

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Community Facilities Building Committee
June 15, 2022 at 7:00pm – Trumbull Town Hall Council Chambers

Present Members: Lori Hayes-O'Brien, Chairman
Dawn Cantafio, Vice Chairman
Ted Chase
Dean Fabrizio
Ron Foligno
Gail Ritacco
Mike Buswell – *Via Conference Call*

Absent Members: Dave Galla
Tony Silber

Also Present: Gia Mentillo, Committee Clerk – *Via Conference Call*
Trumbull Community Television
Pete Robertine
Michele Jakab, Director of Human Services
Cynthia Katske, Chief Administrative Officer
George Estrada, Director of Public Works
Tom Arcari, QA&M Architects Representative
Rocco Petitto, QA&M Architects Representative

Members of the Public: Kevin Shively, 66 Beardsley Parkway
Marshall Marcus, 91 Stonehouse Road
Richard White, 169 Church Hill Road
Kathryn Luedtke, 216 Church Hill Road
Marie Monks, 232 Church Hill Road
Michele Blaskey, 63 Flint Street
Elizabeth White, 169 Church Hill Road
Janet Kramka, 223 Church Hill Road
Mary Murdoch, 11 Hardy Lane
Frank Cioffi, 95 Evelyn Street
Jeffrey Pace, 213 Church Hill Road
Barbara Drummond, 183 Church Hill Road

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:04pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Hayes-O'Brien introduced Gia Mentillo as the new Committee clerk.

Public Comment:

Kevin Shively of 66 Beardsley Parkway stated his presence at the meeting to be on his own behalf as a resident rather than as a Town Council member. Mr. Shively voiced support for both the aquatics facility and senior center, which he felt should remain as one joint project, but stated opposition to moving forward with any project at this time due to continued economic uncertainty and financial difficulties.

He stated that any facility built at this time is likely to be significantly more expensive than that which was originally projected and, therefore, the entire project should be put on hold for the time being.

Marshall Marcus of 91 Stonehouse Road stated he was in attendance to represent himself as a resident rather than a member of the Economic and Community Development Commission. Mr. Marcus voiced agreement with Mr. Shively's comments, adding that the Town just saw its largest tax increases in quite some time. Mr. Marcus stated that he does not feel the Town needs a community center at this time, noting that the planned Trumbull Veterans and First Responder Center will provide the much needed meeting space required by Town staff and residents. He also informed that, because the project has been divided into two separate facilities, the project may no longer require approval by public vote as such approval is typically necessitated by a monetary threshold.

Richard White of 169 Church Hill Road introduced himself as representing himself as a resident rather than a member of the Land Acquisition Commission. Mr. White stated that the proposed location on Hardy Lane was identified by the Town's Natural Resource Inventory as needing to be protected from development, he questioned why an inventory that is meant to guide development, as stated in the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development, is not being used to do so. He added that the residents of Hardy Lane do not want this property developed nor do they want any other property lying amongst residential neighborhoods developed when there is park space available for the necessary facilities.

Kathryn Luedtke of 216 Church Hill Road, also representing Amy Okrepkie of 5802 Main Street, voiced her opposition to the project citing concerns for increased traffic in the area. She stated that the grading of the area already negatively impacts lines of sight on roadways and creates safety issues for traffic. Ms. Luedtke noted increased safety issues based on the fact that Trumbull EMS heavily utilizes Church Hill Road when responding to calls. She also stated a community center to be a want opposed to a community need, noting that schools should be the focus of current investments rather than new facilities.

Marie Monks of 232 Church Hill Road voiced agreement with the concerns raised by others before her. Ms. Monks stated that on April 14, 2022 she garnered a conservation assessment of her property from Chris Sullivan of Southwestern Conservation District in response to ponding on her property. The assessment determined, and USGS ecological surveys supported, that the waterway feeding into her property originates from the waterway behind the proposed Hardy Lane location. Ms. Monks questioned whether the Town conducted any formal watercourse assessments of the area to assess the impact the proposed project has on the watercourse area, particularly in regards to depth of soil penetration and impacts to water flow direction. She requested that, if not yet completed, the Town conduct such a study and share the results with both her and Southwestern Conservation District in order to determine how her property will be impacted.

