

HUDSON, NH BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
Minutes of the January 16, 2015 Bond Meeting for New Fire Station

1. CALL TO ORDER - by Chairman Coutu the meeting of January 16, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at Town Hall.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - led by Town Administrator Steve Malizia.

3. ATTENDANCE

Board of Selectmen: Roger Coutu, Rick Maddox, Pat Nichols, Nancy Brucker

Absent: Ben Nadeau

Staff/Others: Steve Malizia, Town Administrator; Fire Chief Rob Buxton; Kathy Carpentier, Finance Director; Len Lathrop; Paul Inderbitzen

4. PUBLIC HEARING

Chairman Coutu noted at this time we're going to hold a Public Hearing regarding bonding of a proposed warrant article for \$2,174,600 for the design and construction of a new fire station. I will open the public hearing at 6:01 p.m. Does anyone in the audience wish to speak on this item? If so, please step forward and articulate your name and address clearly for the record. Seeing that no one has come forward, I will declare the Public Hearing closed at 6:01 p.m. I will defer to you at this point.

Selectman Maddox thought most time we gave a presentation then we asked for the public input. Chairman Coutu noted there was nobody here for public input but we can discuss it. I would defer to you Selectman Maddox. The reason why I would defer to you is two reasons. One you are the liaison to the Fire Department. Two, I remember the first phone call I received from you regarding this proposal. You wanted to advise me of what was being proposed and why it was being proposed. You asked that I join you with the Fire Chief at the proposed site which is the Burns Hill Fire Station so that we could look at the facility and I'd have a better understanding of what was being proposed. I appreciated that trip and I believe that since then the other members of the Board of Selectmen have done so as well. They've gone down there and looked at the conditions of that fire station. With that, I'll allow you to make what should have been an introduction initially. I'm sorry I've never done - I think we've only had one other special meeting but it wasn't on a bond issue. This is unique. This is our first bond issue. Certainly it's my first bond issue that we're requesting from the town. It's for infrastructure purposes. I'm glad to see it on the ballot or hopefully going on the ballot. I think it will be tough Sir.

Selectman Maddox asked the Fire Chief to come up to the table also. Mr. Chairman I believe that we talked as a Board that there's no good time to ask our citizens for money but we have gone 10 years now that I've been here plus this treading water trying to keep the taxes as low as possible. We are running a \$30 million business and with that comes the responsibility that the 5 of us share to make sure that the infrastructure is solid that's in place to be able to support the services that we provide our citizens. I know that we have talked over the years about a new central fire station and the price was exorbitant, the Board kind of tucked and rolled and disappeared for a while. It kind of lay dormant but Mr. Chairman the buildings are getting older. The needs are getting greater. The central station is being handled by another funding mechanism but we needed to deal with the Burns Hill station. The Fire Chief is here. I know for Deliberative Session we will have some slides that show some of the various issues over there. Primarily Mr. Chairman this facility was never meant to be manned 24/7. It's a call station. It was laid out to be a call station. The Chief did come in to talk about an addition to increase the living space in that site and I think it was like \$850,000. Well if you're going to put an \$850,000 band-aid, I felt and I believe the Board feels the same thing and the Fire Chief. It is time to look at a different location and that is what we have done.

Ladies and gentlemen, Selectman Maddox noted we have a site on Lowell Road. We own the land. It is sitting there waiting for this station. It is really almost a perfect size for what we need. It has municipal water and sewer which the Robinson Road station does not have. It has natural gas running by this location and it's on Lowell Road. The site is basically across from the Fairview Nursing Home. So we will be able to utilize the lights that are in place for the emergency needs. So that's a cost savings. If anybody has gone to Londonderry down 102 that station that Londonderry just built is the model for this. You can basically see what it's going to look like. I believe that the Chief is going to go with HCTV and have something prepared so that, again, we can give our citizens as much knowledge as possible about what we're attempting to do here. We're taking a station that was meant to be take the trucks out, come back, shower there but not live there. We've turned it into a 24 hour a day station but with many limitations. The biggest one that concerns me Chief is the day that the septic system fails. There is no land behind it. There's a pond on the right side and the left side is where the septic now resides. When they built this station in the early '80s...Chief Buxton said the station was built in 1981. Selectman Maddox indicated things have changed as far as the requirement. So we could end up spending \$150,000 to put a new septic system in this location. So all of those factors put together Mr. Chairman, it made sense to look at other locations. Again we found a great location, a model, and a reasonable price. Again we heard numbers of \$6 million for a new fire station but that a central station. It had more involved with it but we're looking at \$2.1 million to be bonded to put a station that will increase the amount of coverage that we get within the minimum 4 minutes and certainly Chief I'd like you to kick in now because that's the area that you really know well.

