

Greenwich Board of Education Minutes of the GHS Front Entry Committee Meeting

DATE: July 20, 2022

LOCATION: Virtual via Google Meet

TIME: 8:00 am

Committee Members Present:

Stephen Walko - Chairman

Maureen Bonanno-Secretary

Ashley Cole

Louis Contadino

Stephanie Cowie

Christina Downey (BOE)

Megan Galleta

Leslie Moriarty (BET)

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Craig Amundson (RTM)

Ralph Mayo (GHS Principal)

Lauren Rabin (Board of Selectmen)

Steven Swidler (BOE Staff)

Tom Bobkowski (BOE - Central Office)

Dan Watson (BOE- Central Office)

Will Schwartz (DPW)

Others Present:

David Stein (Silver Petrucelli)

Chris Cykley (CSG)

Not Present:

Jake Allen- Vice Chairman

Dennis Yeskey (P&Z)

- **Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order by Mr. Walko at 8:04 a.m.
- **Project Update:**
 - Mr. Walko opened the meeting with an update on the RFP's noting that RFP's went out for General Contractor and the Clerk.
 - Mr. Walko stated that the RFP process for the Clerk resulted in 4 qualified bids. Mr. Allen, Mr. Walko and Ms. Moriarty along with BOE Purchasing contacted all 4 bidders and interviewed and ranked them. He added that these were hourly submissions and the GC bids were not known yet.

- Mr. Walko continued that the bid for General Contractor was a more involved process, which included a mandatory review at the site attended by the bidding contractors along with Mr. Walko and Mr. Stein. He added that the contractors then submitted questions and the bids were opened yesterday, July 19th.
- Mr. Walko reminded the committee that the appropriation for the project is approximately \$3 million which includes the \$2.75MM in the 2nd year plus \$250K from the first year.
- Mr. Walko stated that we received 2 bids, even though 4 contractors were at the mandatory site meeting. Mr. Walko stated that both bids were significantly higher than the \$3MM, one bid close to \$4MM and the other slightly over \$4MM.
- Mr. Walko stated that for the process going forward, relative to this set of facts, we cannot independently value engineer or adjust the project and still use the bids that we have, so we would need to go out to bid again. He added that if we had the money to start and then value engineered, we could bring the cost down that way, but legally you cannot enter into a contract with an entity unless we had the money appropriated.
- Mr. Walko then laid out the options:
 - Go back to BOE and BOE would need to decide, in light of these bids, to seek additional appropriation. He added that we can still value engineer to bring the costs down but with the lowest bid at \$3.9M, with no contingency included (which should be around 10%), we are looking to add on conservatively an add'l \$400K, which would then need approval from the RTM and the BET. Mr. Walko noted that this would be a BOE decision.
 - Take steps to redesign elements to take costs down but we would still need to go forward to seek additional appropriation, and hopefully go to the RTM in September. Mr. Walko added that since there are limitations on the bids and we would need to see if the lowest bidder will extend the bid but we would not be shovel ready until the earliest end of September. Mr. Walko stated that one bidder indicated that this project would take 365 days and the other said 420 days. He added that this may include anticipated delays in getting materials.
 - Go back to BOE to change the Ed Specs. Mr. Walko noted that we are limited to what the Ed Specs are and by just looking at the way the Ed Specs were drafted, we could reduce the total volume of the vestibule and have a simple security entrance point. Mr. Walko noted that this would be a total redesign with all new approvals and would likely push the start of the project out to next spring. Mr. Walko added that if you are looking at the feasibility study which was similar to what was designed, this would be a completely different feel and look than the feasibility design outlined.
 - The BOE could also decide to not proceed forward with the project.
- Mr. Walko concluded that this decision is not really in our hands but we may need to look at redesigns or ways to reduce the cost, however, the bids do not break out costs and go into detail, so figuring out where to reduce costs is difficult.

