

**AVON VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT FIRE STATION  
EXPANSION, RENOVATION & BUILDING COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
JUNE 22, 2023**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Chairperson Speich in the Avon Room at the Avon Town Offices. Members Present: Raz Alexe, Jamie DiPace, Gina Kline, Mark Massaro, Brian McDermott, Brian Mirizzi, James Speich. Staff Members Present: Brandon Robertson, Town Manager, Grace Tiezzi, Assistant Town Manager, Bruce Appell, Fire Marshall/EMD and Volunteer Fire Chief, Nick Hogan, Town Clerk

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairperson James Speich.

**III. OATH OF OFFICE**

The Oath of Office was led by Nick Hogan, Town Clerk.

**IV. INTRODUCTIONS AND SELECTION OF VICE CHAIR/SECRETARY**

Mr. Speich started by making the committee aware they need to complete the Annual Disclosure Form Request for elected/appointed officials and return to Nick Hogan, Town Clerk. The committee also needs to complete the sexual harassment training within 30 days of being sworn into office. Mr. Hogan stated the certificate of sexual harassment training completion should also be forwarded to him.

Mr. Speich suggested the committee provide introductions. Mr. DiPace introduced himself as a member of the Avon Volunteer Fire Department and has lived in Avon all his life. Ms. Kline introduced herself as an Avon resident for about 20 years and a member of the Avon Fire Department for the same time and is the President of the Avon Volunteer Fire Department Board of Directors. Ms. Kline also works as a Project Manager for Traveler's. Mr. McDermott introduced himself as an Avon resident of 18 years. He grew up in Wallingford and was on the Town Council and Planning & Zoning Commission as well as State Senator 8 years and moved to Avon in 2003. Mr. Mirizzi introduced himself as an Avon resident for about 17 years previously as resident of Colebrook and on the volunteer fire department there as well as Winsted. Currently Mr. Mirizzi works at Litchfield County dispatch in Torrington, a 911 dispatch center for about 58 agencies, including 3 police departments, in charge of 25+ radio simulcast system and he does all the IT and basically anything infrastructure based. Mr. Speich introduced himself as an Avon resident for about 40 years and a member of the Fire Department for about the same time and comes from a long line of family public service. Mr. Speich stated he worked at Pratt & Whitney for about 46 years doing project management and is currently retired but still consulting and teaching for them. Mr. Alexe introduced himself as an Avon resident, previously from Florida. Mr. Alexe stated his wife works for the Town of Avon in Youth Services for about 12 years and Mr. Alexe is currently working in Litchfield as the Public Works Director/Town Engineer and Tree Warden. Mr. Massaro introduced himself as an Avon resident for 18 years and a 27-year employee for Eversource in Community Relations and Economic Development.

Avon Staff Members introduced themselves: Ms. Tiezzi, Assistant Town Manager, Nick Hogan, Town Clerk, Bruce Appell, Fire Marshall/EMD and Volunteer Fire Chief, Brandon Robertson, Town Manager.

On a motion from Chairperson James Speich and second from Mr. McDermott, Mark Massaro was appointed Vice Chair/Secretary for the Avon Volunteer Fire Department Fire Expansion, Renovation, & Building Committee by unanimous approval.

## **V. PRESENTATION – REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF NEED AND CHARGE OF THE COMMITTEE**

Mr. Speich stated he would like to discuss the presentation and review the Statement of Need (attached and made part of these minutes). Mr. Speich stated that one of the consulting firms, CGR out of Rochester, NY, went through all fire department stations, looked at membership, and helped to develop a facilities and equipment master plan which is also available on the website.

