

Buildings and Facilities Task Force
Monday, January 25, 2021 - 9:00 am
HELD VIRTUALLY

Steve McNally - Chairman

Chairman McNally called this subcommittee to order at 9:00 am with the following in attendance: Steve McNally, Stephanie DeZalia, Shaun Gilliland, Roy Holzer, Ken Hughes, Noel Merrihew, Jay Rand, Jeffrey Subra, Clayton Barber, Mike Mascarenas, Dan Palmer and Jim Dougan. Ike Tyler was absent.

Also present: Dina Garvey and Linda Wolf.

MCNALLY: Everybody's seen the report from Jim Dougan on the facilities, I am sure my now? I just want to make some points early that a lot of things are depending on whether we acquire the Elizabethtown school building at some time. So, we got to keep that in the back of our mind in any decisions that we make.

But, today I think we should talk about this Cornell building that we've kicked down the road for 10 years and it comes down to some pretty simple facts. We need to know what is it going to be used for and what it has to be? Does it need to be two stories? Does it need to be one story? Does it have to have a kitchen? And then the third question is refurbish; which makes more sense? So, does anybody want to lead into those? That'd be great. Anybody hear me?

GILLILLAND: Yeah, this is Shaun. Dan, did you get that email about the kind of requirements that CCE was going to pass to you?

PALMER: Yeah, I actually did. I actually pulled it up on my phone, now.

Essentially, what they kind of laid out was, you know, that they need a large meeting space, classroom for hands-on activities and learning, and learning station for youth and families and a conference type setting, smaller meeting space for when there are multiple activities going on. You know, before they used to be able to divide the room in half, so maybe that's something that we would want to look at, as well. They need a multi-station, demonstration, teaching kitchen; which, again, many of the educational programs that they do are based upon those nutrition skills and they would like to have a kitchen area for that. They also serve during the fair, you know, some of their frosty dairy bar stuff during that period. They would like an attached greenhouse for the 4-Hers, for horticulture and food service programming, a heating system, obviously, bathroom areas, a storage area, a small office area that is ADA compliant and up to date communications, is really what they listed. You know, just kind of going through that list, I certainly think it would fit, so to speak, in a one story building. You know what's part of the issue here is that, you know, as soon as you go to two story you need to have an elevator, you need to have handicapped access. So, it does look like to me that we could probably meet those needs with a one story building.

HOLZER: So, Dan, quick question for you. If we go one story building, does that mean that we could just utilize the existing building and then just close off the upstairs? And if you go to raze the Cornell building are we going to be running into a lot of historical preservation groups, sorta like you guys have done with the County jail?

PALMER: Yeah, I wouldn't be surprised that you would run into some of those. I don't see that building, again, as someone who was a former contractor for almost 15 years, the amount of money that you would have to spend to make that building usable is probably far over what it would cost to just take it down and build a new building.

You know there's no subsidizing on it. You would have to remove all the siding and put subsidizing on it. There's, all the wiring would have to be replaced. All of the plumbing would have to be replaced. The foundation would have to be replaced. The roof won't take a full snow load to meet current code and again, you have to remember that if you touch a building and if you end up with more than 50% changes to it, you have to meet current building code standards. So, you would have to replace the roof, you would have to replace all the windows, you would have to replace virtually the whole building is what you're really talking about. It's just, I don't think it's the best use of taxpayer funding to put that kind of money into a building for historical purposes, only.

HOLZER: Did Cornell give you any kind of idea of how many youth would be actually served through the 4H in the programs that they stated in the narrative to you?

PALMER: They didn't really give me a number. I don't know what the 4H numbers are. I know they're fairly significant, but I don't know, honestly, the exact number. I don't know if Shaun has an idea or not.

GILLILLAND: They have well, I think around 150 actual club members throughout the county, but they also serve individuals, you know, non-active club members, you know in after-school programs and stuff. I think at one time, you know, you talk about reach out and touch and I think it's about 500 kids.

HOLZER: So, right now we have a \$500,000.00 grant and a \$50,000.00 DASNY grant for this building?

MASCARENAS: I think I can help with that a little bit. One reason why we initially looked at remediating the current structure was because SHPO was in play; which SHPO is State Historic Preservation Office in terms of grant funding.

