



Fire Station Citizens Advisory Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 26, 2020

Twin Falls Council Overflow Room @ 3:30 P.M.

203 Main Avenue East, Twin Falls, Idaho

Citizens Advisory Committee Members Present: Debbie Dane, Tami Gooding, Nikki Boyd, Dwayne Tucker, Dave Moore, Jan Rogers

Citizens Advisory Committee Members Absent: Jim Olson (Telephoned in)

Fire Station Programming Committee Present: Josh Kliegl, Joe Miller, Jesse Bowman

Fire Station Programing Committee Absent: N/A

Facilitators: Fire Chief Les Kenworthy, City Manager Travis Rothweiler, CFO Breanna Howard

Staff: Fire Administrative Assistant Danielle Kolb-Slagel

1) Confirmation of Quorum/Call Meeting to Order

Fire Chief Les Kenworthy called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m.

2) Consent Calendar

a.) Approval of meeting minutes from March 10, 2020.

3.) Items for Discussion

1) Introductions – Chief Kenworthy

- Les Kenworthy – Fire Chief – Twin Falls Fire Department
- Dave Moore – Citizen/Resident of the City of Twin Falls, Retired with some Firefighter Experience.
- Breanna Howard – New CFO of City of Twin Falls
- Joe Miller – Twin Falls Fire Department
- Dwayne Tucker – Lifetime resident of Twin Falls, Retired from Twin Falls Fire Department
- Debbie Dane – Citizens Committee
- Josh Kliegl – Twin Falls Fire Department
- Tami Gooding – Citizens Committee
- Jan Rogers – Citizens Committee
- Jesse Bowman – Twin Falls Fire Department
- Travis Rothweiler – City Manager, City of Twin Falls
- Danielle Kolb-Slagel – Administrative Assistant, Twin Falls Fire Department

Les Kenworthy –

- The need for new fire stations has not gone away and gets more pressing as time goes on.
- Station 2 had black mold and had to have mold abatement; firefighters are showering in the bay with a makeshift shower. Cost was around \$10,000 and growing.
- Station 1 has a roof that is deteriorating, went to council for \$80,000 to replace the roof and get it to drain properly.
- Station 3 has a section of concrete on the ramp that is cracked and sinking, worked with the Streets department to fund it out of existing funding.

- Call volume is increasing with growth and other things going on in the City.
- We have added an additional piece of apparatus to hopefully reduce the wear and tear on our engines, but as we added apparatus, we have no space to store it except for outside.
- We are at a place in history with a retiree, a resignation, and many possible retirements coming up, and for the first time we have female firefighters that have made it on the list. Issues with where we will put a female firefighter, there will be some changes in the way we operate to accommodate that.
- Safety standards in the fire service continue to change, and we must facilitate these requirements.
- Because of our limited space, it is hindering what we can do operationally, maneuvering personnel and apparatus.
- Approximately 4 years ago the City went forward with programming and executive teams to find out how to build new fire stations – locations and type of stations to build. The teams toured other stations, worked with an architect, we built a citizens advisory committee and went to bond with the recommendation of the group – build 3 fire stations at the cost of 36 million dollars.
- That bond failed at 63% and we needed a supermajority of 67% to pass. 12% voter participation.
- We started to meet again, and Covid-19 happened. We think the bond failed based on the amount was too much, there were other things on the ballot – jail, schools, community center, there was somewhat of a concern on the increased taxation, some people didn't know about the bond and we didn't advertise as well.
- We met in March to decide how to move forward, and now we are here. More economic uncertainty, more concern on taxation with Covid-19. Over the last 6 months we have discussed some strategies and doing survey work, looking at all different kinds of options to build fire stations.
- Last week we went to the Treasure Valley to look at fire stations with alternate footprints and maybe we do not build the fire stations as we originally went to the council with.

2) State of the City and City Manager Vision – Travis Rothweiler

- There is no question that we need to build fire stations, the question becomes what is the appropriate path and what is achievable?
- The State of Idaho at the adjournment of the last legislative session did not complete their work in the area of property tax reform. They have formed an interim committee to engage in the process of looking at property tax reform. Scope of work is to find a solution that can be introduced at the next legislative session.
- We believe we will see some form of property tax relief and what tax valuation is within the City of Twin Falls. We are dropping the tax levy again; we made that decision well before the Governor provided an incentive not to take the 3% or use the forgone balance.
- We are in an era of unprecedented growth, at the conclusion of August we believe we will have in excess of 500 single family building permits for the fiscal year with one month left to go, August alone was 80 single family building permits. We did 96 total permits for the FY 2011. We have never done 80 single family permits in the history of the City. It is a seller's market for real estate.
- The greatest impediment to moving forward in our community today is fire stations – single largest Achilles heel to expanding our urban growth boundary, our water and sewer boundary, and to be able to take advantage of the opportunities coming before our community.

