CITY OF BURTON
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
JULY 30, 2001, 7:00 P.M., COUNCIL CHAMBERS

THE SPECIAL MEETING IS CALLED TO ORDER BY COUNCIL PRESIDENT BOB CENTILLI AT 7:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Centilli, Bement, Tinnin, Cross, Brawner, Wells, Martinbianco

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Fire Chief, D. Halstead, J. Adams, Clerk's Office

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING: DELIBERATION AND POSSIBLE CONSIDERATION REGARDING THE PURCHASE OF LAND FOR FIRE STATION #2.

PRESENTATION:

Chief Halstead said the Council should have before them a copy of the purchase agreement. He spoke with the Mayor and City Attorney who authorized him to sign it. The building next door to Fire Station #2 has long been remembered as the Calvaryman Book Store and has been for sale for some period of time now. At a past Council meeting I spoke regarding possible acquisition of this land and the Council indicated to look into it. By the time I spoke to the seller, the land was already sold. In the meantime, the gentleman who put in a bid to purchase it found out he had cancer and because of that, he could not get funding and the deal fell through. My being second in line, the seller did get in touch with me. I had an appraisal done on the property which was appraised for $85,000, and that is what I offered for the property. Chief Halstead stated further, Station #2 is the oldest fire station in the City of Burton. At the present time, on one side of the station we cannot get the newer more modern rigs into the station fire apparatus because of the height of the doors. All of the old fire trucks use to be quite a bit shorter. The station is in poor repair with roof, electrical and plumbing problems. I think to have this property in advance and be prepared for the time when we might put up a new fire station, would be a wise idea. The property would give us a straight line down the property line on the north side. It would allow us to move the station over and have drive-thru bays with the fire station, rather than coming in and making a corner to get to them. Chief Halstead indicated his offer was accepted of the appraisal price of $85,000.

Chief Halstead continued his presentation, and stated he spoke with personnel from Hansen Ambulance regarding possibly leasing that building till such time we are ready to build. They have a base and residential home next to the Bentley Florist shop. We have had some complaints at Council meetings about the ambulances pulling out and sirens disturbing the neighbors. It would be common place for a vehicle with lights and sirens coming from that part of town, there are no residents across the street so it would not disturb anybody. It is an ideal location, a small piece of property with plenty of room to park their personal vehicles and ambulances. The building would be adequate quarters for an ambulance corporation.

Mr. Centilli inquired regarding the property being priced out at $95,000.

Chief Halstead said that was the price being asked on it.

Mr. Centilli asked what kind of price could they obtain for a lease on that building.

Chief Halstead indicated he has not investigated it.

Mr. Centilli inquired concerning the purpose of expanding Fire Station #2.

Chief Halstead said he could rebuild at that same location but it would not give the adequate room substantial enough with the growth of the City. To build a station today large enough to support a full time fire department, we need sleeping areas and hygiene cleaning areas. The training facility at Station #2 is on the second floor. Now, they try to build everything on one floor so you do not have stairs and the liability of dealing with a second floor. Consequently, if we keep everything on the first floor, we would have to build wider then taller. That is the reason I believe we need to look at this property and maybe the house behind it if they decide to sell.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:

Warren Nimcheski, 2429 N. Genesee Rd., Burton, MI, stated as a matter of record, he is a fireman. He has spent a lot of hours training upstairs at Station #2. It was a good training room but it is not handicap accessible. At times we have had someone with a sprained ankle, or someone hurt at a fire on crutches and they could not get upstairs. He believes we also need to think about buying the house behind the park because people that use the park and station area for parking, could park behind there off of that street, and it would not be so dangerous coming off of Lapeer Rd. Mr. Nimcheski said he is in favor of purchasing this property and feels it would compliment the Station #2 site. You need to look down the road, $85,000 seems like a lot, but I don’t think it is if you think what might happen down the road five or ten years from now.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

Mrs. Tinnin inquired regarding a copy of the appraisal and if Certified Appraisals did the appraisal.

Chief Halstead said Steve Perez was going to provide copies of the appraisal. It was indicated in the appraisal that it was difficult to show comparables because there were no places of the size of the lot with that type of building to compare. Chief Halstead indicated Certified Appraisals did the appraisal.

Mr. Centilli asked how much was the cost of the appraisal.

Chief Halstead replied the cost was $1,500.

Mrs. Tinnin asked if the seller normally pays for the appraisal.

Chief Halstead said the City wanted to make sure they were on solid ground in order to make an offer. He obtained the appraisal.