Chief Buxton said Selectman Maddox is 100 percent correct. The move to the Lowell Road station although by the bird flying, it's only about a little bit over a mile difference between 88 Burns Hill Road and the new location at 204 Lowell Road has significant impact to our deployment model. The reason for that is that puts the station on a main artery in town and a main

piece of infrastructure being Lowell Road. It gives us direct access down Lowell Road to get to the south end of town into the neighborhoods that weren't necessarily there back in 1981 when the station on 88 Burns Hill Road was built. NFPA1710 gives us a target for response matrix that we're supposed to meet for times. They'd actually like to see you respond with a first unit to an emergency within 4 minutes 90 percent of the time. Currently at 88 Burns Hill Road with 15 Library Street and 52 Robinson Road, we hit that target 58 percent of the time. The move out to Lowell Road will actually increase that percentage to 70 percent of the time as we've mapped out during the facility study and the station location study back in 2008. If you remember back in 2008, we did that facility study and station location study the town paid for and really examined how we responded, and where our impacts were going to be, and where our weaknesses were going to be. That is 100 percent correct.

Just to build a little bit off of what Selectman Maddox was talking about, Chief Buxton said the station was built in 1981. At the same time coming off of the construction of the Robinson Road station. It was a significant period of growth for the fire department at that point in time. In 1979 the Robinson Road station opened. '81 this station opened. It was a single company down there with an engine, and a tanker, and at that point in time with a small kitchen, training area, and a bathroom. Currently in 2001, we opened the station on a 24 hour basis. We have 3 people that staff that facility on a 24 hour basis that basically live within 780 square feet. We have no separation of facilities for the demographics of our organization. Dormitory facilities, no fitness facility and those types of things. This is a significant increase not only infrastructure wise meaning our response model but this is a huge infrastructure change for us organizationally and being to provide a place of work for our employees so their safety and health and those types of things are being addressed also.

Chairman Coutu asked would it be fair Chief if this statement would be true that the majority of calls that eminent and require service from Burns Hill Road primarily on the Lowell Road sector where we have Wal-Mart, Fairview, we have 2 restaurants right down the road that they might respond to because they have quicker access which would be T-Bones and Valentino's, Market Basket. Would that be a fair statement? Chief Buxton believed by the percentages that would be a true statement yes. If you look at what call "District 4", you have two big splits. You have a residential area which is by the 88 Burns Hill area and then you have your commercial/industrial and your main drag which includes Wal-Mart, Sam's Club, Valentino's, and T-Bones, and a fairly major healthcare facility meaning Fairview Nursing Home and their new living facility along with Mission Point right around the corner. So a lot of our responses are out in that area servicing that area day in and day out so that would very much be a true statement.

Chairman Coutu said one of the things you touched upon, and I want the public to be aware, that when we first had this discussion and we met with you at the Burns Hill Fire Station so that I'd have a better understanding of the facility itself, I had told you and I told Selectman Maddox that though I had been there several times, I'd never gone beyond the entranceway where the kitchen is visible and the office was visible. I never saw the facility. You touched upon lightly about the facility in terms of the sleeping quarters and the bathrooms. I want the public to know that as the years progress, more and more women are applying to be in the fire service. You touched upon it briefly but it's imperative that people know that that facility the way it exists today cannot comfortably and should not be allowed to house women in that condition. Renovating and trying to separate and try to make separate quarters is almost - it's not practical. It would be an expensive process and we're just kicking the can down the road. If you want to expound on that.

