

**Town of Chester  
Police Department Space Needs Working Group Meeting  
Tuesday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019  
Municipal Complex  
Approved Minutes**

**I Preliminaries**

Call the Meeting to Order  
Roll Call  
Approval of Minutes  
Will Gatchell & Judy Johnson of Harriman  
Adjournment

**1.1 Call to Order**

This fifth meeting of the Police Department Space Needs Working Group (PDSNWG) was called to order at 9:10am.

**1.2 Roll Call**

Members Present:

Aaron Berube, Police  
Andrew Hadik, Planning (departed 10:15am)  
Karl Knudsen, Resident  
Stephen Landau, Selectman  
Corinna Reishus, Recreation (departed 11:05am)  
Herb Rowell, Resident

Members Absent:

Cass Buckley, Selectman  
Myrick Bunker, Building  
Rhonda Lamphere  
Michael Oleson, Road Agent  
Debbie O’Sullivan, Resident

Others Present at Various Times:

Will Gatchell, Harriman  
Judy Johnson, Harriman

**II. Old Business**

**2.1 Approval of Minutes**

Minutes were not addressed.

**III. New Business**

**3.1 Project Kickoff Meeting with Will Gatchell and Judy Johnson of Harriman**

Will Gatchell (Associate, Architect) and Judy Johnson (Principal, Architect) thanked the Group for choosing Harriman to conduct the Police Department Space Needs Study.

Ms. Johnson explained that today, she and Mr. Gatchell hoped to be able to nail down the project schedule and capture the group's vision of the public process.

Selectman Landau advised Mr. Gatchell and Ms. Johnson to continue to copy all individuals initially interested in the PDSNWG in all future correspondence; they agreed. Selectman Landau and Police Chief Berube will remain the principal contacts for this project.

Planning Coordinator Hadik suggested building a webpage to house all the information on this project (timeline, meeting agendas & minutes, etc.) to ensure transparency and maximize public participation. The group agreed that BOS AA Doda could create such a page under the "Boards and Committees" section of the Town's website. Ms. Johnson wondered how the public would become aware that the webpage exists; it was suggested to announce it at BOS & Planning Board meetings and to place on the Town sign & Chester Academy sign, etc. The Tri-Town Times should be informed of PDSNWG progress as well. Mr. Gatchell Suggested using facebook to advertise the link to the page.

Harriman's first step is to evaluate the existing facility. It was noted that Road Agent Oleson may have access to CAD files of the PD's floor plans. The Building Department has very limited / dated plan sets of the building.

Ms. Johnson asked how the current PD is not meeting needs. Police Chief Berube noted items including but not limited to:

- Lack of sight & sound separation for juveniles
- Lack of sally port: single central entrance used for detainees, animals, staff, and the public
- Sergeant Office was only added last year
- Parking lot ingress / egress deficiencies
- Evidence ventilation & storage deficiencies – staff complaints of odors
- Lack of armory
- Lack of evidence processing area
- Lack of ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Compliance
- Lack of a community training room with its own ingress / egress

Police Chief Berube felt that providing a community training room would significantly improve community relations.

Selectman Landau noted that the current fitness room (in the annex) only has workout equipment and does not have immediate access to bathrooms or water.

Selectman Landau noted that there are asbestos reports on file; asbestos has been discovered in the ceilings, window glazing and possibly floor tiles of the annex.

Mr. Gatchell asked the group their initial thoughts on community interest. Selectman Landau personally does not want to see a combined Police and Fire facility. Selectman Landau felt that, because there are already electrical, wells, septic, and other infrastructure on the current site, to remain on site could be a simple way to saving the Town ~\$1 million dollars. The current parcel is 13.41 acres.

Planning Coordinator Hadik felt that taxpayers will want to see the most cost-effective option; which would mean staying at 84 Chester Street (whether a renovation or new standalone

construction). Mr. Hadik noted that there are presently no other feasible sites for this project. Mr. Hadik felt there should be a driveway around the building for safety; and this could be part of an upgrade to all the Town Offices. Recreation Director Reishus felt that would fall more under the category of space needs for Town Offices; Planning Coordinator Hadik agreed but felt that considering parking for the entire building now could save money in the future.

