

BOROUGH OF CALDWELL
Town Hall Meeting
MINUTES – July 18, 2023

The Town Hall meeting of the Borough Council of the Borough of Caldwell was called to order in-person and on Zoom at 7:10pm PM.

PRESENT: Mayor Jones, Councilwoman Buechner, Councilman Lace, Council President Alonso, Councilman Brown, Councilman Daniolowicz, and Councilman Cole

ALSO PRESENT: Deputy Clerk Brittany Heun, Deputy Clerk Kim Conlon, Borough Administrator, Alex Palumbo, Borough Attorney, Craig Bossong, Architects Robert Cozzarelli and Eliot Goldstein

ABSENT:

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

Adequate notice of this Council Business/Conference Meeting was given on January 11, 2023. Notice was posted on the bulletin board of the first floor of Borough Hall, 24 Smull Avenue, Caldwell, New Jersey. Official newspapers of the Borough were notified of this meeting by mail. Notice was posted and all persons requesting notice were sent the same.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PRAYER/ Moment of Silence

INTRODUCTIONS

Mayor Jones – Provide Background

- Mayor Jones read a welcome statement and gave a brief background on the purpose for tonight's meeting.

Tom Tucci – Explanation of Redevelopment Bonding and Current Budget for Project Completion

- Gave a statement on the Borough's current financial status as well as the finances in recent years.
- Discussed the debt issues that span from 2020 to the present.
- Discussed municipal bonding procedures, and the Borough's bonding history
- Discussed municipal projects, such as the Rehabilitation of 14 Park Ave, the Community Center Project, Borough Hall, Police headquarters, and Public Library.

PRESENTATION

Presentation of Possible Plans for Municipal Complex

Mr. Cozzarelli and Mr. Goldstein gave a presentation on the history of the Municipal projects, and the current updates.

Option 1:

- Police Headquarters at the current site of the Library
- 2 Floors
- Restricted by the Green and by the Culvert

Option 2:

- Police Headquarters located at the site of the parking deck
- 2 Floors

Option 3: Recommended Plan

- Police Headquarters between Library and Community Center
- 3 Floors
- Municipal Offices in the front of the Community Center.
- Repair and Renovate the Community Center

Library Options:

- Close of basement and use first floor with an option to build up
- Keep façade and build anew behind it

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Members of the public are invited to comment at this time on items listed on the agenda

John Donovan - President of the Library Board of Trustees. Ruth Jaffe - Member and past president of the Library Board of Trustees

- Looks forward the future of the Library and the renovation of it to make it the best possible for the community
- Some members saw the plans yesterday and were interested to hear the architects' points of view
- Encouraged to hear that there is a possibility to save the Library Basement
 - Mr. Cozzarelli said that the floor make up really will be budget driven
- How much of the money from FEMA and the JIF has been received and allocated for the Library reconstruction. Hopes for public documents that outlines this
 - Mayor Jones said that the Borough received the plans last Thursday

Council President Alonso said that when the Borough staff was moved, we lost grandfathered rights to the building and have to build the municipal buildings to 2023 codes

- Mr. Cozzarelli- said we are looking at a new building for the Police Department

Meryl King- 17 Birkendene: Thought we would be farther along with the plans at this time.

Mr. Cozzarelli said this is where we are right now. We have to be very careful right now with what the budget will permit. The first thing is to explore what we have and what we can do with buildings.

Ms. King: The Proposed plan for the Police station, would they have multiple floors? Access from Roseland and Provost?

Mr. Cozzarelli said the sally port will be on Roseland Ave. Idea is to have public access on Provost and to possibly connect all 3 buildings. Discussion of parking lot

Ann Marchioni - Co-Chair of Environmental Commission - Fortunate to see the plans on Thursday before of Commission meeting, and thanked Mr. Colombo for that. Environmental impact analysis should be done and made public. Green building materials and features should be used and discussed. Borough should be doing what it can to help bring the are up to national standards for air quality. EV chargers or make ready spaces should be included in plans. Borough should investigate some financial incentives for using these green building materials and methods. Encourage and combination of all offices into one space.

Nancy Caplan - 29 Birkendene Road - Library Foundation member - It seems that finances for the Library are kind of up in the area, while for other buildings it is more sound. The usable space is being reduced if we put it all on the one floor.