Chief Buxton said that was correct. Basically what took place when they opened the station on a 24 hour basis, they took the training room and they built walls for better stance out of lockers. You had an 8 foot ceiling; the locker goes up to 6 feet and built some privacy shelter for 2 dormitory areas. That's the way they address the separation of the dormitory into 2 different sleeping areas. As the demographics of our organization change - and this isn't new for the Fire Department - since the '70s the Fire Department has actually had women on the workforce with us on the Call Department. Currently we have 2 female firefighters that are members of our organization and we've routinely had in and out on the full staff over the years. So this isn't something new for us. It's time to address it on a permanent basis - separate out the men's locker room, and a female locker room, and separate the dormitories to basically accommodate our working staff today on the 24 hour basis that they work there.

Finally from Chairman Coutu's observation is that I'm going to give credit where credit is due. Selectman Maddox has been saying since I first came on this Board that the voters of this community would not be receptive to voting for a \$4 or \$5 million bond for a fire station. People who are savvy about the geographics of this area which would be northern Middlesex County in Massachusetts as well as our environs here which would have been from Hollis, to Derry, in the Nashua area, and on the eastern portion of the Litchfield and east of that. Fire stations have been built for \$3 to \$5 million. Selectman Maddox said then and he continued to say on several occasions that if we could do this for a reasonable cost, he felt that we could bond it out and get it done. Not only did he say that, he set the tone and the amount that he would want to spend. Then as he's known to say - twofer - we can build a new fire station and we can renovate the Lenny Smith Fire Station and we could probably do it for \$3 million. When you look at the entire package which was \$900,000, I think you came in at \$1.1 million, he told you if you could get it under \$1 million it would be more palatable certainly to me and I'm sure the rest of the Board. You were successful in coming in with a plan and we approved it unanimously. I believe I read in the Hudson/Litchfield News that the Budget Committee also approved it unanimously. Because we have the luxury of the land and there's no cost associated with it; we have sewer and water which are readily available, that we can keep this down around \$2.1 million. The warrant article would be not to exceed that amount.

Chairman Coutu commented I've had some people say to me well the land will always be there. True so we'll always have the land but every year that goes by, add to the price tag of what it's going to cost to build it. We might be able to get it now for \$2.1 million but a year, 2 years, 3 years from now that price tag is going to escalate. This is a bargain. I hope the voters see that and realize I believe as you said Selectman Maddox, this is our first. I think with the exception there was a couple times on the ballot for a new library and the voters said no. For infrastructure within what we control in the town, this is the first time we're asking the voters to assist us with our infrastructure. Public safety should be absolute priority. I think the voters are well aware of the condition. We've talked about it for years of the Lenny Smith Fire Station. I think they're going to approve in great numbers to having that done. There's going to be no cost to the taxpayers. This particular item though it seems expensive - \$2.1 million is nothing to scoff at but when you're bonding it out - and we'll decide whether it's a 10 or a 20 year bond. I'm sure if the voters decide to approve this, we need 60 percent of the voters to agree to approve this in order for us to do it. I have a lot of confidence that the voters in Hudson will realize the value of putting a fire station in for \$2.1 million in a central location where a majority of the calls could be handled in half the time that they are now. It's a public safety issue. My father used to say to me when he used to sell baby furniture or when he used to say people when he was selling baby furniture and they'd say how much. He's say - we're talking back in the '60s - \$129.99 which was a lot of money in the '60s. People would scoff and he'd say what is the value of the safety of your child. There's no price on safety. Safety doesn't necessarily come at a premium. It comes because it's a responsible thing to do. I would suggest and I would welcome any further comments that this particular tape be played several times between now and Election Day because I think it's a good promo piece for this new fire station. You're welcome to speak and because you voted for it and people need to know where we stand.

Selectman Brucker said I know that there's more development going on in the southern end of town and I know that Comcast has come in with a large facility there. They're going to have there someday 600 employees. I mean we do have to be concerned about protecting the businesses and also the residents. It just seemed like when I heard about it from Selectman Maddox the piece of land and the possibility of building it the way that they did the Londonderry fire house, it just seemed perfect to me. I'm very much in favor of it.

