

# KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

**Special Meeting**

**Thursday – July 7, 2011 - 1:30 p.m.**

A special meeting of the Knox County Commission was held on Thursday, July 7, 2011, at 1:30 p.m., at the county courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine.

Commission members present were: Carol L. Maines, Commissioner District #1, Richard L. Parent, Jr., Commissioner District #2, and Roger A. Moody, Commissioner District #3.

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew L. Hart, Administrative Assistant Candice Richards, Communications Director Linwood Lothrop, EMA Director Ray Sisk, Sheriff Donna Dennison, and Chief Deputy Tim Carroll.

Others in attendance: Steve Betts of the *Herald Gazette*, Martin Cates of Jaret & Cohen Real Estate, and Architect John Hansen.

## **Special Meeting – Agenda** **Thursday – July 7, 2011 – 1:30 p.m.**

- I. 1:30 Meeting Called To Order**
- II. 1:31 Action Items**
  - 1. Discussion of and Possible Vote on Preliminary Floor Plan and Proposed Cost Estimate for 301 Park Street.
- III. Adjourn**

### **I. Meeting Called to Order**

Commission Chair Roger Moody called the July 7, 2011 special meeting of the Knox County Commission to order at 1:30 p.m.

### **II. Action Items**

- 1. Discussion of and Possible Vote on Preliminary Floor Plan and Proposed Cost Estimate for 301 Park Street.

County Administrator Andrew Hart explained that he wanted to have the meeting so that the Commission could compare what the departments actually need to the current floor plan on the table in front of them. He briefly gave some background of the process thus far. After the County Commission agreed to purchase the building and signed an agreement, Architect John Hansen sat down with department heads to work on estimates for renovation. Space needs have increased over what the County had originally estimated. If the County does every renovation that has been considered, if you include that with the price of the building, the total price tag is around the \$2 million mark.

The County needs to get figures out for having the package done in order to do a referendum on the November 2011 ballot. The County has to hold at least three public hearings, one in each of the three districts. There is some definite concern that the County is not going to have a good proposal to present to the voters, in particular because of the very short amount of time to put it together. If it is not done right, the County will have missed its shot. There needs to be a list of advantages to be able to present to the voters to explain why the County should be doing this. The project will have a pretty significant impact on the budget for the next 20 years. The overall impact might not be so bad if the project can be scaled back. Originally the plan had been to buy and use the building as-is; not putting additions on the building.

The following are topics discussed during the meeting:

#### Square-footage

The Commission was concerned about how the square footage for the 301 Park Street property had been increased so much. The original plan had been to work within the confines of the 8,300 building with nothing built or added onto it. John Hansen explained that he had met with the department heads to put together a list of the spaces that they need. The increase is “circulation” space, which is used for hallways, toilets, etc. That kind of space was not taken into account on the previous space estimates. The EOC is kind of squished and there would have to be an addition to the building to correct that if need be.

#### Vestibule

There was some discussion about the vestibule space and whether or not it was essential or could be used for another purpose. Mr. Hansen explained that the area was left pretty open to house storage space for janitors, hanging coats, etc and so that the public entering the building would be able to walk in and figure out where they need to go next.

Conference rooms

It was explained that the reason there was one shared conference room and one conference room that was not shared was because the law enforcement staff indicated they could share one but needed one designated to just the SO. The Sheriff explained that a designated law enforcement room is needed if the Sheriff's Office has to set up an area to deal with a murder. Currently the staff uses a meeting room at the Rockland City Hall building instead.

Fitness Center

Mr. Hansen explained that the fitness center was on the list of "wouldn't it be nice". The issue was raised of whether or not building the fitness center would impact the parking lot. The answer was yes, it would.

Parking

A parking study has not yet been done to determine how many additional spaces may be necessary.

Total costs

The department heads were asked if they were each satisfied with the floor plan. The costs have almost doubled going from the original plan to the current plan on the table in front of them now. There was some concern that this newest plan may not be feasible.

Where to house the three departments in question

The three main options for departmental location seemed to be:

1. Patrol, EMA and KRCC all move to 301
2. Patrol and EMA at 301, KRCC remain at 327
3. KRCC and EMA at 301, Patrol remain at 327

Square foot costs are driven by whether or not it's new construction. Rearranging office space that will continue to be used as office space is far less expensive than adding new construction onto the building. Regardless of which department ended up at either location, both facilities are going to require some renovations.