Mrs. Tinnin asked if he has spoke to the homeowner on Martha St. to see if they would be interested in selling.

Chief Halstead responded that he hadn’t.

Mr. Brawner asked if the building of the Bible Store is structurally sound as far as plumbing and heating for possible leasing.

Chief Halstead indicated that it looks sound to him. If the plan does not work, we can raise the building, cement it and we do not have to pay utilities. If someone can use the building and we can maintain it, it may be a good idea to lease it.

Mr. Brawner expressed that if this passed, the Chief would probably make a concerted effort to work with Hansen Ambulance.

Mrs. Tinnin asked who called the special council meeting, as it has to be the Mayor and two Council members.

Chief Halstead said to his knowledge the Mayor called the meeting.

Mrs. Tinnin said it is nice to have extra property if you know that you are going to build. We have not heard anything from the administration as to what their intentions are as far as building a new fire station, what the timetable is, and how they intend to finance the new fire station. We do not have a plan that Council has been presented with.

Mr. Martinbianco said he praises Chief Halstead's comments in the newspaper and wants to compliment him on his posture with relationship to the mutual aid pack, and impact on the City of Flint. They are going through some unfortunate times, and I do feel bad for them, but their situation did not evolve over night. It has happened over a period of years. If they haven't been apprised of it, they certainly should have been with the exodus of General Motors and that tax base. Mr. Martinbianco stated further, his contact with their government operations chairman has not materialized yet, but he plans on speaking with him on that very issue.

Mr. Martinbianco stated we do not have a comprehensive plan on the replacement of the structure. He asked how old is Station #2.

Mr. Halstead said he believes the old side was in the 1940's.

Mr. Nimcheski said the new side was built in 1972 when Burton became a City, to house the road graders.

Mr. Martibianco spoke concerning the growth to the south of the City, relocation of a station, new tax roll and tax expenditure, leasing the property and rent costs.

Chief Halstead said there were discussions at administrative staff meetings of possible locations for a fire station. Property was also mentioned on Belsay Rd. across the street from the VFW. Mr. Cross spoke about 1 ½ to 2 years ago, of needing an addition to City Hall. When that was mentioned, and we looked at the basic economy and money we got back from the State. It was mentioned to me that City Hall was first, DPW was second and I was third in line for a fire station. Due to the age of the fire station, I started looking around and spoke to the firefighters of possibly moving the fire station down in front of the VFW hall. One of the things I ran into was the fact that all the guys at that station were pretty much the neighborhood kids. Station #2 is like a second home to them. It was not practical in even thinking of moving the station. It left me with a very small area of property to think about in order to expand or build this fire station. Chief Halstead stated further, Station #3 being where it is at and the railroad tracks, could put us in quite a bit of jeopardy if we located it further south.

Chief Halstead said he had discussion with Grand Blanc to see if they would be willing to go in together for a fire station on Maple Rd. to cover the corner of Maple and Vassar Rd. With all the building going on down there, the average construction area when you have a subdivision, you usually do not get your first fires of major consequence till at least 6 years after they are built. That is when you start having little problems. It will give us time to possibly get a new fire station.

Mr. Martinbianco said we spoke about the potential of General Motors to deed over property that would impact Fire Station #3. I know you had talked about and negotiated within that agreement, a potential for relocating Station #3 on a parcel over there. If you were to have your choice, which would come first, the renovation of Station #2 or relocation of Station #3, knowing we may not have bonding capability to do both.

Chief Halstead replied Station #2 because of the age and condition. Station #3 in spite of the fact it is cramped, is very functional and the building is fairly sound. The only way I would be forced to go with Station #3 first, would be if the demographics changed. If we have a large building boom in the Station #3 area, I would have 6 years after they started this before we would have firefighting problems. Station #2 being centrally located, if I built this station, one of the things I would incorporate into it would be a training facility that would be devoted to the Fire Department, and also a neighborhood meeting place, such as the neighborhood watch groups.

Mr. Martinbianco said he really has no problem with it, having been through the purchase of commercial grade property in a highly traffic area like that. With though, the understanding Station #2 is staying where it is at, which has been expressed by the Chief. I am neutral as to renting or utilizing it within our own devices.   Mr. Martinbianco stated he will oppose the General Fund Contingency to fund this. He is going to make an amendment to take that from General Fund instead of Contingency, City Hall and Grounds (City Hall Expansion).

Mr. Cross asked what happens if Hansen does not want to lease this building, will the building sit and come off the tax rolls.

