

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING/WORKSHOP
DOVER CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
THURSDAY
JULY 26, 2001
7:00 P.M.

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

1. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Nossiff, Reese, Schmidt, Andrews Parker, Boc, Dunnington and Hindle.

Members Absent: Mayberry and Berry.

2. RESOLUTION:

- A.** Resolution RE: Redistricting of Ward Lines. Sponsored by Mayor Wil Boc, by Request.

Reese moved to adopt, seconded by Hindle.

Schmidt moved to amend in its entirety, seconded by Hindle.

The Deputy City Clerk explained that the amendment is naming the 3 individuals being appointed to the committee and also changes the date for Council action from September 12th to prior September 6th as State RSA requires adoption 60 days prior to the Municipal election.

Andrews Parker asked if there will be many people affected and asked for clarification as to whether the Council will be approving the change or approving the question to be placed on the ballot.

Mayor Boc stated that he feels very few, if any, will be affected, but per State RSA we are required to redistrict every 10 years based on the census data in keeping with the "one man, one vote" philosophy.

The Deputy City Clerk clarified that they will vote on the proposed charter change amendment to go on the ballot November 6, 2001.

Mayor Boc stated he is appointing Gary Gilmore, Richard Dolbec and Jerry Reese to serve on the committee.

Motion to adopt as amended passed on a 7-0 vote.

3. ADJOURNMENT

Reese moved to adjourn, seconded by Hindle.

Motion passed unanimously.

WORKSHOP:

1. Discussion RE: REUSE OF OLD DOVER MIDDLE SCHOOL BUILDING

City Manager Paul Beecher explained that this workshop is meant to present a concept of potential uses of the old middle school building including possible conversion for Police Department use. He explained that City Attorney George Wattendorf will be requesting a waiver at the probate court next month to use the building for something other than education, as is required by the deed.

Planning Director Steve Stancel explained that architect Mike Lassel was asked to look at the concept of relocating the Police Department to the old middle school and feels that the conclusion will be that it is not a good idea.

Mike Lassel explained that last year at this time he presented a plan for the former middle school reuse, which was based around the district court being located there. Since then, the court has decided to build another building, and therefore other uses needed to be considered. He explained that, currently, the police department is occupying 17,000 square feet in their present location, but the space needs study shows that they require at least 32,000 square feet to accommodate future growth. He stated that the Police Department requires easy public access, but also has various security needs including jail facilities, sallyport area, weapons storage, interview rooms, etc. He continued by stating that because the Dover Police Department is very active in the community on many different levels, there are often groups of people touring the facility and a public parking area and entrance would need to be constructed in the front of the building. He stated that the cruisers cannot share the same road to the back parking lot as the library, and this needs to be considered as well.

He then reviewed the concept plan stating that the Police Department would utilize the first and second floors of the building in its entirety, which would be approximately 64,000 square feet total to renovate. He stated that the location of the building itself is good, but feels that there would be traffic and access issues.

Boc asked about the cost.

Lassel stated he was asked only to assess the space needs and feasibility but not any costs.

Boc stated that the court decided not to permanently locate there because of the costs for renovation and feels that this may be the same issue for the police department.

Lassel stated that doing minor, cosmetic renovations does not cost that much to do, but any major structural changes do get into a lot of money.

Nossiff asked if it is accurate that it would cost the same to renovate as it would be build a new 32,000 square facility.

Lassel stated that yes, with a new building 50% of the cost is actual structure and 50% is finish, so it would be in the same ballpark, but doesn't include the cost of the land.

Nossiff then asked if the current police space is 17,000 square feet and the projected need is 32,000 sq. feet, then why are we giving them 2 floors totaling 64,000 square feet.

Lassel stated it is a security and access issue.

Nossiff clarified that the first floor is actually the basement and the 2nd floor is the street level, and then asked if the 3rd and 4th floor usage would be restricted because of the police department.

