

MINUTES of the National Guard Building Re-Use Commission
ZOOM ELECTRONIC MEETING
January 25, 2021 @ 3:45 p.m.

Committee Members present electronically
via Zoom:

Councilor David A. Witham, Chair
Councilor Matt Gerding
Councilor Richard R. Michaud

Staff Members present electronically
via Zoom:

City Manager Bob Belmore
Fire Chief George Kramlinger
City Clerk Jonathan Slaven

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Witham at 3:45 p.m.

As Chair of the Somersworth National Guard Building Re-Use Commission, I, Councilor David Witham find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting. All members of the Committee have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform. The public was asked to submit comments via email to jslaven@somersworth.com or bbelmore@somersworth.com by Monday, January 25, 2021 at 2:45 p.m.

****Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.***

CURRENT TIMELINE

City Manager Belmore stated that the initial letter from the National Guard informing the City of the planned decommissioning of the site was received on January 7th, 2021. He stated their intent is to vacate the site no later than June 30th, 2021.

INITIAL ACTIONS/CONSIDERATIONS

Councilor Witham asked if there would be any costs associated with the transfer of deed. Manager Belmore said he would follow up on that question and report back to the Committee. He also noted this may be an item for legal review. Manager Belmore stated he spoke to his National Guard contact, Deputy Adjutant General Warren Perry to inquire about a tour of the facility. The response from Perry was positive. Manager Belmore read the email he had sent earlier in the day to the committee regarding his request for the tour and for hazardous material information the Guard might have available. Belmore also stated he had made contact with SRPC (Strafford Regional Planning Commission) regarding Grant assistance to complete a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment.

SITE SECURITY

Councilor Witham stated that from his point of view, there are no glaring security issues. Manager Belmore stated he has not toured the facility, but it includes many fenced in areas. Chief Kramlinger further clarified that the only pedestrian entrance to the facility is through the main building and that the two other buildings on the site are secure by way of secured fencing.

NEXT STEPS

Councilor Witham agreed that a tour is a great next step. He suggested that Manager Belmore coordinate dates and times for a tour and perhaps limit the number of attendees to ensure proper social distancing. Councilor Witham asked what the best way to begin considerations on the use of the facility. Witham mentioned that the Manager should talk to PWD Bobinsky regarding any potential use of the vehicle maintenance on the site for highway use. Councilor Gerding also inquired if there was anything in the Capital Improvement Program to consider. Manager Belmore responded that his knee-jerk reaction is there doesn't seem to be anything in the CIP that fits with this facility, but he would like to confer with the department heads and bring their considerations back to the Committee. There was a brief discussion on the little league baseball fields adjacent to the Guard facility however on the property itself. Councilors Witham, Gerding, and Michaud each mentioned they have heard support from constituents for the building to become some sort of community center. Gerding also suggested we talk to the School Department about future use; in addition, he suggested looking at the intersection for any possible improvements. Manager Belmore stated the details of a proposed community center would dictate its possible creation. We would need to consider costs associated with demolition, construction, staffing, utilities, etc. Councilor Witham mentioned he heard support to request that the National Guard keep the Howitzer (military weapon) on site as a sort of historical memorial.

ADJOURN

Councilor Michaud made a motion to adjourn. Councilor Gerding seconded the motion, the motion passed 3-0 by roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 4:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan Slaven, City Clerk