- At the conclusion of July, the City of Twin Falls unemployment rate was 5%.
- Do we go forward in the existing environment and ask for a bond? Tough sell, and Covid-19 makes it worse. Uncertainty in the local economy day to day.
- The City is extremely financially strong today. We have a strong balance with our cash reserves and may be able to look at alternative options rather than going to bond.
- Three possible vehicles to take as a community –
 - General obligation bond – makes most sense financially, cheapest money that can be obtained with a low interest rate (currently 1.3% on a 20 yr. bond). Also adds money without sacrificing the current budget. Requires 66.67% approval to pass.
 - Certificate of participation – similar to a bond, a debt instrument that is entered into with a bank, investment group, or other party that has a non-appropriations clause. Similar to a lease with no penalty. Not necessarily practical but it is legal. Fair amount of risk and the interest rate is higher (approx. 2%), and repayment must come from existing funds and revenue stream. We are earning .85% on our money, which is phenomenal given what we are limited to with investing as a City.
 - Loan ourselves the money – take our internal resources in alternate funds and we made a loan to ourselves and repaid the enterprise funds from the general funds for slightly more than .85% but significantly less than what a certificate of participation, with a limit in the neighborhood of \$12-14 million.
- Can the programming committee shrink the size of the stations without losing the functionality and create opportunities to grow the stations in the future?
- Initial thought was to build the stations right the first time without needing to expand or cobble together in the future.
- Loaning ourselves the money gives the City Council the ability to set the terms of the loan and the debt could be extended or the terms modified to accommodate the needs of the City.
- BC Aguirre is charged with finding which apparatus is necessary to provide the current level of service to the citizens, and how to minimize the need for bay space.

Nikki Boyd – Question – Apparatus is linked to the level of service; how do we suddenly not need all of the apparatus that we have?

Les Kenworthy – Answer – We have brush trucks and water tenders that are for areas that do not have water supply systems. One of the things we are doing is signing mutual aid agreements to reduce some of our apparatus and still provide the services needed.

Nikki Boyd – Question – Is apparatus able to be sold to recuperate some of the funds?

Les Kenworthy – Answer – The equipment in question is fairly old and has a limited value.

Travis Rothweiler – Answer – If we can buy one engine that can perform the function of two in the past, we save money in the long run with the replacement and save on the bay space that we need for the organization.

- We are looking at Station 2 and Station 3. The Fire District is donating up to 3 million dollars for the training facility, and we also need to look at updates to Station 1. Moving Station 1 to another location was a benefit to the police department in allowing them to have a 40-year solution to all their needs. We have the capital for

updating Station 1 to make it functional, however one of the issues is the bay configuration. It is very difficult to modify the bay with the current arrangement and still have access to the street, however we have the funds to upgrade the living quarters to meet current standards and be gender neutral.

- Impact fees are paid by each builder when they pull a building permit based on use and square footage. Approx. 2.5 million dollars of impact fees in the fire impact fee fund, which is easier to use for fire stations with a general obligation bond or with internal debt.

Jan Rogers – Question – Based on what you have outlined today, what is your recommendation?

Travis Rothweiler – Answer – Move forward with investigating the process of lending ourselves the money from internal funds. If we can invest in ourselves, we can make the terms flexible and work for us.

Nikki Boyd – Question – Does there need to be a public hearing process?

Travis Rothweiler – Answer – There would be budget amendment through City Council but not necessarily a public hearing. Still need to look at the legal process through bond counsel. Probably the most cost-effective solution to the fire station project.

Breanna Howard – Answer – There is always a cost to this, and the opportunity cost now is at the lowest rate that we could secure the funding at, possibly ever, however it limits our ability for future projects until it is paid off.

Jan Rogers – Question – How will the public discern the difference between a general obligation bond and lending the money to ourselves? I think the general obligation bond is a non-starter and should not be used.

Travis Rothweiler – Answer – There are three ways for a government organization to access money – Bond, certificate of participation, and to save for it. We would be looking at using the sewer and water fund that has a healthy cash reserve, and we do not have any projects on the horizon in the next 10 years with those funds. Lending ourselves the money appears to be the best financial vehicle to get new stations for the time being and may be a pattern for future stations. We did not look at this prior to a general obligation bond because the original 36 million dollars was far too large to lend ourselves, and the current 12-14 million would have only covered the proposed Station 2. There have been generous concessions to meet a much smaller budget, including possibly needing to add bay space to Station 2 or Station 3 in the future. The bond allowed the solution to be done, lending ourselves the money does not allow for a training facility or Station 1. Stations must come before a training facility.

Dwayne Tucker – Statement – We have done a good job of saving money and this is our reward, however we should have spent money on upgrading the fire stations instead of saving the money for the future. Now that we have the money, we need to use it.

Travis Rothweiler – Answer – Since 2012 we have invested over 150 million dollars in the infrastructure, more than the previous three decades combined. This City Council has the mindset of making the investments to be able to build upon in the future.

