

Senior Center Building Committee Meeting Minutes
September 26, 2023

In Attendance: Duane Mosier, Rita Vail, John Matthews, Bobbi Grant, Carol Keeney, Gary Weiner, Mike Fedora, Don Collins, Becky Moriarty (ex-officio), John Flynn (ex-officio)

Meeting called to order by the Chair at 9:05AM

Minutes from September 11, 2023. Gary Weiner motion to approve. Rita seconded. All in favor.

Duane noted that a letter arrived from Catlin in the mail yesterday.

Duane discussed a handout from the Town Administrator that stated the original proposal from Catlin was acceptable without a price.

Also noted that the Selectmen needed to designate an evaluation committee that would bring forward the RFQs. John Flynn stated that the BOS received guidance from the town counsel regarding the RFQ process and the BOS stated that this group (Senior Center Building Committee) should be the group to bring the RFQs forward.

Duane had discussions with Ed Cenedella regarding the process as he has expertise in this area.

Catlin's letter included a dollar amount of \$75,000 for the three tasks in Phase 1.

Duane received a phone call from Chris Wante from edm on 9/21/2023. Duane stated that Chris was trying to get clarification on the request in the letter sent by this committee. Chris explained that the letter was received by edm on 9/20/2023. Duane explained to Chris that the committee needed a written response with any changes or explanations. Chris explained to Duane that he would send an email in addition to a postal mail letter because he was concerned that the postal mail letter would not arrive in time.

An email response to HSCBC was received via email from edm.

Rita noted that Catlin's letter is dated 9/19/2023 and edm is dated 9/25/2023.

Compliments to Gary for writing the RFQ and being so thorough.

Review of RFQ's and ratings

edm Studio:

Bobbi Grant: what does LEED stand for? Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. Certifying green buildings. Bobbi's concern under potential services needed and the topic of the well and chlorination of the well. Bobbi expressed concern if that was an ongoing service, and it was explained that chlorination is done to eliminate contaminants in the water. It is not ongoing.

Mike Fedora: Feels that all firms are qualified. Edm and Catlin have a lot more senior center experience. Mike does not have experience with architects but does have experience with Robert Hall who is a sub-contractor with Architectural Insights (AI).

Gary Weiner: edm: in their proposal they went overboard with what the request was and that was why the fee was so high. The well water review was preliminary to include in this stage of the proposal. They are extremely qualified but overloaded with subs. Gary feels that some of their Phase 1 details would generally be in phase 2. They can do the work, but Gary thinks they over submitted for what is needed at this point.

John Matthews: edm: used subcontractors and John wonders how much emphasis we would get as a small project. Sees some negatives to the subcontractors and vendors in the proposal. The firm is qualified.

Rita Vail: edm submission was harder to follow and it was repetitive. Catlin was very easy to follow and addressed things in order. Architectural Insights completed everything and rated themselves "advantageous" when it came to senior center projects. Rita liked that AI has experience with smaller jobs and they are local, and their cost was low. AI is highest on Rita's list.

Don Collins: Catlin and edm have the most experience with senior centers. Don doesn't feel that AI has the experience with senior centers.

Carol Keeney: no comments.

Duane Mosier: senior center experience goes to Catlin. Almost all the senior center sized buildings have been in the 13-15,000 sq ft range. Sq footage of centers are based on population. General comments about square footage of multipurpose rooms.

With edm and timing of the responses and their high dollar amount proposal in the start, Duane lists them as non-responsive and disregards them as players in the mix.

Catlin's response and letter came in on time and they are responsive players.

AI: the quantity of the local things that have been done, but they had the least amount of senior center work. Duane's first choice is AI.

John Flynn: has some worry with a low quote coming in and a company coming back increasing the price as the project moves forward.

Duane responded to John with some of his experiences in the field.

The current senior center building needs renovations. Duane would like to see the building renovated and then address the space issues.

Bobbi asked if he is looking to do two different things at two different times. Duane stated that he didn't have a response not knowing the town finances and what projects could be handled going forward over the next 3-5 years.

