



**Ansonia Aldermanic Finance Committee
Special Meeting Minutes**

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July 11, 2016
TOWN AND CITY CLERK
ANSONIA, CONNECTICUT

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all those present.

A moment of silence was observed for the lives lost in Dallas this past weekend.

Roll Call:

NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT
Carroll	X	
Stowe	X	
Vaccaro		X
Hunt		X
Jeanette	X	
Kaslaitis	X	
	4	2

The Chair declared a quorum.

Public Session

Alderman Stowe asked three times if any member of the public wished to speak. Being none, he declared the Public Session closed.

Bartholomew Flaherty, 28 Pinecrest Avenue

Good evening Mr. Chairman and honorable members of the Finance Committee. It's a little awkward having the public session before we see the plans. I wondered if anyone considered, first we have a study being done, the Village Concept. I wonder what they're advocating for policing downtown. I wonder if perhaps a Police substation wouldn't be far more beneficial to the downtown development and having boots on the ground. I am really an advocate of Neighborhood Policing and I think it would be great to have three or four Police Officers on the beat downtown. There are 90 housing units proposed for the downtown area so you're going to have 90 more families downtown. You have the Olson Drive complex being built out with 54 housing units. It was 49 when they came before Planning and Zoning to me.

I'm wondering if a Police substation downtown would be more beneficial than moving and building a whole new Police Department and the costs involved. That building on Elm Street, we very recently put a lot of money into it. We put a whole new HVAC unit, new boilers, new generator – a very, very good generator in the front of the building. I know they're probably pressed for space but there's no reason why you couldn't get a real good substation downtown. You could even move one whole unit into the downtown, in addition to some Policemen on the beat downtown.

If you come down here Friday nights and you'll see the parking and the numbers of people. So, it's beginning to be a lot of [inaudible] happening. My suggestion is, has anyone considered putting in a substation and getting some Police Officers to help the people when they're going. They're going to restaurants, where do I park, so forth. I think it would be a great thing because I'm an advocate of Neighborhood Policing. I think it's far better than a guy hopping in a car; I think having boots on the ground is just more beneficial. So my suggestion is to consider having a substation downtown. If they need room, move part of the Department out.

We have a great Police Department and I'm certainly here also to speak for the Police Department because they do a good job. But the town is changing. We're trying to do things downtown., We're going to have a lot more people downtown if what is proposed is built out. So that's my suggestion and thank you very much for listening to me.

I'm going to stay and enjoy the proposal because I've heard nothing about it. It might be something. Maybe I'll be sorry I even spoke after I hear the proposal. Thank you.

Alderman Stowe noted that the Finance Committee has been allowing people to ask questions during the meeting.

Ed Norman, Vice-Chairman, Ansonia Housing Authority

I would like to clarify my attendance. We had a meeting in the Mayor's Office today and they told us about this meeting and the meeting Thursday and recommended we attend Thursday's meeting. I have a conflict so I won't be able to attend. Our Chairman, Bob Lisi, is out of town until next Wednesday so he wouldn't be able to attend that meeting either. There seems to be a lot of confusion about the Ansonia Housing Authority's role in the Police Department plan. There are things going on; we're trying to get the engineers together to let us know if we have to relinquish any property as far as our current plan of 54 units. Looking at it, High Street runs up the middle, we refer to it as the South

Side and the North Side. With the plaza on the North Side if we had to relinquish any property from there, would it involve moving housing further over where it winds up in the middle of High Street, which we can't do.

Our projects are primarily governed by HUD, they have a deed restriction on the property and they have to approve everything. I thought it conducive tonight for everybody's understanding that I brought the Director of the Housing Authority. Our current concept of how it's going to be built, of which any changes would have to be made if more property was needed for the Police Station at the market. That's why I'm here.

If there are any questions of us we will be more than willing to answer. Just one of the comments that Mr. Flaherty made was about the money we spent on the current Police Station. When I was on the Finance Board I had done quite a few tours with architects and engineers and HVAC about bringing that up to some type of working entity for the Police Department. We had spent a lot of time with the Board of Aldermen and moving it as a project forward. One of the questions I had asked the Chief back then, it had to be three or four years ago, even if we did all of these upgrades, how long would this Police Station last, and I think the answer was five years. It was something we needed at the time. I know Mayor Casetti from years on the Police Commission has always been looking for a new Police Station. It truly is needed. Moving from this building here with cells in the basement up to the old Larkin School was a major step forward. Again, that's 30-40 years ago and I think the Police Department does need adequate facilities. I wanted to explain that piece.

Alderman Stowe asked if any other member wished to speak. Being none, he declared the public session closed.

Approval of Minutes

Alderman Jeanette MOVED to accept the June 30, 2016 Finance Committee meeting minutes.