Obviously, if we could get some help from our state and federal partners on funding of that facility, we could bring that in at a cost that's lower to the taxpayer. It's looking more and more like that probably isn't really likely being that we've taken a couple of stabs at it and have come up empty. The grants are really hard to know if they're guaranteed. The current one that we do have available was on remediation of that facility. That's the one, the other one is supposed to be for asbestos removal. They asked that it be repurposed for restoration of the facility. So, without asking permission to have those changed and have that be granted, it's hard to give anybody a clear answer on, on whether those funds are still in play or not. Senator Little had allotted that

initial grant to us. There still has been no contract received on it and then Senator Little had retired. So, who's going to advocate for those contracts to be released? I'm not certain, I mean Senator Stec certainly would, would try to lend a hand and help us, but where those funds are at this time? We haven't had them obligated, with that being said, I don't know that we can count on them being obligated.

DEZALIA: Mike, are you saying that those funds were only for restoration of the existing building? So, we couldn't use them toward building a new building, we would be on our own there?

MASCARENAS: Yeah, we would simply have to, minimally ask for repurposing. It wouldn't fit the current plan, if we decided to build a new structure. The old grant was written under the premise of, of remodeling the building with hopefully an add on grant from SHPO; which would have made our exposure very minimal in terms of what we would have had to provide locally. So, minimally, we would absolutely have to ask for those dollars to be changed over to a new structure and not to support on an existing one, if we went that route.

HOLZER: Mike, what about other restrictions that the County has for utilizing that building? Like, and I'm still learning this stuff, but I guess we have to do youth type programs in there. That was part of the deal we made, what was it, with the Cooperative Extension when they gave it to the County?

MASCARENAS: That's correct, yeah right.

HOLZER: Will we have to get their permission to tear the building down? If the County did decide to build a new structure, there?

MASCARENAS: We are the owners of the property. I don't believe that we would necessarily have to ask permission. We would have to look at that, for sure. But, what that property needs to be used for is youth serving opportunities or we lose control of it. So, is that basically right, Shaun? Is that what you know, too?

GILLILLAND: Yeah, and that doesn't come, that wasn't granted from CCE. It was actually granted from the original owner, you know, back in the early part of the 20th century.

MASCARENAS: I do think there's opportunity and I know we've talked about CCE. When things were a little bit more normal and we were able to meet a little more often and plan a little bit better, you know, if we're going to continue to operate the fairgrounds and try to expand what can be offered there, the opportunities in addition to just usage from CCE are certainly much higher. You know, what one thing Jim Dougan and I had batted around is ballfields and such at the fairgrounds. There used to be awesome tournaments there for a lot of years, that's a cheap way to get people to utilize the fairgrounds. Our youth groups, communities that participate, every town has soccer, basketball programs, baseball and softball programs, to have a centralized field that people can meet at, at those fairgrounds with a space that you could utilize for other things would definitely be helpful, at the very least.

DEZALIA: Is this building also used for the Harvest Festival?

MASCARENAS: Absolutely, yes.

GILLILLNAD: Yes, and it's out at the fairgrounds. It's, you know, traditionally the only building that can be used in the wintertime for any kind of programming or anything.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, I do think and in terms and Dan, Mr. Palmer, has a better idea of this than I, I mean I know we're just talking about Cornell, but we do have to think about the bigger picture, also and how that fits into overall spending and what other facilities we have and what our plan, of finances is moving forward.

I know it had been brought up at the board meeting, last week, to simply bond the activity; which is absolutely something that we could do, but we need to realize what that impact is on us and what opportunity we're giving up to do other things.

I think if you looked at that facilities report, there's a finance section, page 9 and it speaks to what we had at a given time. The nice thing about the report is a lot of those things have been completed and we've move forward on them. I feel really good about it. That's this nice thing about a working document. I think the Board has given Mr. Dougan the tools to move through some budgetary obligations on an annual basis that take into effect the needs of our facilities. Traditionally, those are the first things that go in a budget. Jim, correct my if I'm wrong, but in our initial report we recommended \$250,000.00 be allocated annually, for facilities, is that still the case? I believe that is.

DOUGAN: Yeah, Mike, you're correct. We've, over the past 5 or 6 years, the Board, through some capital projects, we've increased the buildings and grounds budget to tackle some bigger type things. That's how we completed the 1,000-gallon storage tank project, right near the main complex. That's how we're tackling the roof at the courthouse this year.

So, you know the Board's been very good to DPW and we've moved in that direction and those funds haven't been pulled, so that we can tackle some more capital projects, rather than small maintenance projects.