Chief Halstead responded that it would probably come off the tax rolls anyway. He would have to sit down at that point, and discuss with the Assessor, Mayor, and anyone else that is knowledgeable about it, what would be the most practical method of dealing with it. Whether it would be to look for another renter, keep the building open and maintained, or whether it would be wiser to raise the building, put a parking lot there and just let it be and that way you are not paying maintenance on it. Ultimately, we are going to raise the building to build the new fire station.

Mr. Martinbianco commented that the building across the street is empty and also to the west, the former tanning spa.

Mr. Cross asked if Hansen has a lease with the building they are using now.

Chief Halstead said he believes they are leasing or renting. He has not spoke to Mr. Hansen, only a couple of his employees and asked their opinions. I was not in a position to bargain with Mr. Hansen not knowing the outcome of this particular meeting.

Mr. Cross asked the Chief that when he speaks to Hansen, to make it clear that between the Bible Book Store and Scotti's Coney Island, is an open alley. We do not want to have the same problems as in the past with blocking an alley.

Mr. Wells said he appreciates the Chief covering his bases. I don't think we can ever go wrong buying property. Whether in the future we decide to build a fire station there or not, buying that property will only enhance its value if we do decide to move and go somewhere else with it. As far as taking that property off of the tax rolls, I am more concerned with the hundreds of thousands of dollars in tax revenue we turned down the other night, rather than the revenues we would make off of a $85,000 piece of property. Mr. Wells stated further, as far as amending the budget, it is only a month old and we pounded long and hard to get that budget in place. He does not see any point in cutting into proposals that were already made and agreed upon.

Mr. Cross inquired as to why this wasn't presented to us during the budget time.

Chief Halstead said he began the whole process a long time ago, it just didn't work out that way. He would have been more than happy to presented this at budget time.

Mr. Cross asked why this did not go through committee first which is normal procedure.

Mr. Halstead said he was told this purchase had to be approved by Council. I went to the Mayor and asked if this was a good agreement. He looked at it and authorized me to sign it. I do not have a problem going anywhere to do the right process, I was told to bring it here.

Mr. Cross said in reference to Mr. Wells' earlier comments, we did not have a loss the other night, it is still open. I believe the gentleman will be back with another proposal that possibly could be a good compromise for the area. I don't look at it as a loss, I look at it as good Council action.

Mr. Bement said with the budget that was approved, and there isn't a change in anything, is there $85,000 to come out of somewhere to buy this property.

Mr. Cross said we have a surplus of 1.7 million in General Fund. Tom is proposing to take it out of City Hall Expansion.

Mr. Bement said he is opposed to doing that, and I know Tom has his good reasons for doing it. If it is something Council feels should be approved, I would be in favor of it and take the money out of the surplus and go from there.

Mr. Martinbianco said he respects Mr. Bement's opinion. I had originally intended on amending that City Hall Expansion line item down to $150,000 in my original set of amendments. We probably will not spend any of that $180,000 in fiscal year 2002. Mr. Hugh did initial architectural renderings early on at a cost of less than $5,000. If the $180,000 is not spent in this fiscal year, it would maybe roll over into next year, but it would go from the General Fund City Hall & Grounds into the Capital Improvements budget anyway. I think it is a prudent thing to do, we can always re-establish the City Hall & Grounds.

Mr. Centilli said if we don't purchase the property adjacent to the fire station, which is limited for expansion, and it doesn't sell, we are going to be in the same problem as Mr. Nimcheski stated at fire Station #3. If we did not purchase the property and it came time for expansion , we would have to relocate. Mr. Centilli expressed further, we will have to expand that station sooner or later, and as old as it is, I am in favor of it.

Mr. Halstead said he hopes to stay here as long as you will keep me, I like what I do and being Chief of the Burton Fire Department, and I am very proud of it. If something happens and I am gone, I don't know what the next person will do. I want to lay the ground work so that whoever takes over does not have a difficult time. If they want to build a new fire station, they do not have to go out and find property.

Mr. Centilli said he did check with the Assessor and he thinks it is a fair price for that building.

Mr. Martinbianco stated in reference to Item 2., he would like to offer an amendment to change the General Fund Contingency to General Fund City Hall & Grounds line item (City Hall Expansion) in the amount of $85,000.

Mr. Brawner clarified with Mr. Martinbianco that he is suggesting to take $85,000 out of this line item and drop it down to $95,000. Your assumption is very little is going to be spent this year.

Mr. Martinbianco responded, you are only talking about preliminary architecture prints.