Mr. Cozzarelli said we are not trying to make it sound like the Library is not getting treated fairly. The Library has never been often to the left to the side, we are trying to figure out how we can best keep the library functional and service the Community. I understand that the Budget is the foremost concern with this.

Mr. Goldstein said we are looking at a possibility of expanding the Library. We are constrained by the Culver and the Green, but there is a little bit of room that is not currently on the footprint. Looking at all the various options

Ms. Caplan said the property value of the town will go up if you have a library in walking distance.

Annette Sellars - 14 Ward Place - Assistant Director of the Library - Andrew Carnegie donated the funds to create a Public Library to benefit the community. The building presented is 1/2 the size of 268 Bloomfield. That amount of space is inadequate for the operations of the Library. A well-functioning Library requires space for various services that the Library provides. There is a lot that happens behind the scenes that also require spaces. The new Library space should be equal to if not greater than what the current space offers.

Amy Dell - 8 Jackson Place - Comments to Mayor and Council. Horrified that the Council is considering shrinking the library. To provide the necessary services to a diverse community, the Library needs adequate space. I understand that finances are limited, but priorities are identified and funds put in place to support those priorities. Most of our neighbors can provide adequate space for their libraries. The population is also its 3 times the size when the library was constructed, so the upper level alone cannot be an adequate space when it was constructed when the population was much less.

Carla Marras - Ashland Street - I thought we were going to have concrete plans at this meeting. My feeling is that we need a Police Station and out of Trailers. Our Police are underfunded at this time. They should be our first priority. Almost every day there are stolen cars out of these towns. We need Police and DPW. The Community Center has not made money in 20 years, for what I understand

Mathew Fox, 6 Lockward Road - It sounds like rehabbing the PD is out of the question. The proposal presented tonight

Council President Alonso said, because employees were removed from the building, we cannot go back and renovate it. It has to come down and be built to 2023 standards.

Mr. Fox asked what happens now? We have to figure out what is best for the Community. What are you thinking about doing for the Community Center?

Mayor Jones said we are going to be demolishing the current town hall. Then we will be looking at a different plan where we share the CC with municipal centers. The pool will remain as that is a viable option to use for our community swim teams. The gymnasium could be used for various options like Hosting out meetings. We all have various ideas about what to do. We have had no discussions about getting rid of the Library. Outside of the Old Borough Hall, we are not tearing anything down

Councilman Alonso said we are also looking into underground piping to avoid future flooding.

Caroline Mescia - 6 Bowers Road - When do we thing the Pool will be usable again, and be profitable. 3 Local schools have used it in the past and would get a lot of use out of it, if they could use it as soon as possible.

Mayor Jones said our Goal is to get it open as soon as possible. The community Center is completely gutted. There are no locker rooms or bathrooms for the public to use.

Ms. Mescia suggested the swimmers could use the back doors, and not change in the building.

Mayor Jones said we are moving as fast as we can

Kathy - asked the time frame for opening the pool.

Mayor Jones said we are planning on opening the pool

John Shaw - 10 Wakefield Place - \$15 million for the project. Sounds like 2 million for the library. About 4 million for the Police. 2 million for the culvert. Do we have a breakdown of what Money is budgeted.

Mr. Palumbo said the numbers are preliminary. The CC is about 40% there, about 4 million. PD building about 6/7 million. Library 2.5 million or more depending on the option. There will be about 2 million in site work. Sidewalks, permits, etc.

Nick Correale - thanked fo transparency. 2023 taxes went up 7% and about 20% in 2024. Library has 2 options that were discussed. What is the projected numbers to redevelop the library.

Mr. Cozzarelli said that 300-400 sqft would be a possible figure. Rehabbing can be more intense than a brand-new building. Once we have a schematic, we are comfortable with, we can start getting hard costs and figures.

Mr. Correale said I think a new library building would be a better option, in my opinion. Was the projected cost to maintain the façade 175,00?

Mr. Cozzarelli said there were a lot of moving parts in keeping and moving the façade.

Mr. Correale said the Trailers are costing 1500 a month. It sounds like we are looking at 18 months at best remaining in the trailers. At one point there was speculation that it would be cheaper to purchase the trailers.

Would it make sense to leave everything in trailers until the projects are done and move all at once.

Council President Alonso Quality of life has been disrupted by the Trailers. 30 Parking spaces were removed that we could potentially get back.

