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Holden is digging it

Ground broken on Public Safety Building

BY MELISSA MCKEON MMCKEON@HOLDENLANDMARK.COM



Breaking ground on the Public Safety Building were (l. to r.) Building Committee Chris Lucchesi, Board of Selectmen Chair Kim Ferguson, Town Manager Brian Bullock, Police Chief George Sherrill, Fire Chief John Chandler, architect Michael McKeon of Kaestle-Boos and Clerk of the Works Rob Para Jr. Danielle Ray photo

HOLDEN - Three building committees, three ballot votes and three town meetings later, officials on June 20 finally put a shovel in the ground to herald construction of the new Public Safety Building.

Outside the soon-to-be-rehabbed 50+-year-old fire station, in sight of earth movers and piles of dirt, a dozen or so spectators heard officials thank the voters and those who brought the project to the

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"I really don't know how Chief Sherrill did this three times," Holden Fire Chief Jack Chandler told the crowd. "After the first time, I was pretty much done!"



Holden Police Chief George Sherrill, who may have been forgiven for thinking the day would never come, had a long accumulated list of folks to thank. Among them were the voters who "put their faith in the project," and the members of the Holden Police Department, who kept believing it would happen in spite of several discouraging votes.



"I didn't think I'd see this day before I retired," said Holden Fire Department Assistant Chief Alex Belisle.

Town Manager Brian Bullock praised the efforts of Public Safety Building Committee Chair Christopher Lucchesi. Bullock said Lucchesi helped meld the group into a committee that accomplished the goal they set for themselves: to find a cost-effective solution to the town's public safety building needs.



It's an accomplishment Lucchesi himself said was not a foregone conclusion.



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He recalled when the committee was "all over the place" with possible solutions to the space crunch for the fire, police and emergency services departments — one station, two stations, central locations, outlying locations, old buildings, new buildings.



Moreover, the committee was composed, intentionally, by Bullock, of people who had previously disagreed on how to solve the problem of aging facilities.

"You've heard the phrase, 'herding cats'?" Bullock said. "Then you understand Chris's challenge."

"I really believe when people who have differences sit down and talk, you can talk your way through the differences," Lucchesi said.

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While many deplored the long wait, it appears to have been good for the project: a failing economy drove bids lower than expected and meant that voters' money will go further.

"We're really buying services at the best prices for the citizen," PSBC member David White said.



The low bidder for the General Contractor was G&R Construction, Inc. of Quincy.

Officials expect the building to open in September 2010.

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