Chief Fenniman stated yes, the 3rd and 4th floor access would be restricted for security reasons.

Dunnington asked if there was any consideration made in separating the functions of the police department by keeping the lockup facilities in city hall and moving office space to the middle school.

Fenniman stated that separation is already occurring with resource officers being located at the new middle school and off site storage and feels it is inefficient.

Andrews Parker asked, for comparison purposes, how much it would cost to build a 35,000 square foot state of the art facility, not including property.

Fenniman stated that Captain DeColfmacker has visited state of the art facilities and found that they are running around \$150 per square foot.

Lassel clarified that this would be approximately \$5,000,000, not including property.

Andrews Parker asked if that is how much it would cost to renovate.

Lassel stated possibly, but he was not asked to give costs, only concept.

Beecher stated that another consideration besides cost is other potential uses of the building by community groups. He stated that putting the P.D. in the building would restrict most other uses and require extensive renovation. By putting other groups that are more compatible together, it would be a better use of taxpayer money in the long run and also require less major renovation.

Andrews Parker stated she feels that cost needs to be a part of the discussion right from the beginning.

Beecher stated that again, this was merely meant to be a presentation on concept so that when they go to court next month, we will know what we are asking to do.

Boc explained that the land was deeded to the city in trust to be maintained for educational and library purposes. He stated his feeling is that we should not ruin the nice front lawn area to make a parking lot and doesn't feel that the probate judge will go along with it either, although they have been very lenient in their consideration so far.

Schmidt stated that the court decided not to move there because it would require too much renovation and feels that it would be the same case for the Police Department. He stated that if it doesn't fit, we shouldn't ruin the building trying to make it fit.

Lassel agreed that the renovation would require major structural changes to accommodate holding cells, heating considerations, etc.

Dunnington stated that he feels that the fact that the police department is located in such cramped space is an important issue and feels that something needs to be done soon, even it means moving across the street.

Steve Stancel then presented some other potential uses, which will accommodate the development of the waterfront and help maximize existing school space. First, using the front part of the building for a consolidated Kindergarten, Pre-school and possible day care, as well as relocation of the SAU administrative offices. He stated that this would free up much needed class space at the elementary schools and also allow for better utilization of busing for the kindergarten program.

Secondly, moving the entire recreational operation from the Butterfield Gym to the middle school will allow for expanded recreation services and allow for the Butterfield Gym to be reused for an arts center, which would link the downtown with the waterfront.

Nossiff asked to have exact locations given with each potential use.

Stancel clarified that the school would occupy the entire 4 floors of the front of the building and recreation would occupy most of the back half of the building.

Thirdly, the Senior Center could be located in the middle school, which would give them a much larger space and also access to a kitchen area. He stated this would be a good location because it is close to the library, senior housing and the recreation facilities, which would also be in the building.

He continued by explaining that the current senior center could then be used by another private entity, or it could be used for additional parking in the area. He explained that across the street from the senior center there are two 4-story buildings, which are currently underutilized due to lack of

parking in the area. He stated that the Temple Israel is also looking for more parking in the area, and feels that the new train station will require additional parking.

Schmidt stated he heard this idea presented on “Open Mic” and felt it was a great idea. He stated he agrees that parking space in that neighborhood is scarce and that St. Mary Church is in need of more parking as well.

Stancel went on to discuss the current uses of the building including Dover Adult Learning Center, Youth Resources and Human Services, Legal Department, Healthy Universal Beginnings (HUB), community meeting rooms, alternative school, district court, probation office, storage, and recreational use of the gymnasium.

Schmidt stated there are some city offices currently located there and asked if they are there only because there was no other place and will they still “fit” if these other uses come in.

Stancel explained that he feels those that are there now are happy where they are and were able to make the space usable with very little renovation. He stated that when the new Alt school is built, that portion will be used by the school department, the court will be used as the senior center and the probation office will become class space. He stated that although HUB is relocating, they have expressed an interest in maintaining some of their services in the old middle school as well.