Ms. Johnson explained that Harriman will do their best to provide an apples-to-apples analysis and they shy away from going beyond the scope of what they've been hired to do. Ms. Johnson did feel that including a community training room could be a big selling point for the Town. Recreation Director Reishus noted that the Town's only ADA-compliant community room at present is the MPR. Ms. Reishus explained that, technically, there is a winter parking ban on Chester Street, but due to lack of available parking, many facility users / event attendees are forced to park on the street. Ms. Johnson noted that her firm does their best not to obstruct the needs of those accessing any part of the building throughout the process.

Selectman Landau gave a rundown of how the current building came to be: the original brick portion was built in 1948; followed by the "4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> grade" (now the Police Department); followed by the annex, then the MPR, then the front additions (now the Town Clerk / BOS / Finance Offices). In 1997, an anonymous benefactor offered \$300K to renovate the building into Town Offices / Police Department. Forty years ago, Chester's population was around 1,400; it is now approximately 5,000.

Recreation Director Reishus noted that she had heard from Road Agent Oleson that the annex had renovation potential; Planning Coordinator Hadik had heard it was not worth keeping.

Selectman Landau wondered how to replace the other users' spaces if the annex is renovated for the PD. The Clothes Closet occupies 2 of the rooms; fitness classes are held in another, and the Boy Scouts storage area is in the old 6<sup>th</sup> grade wing. Planning Coordinator Hadik suggested swapping these other uses with the PD. Selectman Landau wondered if the Town Clerk / Tax Collector office could swap with the current PD; and make the TC/TC office into the PD community room.

Ms. Johnson asked the group their thoughts on the adequacy of the actual location of the PD; Police Chief Berube responded that he was neutral on that, but that the biggest problem is ingress/egress. Recreation Director Reishus noted that the MPR is rated for an occupancy load of 600; and there is definitely not parking for 600. Planning Coordinator Hadik added that at least a couple times per year, vehicles are parked on Chester Street ¼ mile in each direction. Ms. Reishus noted that it is also not ideal that annex program / facility users must walk across the PD parking lot to access the annex.

Police Chief Berube provided Mr. Gatchell and Ms. Johnson with a brief description of the current problem with Chester Academy traffic blocking emergency vehicles from entering / exiting Murphy Drive; he used this as a point to illustrate that the Town usually goes for the least expensive option.

Ms. Johnson noted that task one of the project would involve performing an existing facility evaluation and a site evaluation – both slated to happen in the first couple weeks of February. Copies of a floorplan of Town Offices / PD were made and distributed to the group; this came from an old plan set and information had been written on by the Building Department, including when each section of the building was added. If anyone in the group is in possession of additional floorplans or site plans, they should forward them to Ms. Johnson and Mr. Gatchell. Otherwise, GIS may be used to get approximate information. Next week, Recreation Director Reishus will

ask BOS AA Doda for any such information.

Mr. Gatchell explained that his team's initial meeting with Police Chief Berube will happen in mid-to late-February. From this, a first draft of the initial space needs document will be created.

The group agreed to meet again with Mr. Gatchell and Ms. Johnson at 9am on Tuesday, February 19<sup>th</sup>; and Selectman Landau will see about putting Mr. Gatchell on the BOS meeting agenda for Thursday, February 21<sup>st</sup> to provide a brief review the initial facility assessment and gap analysis. Between now and then, Mr. Gatchell and some of his team will be on site quite a bit.

It was agreed that although there are no plans to put anything on the warrant, Town Meeting will be a good opportunity to make an initial presentation to the community about the findings of the space needs study.

It was also agreed that it will be important to work through this process in a slow and steady manner; and even more important to keep the process going. The group and Mr. Gatchell and Ms. Johnson agree that it will be key to maintain momentum and ensure public participation is optimal. However, "information overload" should be avoided wherever possible.

Ms. Johnson felt it would be safe to estimate that her firm should have their space needs assessment completed by summer.

Selectman Landau added that, if at all possible, any future renovation or construction should be Colonial to keep with the feel of Chester; this would improve chances of approval.

#### **IV. Adjournment**

The next meeting of the Chester Police Department Space Needs Working Group is scheduled for Tuesday, February 19<sup>th</sup> at 9am.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:08am.

Immediately following the meeting, Police Chief Berube gave Mr. Gatchell and Ms. Johnson a tour of the Chester Police Department.

Respectfully Submitted,

Caroline Wilson  
Recording Secretary