

Town Council Meeting Minutes August 20, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm.

Roll Call

All Councilors were present and answering roll call.

Item 1 Discussion on projected cost increases associated with the renovation/expansion of the Falmouth Memorial Library and a possible referendum.

Town Manager Nathan Poore said the Library gave a presentation to the Council on July 23 to discuss the difficulties facing the expansion project and their request to go to the voters in November for more money. The public was invited to comment on that request at the Council's August 13 meeting. Since there was no quorum at that meeting, those members present decided that a decision on whether to send the matter to bond counsel to draft a bond order and referendum language should wait for a full Council. Due to deadlines in State Statute regarding referendums, the Council would need to take that action at their August 27 meeting. If the Council wants the option to place a library bond on the ballot, they need to decide whether to send it to bond counsel tonight. If they choose not to send it to bond counsel, the bond order will not be on the ballot. He said the Library MOU will also have to be amended; while it isn't required to have that finalized before the vote, he suggested that it should be done before absentee balloting begins.

Councilor Cahan asked what amendments to the MOU are necessary. Mr. Poore said it depends on how this is structured.

Councilor King supported sending it to referendum; she wanted the public to have the option to weigh in on the decision as they have in the past.

Chair Hemphill thought it was fair to ask the voters whether or not they support additional funding for the library.

Councilor Kuhn agreed that they should move ahead with developing the language. She said the stormwater work was an unanticipated cost that wasn't part of the original plan. The extra \$500,000 lines up with that cost. It shouldn't have been waived in 1995 and seems fair for the Town to pay it now. She said the Library has done a great job eliminating wants while keeping the needs, and she thanked John Wasileski for his continuing and recently increased support for the library.

Councilor Ferrante did not agree; she wanted to see a great library built for the \$5.5 million they already have. She felt there was a gap between what has been done so far and what could be done. If they couldn't do it with more time, she thought they could think about going to referendum next spring. They haven't seen what could be done for \$5.5 million in this market. They need to stick to the original agreement.

Councilor Svedlow agreed with Councilor Ferrante.

Councilor Asherman said they could probably build a \$5.5 million library. He was more comfortable with the \$500,000, equal share proposal rather than the full \$1 million being paid by the town. He thought it was the right thing to go back to the voters to see what they want.

Councilor Cahan said she was impressed with Mr. Wasileski's increased support. He clearly values the library as a benefit to the community. She wondered if this increase in construction costs is a blip or if it will continue to increase. She wasn't sure they have gone through and determined whether they can reduce the

costs further; she didn't know if they have evaluated all their options. She would like to see the Town help with cost cutting so the increase is as small as possible. She supported going to referendum. She felt they needed to honor the voters' choice and decision by giving them the opportunity to weigh in on this decision.

Councilor King pointed out that bidding is a competitive process; she wondered if bidders would reduce costs to try and win the bid. She also wondered about the opportunity for in-kind donations. She wondered about language that would make it clear that they wouldn't spend the whole amount if it wasn't needed.

Marsha Clark, President of the Board of the Trustees, said they have presented their request as "up to \$500,000". They would be responsible for the other half, through a combination of grants, fundraising and value engineering. If the bids come in less, it would lower the amount of the Town contribution. They cannot go to bid yet because they don't have final construction documents. If they can find ways to value engineer the cost down they will do that, but it is a time issue. They want to be able to reduce the cost to the taxpayers.

Chair Hemphill asked what plans they have for additional fundraising; Ms. Clark said they haven't spoken with their consultant yet. There are some additional grants they can apply for, and they received a new donation just today.

Councilor Asherman asked what they mean by value engineering. Ms. Clark said it is a way of looking at how to cut costs. One of the original items was to change the roof on the 1995 addition; when they reviewed it, they found that it is only 6 or 8 years old and doesn't need to be replaced yet. They are looking at how to provide programming while still reducing costs.

Councilor Asherman asked if the value engineering would reduce the amount they need from the Town; Ms. Clark said the engineering would be part of the library's \$500,000.

Councilor Ferrante asked why they didn't pick the right design and the right time and stay within the \$5.5 million budget. Ms. Clark was concerned that costs would continue to increase; no one can predict what will happen.

Councilor Ferrante said this happens in commercial construction all the time; she argued that getting the right combination of builders and design is the right way to go.

Councilor Svedlow spoke about an addition he planned to build on his house; it was projected to cost more than he expected. He redesigned the addition to fit his budget and chose a different contractor. That is what they should do here.

Councilor Ferrante asked for details on the unanticipated stormwater costs. Mr. Poore said will ask staff to research the 1994 approval tomorrow.

Ms. Clark said the engineer and architect designed the stormwater based on schematic drawings and assumptions of the soil conditions. When they did the soils testing, they discovered that the soils were not as good as they thought. They cannot treat on the surface as expected; they have to go underground and install a pipe under the road. They had assumed that stormwater mitigation was done in the past and that was not the case. The current cost estimate for that is \$330,000; she doesn't know what the original stormwater estimate was.

Councilor Svedlow asked if there was any TIF money available for the stormwater. Mr. Poore said no; if it was treating water for the watershed that was above and beyond benefitting the library there might be. Mitigating the specific site for the library project alone is not eligible for TIF funding.

Councilor Svedlow wondered if the stormwater mitigation might benefit the sports fields across the street; Mr. Poore said even if they use TIF funds, they would still have to go back to the voters to spend the additional money.

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Councilor Cahan asked if they could use TIF funds for the on-street parking; Mr. Poore thought they could. That would be a good use of TIF funds. If the parking on the site was considered more than what the library needed and would benefit the area as a public parking lot, that might be eligible for TIF money.

Councilor King asked about TIF funds. Mr. Poore said they have to go to the voters for approval of spending more than was originally approved, no matter the source of the funds. He spoke about TIF funds and the impact of using them on tax rates. He can explore that more but would not be able to have an answer in time for a November ballot.

Councilor Cahan struggled with the situation. She was concerned with the number of unanswered questions at this point. She was concerned with the age of the studies that led to this design. She spoke about the amount of the library's annual budget that is provided by the Town.

Councilor Kuhn said the project is far down the road. The voters have weighed in on the design, and thousands of people have donated toward the project at this point.

Councilor King didn't feel it was the Council's job to review the details of the bids. She has no idea what plaster should cost, for example.

Councilor Ferrante asked if Scott Simmons has reviewed what could be done with the \$5.5 million they have. Councilor King said it would be a reduction of about 20%. Councilor Ferrante agreed, but they didn't know what that would look like.

The Council directed the Town Manager to ask bond counsel to draft the language for consideration at the Council's August 27 meeting. Councilors Kuhn, Asherman, King and Hemphill supported this step. Councilors Svedlow and Ferrante were not in support of moving forward, and Councilor Cahan was unsure.

Councilor Cahan asked for more information about the stormwater issue at the next meeting.

The Council discussed examples of amending the MOU. Mr. Poore pointed out that the current proposal for the additional funds is different from the match agreement in the original MOU. He will work on the language and bring materials to the next meeting.

The Council will be asked to take action on the proposed referendum and bond order at the next meeting and the public will have the opportunity to speak on this issue at that time.

Adjourn

Councilor Svedlow moved to adjourn; Councilor King seconded. Motion carried 7-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Tryon
Recording Secretary