Mr. Speich stated there are a lot of inadequacies with the fire stations and a lot of changes that need to be made to build for the future. Mr. Speich stated that the recommendation for the Company 1 station is a refurbishment; Company 3 station plans to build a new station across the street; Company 4 station needs expansion. Mr. McDermott asked what happened to Company 2. Mr. Speich stated Company 2 is owned by Avon Volunteer Fire Department and asked Mr. Appell to describe its function. Mr. Appell stated that Company 2 sits on the Avon/Canton town line and membership has fluctuated over the years and due to the location, it is not a station conducive to do training. It is still an active station with 2 trucks parked there, but there is not enough manpower to keep the station staffed at this time. Mr. Alexe stated that basically CGR's sum of their recommendations are captured in their Statement of Need and questioned to what extent the Fire Chiefs, the Fire Marshall had input and collaboration with CGR. Mr. Appell stated he had a lot of input with CGR as well as the Board of Directors, Members, Fire Chiefs, and a survey was conducted of all the members, so the master plan is a pretty comprehensive report. Mr. Appell stated that CGR additionally contracted out a fire service specialist that came and visited each of the fire station with LaBella Architects and they combined their information together in master plan. Mr. Speich stated the next job of the committee will be to select an architect to do some of the work. Mr. McDermott asked if future meetings could be held at different fire stations. Mr. Speich stated that was a possibility or Mr. Appell could arrange to provide a tour of those facilities. Ms. Tiezzi stated the committee can meet wherever they want to meet, the meeting location just needs to be put on the agenda.

Mr. Speich reviewed the charge of the committee (which is attached and made part of these minutes).

## **VI. NEXT STEPS – INCLUDING POSSIBLE APPROVAL OF A REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS**

Mr. Speich asked Mr. Robertson to review financing of the project. Mr. Robertson stated that this is kind of a two-phase project. The first phase is the getting up and running phase where the RFQ/RFP, the committee will make a recommendation to the Town Council, based on the recommendation of the Committee and Architect. Mr. Robertson stated that cost will be a factor in that process, but as you will see we are looking for the firm that is best suited to serve the needs of the scope of services. Mr. Robertson stated the Committee is not restricted to the lowest bidder and there is funding available in the fiscal year 2024 capital budget to cover architectural design services.

Mr. Robertson stated once the architect is chosen, and from that point on it's basically developing a set of specifications for the scope of work and the project budget. Mr. Robertson stated the point he wanted to make is that the primary focus for the Committee to be thinking about is not cost, but the best plan that satisfies the scope of work that is outlined in the Committee charge. That work effort will be taken to the Town Council to get their feedback and if it looks like the budget is coming in way too high, however that is defined at the time, the Town Council may then charge the Committee with prioritizing the companies.

Mr. Robertson reiterated it is the Committee's job to satisfy the scope and come up with recommendations based on the scope and the primary concern is not cost. Mr. Alexe asked if the focus will be on one firm for renovation and construction or would it be feasible to have two different firms, one that maybe more specializes in renovation or expansion versus one that a firm that specializes in construction. Mr. Robertson stated that right now an architect will be hired for design and once the project is ready to go out to bid, then the process will go through a separate contractor in the procurement phase. Mr. Alexe asked if this will be asked in the context of a design/build approach. Mr. Speich stated it depends where the budget ends up going. Mr. Alexe stated that traditionally the RFQ is running out the ground to select the firm, so at that point the

RFP is going to tell us to what extent that architectural firm is going to put together the scope and present in conjunction with CGR and what they bring to the table in terms of experience. Mr. Alexe addressed Ms. Tiezzi to ask if there is a template for the RFQ. Ms. Tiezzi responded yes. Mr. Alexe asked if there is a process after the RFQ is put out. Ms. Tiezzi responded yes. Mr. Alexe asked if there are questionnaires. Ms. Tiezzi responded she has a plan.