Beecher clarified that if the police department were to go there, none of them could stay.

Boc stated that HUB did a great job rehabilitating the space they currently occupy and feels it shows what potential the building has.

Jack Buckley, Chamber of Commerce Board member and Main Street Program member, feels that city services should be maintained in the old middle school as it is in a centralized location along with the library and city hall. He stated that they support relocating the recreation department out of the Butterfield gym in order to help renovate the waterfront area, which will allow a link and flow to the downtown area. The Butterfield Gym as an Arts Center will provide that link. He continued by stating that Dover already has great recreational facilities including 2 arenas, outdoor pool, indoor pool, skate park, etc., but lacks cultural facilities. He stated that with the renovation of the bandshell and the improvements to Henry Law Park, having the recreational facility on the waterfront is not the best use of that area. He stated that there is a great commitment on the part of the private and business sector to improve downtown and feels the city needs to support these efforts.

Andrews Parker asked Recreation Director Gary Bannon to address the impact of the relocation.

Bannon stated that relocation will provide the department with additional office and meeting space, but will actually leave them in a deficit situation for gymnasium space. He explained that the recreation department is already using the middle school gym in addition to the Butterfield gym and therefore, would be losing. He stated he is currently investigating other options to be able to maintain the current schedule without even thinking about increasing it at this point. He stated he is not opposed to the relocation, but does feel that gymnasium space does need to be found.

Boc stated he would like to hear from the school department as they have specific requirements set by the State in relation to kindergarten classes.

Superintendent of Schools Armand LaSelva began by stating that this is a concept only and that if the concept is accepted, then a feasibility study will have to be done. He stated he feels that the cost of renovating the building will not cost more than building a new school. He explained that the concept is to have an early learning center, which would include kindergarten and an integrated preschool program. He stated he doesn't feel that parents would mind children going to a central school for kindergarten because it is only a half-day program.

He explained the pre-school would be made up of 40% special needs students and 60% students with no special needs, which encourages inclusion from early on in the education process. It also allows for the special education teachers to have a central space and not have to do as much

travelling around to the other schools. He stated he would also like to see a daycare facility in the space as well, which could accommodate city and school department employees for a fee.

He went on to discuss the much needed repairs to the Woodman Park School, stating that this cannot be done in a piecemeal way and Woodman Park School will need to be vacated to accomplish the work due to the removal of asbestos. He stated that the old middle school could be used as a temporary facility while this renovation is done. He stated he feels that the current facilities should be brought up to standard before even considering the building of another school. He stated if the kindergarten classes are relocated to a central facility, it will free up room for an additional 120 students eliminating the need for a new school for 10-15 years.

He then stated that he would like to see the front lawn of the school utilized as an outdoor play area with a tiered amphitheater, which the library could use as well for outdoor children programs.

Reese feels the concept of centralizing resources is a good one, but asked if the special education teachers teach other grades as well.

LaSelva stated yes, but it will help with the scheduling if they are mostly in one place.

Nossiff commended Mr. LaSelva for encouraging the use of the middle school for education. He stated that he feels it is one of the most beautiful buildings in New Hampshire and feels that the building didn't fail us, but we failed the building. He stated he agrees that it shouldn't be about fitting a need to a building, but a building to a need and is glad that there are many options available. He stated he would like to see the city spend existing revenue and not bond for any renovations. He feels we are not in a crisis situation and can accomplish this in an orderly fashion.

He then stated that his idea was to actually locate the 5th and 6th grade to the building as he feels that 5th and 8th graders should not be in the same school. He asked if we can gradually add more classes to the school, once we begin the kindergarten program.

