

FIRE STATION BUILDING MINUTES

**May 27, 2026
Virtual Meeting**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Abby Hurlbut, Chief Don Stats, Mr. Todd Woekel, Mr. Nick Masse, Mr. Mark Hall, Mr. Mike Gilleberto, Mr. Joe Parisi, Mr. Tim Sutherland and Mr. David Rudloff.

OTHERS PRESENT: Select Board member Mr. Rich Walner, Mr. Michael Scarlata, Ms. Rita Mullin, Ms. Kathy Sumner, Mr. David Harlow, Mr. Kevin Macchi, Ms. Lisa Macchi, "AS" and "guest"

Meeting called to order at 5:02 P.M.

The committee began with a presentation from Select Board member Walner regarding articles 24, 25, 26 and 27 for the upcoming Town Meeting. Article 24 would be for the entire property of 97 Main Street, Article 25 would be for a portion of 97 Main Street, Article 26 would be to evaluate 84/86 Main Street and Article 27 would be to evaluate 73/75 Main Street.

Mr. Walner reviewed his presentation with the committee. He presented a historical perspective of 97 Main Street, the Town's previous studies on development on Main Street and the actions taken to date. Last year the Town submitted a bid to purchase 97 Main Street and was turned down by Stop n Shop (the owner of the property). Stop n Shop signed a P&S with a private buyer, but at the time of the meeting the sale had not closed. The Town had been in discussions with the private buyer to determine if portions of the land could be used for municipal purposes. The conversations with the buyer have discontinued. Mr. Walner presented the municipal building needs of the Town that included a West Side Fire Station, a Senior (or Intergenerational) Center and a Town Hall. Mr. Walner cited the repair needs of both the Senior Center and Town Hall buildings and also the MRI report data demonstrating the need for a West Side Fire Station. In conversation, members of the Fire Station building committee spoke on the importance that the committee focus on their mission, which is the needs of the Fire Department and the West Side Fire Station. Mr. Walner did feel that the other needs of the Town were interwoven when discussing 97 Main St.

Mr. Woekel spoke as the Town's Facilities Manager. He noted the efforts in recent years to improve facilities and the repairs that have been made. Many of the Town facilities are aging and will need significant updates in the next 5-10 years. He discussed the infrastructure already in place at 97 Main Street and felt the site would be beneficial to the community and would have opportunity for future expansion. He stated that the Town will need to make considerable investments in Town Buildings in the near future.

Mr. Sutherland inquired about the slide denoting that 46% of property taxes goes to the schools. He asked Mr. Walner to review the figures as he felt this % was misleading how it was presented.

Multiple committee members asked that the discussion return to the purview of the Fire Station Building committee. Mr. Walner continued his presentation and reviewed the West Side Fire Station options. He stated that given a cost comparison of HQ v substation that a substation would be more prudent. He cited the need for funds to rehab the current Fire Station on top of the need for a West Side station.

Mr. Sutherland asked if there were estimated acquisition costs for 84/86 Main or 73/75 Main. Ms. Hurlbut responded that some estimates have been provided by the Town Assessor. 86 Main had recently sold for higher than assessed value and that could be a factor when estimating acquisition costs.

Mr. Walner continued his presentation with some summary data on 97 Main Street. He also provided an overview of the eminent domain option.

Mr. Woekel spoke on the escalating construction costs over the past 5 years and the expectation that material costs will continue to increase.

Mr. Rudloff inquired about the costs to renovate the building currently located at 97 Main St. He stated different building code needs for a Fire Station and he felt it would be challenging to retrofit a Fire Station into that building. He encouraged consultation with Tecton on that question.

Mr. Masse noted that Ocean State Job Lot was on a one year lease and would be a short-term tenant. He also noted changes in the presentation since previous viewing at the Select Board meeting. Mr. Walner confirmed that revisions had been made.

Ms. Lisa Macchi (Adams St) asked what the committee's first choice was for a West Side Fire Station? Ms. Hurlbut provided the ranking of 84/86 Main St, then 73/75 Main St and lastly the portion of 97 Main St. The committee was not asked to evaluate the entirety of 97 Main. Ms. Macchi stated that she is opposed to eminent domain with an exception only for a West Side Fire Station. Ms. Hurlbut did state that the committee would not be determining if it would be a friendly sale vs eminent domain.

Mr. Sutherland asked about the current building on-site at 97 Main St and how much of it could be used for a Senior Center or Town Hall. Mr. Walner stated that there is 30,000 sq/ft currently unused in the building.

Ms. Rita Mullin stated that the Town has not done feasibility studies on any of the properties and everything to this point is just a "guess-timate". Ms. Hurlbut replied that the committee had performed test fits on a portion of 97 Main, 84/86 Main and 73/75 Main. The full parcel of 97 Main Street has not been a part of the Fire Station Building committee charge. Chief Stats stated that many of the property value numbers have come from the assessor's office and that with more time and additional data the committee hopes to go before October Town meeting to seek funding for the Fire Station.

Ms. Kathy Sumner (Swan Pond Rd) stated that she feels a West Side Fire Station is very important. She is in favor of eminent domain for 84/86 Main Street. She also stated that the Town will not support projects related to wastewater.

Mr. Gilleberto and Mr. Masse spoke on the updated articles 25, 26 and 27. The articles will now include funding of \$50,000 - \$100,000 to explore the properties and to evaluate site and building conditions. Funding for the purchase of any of these properties would be brought back to a later Town Meeting for a vote.

The votes on articles 24-27 will determine next steps. More discussion after Town Meeting.

ADJOURN

- A motion was made by Chief Stats, seconded by Mr. Hall, to adjourn at 6:27 P.M.
VOTE: UNANIMOUS.

Approved _____

Date _____