Becky shared her thoughts about edm. They were easy to work with during the feasibility study. Becky did not work with Catlin when the Hampden Senior Center was built. Edm was very responsive to the needs of the staff during the project. Becky talked about Doug and Ellen Gallow, design team with edm and Ellen's gerontology background and feels that having that background is very important. Becky is very much in favor of continuing to work with edm.

John Matthews: concerns with Catlin. Buying a name and there is an expense to that, and it may not be warranted. Some of the subcontractors that would be used are not all located in Hampden and Hampshire counties.

AI does not have the senior center experience, but to gain that experience they need to get senior center projects.

Catlin has grown within a niche, but there can be others out there depending on who subcontractors are.

If AI is selected, the committee would have to be more on top of things and would need oversight and that could add additional fees.

Gary has worked with both AI and Catlin in the past. Over 20 years since he last worked with Catlin. Catlin might be too big for what we are looking for. The size of the projects he is doing are much bigger than what we are looking for. They are not local. Gary rates them highly, but not as his top choice. AI does not have the experience and will learn on us. They are very responsive, and they are local. Gary is not comfortable selecting AI as the lead to help us through this project. AI does not have the expertise.

Gary is very disappointed in the edm proposal. He thought they understood where we were and would move forward with the 2020 feasibility study. Gary would choose edm because they know us and they have tremendous experience. Gary disagrees that they were unresponsive. Gary thinks they should still be included in the mix.

Mike: First choice is AI. This is not a huge project. This building does need renovations. They don't have the overhead that the other companies have. This building is very straightforward, and Mike thinks a smaller company would be the way to go.

Bobbi: Is it problematic that a firm is located outside the state? Bobbi noted that Catlin was involved with Wilbraham and Longmeadow. Bobbi is leaning towards Catlin as her pick.

Carol: speaks to her experience with Catlin and the original design specifically in the kitchen here in the current building. Carol and George Stone redesigned the kitchen. Catlin has the experience but just because he did the senior center it doesn't mean that his entire design was beneficial to older adults.

Don: thinks this project is unique. Modifying an existing building and adding to it. Feels that someone with experience should be on board. Catlin is the guru when it comes to senior centers. Would there be as much input from the principals. Edm has a unique experience in that they completed the feasibility study, so they have a head start there. AI doesn't have the experience and that is a concern of Don. Don is in favor of edm.

Carol: can someone explain how to choose between a firm with no experience and a firm without?
Rita explained that AI does have some senior center experience.

Carol: how difficult is the design of what we are proposing?

Gary pointed out that as much as it has to do with the building structure. The needs boil down to adding and needing space for older adults. The consultant that is chosen, Gary feels, needs to understand that need and needs to know the programs that will be going into these spaces. It goes back to the needs of older adults.

Carol expressed that handicap accessibility is across the generations now and not solely focused on older adults. Carol defers to those who have construction expertise as to whether it is important to hire someone with or without senior center expertise.

Rita agrees with Mike that what we are doing is not so complicated. Rita hated the initial feasibility that was completed by edm. Rita expressed her concern with the first design. Rita is negative against edm because of that. Rita likes the smallness of AI, not just that they are local. This project is not huge. We need space and storage. Storage does not relate to seniors.

John Matthews: John likes AI because they are local, they are the underdog, they do renovations, small additions, the negative to them is that they don't have a lot of senior center experience. John would probably go with edm because of their experience, and they have worked with the senior center previously. The first proposal was very high and was likely a misunderstanding. John thinks a face-to-face interaction is always better than a letter. John likes AI but would choose edm for the job. This project will not be renovation alone, but rather renovation and expansion all at the same time.

John Flynn: AI is the firm that was utilized for the Highway Department expansion. That project started at \$300,000 and went up to \$600,000 in the end. Larry Tuttle from AI was good to work with and the Highway Superintendent had good experience.

Bobbi: expansion and renovation are needed. Who of the three will listen to what the senior center needs are? Catlin has more senior center experience and might understand better where we are coming from.