MCNALLY: We have also received that Stewart's money; which has helped us get a little jump on some projects.

MASCARENAS: That's correct. Now, last time we did an accounting of that, and I'm glad that Linda Wolf is on the call today, where we might not have exact numbers, but she can get them to us.

We had \$400,000.00 after we obligated some funds to the rooftop units and the former nutrition building, I believe. Whether that's still at that amount, I'm not certain. We certainly need an update of that count, but that's where we were after obligating those initial projects.

Another thing that Mr. Palmer and I batted around, last week, is the mortgage tax. Dan, the jail bond will be paid off here within the next year and in order to collect that mortgage tax that comes through the County Clerk's office, we would need to obligate it towards some sort of capital. Now what we don't know right now is what qualifies for that. So, that would somehow, some ways

dictate how much we could bond, per se, without it impacting the tax rate for our local constituents. So, if we could continue a mortgage tax and simply put it up on CCE, or removal of the jail or a variety of projects. I think we need to know that and maybe those are some of the tasks that we need to complete prior to the next meeting. I don't know what your thoughts are on it?

PALMER: Yeah, again, I mean I don't, I'm not sure specifically what the rules are. I know you have to go through the State to get permission to allocate mortgage tax, the additional quarter percent of mortgage tax towards capital projects. You know, we did it for the jail, we did it for the public safety building. Excuse me, we did it originally for the courthouse building and then we reallocated it for the jail. We are coming up at the end of the jail bond, we're also coming up at the end of the radio project, \$10 million that we had bonded on that.

Just to give you some sense, if you bonded even \$3 million over 10 years, you're looking at about \$350,000.00 bond payment. So, that essentially, if you do nothing else, essentially it eats up everything you have in your cap after chargebacks. So, you either have to reallocate money out of, you know, we're allocating \$250,000.00 a year for improvements, if you ate it all up in bond, you may not be able to do that. You know, so there are some things that we have to make choices on. Clearly, getting to the jail, the old jail is getting to be, you know, a serious issue. In terms of the roof being so bad on it, that we really need that building, probably removed and taken down. One of the stumbling blocks to that, of course, is the Board of Elections pod that sits there behind the jail and we either have to find more space for the location of the voting records and machines to be able to really get at the jail to do something with it.

You know, again, the other big project is, the reality is the jail, the new jail is getting close to the same position as the courthouse was. We're looking at the replacement of the heating units and the replacement of the roof and that building is even bigger than the court building. So, we have some serious expenses moving from there, as well.

So, again, in terms of what we do with the Cornell Building, I still believe that, you know, you could build a newer building in the same style and perhaps come in at a significantly lower price and ultimately have a better building. I understand the historical nature of a building, but at some point, you know, it becomes just throwing bad money away and just throwing money away and I think that building's reached that point. I'm not sure, honestly, I stood on that property back when Fred Buck was DPW Superintendent and we had that same conversation; that whether the building was sound enough to spend the kind of money it would take to bring it up to current standards.

MASCARENAS: Linda, are you on the line?

WOLF: I am, yes.

MASCARENAS: And I hate to put you on the spot, but you know, I do that to you a lot. Do you have any idea what the mortgage tax brings in? I thought it was around \$400,000.00, maybe, a year?

WOLF: Yeah, that's budgeted in the County Clerk, \$450,000.00. We have it apportioned, I am going to look on the computer. There is two different lines and I'm just having trouble looking it up right now. But, yeah, it's not a new computer, so it's taking me a minute.

MASCARENAS: That's okay.

While we wait for Linda, I think, the building we just put up there, the nutrition building, that was around \$1.6 million finished; is that correct?

DOUGAN: Yeah, it was around \$1.6 million and then it's around 3,500 total square feet and \$300,000 of that cost was the commercial kitchen equipment that went in that building.

MASCARENAS: Right, so I think probably cost-wise, you're looking at something a little bit easier to swallow in terms of a new structure, being that our current estimate was, what? \$2.2 million, for remediation, but not dealing with the second floor and some of those issues?

