

September 11, 2012

A Special Meeting of Town Council was held on the above date at The Church of the Holy Cross, 2520 Middle Street at 6:00 p.m., all requirements of the Freedom of Information Act having been satisfied:

Present were: Carl Smith, Mayor
Mike Perkis, Mayor Pro Tem
Hartley Cooper, Councilwoman
Jerry Kaynard, Councilman
Madeleine McGee, Councilwoman
Pat O'Neil, Councilman
Mary Jane Watson, Councilwoman

Mayor Smith called the meeting to order and stated the public and press were duly notified according to state law. There were approximately 63 citizens in the audience.

Mayor Smith welcomed all, and expressed his appreciation to the Very Reverend John Burwell and staff for the use of the Great Room at the church, as well as Town Hall staff. He recognized the day as Patriot's Day, and asked for a moment of silence to remember those of the tragedy on September 11, 2001, as well as those on the Charleston airline flight on September 11, 1974 which crashed in Charlotte, and many friends and family onboard were killed. He then gave an overview of Town Hall and the reason a new Town Hall was needed; and stated the purpose of the meeting was for a presentation of the space needs study and options for a permanent Town Hall. Mayor Smith then gave the floor to Councilman O'Neil.

Councilman O'Neil gave a brief overview of the process of hiring Creech and Associates for the space/facility needs study. Town Administrator Andy Benke followed with an overview of the history of the town halls over the years. Councilman O'Neil then introduced David Creech and Brent Green of Creech and Associates.

Mr. Creech and Mr. Green gave an overview of the space needs study. The Town Hall, including the Police Department, needs about 9,500 square feet. They proceeded with three scenarios and probable costs for a permanent Town Hall: the old existing Town Hall at 1610 Middle Street at \$2,771,381; new construction of Town Hall at four alternative sites at \$2,867,063; and the historical structure at 1714 Middle at \$2,455,158. Scenarios one and two do not take into account the value of the Town-owned property; and Scenario three probable cost includes the sale of town property at 1610 and adjacent parking lot, as well as the purchase of 1714 Middle. Mr. Creech then answered questions about his presentation from the audience.

Councilman O'Neil introduced Lisa Darrow, assistant to the Town Administrator, to briefly present opinions received from employees regarding a permanent Town Hall.

Ms. Darrow presented a staff survey summarizing the frequency of interaction between departments and also the public, the elements important for a new Town Hall, and which of the scenarios the employees preferred. Out of the 29 employees responding, the two leading factors most important to employees for a permanent Town Hall were (1) employee working conditions, and (2) facilities meeting all building codes. The overwhelming choice for a new permanent Town Hall was new construction near 2050 Middle Street.

Councilman O'Neil opened the floor for comments from the citizens.

Rusty Bennett , 3124 Marshall, stated he preferred the new construction alternative. There are too many issues when renovating older buildings, although 1714 Middle is a beautiful building. He would like the mound to be considered as a new construction alternative, as it is an ideal location.

Anne Kilpatrick, 1718 Middle, stated as the next door neighbor to the 1714 Middle Street option, she is in favor of 1714 Middle as the new Town Hall. The Police Department should be placed with the Fire Department as a Public Safety Building. She would rather have 1714 Middle serve as the administrative offices of the town, be a public museum, be used for community meetings, and possibly a senior daycare center.

Tim Reese, 305 Station 20, stated he recommended new construction alternative four located behind the fire house. His biggest concern is having a compliant building that will last 50-100 years. He stated later in the meeting that while he does not support 1714 Middle as a Town Hall, Council should look to acquire it as a community center if it is not used as Town Hall.

Kaye Smith, 1019 Middle, asked how the new construction scenarios in alternatives two and three affect the park green space. Mr. Creech explained that in alternatives two and three parking was removed from in front of the retaining wall at the Fire Station and the road was moved over, so only a small strip of green space was needed for the building, and the bandstand could stay in its current location.

Keith Williams, 956-A Middle, stated the Town Hall and Police Department should be in the center of Town with the Fire Department, and the site of the current post office may be an opportunity to explore as the post office is reducing its time and services. A new building could be built on the site, and perhaps incorporate postal services into the building. He also stated later in the meeting that if a new Town Hall is near the park, only parking lot space should be lost; not green space.

Susan Middaugh, 2420 Raven, stated since 1970 she and her husband have evacuated the island four times for storms, and that does not count the many times they were ready and on standby to leave. She continued that homeowners have a lot to get ready for a storm, and it now takes much time and effort for all staff to prepare Town Hall for a storm.

John Roitzsch, 1602 Poe, stated this is an emotional factor that is why he likes the old gym building. It is important for everyone to consider all options.

Rhonda Sanders, 1411 Thompson, stated she was open to any alternative except the mound location.

Mark Howard, 1820 Central, stated Council has a fiduciary responsibility to the history of the island and its historic structures. During a hurricane, the history of the island could be carried out on the laptop and/or data stored off-site.

Roy Williams, 2513 I'on, stated with all the talk about mold, the old Charleston houses downtown have been through hurricanes through the years and had mold and now they are probably worth two million dollars. He added that 1714 Middle Street is of civic prominence. The Army built it, and it is a very stable building.

Karen Coste, 322 Station 19, made the suggestion that the residents should have the opportunity to vote where they want it and the majority should rule. Councilman O'Neil responded that a resident survey will be posted on the website tomorrow, along with a copy of Creech and Associates' presentation.

Everett Presson, 1718 Otis Pickett Ct. stated that he lives behind the gym of 1714 Middle Street where they are considering parking for the building and he does not want cars there. He is not opposed to the Town Hall at the town center. The most important thing is to do what is best for the Town – a safe building that will last 50-100 years. The 1714 Middle structure is mostly at grade and below grade, and the ongoing costs would be a lot, probably \$75-100,000 just to paint it, as an example.

Eddie Fava, 2424 Myrtle, stated from an urban planning standpoint it makes sense to have a new Town Hall in the town center, but not on the mound. The structures at 1610 and 1714 should remain residential.

Wayne Stelljes, 3104 I'on, stated that 1714 Middle is a significant value but it is not a vital option as Town Hall. 1610 Middle it appears does not have as much sentimental value. Town Hall should be a new building with minimal intrusion of green space.

Hannah Dodson, 1462 Thompson, requested clarification concerning the strip of land taken from the park that still allows the bandstand to remain where it is on alternative four. Mr. Creech replied that it is about 15 feet from the edge of the building to the bandstand.

Councilman O'Neil thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and for their participation. He also thanked Mr. Creech and Mr. Green for their presentation (applause).

Mayor Smith thanked Hal Rose, Facilities Manager at the church, for coordinating and taping the meeting. He reminded citizens that there were resident survey forms at the back of the church and the survey will be on the Town website tomorrow.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Miller