Mr. Speich stated that he attended a fire station seminar in St. Louis with Mr. DiPace and Mr. Appell, and the architects there looked at the master plan and suggested many different structural and cost saving ideas. Mr. Speich stated the good things about the RFQ that Ms. Tiezzi has put together is that we are looking for someone that is specific with fire stations, which is one of the requirements for this project. Mr. McDermott inquired about the design versus the design build experience of Mr. Alexe. Mr. Alexe responded he is not familiar with Avon's procurement policy but would be able to assist. Mr. Robertson stated that by starting with the request for qualifications, we are casting a really wide net so they will provide resumes, experience, approach, then through a process we will whittle it down for the committee and have specific questions for the firms that this group feels meets the basic requirements and then we will move on to a request for proposals. Mr. McDermott stated that the charge of this committee is concept today through ribbon cutting. Mr. Robertson replied ultimately assuming it gets there, this will be the group that sees this project all the way through, subject to Town Council approval. Mr. McDermott asked if there is a target date. Mr. Robertson stated one of the timelines with the referendum was Fall of 2024. Ms. Tiezzi stated it depends if you were to fulfill your charge that you have been tasked with by October 2024, through schematic design, present to Town Council, then Town Council then has 3 options. Council can say, sorry we are done, we will go to referendum right now with this amount of work that has been done, or we want you to take it all the way to basically shovel-ready project, permits, full design which is kind of how the Town has been doing recent larger projects. It is really up to the Council and will really jive for when the referendum is so it could be a year and a half from now or it could be longer than that. Member asked it shovel-ready means having contractors picked before going to referendum. Ms. Tiezzi responded no, but you have a project with approved permits where as soon as have a referendum approval, you can advertise a bid.

Mr. McDermott asked about the fire apparatus when is that due in and is there any issue fitting in the buildings. Mr. Appell stated the new apparatus is due in December 2024/January 2025, so they will move the trucks around temporarily and make do with their stations. Mr. Speich asked Ms. Tiezzi to review the RFQ and timeline provided in the meeting packet (attached and made part of these minutes). Mr. McDermott asked if there is a date for interested parties to come and tour all the facilities. Ms. Tiezzi responded they will be given a full request for proposals package which will include terms and conditions and, in that narrative, the scope of work we are asking for, we would offer the opportunity to get in touch with Chief Appell and tour the fire houses. Mr. McDermott stated the timeline is aggressive, and not doubting the Town's capability to get this done but did the Town help looking at the timeline or looking at the scope of things for this, was there other people consulting on the best timeline. Ms. Tiezzi responded that the timeline can be adjusted in terms of procurement. Mr. Robertson reiterated there is not a cookbook, but it is very similar to other processes. Mr. Appell stated that these firms may want to visit the firehouses for price scheduling and scope of work. Ms. Tiezzi stated that the timeline is flexible for procurement. Mr. Speich stated the Committee is in the driver's seat essentially. Ms. Tiezzi provided an overview of the RFQ draft (attached and made part of these minutes).

On a motion from Mr. Alexe and second from Mr. McDermott, Ms. Tiezzi was permitted to forward the RFQ as shown in the meeting packet by unanimous approval.

## **VII. DISCUSS FUTURE MEETING DATES/SCHEDULE**

Mr. Speich addressed the future meeting dates and schedules to leave as is and cancel as needed. Mr. Robertson responded with a suggestion to keep the dates. Ms. Tiezzi suggested cancelling the July meeting due to lack of member availability and reaching a quorum. Discussion continued regarding future meeting dates. Ms. Tiezzi stated she would update the meeting dates for Mr. Speich to sign and file with the Town Clerk and provide dates for a tour of the firehouses coordinated with Mr. Appell. Mr. Speich asked for a list of names and phone numbers as a contact list for the committee. Ms. Tiezzi stated she would provide a list of contacts.

On a motion from Mr. Mirizzi and second from Mr. McDermott, the meeting dates and schedule with exception of the July 12<sup>th</sup> meeting were accepted by unanimous approval.

Mr. Robertson stated he would like to notify all the neighbors near these projects to let them know what is going on, send out a letter now, point them to the resources posted on the website and perhaps reach back out to them at the end of August or September we will be back in touch with them to schedule a meeting at Company 3, for instance, just so they can come in to get a brief presentation, answer any questions so they aren't reading about it in the paper for the first time or coming in cold.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. McDermott moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:15pm, Mr. Speich seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted:  
Mark Massaro, Vice Chairperson/Secretary

Attest: Nicole Chambers, Clerk