DOUGAN: Well, the building estimate from our report, back in 2017, without really tackling the second floor and definitely not adding an elevator, got us up to \$2.3 million and then an independent estimate from an engineer to build a building that looked the same, but was new with an elevator to the second floor was \$2.8. That's about a year old when we got that estimate and obviously, prices with COVID and supply issues have gone through the roof on some things. Just, maybe to give everybody a little bit of a scale here, the existing Ag Center building has around 5,600 square feet of usable space, both the first and second floor. I do hope that this committee, I don't disagree that this, this building needs something done with it, but we have over 300,000 square feet of space that we have to maintain. So, please as you're planning to come up with a plan to finance, 3,000 square feet versus 5,600 square feet, let's make sure that our plans keep all of that in mind.

WOLF: This is Linda, I have, so for the revenue for the radio from the mortgage tax that's showing up in the County Clerk's revenue received in 2020; \$632,181.00 and budgeted \$400,000.00 and then \$350,000.00 for the tax for the jail and received \$518,477.00. So, in 2020 we really went over budget on that revenue.

MCNALLY: Steve McNally; my personal feeling is I cannot see spending \$3 million on a Cornell Building when the County needs so much other things. I just, it's, it would just be brutal to the taxpayers.

On the other hand, I invite everyone to come down and see my new building; which is basically what you have at the Cornell, except 100 years newer. That total building with a commercial kitchen, soup to nuts, from LED to electronics, to heating, air conditioning, spray in insulation; I think Shaun's been there, Dan's been there. It's an ideal building, it could be tweaked a little bit. We finished that, last year, for \$740,000.00 and that's including a generator, a sunroom, Anderson 400 windows. You know, I think that it's more likely that we could build something comparable to what their needs are, for probably \$1.5 million and I can't see going over that for the amount of usage that building would ever get from the people in the county. That's all I have.

DEZALIA: What do we allocate the additional \$2.00 per thousand transfer tax to, right now? What's that being allocated to?

PALMER: The jail and the radio project. Those are the numbers that Linda just gave you.

DEZALIA: The transfer tax or mortgage tax?

PALMER: The mortgage tax. The transfer tax...

DEZALIA: The County portion?

PALMER: Linda?

WOLF: That's the radio.

PALMER: That's the radio one, okay.

DEZALIA: Okay, so the radio is the transfer and the mortgage goes to the jail, okay.

MASCARENAS: Okay, so given Linda's numbers and we did have a big year in term of sales. I think, I don't know that we would count on having those kinds of numbers on an annual basis. You know, you're probably looking at Mr. Palmer's original estimate at somewhere between \$3 and \$5 million dollar bond that you could pay for without necessarily impacting tax rates, just on those mortgage taxes. Provided that it's an allowable expense. So, so those are the things that we, we've got to clean up a little bit and start to look at, get Dan Manning involved in that.

HOLZER: What actual work are we going right now?

DOUGAN: At Cornell?

HOLZER: Yes

DOUGAN: We completed the asbestos abatement this past year in 2020 and right now there's nothing else planned there, Roy.

HOLZER: Okay, so if the, if the building was razed that would be something that would have had to do, regardless, I believe; right?

DOUGAN: That's correct. That's part of why it is one of the first steps to tackle was the asbestos abatement.

HOLZER: I wish Ike was here.

MCNALLY: Do you have an estimated cost on what it would be to tear that building down?

DOUGAN: We haven't gotten a formal estimate on that. Mike and I were actually running some numbers. There's, there is one, let me just go back to asbestos for one second, before I answer that, and there is one porch roof that the coating that's on that porch roof is still asbestos containing. So, if we were going to demolish that, I would have to deal with that as its own little asbestos project. We didn't move forward with it, because we didn't want to cause any more damage to the structure.

The rest of the removals we felt we'd be able to do in-house and therefore, your biggest costs would be the tipping fees. Quickly, we came up with tipping fees in the range of \$50,000.00 to \$70,000.00.

MCNALLY: What is the chance that \$500,000.00 from Betty can be reallocated to this, a new building?

MASCARENAS: That's a great question, I don't have an answer. I mean, you got to ask; right? To see I think we have to put in the request to get something. I mean at this point I think we plan on the worse and if something comes than that's great, but to count on that as our primary source of funding and not get it would, would put everything into a tailspin. So, we could certainly put in that request if that helps hunt that down and where that's moving to, but we don't know the answer, right now.

PALMER: Yeah, I think so much of that answer would depend upon what the feds do with the stimulus money for state and federal and local governments. You know, until, the State is currently sitting at \$15 billion in the hole. I'm not sure many grants are going to be going out, other than the ones that are really contractually obligated. But, you know if the feds do come through with this money, then maybe that changes the tenor of it, so to speak, but I don't know, at this point, that we could rely on that until we actually see something from the fed level.