Selectman Nichols said I am also in favor of this. I think it's something the town needs. They desperately need it now. Our infrastructure is starting to deteriorate and the more you let it go, the more expensive it is and the more taxing on the people and their homes. To me this money is so minor compared to what it would cost maybe 3 years down the road. It might be \$500 million. You don't know at the rate prices are going. We have the land. We have the water. We have the sewerage. We have the electricity. We have the gas pipeline. We have a site that doesn't really need all sorts of work. You'd only have to worry about hills, or granite, or anything I don't think. It's all these things that people don't have to worry about that we can put in a beautiful station and be proud of something in our town plus the safety. There are so many businesses and so much down that end of town now and years ago there wasn't anything or it was minor. We have businesses that we want to take care of and we want more businesses to come in. If they know they're safe and that they can get taken care of quickly, we might have more people come in and it would reduce our tax rate a little bit or it would help.

Chairman Coutu wanted to correct Selectman Nichols on one thing. You said \$500 million and in 3 years it would only be \$5 million and I'm sure that's what you meant \$5 million and not \$500 million. I forgot to mention the Industrial Park and I should not have forgotten that we have an industrial park. Also what came to mind and I gave this serious thought, you know I've leaned a little bit on the new fire station so they - I'm not going to change my mind certainly on the Lenny Smith. I received a phone call from the person who owns all of the land behind St. Kathryn's. It goes all the way down to almost to my backyard. I believe there's 100 some odd acres back there. He's going to come in the near future with a proposal. I have no idea what it is. I haven't engaged in too much conversation with him other than I think he wants to make some sort of a presentation. So that probability exists. That's a large parcel of land. A lot of things we need to iron out. We need to talk about the water tank and things of that nature. If that should come to fruition and I know he sought out universities. He sought out hospitals. He's come up with a lot of ideas. I don't know what he's planning. What he hasn't planned, or what he has in store but he's been trying to market the land. If that's built, another reason why it's imperative that we have access for a quick call.

Selectman Maddox wanted to say that this Board and the Boards before us have tried to squeeze every nickel we can out of our tax dollars. At some point we need to say we need your help. This is a cause that needs to be done. It is not a flash in the pan. We need it today. We'll forget about it tomorrow. This is an ongoing need. For \$.11 at its highest point if we go for the 10 years which I think is probably the most practical because of the amount of interest you're going to pay if you go out 20 years. It's going to be \$.11 on the tax rate on just the second and third year and then it starts to decline after that. Again we've asked people to believe what we did with the taxes was the squeezing of every nickel. It's not time to ask them for their help in funding this warrant article. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Chief Buxton encouraged anybody that has any questions to please pick up the phone and call us. We are taking the show on the road. We have several civic groups that we'll be sitting with starting in February to promote the program. We do need the public's help. I think Selectman Maddox clearly stated that and we need the public to come out and vote and we need their support. We thank them for their consideration.

Chairman Coutu welcomed Paul Inderbitzen our Town Moderator.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen. Paul Inderbitzen appreciated the time. I know it was last minute. When I found out you were having this bond hearing and I said I rarely get to meet with you before the Deliberative Sessions since you have your meetings on evenings that I work. I thought this is just to briefly go over toward the Deliberative Session with you on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

Like was stated during your bond hearing, this is the first time that we've had a bond issue I think since I've been Moderator on the town side. The last bond issue I remember is the new school - Hills Garrison. Steve Malizia indicated we did one in '05 for the water utility. Mr. Inderbitzen said that was before my time as well. I didn't start until '08. That's going to be a little different for people.