Jan Rogers – Statement – This is a very creative approach to the issue, and if we want to move forward any time soon this appears to be the solution.

Les Kenworthy – Answer – I feel good about this solution. We have looked at several ways to get fire stations built, and Travis and the City Council have been very supportive of moving forward. It takes time and planning to continue to move forward.

Jesse Bowman – Statement – I can speak to the conditions at Station 2, we are about 3 weeks into trying to get the bathroom finished. Reevaluating the equipment, we need, and even the design of the new stations allow for concessions to be made. Anything we can do would be very helpful.

Nikki Boyd – Statement – It seems like the citizens told us with the bond failing that they do not want us to spend money on fire stations. Maybe the situation we are in now is because we were not ready for it at the time, and it makes this solution more attractive.

Dave Moore – Question – What will that amount of money truly do for us, will it improve the safety and well-being of our firefighters?

Josh Kliegl – Answer – When we toured the stations in Meridian, it covers everything that we planned for in the bond – clean side, dirty side, extractors, sleeping quarters, gender neutral bathrooms, office space – everything we need. The scaled down version saves space on the bays but allows for future expansion.

Joell Miller – Answer – The 5.5 million dollars that Meridian spent on the stations was a “that year” price for the year it was built, not a today price. It also does not count the difficulty of getting contractors in our area. Hopefully, we will be able to get a price close to 5.5 million per station and stay under the 14-million-dollar mark.

Travis Rothweiler – Answer – We would negotiate the profit and go through the competitive bid process. The challenge is shrinking the price without shrinking the quality. We are aiming for 7 million per station. Hopefully under contract by January 1, 2021.

Les Kenworthy – Answer – The time factor is a plus; it will be sped up and the design work will reduce the time for construction.

Debbie Dane – Question – Where are these stations in Meridian? Simplifying the self-lending process like a home loan is valuable for education of the public so that people can understand the benefit to the community. What are the next steps in the process?

Les Kenworthy – Answer – Station 6 is brand new and is on Overland.

Travis Rothweiler – Answer – We will not be breaking ground by the first of the year.

3) Next Steps – Travis Rothweiler/Chief Kenworthy/All

Travis Rothweiler - First step is communicating strategies and getting all the details figured out to ensure the plan is accurate. The committee would confirm that this is the approach to take and advocate it to the City Council. At that time there are three steps – scope negotiations with Pivot North, hire a general contractor to assist with the project and help assist with construction documents and drive down cost, and there is a public process for Requirement for Qualifications which is submitted to the Council. Those steps allow the Council to certify the process and turn it back over to

the committee to carry it out. Once the construction plans are finished, they will be sent to bid for a general contractor.

Jan Rogers – Statement – If we are going to market this as a phased approach, educating the Council and the public what phase this is as compared to the 36-million-dollar project.

Nikki Boyd – Question – The Council will want to know much is left over in the enterprise fund after this project is started?

Travis Rothweiler – Answer – The sewer fund has 12 million alone, and we would be taking funds from several of the enterprise funds. If something happens the contingency plan would be to use general funds and shift them over.

Dwayne Tucker – Question – Does this plan include the remodel of Station 1 or is it just the replacement of Stations 2 and 3? Is there any plan for Station 5?

Travis Rothweiler – Answer – We intend to use cash reserves for Station 1, the 14 million dollar loan is only for the replacement of Stations 2 and 3. Challenges for Station 5 include not starting a new construction with outstanding debt, possibly in 7-10 years. If the east side of Twin Falls is growing faster, we may need to go to bond. We also have issues with manning, and manning a new station is an added cost every year to the budget. The organization is needing personnel throughout, with police, streets, etc. We must be thoughtful as we add more personnel within the City of Twin Falls.

Dwayne Tucker – Statement – The act of being frugal has gotten us where we are, but it may be one of the reasons that we need to spend the money now. The town has exploded since 1962, and the manning has stayed almost the same. We are putting a strain on the personnel. With the call volume that Station 2 is expected to handle, nearly 50% of the calls, breaking that up with a Station 5 would help to alleviate that problem.

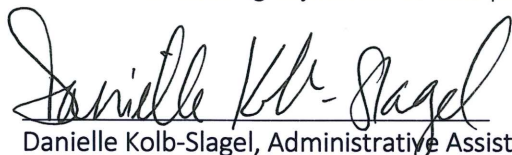
Travis Rothweiler – Answer – We have the ground for Station 5, and we have failed to add staffing in a manner that is sustainable, however we hope to move forward in a sustainable manner and find new solutions. We have been looking to use new apparatus, using SAFER grants to add personnel. We do not want to lose our financial strength that will help us in the future.

a) Upcoming Meeting(s)

- Reconvene in a short time. We will schedule next meeting and send out meeting invitation soon.

b) Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m.


Danielle Kolb-Slagel, Administrative Assistant