Discussion:

Relocation of Ansonia Police Station; Costs of new station; Referendum to approve borrowing of funds for relocation and construction of new facility

The Architect was not able to be here today but will be available to attend on Thursday. Chief Hale will inform us as much as possible; Ms. O'Malley will be able to answer a lot of the questions as well.

Ms. O'Malley will provide the names of the people up for appointment to the Building Committee to the Board of Aldermen for their vote. A Committee of six people is recommended by the USDA. The members have already been selected.

Alderman Stowe would like those people to attend Thursday's Finance Committee meeting. Mr. Nimons, Mr. Flaherty and Mr. Norman all have interest in serving on the Building Committee.

Chief Hale distributed copies of the needs assessment that was conducted. Brian Humes, the Architect, will be here Thursday to talk more in-depth about this. This is a fluid document and there will be changes. The needs assessment is a description of what we have and going through what is proposed. This architect has done in excess of 80 Police Departments and is well-versed in modern construction of Police Departments.

The current Police Station is a hair under 17,000 square feet on a half-acre of property. The building is 17,000 square feet but only half of that, about 8,500 square feet, is usable space. Larkin School was closed in 1977 after 83 years of use as a school. The Police Station moved there in 1980 and has been there ever since. There was a reduction from 12 holding cells in the City Hall building to 3 holding cells in the Larkin building.

The report describes the existing layout, pros and cons, of the building, with growth estimates out to the years 2025 and 2030. There is some discussion on staffing, activity, arrest data, ticket data, vehicles, calls for service.

Because the Police Department works very closely with the Fire Marshal, the design provides office space for the Fire Marshal in the building as well.

The Dispatch Center is currently crammed into a space that is only 254 square feet. The new plan recommends 500 square feet. We are also considering combining PSAPs (public safety answering points) with several other area towns – Seymour and Derby have expressed an interest. There may be grant money involved in combining that.

The plan covers all of the needed areas – Detective Bureau, Patrol, the Locker Rooms which are really in tough shape right now. Evidence would become centralized and better secured as we have four different locations in the building right now where we store evidence. The Records Room would be expanded and Records Storage would become centralized. The plan includes a Juvenile Holding area. We are currently using a renovated bathroom (plumbing removed) for that purpose. The cellblock area needs to be expanded with enough space for men's cells, women's cells.

The current building, which is a part of the Historic District, also holds our Emergency Operations Center which we operate in the case of storms or emergencies. Parking is definitely an issue. There is a parking lot across from Webster Hose that we can share with them and with the residents. The Armory is the offsite location for vehicle impound.

There is a house behind the Police Department that had a fire, and there is consideration of tearing it down to provide additional parking.

Whoever moves into the Larkin Building after the Police Department moves out will have heat, air conditioning and windows that work. There would not be a need to tear it down. The architect will discuss all of this in more detail.

Chief Hale stated, it is all very self-explanatory, Page 25 breaks down everything. There are ratios there that show the wasted space. You can call me if you have any questions. It is fluid; it's going to change.

Ms. O'Malley reiterated that if the City is going to borrow money from the USDA, it needs to follow the requirements of the USDA. You have to go out to bid, get an engineering firm. Do a feasibility study and a needs assessment. Get a cost, fill out the application, get back to USDA with the dollar amount and needs assessment. We have given them a needs assessment which may be slightly revised. The application is almost complete; I will plug in numbers depending on this Committee and the Board of Aldermen. Then we will have to go back out for a construction contractor. It could end up being design/build.

Mr. Nimons explained that a design/build means, if they win the contract they are in charge of the whole thing. General contractor to turn key.

Alderman Stowe stated, we need to appoint a building committee. If the referendum property is deemed to be inadequate we need to determine that quickly. We need to understand what the square footages are. We need to understand how it will impact the City, if everybody is going to be getting Police coverage. We don't have a lot of time. I would like to see us get a building committee by Thursday, July 14th.

Chief Hale explained the concept of a Police Substation. We're in a building that is 122 years old. It was a school for 77 years before it closed. At some point there has to be a new facility. I don't see that it's feasible to be there for another 20 years. We've made changes, we've moved walls, we've squeezed people – and we're doing it again this summer, moving things around to try and make it more efficient.

Ms. O'Malley explained that the Finance Committee has to decide whether or not it's going to be included in the Capital Improvement Plan, and we have until August 15th. We also have to get a number in to the USDA. This Finance Committee needs to figure out if that's something we want to put on the referendum. We are asking \$12 million from the Capital Improvement Plan. The needs assessment says \$14 million. There will have to be some adjustments.

She thanked Bob Lisi, Ed Norman and Bob Henderson for coming tonight. We're trying to figure out how to do this cooperatively with a public safety component and a residential component. We're working together and will work cooperatively and trying to figure out how big the station is going to be and where it fits into the Housing Authority's plans for their residential units. HUD has indicated that we can use a portion of the property; it's going to up the Housing Authority what they don't need and what they can accommodate us with. There may be a portion of the HUD property that can be used for public safety. We may have to extend further north into that strip mall. We are close to coming to an agreement on the footprint.