LaSelva stated that anything is possible, but feels that centralizing kindergarten isn't likely to be an issue with parents because it is only for ½ days. He stated he feels that in the rest of the grades parents prefer to have them go to the neighborhood schools. He explained that he prefers the idea of a middle school with 4 grades (5-8) because 2 grades can be grouped together and still be maintained separately without creating an "odd man out" situation. He agrees that 5th graders and 8th graders should not participate in most school activities together.

Hindle stated that as a member of the Facilities Task Force committee he endorses the early learning center concept. He then stated he feels that the city has spent all we should on recreation and that education should be the top priority. He stated that when Woodman Park School was built in 1950 it was the largest in the State and has not been used to its full potential. He stated that if a new school is built, it also has to have teachers and maintenance people hired as well.

Schmidt stated he agrees that we have spent a lot on recreation, but feels that not everyone skates and skateboards and feels that people need gymnasium facilities to participate in other activities as well. He then asked how many kids they would expect to occupy the space.

LaSelva stated that presently there are 6 kindergarten classrooms which run 2 – half day classes each totaling approximately 280-300 children. He stated the preschool classes would consist of 3 classrooms with 10 children each. He stated that if the State Department of Education approved this usage then they would still provide 30% towards the cost.

Regarding daycare, he stated he is unsure of the actual number but knows that there is a definite need. He stated that having a centralized facility available to city and school employees for a fee would be a good recruiting benefit as well.

Schmidt asked if the School Board has looked at the cost breakdown at all yet.

LaSelva stated that this is all still a concept and they are waiting for the green light from the Council before having a feasibility study done.

Boc stated he would like to have the Council come to a consensus as to where to guide the City Manager to go from here by deciding whether or not the Police Department will go across the street or not; and if not, to come back with recommendations for other uses.

Andrews Parker stated she would like to know who is paying the \$75,000 - \$100,000 for the feasibility study.

School Board member Nick Skaltsis stated he feels we are ahead of ourselves as the Superintendent has come up with a concept, but the School Board has yet to discuss it. He stated that if there is a green light given before November, the School Board would have to determine if they could spend the money but feels that he would not vote in favor of it at that time. He stated he can see it being a part of the CIP in December.

Andrews Parker stated she is concerned because she recalls that the children were moved out of the school because it was unsafe and unhealthy, so why can we put them in there now.

Skaltsis stated that they were not moved because the building was condemned, but because it was overcrowded and there were no recreational facilities.

Discussion ensued regarding cost of renovations in relation to different uses and users.

Andrews Parker stated she supports the concept but feels she needs to also understand the costs associated. She then asked if the current users will be able to stay if this concept is put in place.

Stancel stated that all can stay except for legal who may have to move if recreation moves in.

Beecher stated that there may be some musical chairs, but all will be better off than before.

Nossiff feels that there are other private buildings with gymnasiums, such as churches, that can be leased by the city. He asked if we do go with the school and rec in the same building will it lessen the availability of the gym for recreation purposes.

Bannon stated that the compatibility between the school and recreation facilities will be good. He stated he also feels that having the Senior Center in the same building will be very beneficial as they have been trying to outreach to this group for many years. He also feels there is a good opportunity to match seniors with the kindergarten children as well.

Nossiff asked what will happen with the indoor pool if the Butterfield Gym is converted to a cultural center.

Bannon stated that the pool will stay put and that there are some storage areas that can be converted to office space for the staff.

Hindle clarified that the old middle school had been crowded when there were just 7th and 8th graders and then when the 6th graders were added, it became intolerable. He stated the only unsafe area was the balcony of the gymnasium.

Dunnington suggested a tour of the building.

Boc stated that a tour was held at the workshop last year but this year they didn't go over there because people like to see the meetings on television.

He then asked if the Council consensus is that the Police Department will not relocate to the old middle school and to have the City Manager have a plan and costs associated by September or October in order to be included in the CIP proposals. The Council agreed by hand count.

Reese moved to adjourn, seconded by Andrews Parker. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

**Valerie A. French
Deputy City Clerk**