

**Planning Board
City of Newburyport
Newburyport City Hall
Meeting Minutes
February 16, 2011**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M.
A quorum was present.

1. Roll Call

In Attendance: Dan Bowie, Bonnie Sontag, Jim McCarthy, Sue Grolnic, Anne Gardner and Don Walters

Absent: Julia Godtfredsen, Henry Coe, and Paul Dahn

Emily Wentworth and Andy Port of the Planning Office were also present.

2. General Business

a) Approval of the Minutes of the January 19, 2011 meeting

Don Walters made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted.
Jim McCarthy seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

a) Annual Election of Officers

Anne Gardner nominated Dan Bowie as chairman.
Bonnie Sontag seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

Don Walters nominated Jim McCarthy as vice chairman.
Dan Bowie seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

Sue Grolnic nominated Bonnie Sontag as Secretary.
Anne Gardner seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

b) Election of Planning Board Representative to the Community Preservation Committee

Anne Gardner nominated Don Walters.

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Bonnie Sontag seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.

3. New Business

a) Symes Development

Oleo Woods OSRD/Definitive Subdivision

Informal Discussion regarding potential plan modifications

Jeff Rhuda, of Symes Development, stated that they have been in talks with the owner of the property during the last two weeks. They have secured a contract to purchase the property, conditioned on several changes to the approved permits. However, the bank has decided to go ahead with a foreclosure on the property on February 24, 2011. Symes Development will need to come to an agreement with the owner before that date.

They are looking to make changes to the architectural design of the homes that were approved, the exterior materials, and the driveway material. The new proposed plan would actually decrease the size of the homes and create much less impervious surface. Mr. Rhuda stated that they need to build to the market and that the housing that belongs on this property should not be as elaborate as what was approved before.

Board member asked what external materials are being proposed. **They would install vinyl siding instead of clapboards and poured concrete or wood walkways.**

Board member asked what the starting price of the homes would be. **The home prices would start at \$450,000.**

Board member noted that Symes Development did not use vinyl siding on the homes in Moseley Village. **Mr. Rhuda stated that that is correct and many of the homeowners are unhappy about it because they do not like having to pay for the exterior to be repainted. The Planning Director at the time imposed that there be wooden siding. They installed hardy plank in Marblehead and are getting resistance from the homeowners. They offer clapboarding as an option and most people do not want it.**

Board member stated that she did not believe that Symes would be reaching the first time home buyer market with the house design at this price. **Mr. Rhuda stated that research suggests that this is an accurate price range for current first time home buyers. They want to keep the home prices below \$500,000.**

Board member stated that she believes there needs to be some separation between the garages and the homes.

Board member stated that he believes this project would be a benefit to the City by providing open space and finally seeing this land developed. The proposal is acceptable to him. He likes the size of the homes and is comfortable with where Symes is going with the plan.

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Symes Development will work on the drainage system design with the peer review engineer.

Board member stated that he is not for or against the proposed plan. He needs more time to think about it. If the proposal is equal or better than he is for it. If it is less than what was approved, then he cannot see why the board should modify the approvals. Mr. Rhuda noted that the new plan proposes less impervious surface, better infiltration and swales, and a change in architectural design to reduce the size of the homes.

Parcel B can be subdivided and both lots would be conforming, 10,000 square foot lots.

Board member stated that if the two retention areas were minimized when redesigning the storm water system, it would be looked upon favorably by the board.

Board member noted that designing the homes with front porches would really help to create a sense of community.

4. Planning Office/Subcommittees/Discussion

a) Report on Joint “Public Benefit” Meeting of the Planning Board, Zoning Board, Historical Commission and Affordable Housing Trust

The board discussed the joint public benefit meeting. The board would like written documentation of what exactly the other boards are looking for from an application. This would provide a more formalized version of other board’s requirements. Each board learned something new about all of the other boards.

b) Discussion regarding Charter Commission recommendations affecting the Board

There is a final report that includes all of the commission’s recommendations to date. The board discussed the recommendations. The rationale for recommendations is that it helps Mayors to be strong and in control of their agenda as Mayor. The Planning Board, Zoning Board, and Conservation Commission chairmen will draft a joint letter in opposition to the recommendations to be sent to the Charter Commission. Chairman Bowie stated that the boards are not an extension of the Mayor in any community; they are supposed to have independence. The proposed recommendations diminish the boards. The board chairs have always been voted in by consensus of the other board members.

Board member stated that one result of the recommendations being enacted is that applicants would constantly be before the Mayor trying to persuade him/her to approve their application. The Mayor has authority over the Building Commissioner and has other powers. Currently, applicants can appeal to the Mayor if they are not happy with the decision of one of the boards. Ms. Sontag will call the Charter Commission consultant to see if there is a way to get the recommendations reconsidered.

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5. Adjournment

Motion made to adjourn.

Motion seconded.

Motion approved unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted, Jennifer Stone - Note Taker.