MASCARENAS: If the Committee thinks it's appropriate at this time, and I don't want to put the cart in front of the horse, but we could certainly formalize an estimate on razing the structure, so that is somehow, moving forward, I don't know if that's what this group wants to recommend? Your thoughts?

DEZALIA: I would stand behind what Steve is saying. I am looking at the list of what they are asking for the building to include and his building that he has there has all of what they're asking for, except the attached greenhouse. His community center is a beautiful building, and spacious. I can't see how they could need or use anything more than that. So, I would move for that recommendation. It doesn't make sense to spend an extra million dollars to try to save a building that, in the end, probably is going to cost us even more than what the estimate is and whether we'll utilize the upstairs, spend all the money on an elevator and whether we'll even utilize it, it makes no sense.

MCNALLY: And anybody that's had any dealing with an elevator, you do not want an elevator. You do not want an elevator. We have one in our building and it costs me three grand a year and it gets used three times a year.

PALMER: Yup

MCNALLY: Anybody else have anything?

MASCARENAS: So, Jim, can we try and formalize some kind of bid to, I guess we don't, I guess if we're going to do it in-house, we'd have to figure out the asbestos part for removal in the spring and then razing that structure.

DOUGAN: Yeah, you want to do this in-house? Do you want me to ask any of our term contract people to put a number on it? I can ask, like our term general contractor for a price so that we might have an idea of what it would be if we had to pay prevailing wage rate and then we'll do our own estimate on like I said, the tipping fees, basically.

PALMER: Yeah, I think that's the direction we should go. At least we'll have some sense of what the difference is, if we do it ourselves versus having a commercial contractor do it. Ultimately, everybody's going to have to pay the tipping fees, it's just a question of labor.

DOUGAN: Yeah, our term contract with Atlantic Testing with our asbestos abatement firm, they should be able to, I can go back and to the old report and see if we can have a rough cost of the removal of just that roof, otherwise I'll ask them to give us an updated budget for, for that little bit of asbestos that's left.

MASCARENAS: Okay and I think in the meantime, too, Steve, if you're okay with this, we can work on updating that report as a whole, so the Committee can see what's been completed, what's outstanding, what's popped up since we filed the report, had it approved by the Board, if that works? I don't know if that's the direction you want to go in, next?

MCNALLY: Well, I think that report should be updated and this decision would be so much easier if we didn't have the opportunity for that E'town school. We definitely need, CCE needs a building. We need to tear the jail down. We need, like Dan said, we got the Public Safety Building and it's going to need some upgrades eventually. But, with that school in the back of our mind, it takes less stress off those projects and it gives us time, and maybe some resources to work on this, this building.

But, I invite anybody to come down and look at this building. It's 180 people occupancy on the first floor. It's got a commercial kitchen with two commercial stoves and everything's stainless steel. It's state-of-art. It's just amazing and that was \$740,000.00 and of course we did some of the work ourselves, so you're probably looking at a million dollars, like probably somewhere along the lines of what it cost to build the kitchen up, there, at \$1.2 or \$1.4 million, but I think that's the way to go. You know, I strongly feel that if we're renovating that building it's a poor idea. That's all I have. Does anybody else have anything?

MASCARENAS: We should probably check with Mr. Tyler just to make sure that's acceptable with him and his community in terms of moving toward razing that structure and replacing.

MCNALLY: I just got a text from Tom Scozzafava and he said he'll take that Cornell Building (laughter).

Anybody else? So, we're going to upgrade the plan and Jimmy's going to give us some information on cost for tearing it down. Okay, I'll talk to Shaun about how to reach out to Dan Stec to see about redirecting that money, or Dan you can do that, if you wish?

PALMER: Yup, we can do that.

MCNALLY: Okay and then I think we should meet back. You know we got to get on this and we've got to keep moving on it and get a decision made and go ahead. It's been, I've been on the Board almost seven years and the same conversation we had seven years ago, and it doesn't seem to be going anywhere. So, if anybody doesn't have anything, we're adjourned.

AS THERE WAS NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS BUILDING AND FACILITIES, IT WAS ADJOURNED AT 9:32 AM

Respectively Submitted,

Dina Garvey, Deputy Clerk
Board of Supervisors