

Public Safety Property Reuse Working Group

March 30, 2022

Minutes

The Working Group participated in this meeting remotely utilizing Zoom in accordance with the Governor's March 12, 2020 Order suspending provisions of Open Meeting Law and to promote public health and social distancing.

Working Group members present: Gordon Harris, Chair, Linda Alexson, Janice Clements-Skelton, Janet Craft, Laurie Paskavitz, Jeff Poirier, John Sarni, Paul Seaman.

Also present: Ethan Parsons, Planning Director

Not present: Keith Anderson, Scott Glosserman.

Gordon Harris called the meeting to order 7:00 PM.

Citizens Queries: None.

Site Visit Follow-Up

The group discussed their impressions from the March 19th tours of the police station and fire station. Most felt the fire station has significant historical and architectural value and potential for reuse. The police station building was not as interesting, but the property has potential and could be enhanced with landscaping, making the neighborhood more attractive. Locations of both properties are an asset.

Both buildings would cost a lot of money to renovate. Funding sources other than town money could be explored. If there were an opportunity for public/private partnership, the town could control potential uses while having private financing and experience to complete the project. If either property is sold, it should be the town's responsibility to carefully vet the buyer's finances and plans to ensure the project will be completed and the building will not be left vacant as was done with the old Town Hall property.

Property Evaluation Process:

Linda and Gordon met last week with Ethan Parsons and Town Manager Tony Marino to discuss ways to streamline the process, including:

- Formulate objectives/goals (i.e., community benefit, affordable housing, project fit with neighborhood, environmentally friendly, etc.).
- Determine what is most important to the town:
 - Initial/long-term costs for renovation and maintenance
 - Municipal revenue opportunities
 - Community use
 - Opportunities for partnerships
 - Project feasibility
 - Environmental concerns, etc.

Ethan Parsons emphasized it is important to consider initial and long-term costs to town. Potential revenue should also be considered. We need to clearly define what both of the sites are (acreage, parking, other buildings, etc.).

Gordon outlined the process Beverly went through with the Briscoe Middle School: Site analysis, existing conditions, structural analysis, architectural assessment, parking assessment, handicap accessibility, landscaping, code compliance, weatherization, HVAC, electrical, water/sewage, uses conception and assessment, municipal space needs assessment, community needs assessment, cost analysis. Ethan will send those materials to the group.

The fire department is listed with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (site: MACRIS) but Gordon doesn't believe it is on the National Register, and there is no preservation agreement on the building.

There should be regular check-ins with the Select Board as to their plan for this process.

Discussion of the approval process for selling town-owned properties, whether it must go to town meeting. The sale of the old town hall, Burley School, Shatswell School and the "annex" behind town hall were examples, as was the Memorial Building that later became senior housing.

Next steps:

Survey: Ethan will send Janice information on how the Community Development Plan survey process was done. A survey could solicit residents' feedback on what they like about the sites, what they'd like to see there, etc., to get a sense of what's important to the community. Public outreach and engagement is important. The initial survey should be more of a big-picture, visioning process.

Janice and John will work on creating a survey. Group members can e-mail them with suggestions for survey questions.

Laurie and Gordon will create a list of former municipally-owned buildings.

Jeff will help research annual town meeting warrants to locate sales of town-owned buildings.

Ethan will do some research to get much clearer definition of the 2 properties, site configuration, etc.

New Business:

Public gardens status. Test borings on the new public safety site (location of the community gardens) were going to be done earlier in the year but now they will probably be done during the gardening season. Representative from the gardeners expressed to Gordon that it would be too difficult to find a new space for this year so they will plan to use the current location. The YMCA knows about the gardens not being available after this year and is exploring the possibility of offering some of their land for community gardens. The current gardens are about $\frac{3}{4}$ acre. We expect to invite the Y one of our upcoming meetings to discuss.

Janet offered to contact the gardeners' representative and the YMCA. She won't be at the next meeting but will report back to Laurie and Laurie will update the group

Approval of Minutes

Vote: Janet Craft moved to approve the March 16 minutes. Janice Clements-Skelton seconded. Motion passed via roll call vote. Laurie Paskavitz and Jeff Poirier abstained.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 13, at 7:00 PM in person.

Adjourn

Vote: Paul Seaman moved to adjourn. Jeff Poirier seconded. Motion passed unanimously via roll call vote.

Submitted by Linda Alexson