Moving dispatch is very costly. On the other hand, it makes sense to keep EMA and Dispatch together. If patrol stayed where it is and dispatch moved, patrol would only gain about 300 square feet. If patrol moved out and Dispatch stayed at 327, even if some of the patrol space was given back to the jail, that still leaves space for dispatch to expand out into. Renovations at either building would not be much different from each other in terms of costs, but adding/building onto the jail would probably be far more expensive than doing the same at the 301 property.

Mr. Hansen explained that this was just the first round of trying to fit all three departments in the 301 Park Street space. It was clear early on that they were not going to fit in the existing building, so if all three departments are moved there, the County will need to add on to the existing building. Leaving one department in the 327 building might make sense, but the County could look at using some of the vestibule space and change the conference room set-up.

Communications Director Linwood Lothrop commented that he works with 39 agencies and is completely out of space.

Funding sources

Some of the funding sources for this project could come from grants, reserve, and forfeiture funds. There are grants that allow for renovating EOC spaces, but the money from the grant would only cover the EOC piece. There is currently about \$135,000 to \$140,000 in the building reserve account. There is about \$300,000 in the forfeiture account, but it can only be used for law enforcement purposes, and some of that is going to be spent on another patrol vehicle.

Every year the Budget Committee asks what has been done about the departments' space needs, which would imply that the Committee is supportive of fixing the space needs problem, but do not necessarily back the cost of solving it. If the County had been putting aside money every year for this, funding would not be such a problem.

If the County waits too long to go after grants, a lot of funding possibilities may be lost because Homeland Security funds are drying up. The EMPG programs would pay for part of the renovations for the EOC.

Going out to Bond

Administrator Hart had talked to the Maine Municipal Bond Bank and asked for figures on bond money for 20 years. It may be better to go out to bond high so if the County is unable to get enough grant money, the project would not end up being short of funding.

Justification of the project

The County needs to be able to convincingly show the taxpayers why this project is necessary. How does it benefit the three departments, the County, and the taxpayers as a whole? The current dispatch space wasn't adequate when they first moved in there, but that's all that was available at the time. EMA is having a hard time operating out of their current space too. The biggest hurdle will be the budget committee, which will have to favor it before the County gets on the ballot and has public hearings.

The Commission was concerned about how to sell a \$2 million bond to voters. If the bond got shot down the departments would all be stuck where they currently are. The project can be justified in terms of need, but the voters are going to be concerned with cost. The public needs to be educated so they can make an informed decision. In the past, the public wasn't necessarily educated and therefore didn't understand the full scope of the problem and so the project was not supported. The sheriff and EMA are getting by, but Dispatch is really hurting for space. Communications would also have the support of the dispatch advisory board because they know Director Lothrop needs the space and it affects them more.

Time frame

The county administrator and the commissioners were all concerned about the time frame that would have to be worked within to accomplish the project. There is an August 16<sup>th</sup> deadline to decide whether to go out to bond or not. It will be very tough to get everything done in time. There is not a lot of time to make decisions.

Original purpose of the jail complex

There was some question regarding whether or not the jail had been built with the intention of housing both the corrections functions but also the Sheriff and her staff as well.

Assignments

Mr. Hansen was asked to meet with Director Lothrop to look at the blueprints for the jail to see if Dispatch would have enough room if it remained at the jail with Patrol moving out. Director Lothrop agreed to meet with Mr. Hansen the next day at 1:00 p.m. Mr. Hansen said that he come up with some estimates and commented that he would try to use a contractor that would likely be chosen to do the work to get realistic cost projections.

Administrator Hart stated that he wanted to be able to show the public what the options were so that once a decision is made the County will be able to show that all options were considered prior to making that decision. The department heads will need to work with the county administrator to develop a list of the benefits for doing the project. The County can't just say it needs more space or the bond will never pass. There are three options that the County is currently reviewing:

1. Original concept as presented (move all three departments to 301 and add onto the existing building)
2. Move only EMA and patrol into 301 without adding on to the existing building
3. Move only EMA and Dispatch into 301 without adding on to the existing building

Construction time-frame

If the County bought the 301 property and was now ready to start doing construction to make changes, the actual construction time is 3 – 6 months, so it would be about a year before the departments could move in to their new areas.

- No action was taken.

**IV. Adjourn**

- A motion was made by Commissioner Carol Maines to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Richard Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Candice Richards  
Administrative Assistant

**The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting held on August 9, 2011.**