Paul Inderbitzen said I just wanted to touch base with you on a couple of items. Obviously the Deliberative Session goes pretty well regularly but this is going to probably generate a lot of discussion and people are going to want to know a lot of how much is this going to cost us and you talk about the \$.11 rate. I think that will be very good to bring out at the meeting on how you might propose to have that funding and show it so people get an idea of what it is. It's just a little different. I know in the past with bond questions that I've watched and taken part in that there's always a lot of confusion as to is this the way to go and how to do that. I know you're going to have a presentation. Mr. Maddox was going to be the presenter on this article and there will be some information given and a video to be able to show. That will be helpful.

Mr. Inderbitzen had a reminder that anything that you want for visuals need to go to Mr. O'Keefe as early in the week as possible. I think he usually gives me a deadline like Wednesday if people want stuff. If you're going to have stuff so that you know what's going - he's going to project the article but if you have other items that you want to have in that make sure if you're using town staff that they get it to Mike early enough so that his people can get it on the disk and ready to go and incorporate it into their stuff. They'll be setting up on Friday and I'll be stopping in Friday to make sure that they have everything they need. I will be contacting the petitioners for Articles 14 and 15 to make sure that they're ready and that they have their stuff to Mike if they need to make their presentation. The presentations should be adequate but not too lengthy so people can ask questions and discuss it. I know we'll have discussions on a lot of things. I think it's worthwhile to do that and I anticipate. I would just say your presentation shouldn't be too lengthy in terms of your time spent so that the public that are there can then see. Enough so that the people watching on TV can get a good idea of what they're going to be voting on. I know there are people who haven't read a thing until they walk into that voting booth and they look at this and that's all they see. It's not always the best way, although there aren't too many here to describe things. The descriptions - you just can't do what you really like to do and have a whole big explanation on each issue that the public can read if they're standing there at the booth. Of course then they'd be in there too long too.

Paul Inderbitzen asked if there is anything that the Board needs from me in terms of what they anticipate discussing at the meeting any problems that you might anticipate coming. If you know of anybody that says oh we're going to have some amendments here and there, please let me know if you know of any if people have come to you about just so that I can be prepared when things come up and have my notes and everything set. No Moderator likes to have something come out of nowhere but sometimes it happens. We just adjust. If you're aware of any, get them to Mr. Malizia and just let me know. Even the Board sometimes makes amendments to stuff and it helps me if I know what's coming. Let me know if you would. If there's any questions from the Board members, I'd be glad to answer too.

Chairman Coutu stated to Mr. Inderbitzen you've always been fair and impartial certainly since I've been a resident of this town in your position. I only have one question. I think I know the answer. Would not be a problem if we were to have the pictures of the fire station either that or something different in color and placed in the entrance to the Community Center? Mr. Inderbitzen said no. These are aids for the Deliberative Session. Things that people want to know what they're voting on. So if you have pictures out there of what they're going to be voting on, that's not campaigning or anything. Its information about - I've had other people ask me can I bring in stuff. I said if it's informational. Of course on the bond issue like this, this is informational. What are we getting for our \$2.1 million? Well this is what we're planning on building.

Chairman Coutu recommended that that be redone in something colorful and say "our proposed new fire station" so people will know what it is. It almost looks like the senior center when you look at it because it almost has a barn shape on the bottom left. There's no problem we can do it on Election Day. I remember the old senior center, the original senior center they had proposed, we had a big picture so that's okay. Mr. Inderbitzen said please vote for us just saying this is the information for warrant article #1. The same thing with if we had any zoning amendments. There's nothing on here so obviously there aren't any zoning amendments. I always have the Planning Board and Zoning Board's representative to make sure that there's a map up showing where the zoning changes are occurring so that people can be aware. I know they have two public hearings and all of that.

Chairman Coutu thanked Selectman Maddox for that because he's been vigilant this year in trying to keep the warrant articles down so that the people can see 1 or 2 so that they understand what they are and hopefully get their support.

Chairman Coutu wished Steve Malizia a happy birthday.

5. ADJOURNMENT

*Chairman Coutu declared the meeting adjourned at 6:34 p.m.*

Recorded by HCTV and transcribed by Donna Graham, Recorder.

HUDSON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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Roger E. Coutu, Chairman

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Richard J. Maddox, Selectman

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Nancy Brucker, Selectman

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Pat Nichols, Selectman