Facilities Optimization Committee

Draft Minutes

August 18, 2020 7:00 PM

Via Google Meets

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

**Attendance:** Rick Bertasi, Steve Ezzes, Rone Baldwin, Gayle Weinstein, Denise Harvey, Ken Edgar, Richard Wolf, Jonathan Luiz

**Approval of minutes from the 6/30 and the 7/7 meetings:** A motion to approve the minutes from the 6/30 and the 7/7 meetings was made by Mr. Edgar and seconded by Ms. Harvey. Motion carried unanimously.

**Review of responses from the RFQ request:**

The Committee received responses from the following firms:

Colliers

KG&D

MGT

Silver Petrucelli

OMA

Tecton

BL Companies

DRA

-Mr. Bertasi would like to hear everyone’s thoughts on the submissions.

-Ms. Harvey thought that there were some that were more responsive than others. She felt that we should not interview MGT due to its lack of a CT office and experience in CT or OMA due to its lack of experience with educational facilities. She also thought that we should put Silver Petrucelli to the side as they would not be able to provide an independent review of their own initial school building review.

-Mr. Bertasi had the same feeling about them

-Mr. Wolf has worked with KG & D on several school projects, and felt they did a good job. His understanding is that we are accepting Board of Education’s educational specifications. In addition to the firms mentioned by Ms. Harvey, he would also like to eliminate Colliers.

-Ms. Weinstein agreed with Mr. Wolf, as she believes KG&D did an excellent job on several town related projects. John Ireland, currently with BL Companies, did the school and town space needs analysis in 2013 when he was at Silver Petrucelli. She felt it might be beneficial to speak with him, as well.

-Mr. Ezzes thinks the project has changed given the increase in the number of students. If this is transitory, we could be making a decision based on a number that may be different down the road. Mr. Bertasi said that he believes the process is the same, but the outcome may be different. The uncertainty is much higher and the baseline enrollment assumptions from last year most certainly will be off. What we don’t know is if the increased enrollment is a 1-year jump or are we seeing a new trend line?

-Mr. Ezzes (Board of Finance Chair) wants to slow our process down and not spend money until 1st quarter. He feels that given the current financial environment and potential school needs due to COVID, he doesn’t want the Town to spend money on anything that is not an immediate need.

-BoE enrollment numbers are usually made public around November. We should have a better sense of future school enrollment at that time.

-Mr. Baldwin echoed Ms. Harvey’s sentiments. He likes the proposal from KG&D the best. He would have a problem hiring Silver Petrucelli to do this work, as we did not agree with their conclusions.

-Mr. Edgar said that the fundamental question remains the same, but until we have a good handle on the facts, we are probably wasting money by hiring a consultant now. He agrees with Mr. Baldwin regarding Silver Petrucelli.

-Mr. Luiz agrees with Mr. Edgar. He thinks we should slow the process down but still speak with the 3 or 4 consultants we are interested in.

-Mr. Bertasi agrees with Ms. Harvey’s concerns about MGT and OMA. He thinks BL, Tecton, DRA and KG&D are worth talking to. He still needs to review Colliers’ proposal.

-Mr. Wolf disagrees with delaying the study. He does not think we can pin down a school enrollment so closely that we can’t allow for an increase or decrease of 100 students. Two of the schools need serious upgrades.

-Mr. Baldwin doesn’t want to spend money now but doesn’t want to push off the study long term.

- Mr. Bertasi has been dealing with these issues professionally for several months now. He doesn’t think any of these people will be able to tell us how to deal with post COVID, as no one really has any answers yet.

-Mr. Wolf said there is no downside to talking to these firms.

-Mr. Luiz is concerned that if there is a delay, we need to be cognizant of dates we expect big projects to happen, such as roof replacements. Maintenance for school buildings and the Annex are not going to go away.

-Mr. Baldwin wants to make sure we all understand the implications of the 10-year projections for the BoE capital plan requirements. We also need to reach agreement on what to do about the Annex. We are going to look at it and the cost to relocate employees and say versus what? He does not believe it is going to make sense to spend $10 or 20 million to get down to 3 schools. There is a disconnect between the BoE capital plan and what was articulated as the true need.

-Mr. Luiz said that if we view our charge to determine if we can go from 4 schools to 3 schools permanently, we know that we are going to save money. If our objective is to optimize all town facilities, we need to consider all buildings. Mr. Baldwin does not think our charge is to get down to 3 schools. He hasn’t seen any numbers that support 3 schools. Mr. Bertasi reminded the committee that the math has to make sense.

-Mr. Edgar thinks the BoE is a critical player and they are busy working on school openings. They have a lot on their plate and their committee representatives have not been able to attend the past several meetings. He thinks we should wait until the October-November timeframe and that it is premature to bring people in. Ms. Harvey shares Edgar’s concerns that the BoE needs to be a part of the process.

-Mr. Wolf agrees that the BoE committee members should be attending the committee meetings but is concerned about what the delay means to us. He would rather not see us slow down.

-Mr. Bertasi will reach out to BoE Chair Tony Pesco and ask his opinion. We will decide as to timing of interviews after that.

**Review of the common questions to ask prospective consultants:** Moved to next meeting

**Any new items:** None

**Adjournment:** Mr. Edgar made a motion to adjourn at 8:50. Seconded by Ms. Harvey. Motion carried unanimously.