Michele Blaskey of 63 Flint Street stated her primary opposition to the project as relating to traffic flow in the area, noting that the area, particularly Church Hill Road, is already entirely unsafe for pedestrians and elderly drivers. She questioned why a community center would be put in an area that is unsafe for residents to walk to and that would increase the safety issues on Church Hill Road.

Elizabeth White of 169 Church Hill Road stated concerns regarding the removal of large amounts of trees from the Pequonnock Valley area and the subsequent impact on the watercourses. Ms. White

referenced the Town Plan of Conservation and Development, which identifies the area in question as being the natural resource most critical to conserve in Trumbull and lists the following factors as having an immediate, negative, lasting impact on water quality: loss of protective buffers, filling of wetlands, disturbance of stream banks, and development along flood plains. She added that the Pequonnock River provides drinking water for a wide array of wildlife and a recreational area for residents to swim and fish. Ms. White stated that the Town claimed to have originally purchased the property in question as a means for protecting the area from development, noting that this shift in use will not only erode the land but also the community's faith in local government.

Janet Kramka of 223 Church Hill Road asked that Hardy Lane be removed from the list of locations to be considered for the proposed community center and that the Town utilize an existing building for their needs. While in support of having a senior center that meets the needs of residents, Ms. Kramka stated opposition to decimating a neighborhood or utilizing land meant for conservation in order to do so. She stated that, as a floriculturist on Church Hill Road regularly attending Trumbull farmers markets, many members of the community have voiced concerns to her regarding ongoing development and increased traffic to the area. Furthermore, Ms. Kramka cited other instances in Trumbull where the Town purchased a land that they stated to the public to be for explicit purpose but ultimately developed it for a different purpose, adding that continuing this practice on Hardy Lane will only add to the negative optics surrounding development.

Mary Murdoch of 11 Hardy Lane voiced her opposition to the project, noting that she supports the aforementioned comments from other residents in opposition. Ms. Murdoch stated that the proposed facility should be located in an existing building rather than result in further development in Town.

Frank Cioffi of 95 Evelyn Street proposed that the Town consider utilizing space in the Westfield Trumbull Mall for a community center. Mr. Cioffi stated that this approach would alleviate concerns surrounding new construction in the following ways: (1) removes need for new construction, (2) alleviates traffic issues by utilizing an area planned for heavy volumes of cars, (3) and the mall would provide the bathrooms, parking, and outdoor lighting in evenings. He added that this approach could be taken as a trial run as it allows the Town to remain flexible by renting rather than adding a fixed money line to the budget.

Jeffrey Pace of 213 Church Hill Road voiced his opposition to the project, citing increased traffic flow to the area as a primary concern of his and noting his agreement with other comments made.

Barbara Drummond, 183 Church Hill Road voiced opposition to the senior center being located as proposed on Hardy Lane, citing all the aforementioned reasons for opposition.

Chairman Hayes-O'Brien closed the public comment session, noting that the public is always welcome to submit their comments in writing to the Committee.

Acceptance of June 8, 2022 Joint Meeting Minutes

MOTION MADE (Cantafio), seconded (Ritacco) to approve the June 8, 2022 joint meeting minutes. The motion carried unanimously (7 – 0).

Discussion of Project:

The Chairman introduced Tom Arcari, noting that the plans presented by him were requested in advance of the meeting as part of the Committee's typical review process and the Committee's review of the plans is not indicative of a lack of attention to public comment.

Tom Arcari – QA&M Architects

As requested by the Committee, Tom Arcari of QA&M Architects shared a presentation providing an overview of the preliminary plans he prepared for the proposed community center at the Hardy Lane location in question. It was noted that the buildable area of the lot does not extend to the area identified as being a preserved wetlands corridor. Additionally, the parcel in question previously received soil fill, and the development of the area may provide an opportunity for better soil practices and mitigation of harmful factors. The addition of a community center to this area may also provide an opportunity to increase the traffic control of the area by providing an argument for additional traffic lights or other remediation efforts. Furthermore, Mr. Arcari reminded those in attendance of the process by which sight selection originally occurred by providing an overview of the original criteria, noting that utilizing existing office space was not taken into consideration.

