

Trumbull Veterans & First Responders Building Committee Meeting

Thursday January 29, 2026, 6:30pm

Via Zoom

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Ray Baldwin at 6:30 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

Attendance:

Ray Baldwin, Chairman
Preston Merritt
Dan Sacco
Michael Lombardo
Bruce Silverstone
Steve Lemoine
Richard Wolf
Mary Issac

Also Present:

George Wiles, Wiles Architects
Rich Infante, Trumbull Public Works
Maria Pires, Director of Finance, Town of Trumbull
Rina Bakalar, Director, Economic Development, Town of Trumbull
Jeff Anderson, Downes Construction
John Nugent, Attorney for Town of Trumbull
Ernie Foito, American Legion Commander
Graham Bissett, VFW Post 10059 Commander

Public Comment

Mr. Foito and Mr. Graham commented that they want to be able to get a building done as soon as possible even if it means downsizing it.

Approval of August 6, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Moved by Mr. Sacco and seconded by Mr. Merritt to approve the August 6, 2025 Meeting Minutes. **Vote: 8-0-0**

Discussion and motion to request up to \$700K in funding from the town of Trumbull for the completion of construction of the center should it become necessary (Bakalar & Baldwin)

Mr. Nugent stated that if committee approves this and Town Council and Board of Finance approve, we can bond the money. Once we have the bond in place between the contingency and other funding, we may not have to draw down on the bond 100%. We can replace the money from other sources and the town will not have draw down on the bond—this would mean less borrowing costs for the town, and Mr. Nugent encourages this.

Mr. Baldwin said this bond money is at the back end of the project. We have money to start construction. The estimation is that if we start in April or May, project won't be completed until next January or February. We have a lot of time to get donors in place.

Mr. Sacco said that he will vote yes on this motion but wants to make sure we understand that we're doing this project because it's good for the community and veterans are already on record saying that they are fine with a smaller building. Mr. Sacco stated that he wants to make sure it is on record that there's no misunderstanding from the veterans' standpoint that this is where they stand.

Mr. Baldwin said the view of the two commanders is very clear. Must remember that this is a town-owned building and they will want to use this facility.

Ms. Issac stated that she agrees with Mr. Silverstone that this is a monumental task that's been in process for 6 years and that building costs have escalated since then. Ms. Issac asked if the \$250K state grant has already spent? Ms. Bakalar said that the money went to veteran's organization and was used for multiple things. An account of how the funds were dispersed have been given to the state.

A discussion took place on how the \$250K was spent and explained that we have another \$200K being saved for operating expenses. Ms. Isaac asked if the Committee would entertain using this toward the 700K, in case there's no appetite. But the question is how do we pay bills to run the building. Mr. Sacco said he prefers to scale back the building rather than use the \$200K toward the project. They want to run the building without having to come back to the town to ask for more money.

There is a robust contingency of \$300K in the budget and that's part of the \$700k. We may not use this.

Mr. Lombardo asked if at some point if we raise money, would we pay back the town. Mr. Baldwin said that's the idea with the \$700K – if at the very end we find a shortfall, this is when we would draw down. Whatever money we raise will be that much less the town pays at the end.

Mr. Merritt thanked Ms. Bakalar for all her hard work.

Mr. Nugent wants everyone to understand that the project cannot go to contract without committed funds for the project. Won't be able to sign a contract without commitment for all funds. Mr. Baldwin agreed.

Mr. Wolf said he's honored to be part of the committee. Supports asking the town for the \$700k.

Ms. Tesoro stated that the committee has her full support on this project. She also wants to be absolutely sure that committee is confident that the \$700k is sufficient. She doesn't want the committee to come back again. Mr. Baldwin said this is a question for Mr. Wiles and Mr. Anderson.

Mr. Anderson said this entirely predicated on Pax's willingness to hold their bid plus value engineering. There's confidence in the professional word given by Pax. They are a reputable firm and have put in writing to Mr. Wiles, so we don't have anything to lead us to believe that Pax won't concur as long as we're in vicinity of end Feb/early March. Mr. Wiles concurred with this.

Motion made by Preston Merritt and seconded by Richard Wolf:

I make a motion that the Trumbull Veterans and First Responders Center Building Committee hereby request the Town of Trumbull to guarantee and provide funding for any construction budget shortfall for the center in an amount not to exceed \$703,000. Vote: Approved unanimously

Mr. Sacco stated that he wanted to make sure that in no way are the veterans expected to take out a loan for the building.

Discussion of Construction Timetable

Mr. Baldwin said that assuming we get approval from BoF and TC (the closest TC vote is in first Monday in March) they can pass it as emergency legislation so it goes into effect right away. If this is the case, how soon can Pax begin construction and how long will it take?

Mr. Wiles has a commitment until end of Feb but need to is to revisit with Pax to get sooner. Mr. Wiles thinks Pax would start entering contracts with subs. Mr. Wiles construction time estimation is between 9-11 months.

Mr. Anderson said if it's possible to get a contract drafted for Pax knowing we can't release until approvals occur, so they get a contract in hand ASAP. Need to allow for a month for submittals and chapter drawings to be able to start construction. Mr. Wiles said that there would be constructions activities that could get done in the meanwhile to move project along. There will be a period of mobilization that can take 30 days. Mr. Baldwin asked if it would be possible for Town Council to hold a special meeting should BoF pass this. Ms. Tesoro can ask that question. She also thnks we should have joint meeting with TC and BOF (meets Feb. 12). Ms. Issac will be point to get special meeting scheduled.

Any other related business to project

Mr. Silverstone questioned a line item in recent budget which was architectural invoices of \$185K. Not questioning the work, but question is what will fee be as we continue for remainder of project? This seems to be a growing number. Mr. Wiles said he has \$298K to finish the run. Mr. Silverstone asked Mr. Wiles if he'll be able to come in at this number. Mr. Wiles said we have stipulated contract that's now old. This contract was signed 6 years ago and has held this number since. Mr. Wiles added that also helped develop the website.

Ms Pires said need to work on new contract for Mr. Wiles which committee must approve. Mr. Baldwin asked if the current contract can just be extended. Mr. Wiles said he can discuss this with Ms. Pires and/or Mr. Nugent. Ms. Pires will review with Mr. Nugent and circle back.

Ms. Pires said that regarding bonding resolution, she will need information by next Tuesday so she can submit to Bond Council – it needs to go on agenda by Friday. Said committee should prepare a memo to BoF and needs minutes of tonight's meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Merritt and seconded by Mr. Sacco to adjourn the meeting at 7:26 pm. **Vote: 8-0-0**

Submitted by

Marisa Petriello