

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

* MINUTES *

September 18, 2017

7:05 p.m. A special meeting of the Board of Selectmen was convened by Chairman Marianne Cooley at the Hillside Elementary School. Present were Mr. Daniel Matthews, Mr. John Bulian, Mr. Maurice Handel, and Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick.

7:05 p.m. **Public Safety Facilities** – Ms. Cooley welcomed invited neighbors of Fire Station #2 and the Hillside School to hear about the Town's plans for reconstructing Fire Station #2.

Ms. Fitzpatrick provided an overview of the entire project, the reconstruction plans for Station #2, and the intent to use the Hillside School as swing space for both Police and Fire operations. She provided information about the project schedule.

A Birch Street resident asked if businesses in Needham would help pay for the project. He said that the new doors on Station #2 did not look much bigger, and that the equipment still fits. Ms. Cooley noted that because the Town has a split tax rate, the commercial sector bears a higher share of the tax burden. Chief Condon confirmed that the apparatus bay doors are significantly wider.

A Birch Street resident noted that there are 50 children on the street. Many will attend the Williams School and do not qualify for a bus. She said that they do not want to walk down West Street and along Central Avenue – they want to be able to cut through the Hillside School. She asked if there had been any accidents with the fire apparatus at the Station. Chief Condon said that there have been accidents. He said that in order to staff a full-time ambulance in Needham Heights the station must be bigger. Ms. Cooley suggested that the resident contact the School Department about hazard busing.

A West Street resident asked about lights and sirens. Chief Condon said that sirens would be limited until vehicles enter West Street as they are intended to alert traffic. He said that firefighters will be considerate of neighbors. He said that lights are on when vehicles exit the station but not upon return. He said that the current Station #2 has a good relationship with neighbors. Michael McKeon, project architect, noted that the designers are contemplating a temporary traffic signal at Glen Gary and West Street.

A West Street resident said that he is concerned about traffic and safety. He said there are a lot of children and the situation is dangerous. He suggested an overpass be constructed over West Street. George Kent, Chairman of the PPBC reiterated that the

Committee will examine the need for a traffic signal.

A Birch Street resident said that to get to the Williams School without cutting through the Hillside School would require a longer walk and that a bus should be provided.

A West Street resident raised a concern about the loss of the field and playground, noting that Needham does not have good playgrounds. Hundreds of children use the area outside of school hours. Ms. Cooley said that she is confident that the PPBC will carefully consider the request to maintain access to the field and play area.

A Glen Gary Road resident asked about the number of calls. Chief Schlittler noted that the Police work three shifts, and that most calls are responded to in their sector not from the station. Chief Condon said that Station #2 responded to 1750 calls over the last 12 months, which amounts to about 5 calls per day. He said the majority of calls are between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. He said that the temporary quarters would house 6 – 8 staff. The resident asked how long the Hillside School would be used as swing space. Steve Popper, Director of Design and Construction indicated that it would be approximately three years. The resident asked if other sites had been considered. Ms. Cooley said that the Avery School had been considered but that the Hillside School is a much better site.

A Birch Street resident who is an ER physician said she sleeps during the day and would not have moved somewhere near a fire station, noting that the temporary operations will impact property values. She said that she would like to hear about alternatives, and that the presentation did not justify the need to use the Hillside School. She asked why the temporary quarters cannot be located at Station #2. Ms. Cooley noted that the Station #2 property is too tight to accommodate the temporary quarters during construction. If there was a way, we would do that. The resident asked if the Police Station can be rebuilt leaving the old station in place. Mr. Kent described the project phasing. Chief Schlittler noted that the Station has many neighbors now including a pre-school and receives no complaints.

A Birch Street resident said that without a temporary traffic signal there would be a problem. Ms. Cooley noted that she walked her children to the Hillside school and understands the issue.

A Webster Street resident asked about the schedule, and whether the station will be bigger. Chief Condon said that station will be bigger.

A Glen Gary resident said that the temporary station will reduce property values. Mr. Bulian said that he disagrees with this conclusion.

A Birch Street resident said they had been told the Hillside School would become a park. Ms. Cooley noted that may be the case once the Mitchell School is rebuilt. The resident said the neighbors were told they could use the school as community space. She said that the station will affect property values and the Town should acknowledge that and mitigate it. Ms. Cooley said that the building is currently controlled by the School Department.

A Webster Street resident asked if the Police and Fire Chiefs had input on the design. Both chiefs asserted that they had been fully involved in the design process.

A Birch Street resident questioned whether the ladder truck can make the turn onto West Street. Chief Condon said that it happens all the time.

A Birch Street resident asked the Board to find ways to shorten the timeframe that the station would be located at Hillside.

Mr. Matthews summarized the project, noting that at a \$65 million cost the project is very expensive but seen as critically important to the Board.

Ms. Cooley thanked the residents for their participation and said that there is a lot of work still to be done, and that input would be carefully evaluated.

8:20 p.m. Motion: Mr. Handel moved that the meeting be adjourned. Mr. Matthews seconded the motion. Unanimous: 4-0.