Chairman Hayes-O'Brien asked how moving the facility closer to the street line, as proposed, would impact the visibility of the building for Hardy Lane residents and how much the building moved compared to earlier plans. Mr. Arcari informed that the facility will be roughly 25' closer to the street line and still sit approximately 25' below grade level, putting it out of view from the top of Hardy Lane but in view once reaching the crest of the street. The Chairman asked how many acres the facility would cover, and Mr. Arcari was unsure at the time but noted that the plans presented offered solely a preliminary look at the site and had not factored in appropriate parking numbers. Mr. Arcari stated he would need the use of the facility and its amenities to be further refined in order to identify the necessary number of parking spaces, adding that such information would also be needed to conduct a traffic study as such factors heavily influence traffic flow to and from the building. The Chairman asked for the square footage of the proposed gym and how it compared to that of the middle school. Mr. Arcari stated it to be roughly 2500 square feet, approximately half that of the middle school.

Chairman Hayes-O'Brien asked Michelle Jakabs whether she felt there was a need to include showers, lockers, or a changing area in the facility, to which Ms. Jakabs replied no.

Chairman Hayes-O'Brien stated the immediate needs of the Committee to be to determine the full extent of the amenities to be included in the community, then order a traffic study of the area. The Chairman asked what factors went into creating a storm shelter location and what the pros and cons would be to having the community center serve as a storm shelter to which Mr. Arcari replied there are a myriad of factors that apply and the biggest pro or con is whether the community needs that service.

Ms. Cantafio questioned at what point a soil assessment should be done, and Mr. Arcari stated it was not an immediate issue and could be handled at any point in the review process.

Rocco Petitto – QA&M Architects

There was no comment from Rocco Petitto.

George Estrada – Director of Public Works

George Estrada introduced himself and stated a need for the Committee to refine their expectations for the proposed space, in terms of defining the programming that will occur there, in order to provide clear direction to those responsible for designing the project. He stated that this will afford the Committee an opportunity to discuss the details of the project more thoroughly and order a traffic study for which such details are required, noting that he will collaborate with his staff to refine their expectations for the space as well.

Dmitri Paris – Superintendent of Parks & Recreation

Dmitri Paris was not present for the meeting.

Next Steps:

The Chairman asked the Committee if they wanted to move forward with ordering a traffic study for the project and, if so, at what time of the year should the study happen to allow for accurate accounting of schools related traffic in the surrounding area.

Ted Chase proposed that the Committee take a vote on whether or not to continue to consider Hardy Lane as a possible location for the community center prior to voting on whether to conduct the study. Ms. Ritaqcco stated she did not feel as though she had enough information to make that decision at this point, noting she would like to see a traffic study. Mr. Chase stated that the Committee could possibly prevent spending the money on a traffic study if we agree that this location simply doesn't work based on all the reason presented here.

Mr. Chase asked Mr. Arcari what more would need to be done regarding the Hardy Lane property in order to be caught up to the level of research done into other sites considered by the Committee to which Mr. Arcari stated none, adding that traffic and geological studies are typically reserved for later on in the development process.

Mr. Buswell asked whether a traffic study would factor in traffic from the surrounding schools in the immediate area, and Mr. Arcari noted that to be a factor of significant influence.

MOTION MADE (Chase), seconded (Buswell) to remove the Hardy Lane location from the consideration list for the proposed community center. The motion failed (3 – 4 Ritacco, Fabrizio, Hayes-O'Brien, Cantafio).

Mr. Foligno asked Mr. Arcari if he felt the area could handle a potential increase in traffic flow to which Mr. Arcari replied he is not a traffic engineer and that question is beyond his expertise.

Ms. Ritacco stated her appreciation to the ratio of green space to building space in Mr. Arcari's proposal and questioned how many pickle ball courts could fit in the gym as proposed. Mr. Arcari estimated six courts. Mr. Arcari also noted that the vast majority of municipal facilities he has worked on throughout the state are placed in residential neighborhoods.

Mr. Fabrizio asked whether there were any other potential access points to the proposed location. Mr. Arcari clarified there are no existing access way though there is physical space to do so, noting Hardy Lane would probably be reconfigured a bit to allow for proper entry and exit.

Mr. Foligno asked if a traffic study would result in the Town incurring additional costs which Mr. Arcari confirmed to be true stated the cost to be between \$5,000-\$7,000

New Business:

There was no new business.

Ajournment:

MOTION to adjourn made by Chairman Hayes-O'Brien. The motion carried unanimously. The June 15, 2022 Regular Meeting of the Trumbull Community Facilities Building Committee adjourned at 9:17pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Gia Mentillo, Committee Clerk