

Bedford Select Board
Executive Session for the Purposes of Discussing Strategy
Related to the Purchase, Exchange, Taking, Lease or Value of Real Property,
and Collective Bargaining or Litigation
November 22, 2021—Part II

Members Present: Margot Fleischman, Bopha Malone, Emily Mitchell, Bill Moonan, Ed Pierce

Also Present: Town Manager Sarah Stanton, Fire Chief David Grunes

Land acquisition for new fire station

Chief David Grunes joined the meeting at 9:14pm.

Mr. Moonan stated that, as the process for identifying and acquiring land for a new fire station moves forward, he hopes we sit down and review the cost/benefit analyses for all options. Mr. Moonan noted that, because he is a direct abutter to 139 Great Road and did not want to create the appearance of a conflict of interest, he would recuse himself from further discussions of that property.

Mr. Moonan left the meeting at 9:15pm.

Ms. Stanton reported that she and Chief Grunes spoke with the University of Utah about the possibility of acquiring 139 Great Road, and the university was thrilled by the possibility. Stewart Radiance Laboratory has been planning to move out of the building in March 2022 and was expecting to put the property up for sale; they would be pleased to sell to the Town.

Ms. Stanton arranged for an independent appraisal of the building. A written appraisal is coming soon, but the verbal report gives a value of \$1.32 million for the land and property.

Chief Grunes reported that he spoke with DPW about a traffic study, and has engaged Green International to perform it, with particular attention to the grade and the potential need to signalize the intersection with Bacon and Hillside. He noted that 139 Great Road is not an optimal site due to its shape and grade, and he believes the Town would need conceptual drawings from an architect and engineer to help Town Meeting visualize the property's potential as a new fire station site. Ms. Stanton noted that residents of Bacon Road may demand landscaping and noise mitigation as part of the site design.

Ms. Fleischman noted that, when we last discussed this property, it was seen as potential leverage to be used in negotiations with the property owner of 175 Great Road, Eli Jammal. She asked whether Mr. Jammal was aware that the Town was exploring a different property. Ms. Stanton confirmed that he is aware, but has not budged on his previous demands of \$7 million+ for the building at 175 Great Road and obtaining the current fire station building for TD Bank.

Ms. Fleischman asked whether the CVS building might be a new possibility, since CVS has announced the closure of many retail outlets. Ms. Stanton said she spoke with CVS and they were not planning to close the Bedford store. Chief Grunes also noted that the CVS site included two other buildings, one of which sold recently and has contamination that would need cleanup, and the other of which has suspected contamination and is owned by Mr. Jammal.

Ms. Fleischman asked what actions the Select Board should take tonight to keep the process moving forward. Ms. Stanton asked for a motion to continue negotiations for 139 Great Road up to a specific dollar amount, which she proposed at \$1.75 million. She and Chief Grunes could then report back to the Select Board on 12/6, and move discussions into a recommendation in open session if negotiations were successful.

Ms. Mitchell asked what response we anticipate from the Historic District Commission, and whether there was any possibility of salvaging the building. Ms. Stanton noted that Mr. Moonan would need to recuse himself from HDC discussions as well, and confirmed that the building is not salvageable for these purposes and is not in great shape overall. Ms. Stanton confirmed that the Town would petition HDC for demolition and would likely face a Demolition Delay.

Ms. Malone asked whether we would also need to acquire or approach the dental office on the corner of Bacon and Great Road. Ms. Stanton said we would not look to acquire that building, but will bring the property owner into discussions regarding any changes to the intersection. Chief Grunes noted that the property owner has previously done work with the Town.

Mr. Pierce asked what the building footprint would look like at 139 Great Road. Chief Grunes said it would likely be a long, skinny building around 8000 ft², with one large curb cut replacing the current two smaller curb cuts. Mr. Pierce asked about the overall look of the building, given its location in the Historic District. Chief Grunes replied that there are four or five architectural firms in New England that do municipal buildings, and all have experience in designing buildings that fit with the overall character of the area.

Ms. Fleischman asked for further information on the proposed timeline. If we'd be asking Town Meeting to appropriate land acquisition and design costs, would we need to do the design before acquiring the property? And if a feasible design turned out to be impossible, would we still be locked into acquiring the property? Ms. Stanton noted that if the Select Board were comfortable with the property, we would begin negotiations. There is existing funding to support preliminary design between now and March. If, between now and March, the architects feel an appropriate design is not possible at this site, we could pivot to another option. She feels a joint meeting of FinCom and CapEx will be needed in December to outline the current status.

Chief Grunes asked whether we are prepared to spend for 175 Great Road if negotiations for 139 Great Road are not successful or if public response is tepid. Ms. Fleischman added that our choice now is to negotiate for a more affordable property that we're not as enthusiastic about. Mr. Pierce concurred that we are making a tradeoff between site conditions and cost, and we need to decide whether the additional \$7 million is worth choosing the better site.

Ms. Mitchell stated that whichever property we choose will have political implications, and noted that it is crucial for the Select Board to be united behind the final choice. If we choose 139 Great Road, the argument will be for financial responsibility, with significant cost savings for the Town compared to previous options. If we choose 175 Great Road, the argument is for the ideal site for long-term investment and future needs. Either way, it makes sense to continue negotiations for 139 Great Road now, and see where we stand by 12/6.

Ms. Malone agreed that it made sense to continue moving forward on 139 Great Road for now, even though it's not our first choice.

Ms. Fleischman stated that we need to be able to articulate the costs to renovate the existing fire station and create a substation, including both capital and operational expenses and staffing and equipment needs. She advocated for a matrix of all costs, lined up neatly so people can understand without having all the background knowledge and history of the process. She added that 139 Great Road should be part of that matrix, and that the intersection redesign possibilities should be included.

Mr. Pierce stated that we will need to create a list for the public of properties that we had considered and the reasons for declining each. Chief Grunes noted that an interactive map is in development for this purpose, and confirmed that it would not include residential properties.

Ms. Mitchell moved to authorize the Town Manager and Fire Chief to continue negotiations with the University of Utah and Stewart Radiance Laboratory to acquire 139 Great Road, up to \$1.75 million. Ms. Malone seconded.

Roll call vote: Ms. Mitchell – AYE, Ms. Fleischman – AYE, Ms. Malone – AYE, Mr. Pierce – AYE.

Ms. Malone moved to adjourn the Executive Session. Ms. Mitchell seconded.

Roll call vote: Ms. Mitchell – AYE, Ms. Fleischman – AYE, Ms. Malone – AYE, Mr. Pierce – AYE.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:58pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Emily Mitchell, Clerk of the Select Board