Carol: asked John Flynn for clarification about the bidding process. John explained the process. Carol asked if the price would dictate who the bid is given to. John explained the process and that the approved number does not have to be the lowest. The town reserves the right to throw out all bids if they are not in the best interest of the town. Carol does not have a strong feeling towards one proposal versus another. Catlin was untouchable and is confused by the huge price difference with the edm quotes.

John Flynn: did not rate the proposals and was only providing insight into some history.

Duane: it takes a unique person to work on renovations.

Duane went around the table to confirm the current top choices of each committee member.

In favor of edm: Don, John M, Gary

In favor of Architectural Insights (AI): Mike, Rita, Duane

In favor of Catlin: Bobbi

In favor of edm & AI: Carol

Duane still considers edm to be nonresponsive. Struggled with the original feasibility study. Duane did not like the individual from the design team that was on ZOOM when we originally met with edm.

Duane was uncomfortable getting a phone call from edm. Duane supports AI and feels the project can be controlled using them.

John Matthews: addressed Duane's concerns about edm and the comment about their being nonresponsive. When selecting a large company, you need to make sure these large companies hear where the client is coming from. John thinks edm should be asked why they responded so late.

Duane talked about a chart he created looking at the projects that each designer worked on. Duane was very turned off by edm. Duane does not want to work with edm.

Gary is concerned about Duane's comment about not wanting to work with one certain firm and thinks it is a problem.

John Matthews stated that regardless of who is chosen it needs to be made very clear as to what the expectations are at the beginning of the project and as the project continues. Everyone needs to be held accountable.

Carol changed her vote to AI.

Duane received mail that was returned. It was originally mailed to a firm that did not respond to the RFQ.

Mike: should there be an interview process with each of the firms to ask more questions?
Is there a time constraint with doing that?

Gary: worries about the time constraint and going to town meeting with a dollar amount, but also said that a larger dollar amount can be put forward for the town meeting giving the committee enough time to bring in the firms for interviews.

John Flynn explained that the warrant article does not need to have the dollar amount, but rather the motion at the meeting will need to have the exact amount.

Bobbi: will defer to the expertise of the others on the committee.

John Matthews: The committee needs a number for the town meeting, we do not need to award a contract here.

Gary is concerned about deferring interviews until after the town meeting. If the board feels comfortable, we could recommend the highest amount of \$75K.

Don moved that \$75K be put forward for the town meeting warrant and then bring in the 2 architects selected by the committee for interviews. Gary seconded with a friendly amendment of \$60K.

Discussion. Gary discussed the Phases of the project moving forward and the timeline associated with each phase as well as the hope of having construction amounts for the spring town meeting. Gary hopes that interviews be done with 2 firms and completed in October.

Friendly amendment voted. John Matthews opposed. All others in favor.

Original motion with amendment voted. John Matthews opposed. All others in favor.

John Matthews discussed follow-up meetings with regards to interviews. John Matthews would prefer to interview the firms on separate dates.

Bobbi was not present at the walk through and asked what the feeling was from those that came to the walk through. Becky explained that there was no major group discussion, it was just a walk through with some points made throughout as to what the needs are.

Becky expressed that she will be writing a grant to the MCOA for SIG funding that could help to pay for some of the costs associated with this Phase 1 project in the amount of \$25,000 but will not have an answer until the end of the year.

Gary will write and mail letters to the firms requesting interviews for October 16th and will follow up with an email.

Rita asked if any constraints would be set as far as what the possible total amount of the project could be? Gary stated that at the beginning of the process it be stressed that input from the BOS would be needed about concerns and budget numbers as the project moves along.

There will be no meeting on October 10th.

October 16th at 11:00 AM. And hold interviews with two firms. 45-minute interviews. 11:00 and 12:00 interviews.

October 23rd at 11:00 AM

October 23rd advisory hearing at the town house.

Rita moved to adjourn. Don seconded. All in favor.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:09 AM

Respectfully submitted for the Secretary: Rebecca C. Moriarty, Executive Director (Ex-Officio)