.
- AK asked about food allergy concerns. AE explained that they have strict policies on this and how to clean up to prevent any issues.
- AK asked about where the vans will be parked. They are currently parked at the Nock Molin and will remain there.
- SZ expressed that he feels that the cost of the project is still too high and this step is our last opportunity to really impact the design and cost.
- SZ asked about the contamination of the site and the city's liability. Are there other tests that will need to be done by DEP. SH answered that the only thing they are aware of in the building of concern is the asbestos in the roof and he does not anticipate any further costs associated with that. The plans call for covering the asbestos with insulation and gypsum board on top of that which would completely contain the asbestos. SZ clarified that he is asking about the soils. KT said that she could not answer the question at this time.
- SZ asked about the site considerations with water and whether it will undergo a peer review. KT said that her understanding is no and that Jon-Eric White is designing it to comply with all regulations.
- SZ asked about the crosswalk on Low St and asked whether there would be a hawk signal or a rapid flashing beacon. KT confirmed that it would be a rapid flashing beacon hanging over the street. If there are costs associated with any further work that would be recommended in the traffic study are not carried in the costs presented at this time.
- SZ asked about allowances that were carried and if there is anything that isn't being carried in the current estimates. SH says that there is a very detailed cost estimate and he is very confident that everything that needs to be covered is covered in the estimate for the full use of the building.
- SZ asked about the contingency and what percent of the project it represents. SH answered that the contingency was \$136K. SZ commented that he feels that the contingency should be more like 10-20% of the project and the contingency is too low.

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- SZ asked what flexibility exists in the design to help us respond if the bids come in significantly higher than the estimates. SH answered that there are things that can be done in terms of the level of finishes such as window quality and door hardware that could be downgraded but there isn't a way to cut out much cost out of the project.
- SZ asked about the playgrounds and whether there was a budget for play structures. AE said that there are many good play structures across the city and therefore it was not included here.
- SZ asked about programming and the availability of the gym for sports teams in the community. AE explained that she anticipates the gym being used by the sports teams and there is a great need for gym space across the city. They will try to schedule their programs around community needs.
- EC asked about pricing and availability to schedule a gym. AE said that it's on the website and reiterated her hope that the gym will help fill the need in the community.
- AK asked about the modular gym. SH described it as mostly pre-fabricated parts attached to a main U-shaped structure and it's very cost effective for structures needing a large span. The life expectancy is the same as other structures. The flooring is similar to other gym floors.
- HG asked if they anticipate a large increase in enrollment and how that will affect revenue. AE answered that the 2 programs they anticipate the largest increases are the programs that they lost their previous facility. First is the pre-school age programs where they previously had over 200 families. It does not provide a lot of revenue but it meets a community need and it feeds the other programs as the children grow and the families learn about the services provided by RYS. The second is the youth and afterschool program which they anticipate growth from the middle school across the street. All the programming is dependent on sufficient enrollment.
- CP commented that the contingency seemed very low compared to the cost of the project. SH mentioned that they discussed it with the city.
- CP asked about the large number of bathrooms and whether the positioning of the bathrooms is the most efficient place. SH said that it is the best place because it is centrally located and since it is in the new addition the utilities can be put in before the slab is poured. The number of fixtures is based on the code and maximum occupancy of the building.
- CP said that she felt that this is going to take some compromise and concession to get to the supermajority votes on the bond. She asked if there was any consideration on design changes to decrease the cost. KT answered that she appreciated keeping this in committee so that they had time to work with the architectural team to come up with new designs that might be able to bring down the costs.
- AL mentioned that the team has been working hard to contain costs as much as possible but that we need to balance costs with the needs of the department.
- CP asked about the Conservation Commission setting the wetlands in May 2022 which was valid until May 2025. She asked how this impacts the project. KT answered that as long as the permits just have to be issued before it expires.
- BH asked about the value engineering once we move to construction documents. KT answered that it gets harder as we move through the process but there is always opportunity to change elements of the project such as cabinets, etc. However, it is only possible to value engineer the finer details which only allow for smaller increments of cost savings as the project moves forward.

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- HG asked SH about his mentioning the difficulty of cutting costs at this stage. SH answered that they have already reduced the square footage to the minimum space that fulfills the needs of the department. Any further cuts from here would impact the ability to provide programming.
- JD asked about the ability to cut costs by doing some of the work in-house such as the crosswalk, etc. KT answered that they included that in the estimates.
- JD asked about whether ARPA money was considered to fund the project. AL answered that it is an option.
- SZ asked about inviting Parks or DPS to attend to discuss moving Parks out of 59 Low St.
- AK asked about have Jon-Eric White attend to discuss stormwater management

Public Comment:

- Bonnie Sontag - 21 Smith St. Speaking on behalf of Newburyport Liveable Streets. They are concerned about the inability of students from the River Valley Charter School and their ability to walk to 59 Low St safely on their side of the street. Forcing the children to walk across Low St twice to get to RYS is unsafe. Two options - a back route behind the National Guard building or create a sidewalk from the Rec Center to RVCS on their side of the sidewalk. The NLS will be willing to look at the costs, the length and alternative sources of funding working with the City's grant writer. They will only act if the City is interested.
- Kristen Farrell - 28 Spofford St Co-Chair of the Commission on Disabilities. She and Dennis Morel (ADA coordinator) have consulted on the design and they appreciate the thinking to include all members of the community. This has been a thoughtful collaboration.
- Jasmine MacDonald - 28 Columbus Ave. She is very appreciative of all the people stepping up for this project. Her family has been involved with NYS for decades. She is frustrated that there is discussion of cost cutting and the project is continuing to be delayed. She sees that the cost of construction continues to rise and the cost of the project will rise. She wishes the questions would stop. She is particularly frustrated that the kids are under a tent on Low St. She feels the programming is helping to keep kids out of crime and drugs.

BH made a motion to keep this in committee. Seconded by JD. Committee voted 3-0 to keep Order 537 in committee.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:30pm