



**TOWN OF NORTH HAMPTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
NORTH HAMPTON SELECT BOARD MEETING**

**JULY 27, 2021 7:00 PM**

**NORTH HAMPTON TOWN HALL**

***Approved August 9, 2021***

SELECT BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Jim Maggiore, Vice Chairman James Sununu, Selectman Jonathan Pinette

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator Michael Tully, Police Chief Kathryn Mone, Fire Chief Jason Lajoie, John E. Ricci of Ricci Construction, John M. Tuttle of T|W Designs LLC

**AGENDA**

Chairman Jim Maggiore welcomed everyone to the July 27, 2021 North Hampton Select Board Meeting which was opened up and called to order at 6:00 pm.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**3.1 Discussion and Public Comment of Town Facilities**

Chairman Maggiore said the purpose of the meeting is to get ideas for our facilities: Police, Fire, and Town Administration, and to consider possibilities for renovation of these buildings. He said the meeting was preceded by a tour with the Chief of the Fire Department, the Chief of the Police Department, and our Town Administrator. Both chiefs will provide a summary then Contractor John Ricci of Ricci Construction and Architect John Tuttle of T|W Designs, will give their ideas followed by public input and ideas.

**Fire Chief Jason Lajoie** thanked everyone for their interest in being part of future solutions for Public Safety space needs. He said North Hampton Fire & Rescue is a fulltime Fire Department providing paramedic-level ambulance service to the town working a 24-hour shift. This is a full-service department responding to fire rescue and medical emergencies, as well as administrative tasks, and to perform effectively requires adequate workspace and living space.

Chief Lajoie listed current Fire Station deficiencies and said the facility was built in 1968 to house 1 fulltime firefighter with all other members on call. There are now 5 fulltime employees with 3 members on duty 24/7. The station was not designed with future needs in mind and did not anticipate paramedic-level EMS as well as fire apparatus changing size and design, or the changing dynamics of fire service and increase in calls; there are no accommodations for female firefighters or adequate space to meet today's clerical

needs. The current Chief and Deputy Chief's offices are located in an apparatus bay; administrative duties are disrupted by noise pollution from running apparatus and limited space; one office is a converted tool room and another a small kitchen converted to offices. There is no room for meeting space or additional accommodations for off-duty firefighters during large-scale emergencies.

Chief Lajoie said there is no proper decontamination area for hazardous materials; one shower stall in an open hallway, no gender separation or separate bunk space for female employees, no EMS storage room, and supplies are kept in the kitchen; no SCBA workroom (air packs); no tool or maintenance area. There is no conference area for staff to meet with public, no fitness room or equipment, insufficient bathroom facilities, inadequate bay space for existing apparatus and equipment storage, no gear room (stored in bay areas), no training area in apparatus bay for firefighters, and no room for needed equipment.

Chief Lajoie said the old floor to door height limits replacement needs, there is no space for IT equipment which is stored in the attic with extreme temperature differences and perilous access for firefighters. The front exterior wall of the station has shown evidence of separation from the building, and the existing roof structure is not insurable due to weakened trusses which requires every 6 inches of snow on the roof to be shoveled off.

**Police Chief Kathryn Mone** said the Police Department is looking to go into National Accreditation in the future which is unattainable at present with deficiencies. She said they need sight and sound separation for juveniles which is a New Hampshire State Law; the heating and cooling systems have significant issues with significant septic and plumbing issues and inadequate file storage space; no room to move in file room, lack of separate office space for workers, no space for private conversations. There are only 2 workstations with a file cabinet, a drawer, and a storage area; no kitchen or place to eat, no firearm storage area with firearms stored in evidence area, evidence storage space is right off the booking room.

Chief Mone said they have male and female locker rooms of inadequate size; for females a storage closet was turned into 2 lockers with 1 bathroom and shower stall; male space is also inadequate but has room for 2 lockers and 2 shower stalls. Air circulation in the building is not good causing failure of breathalyzer machine for DWI; no public restrooms off lobby, no fitness area for physical and emotional wellbeing of employees. Have one sally port where officers bring in arrested individuals which is also used for bulk evidence storage and taser training; need additional training and defensive tactics areas; there is one interview room for suspects, witnesses, or crime victims not in an ideal location in the building; security limitations with current building layout.