- Mr. Stein then shared his thoughts on the RFP process. He noted that they hoped to have 5-7 bidders given that this is a straightforward project, but with the labor shortage and the busy market, there were only 2 bidders, both, in his opinion, viable and reputable firms who have done work in town and Silver Petrucelli has previously done work with them.
- Mr. Stein added that Silver Petrucelli based their detailed estimates on the budget established during the feasibility study. Mr. Stein stated that if you did a cost per square foot analysis, with a \$2.75MM budget for construction for the 2,000 square foot addition, the cost is about \$900 per per square foot but based on the 2 bids, one at \$3.91MM and the other at \$4.318MM (10% difference between the two), the cost per square foot for lowest bidder works out to almost \$1,500, which is higher than they have seen in a project like this. Mr. Stein believes that the duration of the project is also a factor and contractors are compensating for the time that they are waiting for materials and work is not being done.
- Mr. Stein was surprised that there were only 2 bidders, especially for an attractive project like this one, in the town of Greenwich, which has already been reviewed by the state.
- Mr. Stein added that the 2nd bidder offered a \$400K bid deduct for windows so may be some room for value engineering, however, Mr. Stein doesn't think there is one thing that gets it down to where we need to be.
- Mr. Stein stated that the challenge is whether we can move fast enough to counter any other unforeseen issues in the market and added he does not recommend going back to rebid and noted that any redesign would need to go back to state for approval.
- Mr. Stein stated that in general, there are a lot of situations that get the number to where we are, and at \$1,500 per square foot this project would likely not have been approved.
- Ms. Downey added that she is very disappointed and in terms of things coming back to the BOE, she put in a request for this project to be on next week's BOE meeting agenda and noted that BOE approval was needed for any scenario other than a redesign consistent with the Ed Specs.
- Mr. Walko asked the committee for input regarding the direction we should give to the BOE, either move forward with this per square foot price or redesign the project.
- Ms. Moriarty clarified that the bid documents specified that the responders hold bids for 90 days which could take us through the September RTM meeting if that's what is decided. Ms. Moriarty noted that we would need to be requesting an additional \$1.6 - \$1.7MM more since we already spent the \$250 A&E funds and we would need to include a 10% contingency on the bids that came in. Ms. Moriarty confirmed that the BOE would need to vote for the additional appropriation and then go to the BET and RTM. She noted that this recently happened with the Eastern Civic Center project.

- Ms. Cole stated that given the current environment, this is not surprising, however, she wants to keep the design given the amount of work that was put into the project. She asked Mr. Stein if it is possible to get the cost of \$1,500 per square foot down without redesigning the project and Mr. Stein responded that he doesn't think that it's possible and there are not enough minor adjustments to do to get the price down.
- Mr. Walko reiterated the need for contingency.
- Mr. Walko stated that given this is a one room addition, he is surprised by that amount. Mr. Walko stated that the 2 contractors are from reputable, local firms that do a lot of business in Greenwich, but he would have liked to have seen more bids.
- Mr. Contadino stated that we have designed more than a vestibule, it's the front entrance of the high school, the face of GHS and asked if there was a possibility to do a cost plus scenario. Mr. Walko noted that with town projects, you can only enter a contract for which you have the funding and what is allocated is what you can legally do, so even though this may work on the private side, it does not legally work on the public side.
- Ms. Rabin stated that the protracted town processes could have negatively affected this project and going forward on other projects, this should be taken into consideration.
- Ms. Galetta stated that given the macro view, and what is going on in the economy as well as other projects within the building at GHS, she believes that as a committee, regardless of the amount of work we have done, it would be expected of us to do our due diligence and get it right because she thinks people will think it is either a good spend or an inappropriate spend on the town's budget. She added that there are other facility needs at the school that should be addressed, such as lack of a/c throughout the building and believes the whole athletic wing should be knocked down due to mold issues. She believes if we spend \$4MM or ask for another \$1MM for a fancy, oversized, glass corridor, the town and taxpayers would be upset and we overspent on something not highly utilized. Ms. Galetta recommends that we scale down the project to the basics instead of spending an additional \$1MM, given the macro view and the economy.
- Ms. Bonanno expressed her concerns over timing if the project needs a total redesign and pointed out that the need for a secure entrance at GHS is long overdue, so whatever we can do to keep the project going in a timely manner would be her priority.
- In response to the comments, Mr. Walko stated that he does not believe that the vestibule is extravagant and noted that there is nothing that is custom, there is a very simple A/C system utilizing the existing chiller, it is extremely efficient relative to getting to the Administration wing and if anything is extra, it's the height, however, the extra height functions to hide the mechanicals. He reiterated that this is not an overly designed building.
- Ms. Cowie asked Mr. Stein if the cost will be exponential going forward. Ms. Cowie believes that this is not an extravagant project and was designed with

input from all relevant town parties, including the neighbors, P&Z, parents and students. She feels strongly that we should keep the current design and go back to the BOE because the high school deserves this entrance and we cannot push this off again. She added that this design also solved an hvac issue for the corridor.