Mr. Correale said it would be great if the CCC could function and be modernized. If caldwell residents could get a break on membership

Mayor Jones said we are looking at getting out of the trailers as soon as possible. The cost of moving the technology and everything else will be pricey. The CCC will be a community center, and we are looking at multi-faceted plans. Looking at more shared services. No Court room or municipal meeting rooms.

Justine Bassman - 10 Hatfield St. - It is my opinion that I have not seen the plans for the municipal complex. If I understand correctly, what I saw is the proposed located of the Police department, the current floor plans of the Library. I am still confused as to where the municipal offices will be, what is happening with the Community Center. These are basically Arial schematics and not plans. I don't understand what we are deciding on.

Mr. Cozzarelli said the Prior council hired us to prepare designs and drawings, and we must have done 6 or 7.

Ms. Bassman asked if we ever have the money to build those buildings?

Mr. Cozzarelli said at the beginning of the year, we presented all of our work to the new Council. We got to the point of these schematic drawings. We have a lot of valuable information from the other preliminaries, and have implemented all of that into the Police Building.

Ms. Bassman asked what we are deciding on tonight?

Mr. Cozzarelli said I was not privy to where the 40 million was going. We were brought in to do the plans.

Ms. Bassman said The town is in a tough spot, and we now have \$15 million and I don't think that is enough to do this. We are talking about years of rental payments and bond payments. When are we making these decisions and seeing the plans.

Mr. Cozzarelli said that there is a process that has to be done. Design development is the next phase that can be done in order to send it out to bid.

Ms. Bassman said that the basics aren't clear.

Mr. Cozzarelli said that the municipal offices will be in the Community Center.

Ms. Bassman said we should have been shown more detail tonight

Lori Brown: on CCC Advisory Board. CCC offers a unique value to the community. The Advisory Board did work with the Council on the plans for the center. I am disappointed that the new administration is trying to convert it to Borough Hall

Paul Jemas: Birkendene Road: Former Mayor. We need to have these kinds of meetings. 1/3 of the town is Tax Exempt which is unique to Caldwell. The Community Center was originally generating \$500,000 in revenue, as was the purpose. I love the Community Center and I think there is a way to move forward.

Lisa Jenkins - 155 Roseland Ave Unit 126 - Mentioned the Library building being Office building. I think we should differ to the Librarians who will be working in the space. I realize that that space is very important and should be allowed to grow as it needs to.

Council President Alonso said we also have FEMA Grant money for the purpose of that library in that space. We lose it if we move the Library

Justine Reyes, 32 Park Avenue - I agree that many of us were expecting more detailed plans that what has been presented tonight. It sounds like you are discussing repurposing part of the CCC. Why can't we continue a 1 structure plan. A possible 1 structure with 2 separate entrances. Is there a way to troubleshoot some of the issues and rethink a 1 structure building. As residents we don't want to lose anything and have else's than what we started out with.

Councilman Brown said we did have a meeting in December before we came onto Council, with the architect. 1 building is very financially restraining. It is about what we can afford. We want to provide the services our residents deserve and not crush them with costs. It is not about sectioning people off, but finding the best solution. The meeting's purpose was to just talk things out and flush out some ideas. We have a budget we have to work with. Asked for the Police structure restrictions

Eli Goldstein said It is prohibitively expensive to put the Police Department in other existing buildings. There are state requirements that the Police Buildings have to meet certain standards. The cost of strengthening existing buildings is very costly. If you put other operations in with the Police, the entire building has to meet standards that the other occupants wouldn't have to meet. Moving the Police into their own building is the most financially sound option. The challenge for all of us is to come up with a solution to provide the library, municipal offices, and police with the space they need. This meeting gives us an idea of where we need to focus next

Councilman Brown said that the point of this meeting was to get insight on how the public is feeling. I hope this meeting helped people. We are here to listen.

Mayor Jones said The Council members will be the ones voting on this so please, give us your ideas and suggestions. We are looking at our needs as opposed to our wants. We will be proposing a budget next month, which Alex has been working hard on. We could theoretically sell our Sewer Authority; we could sell the community center to private entities. There are options that we don't want to visit, so we are trying to look at other opportunities.

I wanted to recognize the Newark fire fighters who were killed in the line of action. Would like to have a moment of silence for those fighter fighters for their service. We thank God for our Fire fighter, police officer, and West Essex First Aid Squad

ADJOURNMENT

Prepared by: Brittany Heun
Brittany Heun, Deputy Borough Clerk

8/16/2003
DATE