Chairman Maggiore explained that the Select Board went through a selection process interviewing different firms for design/construction and chose Ricci Construction for construction management and John Tuttle as architect.

**Mr. John E. Ricci** of Ricci Construction said he did a building assessment for the existing Library, Fire Station, and Police Station, and Town offices. He said John Tuttle will talk about what exists today and some of the code issues we see. He said the existing Library was built in 1970 and they walked through for structural capacity, plumbing, mechanical, and electrical. The building itself is in very good shape for its age; mechanical systems are original to building and have reached useful life and need replacement; electrical was recently redone but electrical service also at its useful life.

Mr. Ricci said the scenario for all of these buildings is renovation of each existing, then comprehensive demolition and construction of new. He felt the old Library would be great to repurpose for Town Offices

with no major modifications needed. The structure would be kept intact, replace mechanicals, add ventilation, and rework the interior.

Mr. Ricci said the Fire Station was built in 1968; Foley Buhl Roberts did a report in 2014 which structurally said trusses were not braced properly, the hose tower was framed from left over trusses cut to fit, the block wall was not reinforced, and the building structure would not meet today's design codes. The electrical service is undersized and needs upgrading; mechanical units providing heat in garage are antiquated; only the new basement boiler is salvageable, but exhaust does not meet today's code; no CO detectors there which is critical. The Police and Town Offices were built in 1990 and renovated in 1997; have the original mechanical equipment which has reached its useful life and needs to be replaced.

Mr. Ricci said based on his assessment the existing Library lends itself nicely to be renovated for Town Offices; Fire Station renovation would be a challenge as will the Police Station with some underground sanitary issues. He said he did an exhaustive study of all buildings and will take public input and look at cost to renovate versus cost to replace.

**Mr. John M. Tuttle** said he is Principal Architect at T|W Designs, started in 2001; the firm does everything from single-family homes to multi-story mixed use buildings. He said he looked at the existing facilities here and the old Library was a decent structure and structurally sound, lending itself easily to modification. There is a large space in the structure with not too many bearing points to hinder reusing the floorplan.

Mr. Tuttle said the existing Fire Station structurally has inadequate ceiling height, and the roof would have to be raised. It was built in 1968 and there is already separation of masonry making it difficult to raise those walls higher to an adequate height. There are also HVAC issues with lack of CO detection; offices off apparatus bay is not good. None of the building met ADA standards and the structural instability in the roof is alarming.

Mr. Tuttle said for both Police and Fire there is lack of gender separation in the facilities, lack of plumbing fixture count to support both facilities appropriately, and additional discrepancies in the existing facilities to be addressed. For Police there is lack of confidentiality and lack of separation between security and custody of evidence, as well as no appropriate juvenile cell separation.

Chairman Maggiore said both firms have access to the different studies conducted over the years for these buildings and the minor renovations.

### **Public Input**

Frank Ferraro of Post Road asked Mr. Ricci and Mr. Tuttle if they would be looking outside the box for solutions. He said current Town Offices are 2,000 sq ft and the old Library is 5,000 sq ft and it may not be the best use; they might want to consider moving the Police Department there with a sally port where the old storage locker is now. Fire could get the Police Department space with women's locker rooms and rooms for offices. There would be room for some town offices in the old Library, keep some staff where they are now, or move all office staff to a central but off-site location.

Chairman Maggiore gave out the telephone number for the public to call in: 603-758-1447.

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Kirsten Larsen Schultz of Post Road said for transparency she would be interested in how much money was spent to date on studies, where the money came from, and whether residents should expect a Warrant Article in March. She said it sounds like the Fire Department is the biggest need.

Town Administrator Tully said he would have Ryan search the records. Chairman Maggiore said as far as the warrant article they would ultimately like to be there but do not want to commit. He said it depends on cost, viability, and timing and this is just the beginning of that process. Town Administrator Tully said this is a chance for the public to let the Select Board know what they are thinking at this time.

Chairman Maggiore said Cynthia Swank sent an email asking if any of the functions could be moved to Route 1. He said the commercial property there is valuable and he personally would love to move safety to Route 1 if it were affordable. Town Administrator Tully said there would be a higher price to purchase property there and it would take property taxes off the tax roll.

