

Police Station Steering Committee Minutes March 7th; 2024

Members Present:

Bill Baldwin: Co-chair
Tim Crowley: Atkinson Police Chief and Co-chair
Nick Fiset: Atkinson Police Captain and Vice-chair
Sam Butler: Secretary
Dave Cacciotti
Matt Casey
Bob Connors
Karen Steele

Also present – Keith Kelley from Harvey

Meeting Called to order at 6:10.

Chair Baldwin opened the meeting with a statement about the importance of transparency for the committee and the need for voters to be informed about the basic facts. Chief Crowley followed, speaking about how disheartening it was to see a small group of people in town spreading misinformation. He outlined the basic timeline and facts behind the two RFPs, site selection, formation of the current committee, bond costs, and federal grant application requirements and status. He also pointed out how solidly the town committed to the fire station twenty years ago, and to the additional 2012 and 2019 repairs, a fire station that is estimated to cost between \$12MM-\$14MM today.

The remainder of the meeting consisted of discussions in response to questions raised by voters on social media and at the five open houses held by the committee.

Compensation – All eight committee members reiterated that they had no personal interest in passing the warrant to build the station.

Location – The last accident at the proposed site was in 2012. There have been twenty accidents at the current Academy Avenue location since that time.

Cost increases and local contractors – Current annual construction inflation is running at about 4%, about the same as it has for the last two decades (not including the Covid years). Those cost increases are almost entirely labor, and do not go down. Any delay will raise the price of the station. Keith Kelley suggested folks look at the Salem interview about costs for their proposed \$40MM Police Station. He also discussed Harvey's extensive contacts with about 2,200 local contractors. The blasting process and the need for an elevator were also discussed, along with the material differences and higher standards for commercial buildings vs residential, and police vs fire stations.

Claims that a new station can be built for \$4MM-\$5MM – The committee questioned how this number had been calculated. How big will this proposal be? What is the proposed cost per square foot? How will the new design be determined, and how much will it cost?

Transparency – Several members pointed out that the committee meetings had all been open to the public with dates posted in advance. Despite this, the committee could not remember anyone from town attending other than the committee itself. Abutters were notified by certified mail in 2022. Chief Crowley also wrote about the station project in the 2022 Annual Report.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:40.