Mr. Brawner continued for clarification, and that the balance of this money probably at the end of the next fiscal year will go into Capital Improvement.

Mr. Martinbianco replied yes, under the City Hall Expansion line item. It would take a five vote majority to move it out of that. It would take five votes to change it from anything other than City Hall Expansion possibilities.

Mr. Cross asked Mr. Martinbianco for clarification that he is saying to take it out of the City Hall Fund, but in next year's budget take it back out of General Fund to re-supply the City Hall Expansion money out of next year's budget.

Mr. Martinbianco said as soon as we have a plan, costs associated with that plan, bids that support the cost that support the plan, then you will be able to plan for what that bond sale and bond needs are going to be. The debate is what is going to get done first, City Hall, Station #2 or the DPW Motor Pool. We are faced with something where we can make an immediate decision that has an immediate financial impact. We already have a built-in cushion of $180,000 that is already put in City Hall Expansion. If we approach the time when the Building Authority is prepared to make those fiscal determinations, as to the sale of bonds, what the bond cost is going to be, we may only have an expenditure of $95,000 a year if we only do City Hall. There has already been a common consensus that City Hall expansion is an important factor. I stand by my comments that public safety will come number one and certainly for the benefit of Station #2, long before we do anything back in the motor pool.

Mr. Bement said he is uncomfortable with having the five votes because of the politics.

Mr. Martinbianco said he will put the figure back up to $150,000. There have been times we made budget amendments on the day that we passed the budget.

Mr. Brawner said if this proposal had come to us in May or June that money would come out of this right here in the beginning and we would have set it aside for it. Mr. Martinbianco, at least the two years I have been on Council, has been very pro as far as getting the City Hall expansion. I think this is the perfect place for the money to come out and I don't foresee the City ever spending the extra $100,000 this year on the rest of City Hall.

Mrs. Tinnin said we were not given any definitives as to how that $180,000 was going to be spent. Public safety is extremely important, Chief Halstead and Mr. Nimcheski brought out good facts, and it is probably an area where the firefighters want Station #2 to remain. The money in City Hall and Building can also be replenished at a later date, if it is known to us that we are going to move ahead this fiscal year with the City Hall expansion. I want to keep an excess in General Fund because we never know what health care and pension costs, sewer expansions, water and garbage rates will cost us at the end of the year. We don't want to get into a situation that City of Flint is faced with now.

Mr. Brawner asked if the amount of $180,000, was strictly what they figured the lease payment a year would be if they do improvements.

Mr. Martinbianco spoke regarding a memo from the Mayor's office concerning State Shared Revenues.

Mr. Brawner said looking at your notes, the $180,000 they came up with is what they expected the bond issue to be every year.

Mr. Martinbianco said that is correct, which won't happen till next fiscal year at least.

Mr. Centilli asked how we know it will not come up till next year.

Mr. Brawner indicated he has only watched the progress in the last couple of years, and unless something happens on a real quick basis.

Mr. Centilli said we are quite well in progress right now. The architect has drawings of the building and if they proceed, where is the $180,000 now, is it in General Fund.

Mr. Martinbianco responded that it is in General Fund under City Hall Expansion line item. I suggested we take $85,000 away from it, which will leave it at $95,000. I will go on public record that I will support any increase up to $150,000 in long term, which represents about half of what we expect to receive from the State under these additional State Share Revenues under this fiscal year. I will support anything for another $55,000 if that is what it takes under this year's budget. I want to see some plans, I don't see the Bond Council come in telling us this is what you need, this is your long term fiscal obligation and commitment.

Mr. Wells said the $180,000 is already there, which took 4 votes to get. We already debated and made a decision 6 weeks ago.

Mr. Halstead thanked the Council for their consideration and approval.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION ACTION:

Martinbianco moved and Tinnin seconded the following motion to amend Item 2.

1. Approve and authorize transfer of $85,000 from General Fund - City Hall & Grounds (City Hall Expansion) to Fire Department - Land Acquisition line item.

Motion carried, 4-3. Centilli – no, Bement – no, Wells – no.

COUNCIL ACTION:

Cross moved and Wells seconded the following motion:

1. Approve and authorize the purchase of property described as Lots 71 and 72 of Lapeer Heights Subdivision (#59-14-576-021) at a cost of $85,000.

Motion carried, 7-0.

Wells moved and Cross seconded the following motion:

2. Approve and authorize transfer of $85,000 from City Hall Expansion line item to Fire Department line item acquisition.

Motion carried, 7-0.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 8:07 P.M.

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