- Mr. Amundsen expressed his shock over the price and asked Mr. Stein if there was any discussion with the 2 bidders as to why they are so high. He added that the A/C for the glass corridor and the extent of the landscaping were not part of the original Ed Specs and asked if those amounts should be broken out to show what was added on as a result of the requests from ARC and the community.
- Mr. Walko responded that there are very stringent guidelines on what you can speak about with the contractors. Mr. Walko will speak with BOE Purchasing to see if we can get more information on the bids. Mr. Walko added that the HVAC for the glass corridor is not part of the bid package and as for the landscaping, he does not have that information but it is likely the amount is not close to \$1MM.
- Ms. Galetta reiterated that, as a committee, it would be expected of us to take another look at this and be very responsible about tax payers' money. She understands that we spent a lot of time on this project but given the climate no one expected and the unforeseen in the next year, we should not just go back and ask for more money but think about the ultimate purpose of the space and just ask for what we need and not overdo it.
- Mr. Walko then asked Ms. Galetta where we would go to reduce the cost and Ms. Galetta suggested that the scale should be reduced because it could be perceived as overdone or overkill. Mr. Walko asked if the vestibule should encompass all of the glass doors and Ms. Galetta responded that she would like to hear about ways to scale it down and asked if there is a way to accomplish what we need with a smaller size and look into less expensive materials.
- Ms. Moriarty stated that it would be helpful if we can get information on the environment and how that impacted the cost. Ms. Moriarty suggested that it would be helpful to know how much is driven by the current construction environment vs. our design. She suggested that we may be in a bubble where people may be overreacting to inflation, labor shortages etc. She also thinks it would be helpful to be able to explain what the expensive parts of the building are and where we can provide information on what parameters we can change to get the cost down.
- Ms. Cole does not think that the design is extravagant and believes that the structure is very purposeful. She also agrees with Ms. Moriarty that it may be the environment that is adverse to building projects like this and that this building should not cost that much. She stated that she wants to stand by the existing design.
- Mr. Walko asked Mr. Cykley from a macro perspective, in context of the contract with Silver Petrucelli, if there is a way to seek a more robust estimate to help make decisions on how these bids came out to where they are. Mr. Cykley responded that we can go back to the bidders for a scope review to get more

details, but we would need to tell them we are significantly over budget and cannot award a contract since we don't have the funds.

- Mr. Cykley added that they can go back and do a full estimate, but going back to the 2 bidders would be more helpful.
- Mr. Walko stated that if we are looking at redesign but we don't know where the push points are, we don't know what is the driving force that gets the cost up. Mr. Walko stated that Mr. Allen and Mr. Contadino would be part of the scope review and asked if any other committee members would like to be part of that review and no other committee members asked to be involved.

- **Going Forward:**

- Mr. Walko will schedule the scope review with BOE Purchasing.
- Mr. Walko stated that at a minimum, we should do our due diligence to see what the driving factors are and even if we were to go forward with asking for more money we would need to sharpen our pencils and look at how to reduce the amount of the request.
- Mr. Walko stated that he will continue the conversation with Silver Petrucelli regarding the bids and Ms. Downey noted that whatever information we can get prior to next week's BOE, the better positioned we will be.
- Mr. Walko will report the results of the bid to the BOE along with any analysis we receive and will let them know that the committee is exploring all options but right now has not taken a position or a vote and he will give a balanced approach to the BOE .
- Mr. Walko noted that we will likely meet the week after the BOE meets.
- Mr. Cykley stated that he will have his estimator review the bids at a higher level.

- **Approvals of Outstanding Invoices:**

- Mr. Walko stated that there are 2 outstanding invoices to approve.

Motion was made by Leslie Moriarty and seconded by Christina Downey to approve invoice 22-0510 from Silver Petrucelli, dated 06/01/2022 in the amount of \$1,799.70. The motion was approved.

Mr. Allen was absent.

The Motion Passed 8-0-0

Motion was made by Leslie Moriarty and seconded by Christina Downey to approve invoice 22-0688 from Silver Petrucelli dated 07/01/22 in the amount of \$40,512.37 for the landscape architect design as a result of the P&Z discussions. The motion was approved. Mr. Allen was absent.

The Motion Passed 8-0-0

- **Discussion on Motion:**

- Ms. Downey asked about the money for the landscaping and asked if the funds were in separate buckets. Ms. Moriarty responded that we approved in March an \$34,700 in additional scope for landscaping so some is part and some is additional.

- **Approval of Minutes:**

Motion was made by Leslie Moriarty and seconded by Stephanie Cowie to approve the minutes of the June 18th, 2022 meeting. The motion was approved. Ms. Downey and Ms. Bonanno abstained. Mr. Allen was absent.

The Motion Passed 6-0-2

- **Next Meeting:**

- We will go before the BOE next week and then we will tentatively meet the week of August 1st, after the BOE meeting.

- **Adjourn:**

- The meeting was adjourned by Mr. Walko at 9:13 am.

Submitted by Maureen Bonanno on August 1st, 2022