Vice-Chair Sununu said he has been involved with this for 7 years and the buildings are now 8 years older than they were when the urgent need to replace them was discussed. He said the Town decided to commit to a new Library and now we need to take a serious look at these buildings. He said he wants everything to stay on this campus as the best solution and to make sure whatever is done will last 50+ years or they will be right back where they started. He felt they should keep Town Administration, Town Clerk, and Library traffic together, keep public safety and emergency traffic together, and separate the two as much as possible.

Dan Derby of Mill Road said he reviewed Select Board meetings and could not find a problem statement and felt the Select Board needed to clearly define what the objective is here and what they are trying to accomplish with a written public statement. He also encouraged them to use the lists of deficiencies provided by Police, Fire, and the Town Administrator and make the lists available to the public for comment. He said this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> time the town has tried to bring something like this forward and asked what strategies we have this time to make it successful.

Selectman Pinette said as far as having an exact game plan from the Select Board and how we would like to move forward on this, we are not reinventing the wheel here, this has been ongoing for years and each time it comes up the issues in the buildings keep escalating. He said they are bringing this up again and trying to get public input in order to have a game plan without the Select Board dictating what they will be doing. He said we are trying to get everyone involved, have a list of suggestions, and do it right so we can actually get something done to make sure we have safe facilities to operate from.

Scott Baker of Squire Drive said everyone understands this plan has been attempted a number of times and it would be helpful for the public and the town to come up with a list of assumptions on what the Select Board feels the needs will be for the future: assumptions based on a percent of population growth and assumptions on trends in fire and ambulance calls in the past extrapolated forward to come up with assumptions everyone is comfortable with to determine how much facility we will need in the future.

Vice-Chair Sununu said to that point he felt it was fair to say that Mr. Ricci and Mr. Tuttle, in their assessments with the Chiefs and the Town Administrator, have taken into account where they are today, where they might be down the road, and what other similar-sized towns have done to meet their needs. This has been discussed and will be informing them in terms of design choices and options they would bring forward and be able to speak to why, and this is ongoing.

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Mr. Tuttle said we understand our goal is to make sure we are planning for expansion in the future, but today we are here on fact-finding, trying to determine what we have, what we need to address instantly, and where the Town wants it in future. We are here for your input tonight about what you envision and to take that back and reassess it and figure out what it would take to renovate what we have, rebuild, or do partial renovation. No preconceived design has been done and we are just starting the process.

Valarie Gamache of Atlantic Avenue said this has come up many times and said she is appalled to know that people there for our own safety have an unsafe roof over their heads and barely enough clearance for vehicles and said some things obviously need to be figured out and architects are the ones to do that.

Chairman Maggiore stated that nothing would be changing with Town Hall or the Stone Building. Town Administrator Tully said this does not end tonight with public's ability to bring ideas forward and said we want an open line of communication and asked that emails be sent to him to forward to the Select Board.

Steve Robie of Exeter Road thanked everyone for the work done so far and said it is obvious those buildings need to be replaced rather than renovated, as renovations usually cost more in the end. He said he knew Mr. Ricci and asked about other projects like this he has done in the past, where the process is right now, and what they are going to do differently this time. He said we did the Library and now it is time to do the next phase to bring Police, Fire, and Town Administration buildings into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Town Administrator Tully said they are now in the beginning stages of the process and are not doing designs yet, but the chiefs have been studying this for a long time and have put forward some ideas and a list of spatial needs, and we have looked at general ideas that the Select Board includes in any design with needs as well as legally required spaces.

Mr. Tuttle listed a number of safety complexes he was part of and designed, mixed-use buildings, warehouses, office buildings, and many other types of structures with his company averaging 40 projects/year and close to \$125 Mil of construction. He said he definitely has the experience and ability and hopes they can work with residents to come up with a great solution, and he has personally been part of 3 of those for this Town.

Mr. Robie said there have been lots of lists and needs over the years and he hoped they would use all of that plus the studies. Vice-Chair Sununu said their first assignment was to read all of the past studies and said a lot of different suggestions and proposals have been made but not approved by voters. He said the Select Board does not have a design yet, and cannot guarantee anything, but their *goal* is to have a design and cost estimate by fall to put forward for the March Ballot.

**Any Other Item that may legally come before the Board**

Chairman Maggiore said the Board accomplished their plan for this evening and asked that the public continue to send comments, thoughts, and questions to the Town Administrator to funnel to the Select Board.

**Adjournment**

Chairman Maggiore adjourned the meeting at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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Patricia Denmark, Recording Secretary