Mr. Norman explained that the property is owned by the Ansonia Housing Authority and there is a deed restriction from HUD. The Connecticut Fair Housing also has stakes in the game and they have to give approval. We went to Hartford and met with both groups – they were elated that we were putting a public safety complex along with residential, and looking at where the Tinney Center is now. The Housing Authority cannot go forward with the residential until the footprint is decided upon for the Police facility. We are trying to put our engineers in touch with the Police Department's engineers just to see what they need in terms of a feasibility study, the Market property, how much additional will they need to put in that size of a Police station.

Ms. O'Malley stated, the Housing Authority has control over the property, HUD has a deed restriction so it can only be used for certain things. HUD has agreed that if some land is needed for a public safety facility that they would accommodate. We don't have to lease that land, it would be up to the Housing Authority, what they didn't need for their project.

Mr. Lisi stated, coexistence with the Housing Authority and public safety complex was well received by not only statewide HUD and Fair Housing but regional. Administrators in Boston were really excited about this project. This is something that 10-20 years from now we're going to be really proud of. This is something that our community will say, "they did the right thing." Now is the perfect opportunity to do it and we should go forward with it. There has been, and will be, a great deal of communication. We need to get the architects and engineers in a room together - that is critical at this point.

Tara Graslin, 76 Garden Street

I like the idea of having the safety station on Olson Drive. I like the idea of having the affordable housing together down there with the safety station. I haven't heard much about the affordability of this project. Has that discussion happened? How does this impact the finances of the City and the budget?

Alderman Stowe replied, the last meeting that we had, you can look up and read the minutes. In that discussion we were saying about how we need to make sure that if \$12 million, or \$14 million, whatever it is that the architect and Building Commission seem content to be final – at that point we need to make sure that we don't have any overages that would affect negatively the taxpayers. The whole object of this is if it does get done, because it's going to be in the Capital Plan, over years, so we're not going to have tax increase, we will be responsible stewards and going to be paying the monthly or the yearly bill, which we're paying now on something else. We have bonding that becomes paid off. Right now we're at AA rating and that's where we want to stay. We do not want to do this project and then have the taxes go up. We are trying to have a new Police Station and be able to do it within budget and not have any increases to the taxpayers.

Alderman Norman stated, I don't know if you've seen the property but there's also going to be site work because that's just a straight embankment and freestanding stone walls, not even cemented in. You may have to start reinforcing that, which can be quite expensive, but that will all be tied into that \$12 million or \$14 million figure.

Alderman Stowe stated, the City and HUD need to choose a location for this Police Department. We need a Building Commission asap along with the architects – and we need to know what we're going to be looking at, either leasing property or paying for property. When we have those answers, only then can you vote on it.

Mr. Graslin stated, I understand that this project is coming under the Capital Improvement Plan and is going to be financed as such. Just for the sake of scenarios, we still carry a debt service on that, if the project were to go to \$16 million or whatever number, does the debt service and increased borrowing through this Capital Improvement Plan, is there a point at which that starts to impact the budget?

Alderman Stowe stated, we are going to try to get a piece of property that we cut out of the cookie sheet so to speak, and we're going to have these people

who are professionals look at this property and give us a number of what they think it will cost, and we're going to say worst case scenario if we had any problems, what would be the percentage that we should... if the job is a \$12 million job should we keep 2 percent, 3 percent, 5 percent in reserve. When would be burden the taxpayers negatively – because we're not going to do that. That's part of what's going to happen here. We're going to make sure that we have a location, we're not grabbing from straws here so that we end up getting ourselves in trouble – we're not going to do that.

Mr. Nimons stated, what the gentleman is saying is that to keep equilibrium if it goes to \$16 million you're going to have to chop something off of the Capital Improvement Plan.

Alderman Stowe explained, we already have \$156,450 that we need to chop off. We're aware. That's why I want to know the percentage.

Corporation Counsel Marini stated, to clarify what was already explained, the USDA loan is what's going to be used to finance the Police Station, but that does increase the debt service, which is why it's on the plan, and that you do already have a target number that you're looking at to consider when you're raising or lowering the amount, so you have your eye on the threshold as to how much the yearly payments will be.

Upcoming Meetings:

July 14, 2016 Finance Committee – Police Facility, Public Works, Paving

July 19, 2016 Full Board of Aldermen – Special Meeting to Appoint Building Commission

July 19, 2016 Finance Committee – All Departments, Capital Improvement Plan

Adjournment

At approximately 8:20 p.m., Alderman Jeanette MOVED to ADJOURN; SECONDED by Alderman Kaslaitis. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia M. Bruder
Secretary, Board of Aldermen