DEPT./BOARD: Capital Budget Committee

DATE: Jan. 21, 2020

TIME: 6:30 P.M.

PLACE: Town Hall Annex Room B

AGENDA

1. Review of Museum “lift” project for Handicap access to the Historical Museum

2. Citizens time
DEPT./BOARD: Capital Budget Committee

DATE: January 21, 2020

TIME: 6:30 PM to 7:30 PM

PLACE: Burlington Town Hall Annex, Room B

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Ernest Zabolotny (Chair), Gary Kasky, Gary Mercier, Myrna A. Saltman, Adam Senesi (by phone)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Patrick Moreno, and Salvana Shakib

OTHERS PRESENT: Peter Coppola (Historical Commission), and John Sanchez (DPW Director)

MATERIALS USED: Photocopies of an aerial view and a ground-level rear view of the Burlington Historical Museum, and two sketches of potential accessible ramp designs

Mr. Zabolotny opened the meeting at 6:30 PM, after a phone connection was made to Mr. Senesi. Chair Zabolotny noted that Mr. Senesi was able to participate and vote even though he was not physically present at the meeting. He asked Mr. Sanchez to update the Committee.

Mr. Sanchez noted that a meeting had been held on this issue in August, 2019. He noted that options had been discussed for a ramp in the front of the Historical Museum to make it universally accessible, and compliant with the American Disabilities Act (ADA). Director Sanchez noted that the proposed design was a ramp with a landing and a turn around the corner. He said that further investigation determined this design was infeasible, due to the location of subsurface utility lines, and that the grades were too steep for this configuration. He said the combination of issues would require a larger, U-shaped ramp that would encompass much of the front yard.

Mr. Mercier questioned why this issue was being brought forth now? Presumably, the building has had accessibility issues before.

Mr. Coppola responded that there were several factors that have brought the accessibility to a head, the primary being ADA compliance. He also noted the building was on the National Register of Historic Places, which is overseen by the US Park Service, who had also strongly urged the Historical Commission as custodians of the building to address the issue.
Mr. Sanchez noted that his Department had taken the lead on finding potential solutions, and that several had been explored, including a rear ramp at approximately $25,000, an outdoor unenclosed lift at $30,000 and an enclosed lift which was about $120,000. He noted the need for public bidding, prevailing wage and use of a design architect all added to the final project cost. He said that the project, regardless of the final configuration, would also need local permits, including one or more Variances. Mr. Sanchez said his Department had applied for grant funds to cover the cost but had just received word that the grant application was not successful.

Mr. Coppola noted that another factor bringing the accessibility issue to the forefront was a disabled student who would be otherwise unable to access the building.

Mr. Sanchez also noted that he would coordinate with the local Building Inspector to apply for local ADA monies.

Ms. Adams noted that the Building Inspector may be able to utilize the Reasonable Accommodations doctrine to reduce the permitting burden.

Mr. Zabolotny, Chair, encouraged Mr. Sanchez and Mr. Coppola to work together, and re-apply for grants in the Spring, particularly to Mass Historical, as the building was on the National Register. He also noted that several possible locations for the ramp had been discussed and suggested that a rear access was preferable from a community character standpoint.

Ms. Saltman asked Mr. Coppola for an estimate of the museum attendance.

Mr. Coppola said the museum is open on the first Saturday of the month, for nine months of the year. He also said the third-grade classes make field trips each year to the facility, and it is open by request to groups for special events.

Ms. Saltman asked if the front steps could be redone, and if this project could include a ramp?

Mr. Coppola noted Ms. Saltman was correct, the front steps needed to be redone as the kick height was too low, posing a possible trip hazard. Unfortunately, he said the ADA requirements for a ramp would require a gentler slope than could be provided with an integral ramp in the stairs.

Chair Zabolotny asked Mr. Senesi if he had any questions.

Mr. Senesi asked what would happen in the hypothetical situation that an accessibility modification was not done?
Mr. Sanchez and Mr. Coppola said that ultimately, the building would have to close. Given that it was an ADA compliance issue, the Town could be open to a formal ADA compliant. Mr. Coppola noted that the Historical Commission was also looking at redoing the front landscaping, to reduce the steep grades.

Ms. Saltman asked if the condominium complex to the rear had been consulted regarding a rear entry ramp or lift?

DPW Director Sanchez said not formally, but if the Warrant Item was approved, that would begin the hearing process for the necessary local approvals. He noted this would be a public process, involving notices to abutters. Mr. Sanchez noted that the DPW would pursue other funding avenues, and if those were successful, the final cost to the Town would be less than the requested “up to $120,000” as described in the Warrant. Ms. Saltman asked if a temporary ramp or lift could be used?

Mr. Coppola said this would only be a temporary solution, and that a permanent fix was needed, which would resolve the issue.

Mr. Senesi said he was not enthusiastic by the idea of voting for a $120,000 expenditure, although as a parent of a disabled child, he instinctively understood the reasons, and was in support of the proposal from that perspective. He also noted that the Town has a strong sense of inclusion, and that this was a “public good.” For these reasons, he suggested that if the Committee was inclined to vote on the matter, he would support it.

Mr. Mercier said he agreed with Mr. Senesi.

Ms. Saltman asked Mr. Coppola if the lift would solve the accessibility issues?

Mr. Coppola said that additional minor interior modifications would be needed, such as removing thresholds between rooms, but that these modifications could be done by Town staff.

Mr. Zabolotny, with concurrence of others, recommended that Mr. Coppola provide a sketch of the proposed lift that could be shown to the Town Meeting, to show its mass, its proposed location, and how it would be integrated into the rest of the building.

Mr. Coppola suggested the location would be to the rear, and side, and the lift would be incorporated into the building’s fabric, being made to look like a tall bulkhead entrance, similar to one already on the rear façade. He also said the Historical Commission was committed to apply to Mass Historical and other organizations as could be found for grants to defray the cost of the accessibility solution.

Ms. Saltman and Mr. Senesi said the cost seems high, but acknowledged the contributing factors, such as prevailing wage and public bidding requirements.
Mr. Zabolotny called for a vote, noting again that Mr. Senesi would be voting on the matter.

Mr. Senesi moved that the Committee endorse Warrant Article #12 as printed in the January 27, 2020 Warrant, specifically, to see if Burlington will transfer from available funds $120,000 for the purpose of disabled accessibility improvements to the Historical Museum, or to act in any other manner in relation thereto. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kasky. The Committee voted Zabolotny, Kasky, Mercier, and Senesi in favor, with Saltman opposed. Motion approved 4-1.

Adjourn
Mr. Zabolotny asked for any public or other comment, and if there were any further matters to come before the Committee? Hearing none, he asked for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Mercier moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Kasky seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Adjourned at 7:30 PM.

[Signature]

Minutes Approved, Ernest Zabolotny, Chair

Date