

**Newburyport Redevelopment Authority**  
City Council Chambers  
September 21, 2016  
Minutes

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Tom Salemi called a regular meeting of the Newburyport Redevelopment Authority to order at 7:00 p.m.

**2. Roll Call**

In attendance were members Tom Salemi, Leslie Eckholdt, Bob Uhlig and Andy Sidford. Marian Levy was absent. Carol Powers was also in attendance.

**3. Minutes**

The approval of the minutes of the August 17, 2016 meeting was deferred.

**4. Old Business**

**Waterfront Lot Improvements**

Wilbur Shenk represented the Waterfront Trust. Prior to the meeting he sent the NRA members revised plans for the improvement of the area between the embayment and the west lot. He said he would like to extend the retaining wall approximately 15 feet. To accomplish this, blocks from the east lot that are not being used as car stops could be transferred. He received two bids for the project and met with both bidders. The low bidder would not be available to do the work in the desired timeframe. Through discussions with the bidders, the design was refined and would now be estimated to cost \$29,000. If the DPS were to do a portion of the work, the cost could be reduced to \$27,000 or \$28,000. The timetable for the project was discussed. Mr. Shenk is concerned about planting late in the fall, especially with a water ban in place. He suggested the project be divided into two phases, with the planting being done in the spring. Bob Uhlig spoke in favor of the work being completed in the fall, saying he is concerned erosion would take place if there were no cover on the ground through the winter. Carol Powers said a contract should be received that includes a completion date for the work.

Andy Sidford moved that the NRA pay half the cost of the project provided its total cost does not exceed \$30,000 and plans and specifications are received that would provide the basis for a contract. Leslie Eckholdt seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

The parking kiosk must be moved from the Waterfront Trust's Riverside Park lot while the new islands are being constructed. The Trustees wish to place the kiosk temporarily on Somerby's Way, where it might intrude slightly into NRA property. Andy Sidford moved to approve the temporary relocation of the parking kiosk. Leslie Eckholdt seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

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September 21, 2016

Bob Uhlig moved to approve the installation of a light pole base on NRA property with the condition the area is restored after the work has been completed. Andy Sidford seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

The NRA will share with the Waterfront Trust the expense that was incurred when planks were ground down on the portion of the boardwalk that is on NRA property.

**Custom House Lawn Maintenance**

A volunteer who has been taking care of the lawn behind the Custom House does not wish to continue the work next year. Michael Mroz said the lawn gets a great deal of use. He is seeking separate bids for the irrigation, fertilization and maintenance of the lawn. The NRA members asked him to inquire about adding the work to the maintenance contract for the Waterfront Trust's lawn. The park is mowed every Friday. Mr. Mroz commented the Custom House lawn is frequently used for events on Fridays and mid week mowing would be preferable.

**Pop Up Park**

The public restrooms are scheduled to close on October 15. Tom Salemi will send an email to the City stating the NRA supports keeping the restrooms open longer in the season. One picnic table has been moved from its location near to the berm to Waterfront Park. The remaining two tables will be moved as well. Umbrellas at these tables will not be need in their new location. Leslie Eckholdt will order a new rib for one of the umbrellas in the Pop Up Park. She will also contact Wilbur Shenk about coordinating the required end-of-season maintenance for the irrigation system. Bob Uhlig moved to authorize Tom Joy to replace the faucet in the bed for a cost not to exceed \$100. Andy Sidford seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Parking Agreement**

A new parking agreement has not yet been negotiated. The increased rates are in effect but all other terms remain the same at the current time.

**Discussion of Future Needs**

The Ad Hoc Waterfront Committee asked the NRA to prepare a revised vision for the future of the waterfront. Tom Salemi said plans for the waterfront should include the provision of a sufficient amount of parking and an expanded open space. There must be adequate revenue to support the park. He does not wish this to be the responsibility of the taxpayer.

Andy Sidford said there is a consensus the park should be expanded. In his opinion the City should not own the property because it was once private land. A group that is a melding of the Waterfront Trust and NRA should oversee it. It should be independent of the City Council.

Bob Uhlig said the park should be expanded along the water to the east and the west. Any buildings should be placed along the street and not within the park. He said the expanded park must be large enough to be meaningful and useful. He said the gap between buildings at the entrance to the east lot could provide the opportunity for a

development parcel that could be used to fund the park. The bottom of Green Street could remain open and a public space could be added near the Custom House.

Leslie Eckholdt pointed out the Ad Hoc Committee has requested an approximate map of land distribution be completed by September 27. She said the expectation seems to be that the design would be developed after the land has been distributed. Andy Sidford said much work must be done before the property could be transferred. He said it is more important to do it properly than to expedite it. The revision of the Trust documents would also take longer than was allowed under the Ad Hoc Committee's timeline. He said the dissolution of the NRA is not as important as getting the job right.

Carol Powers discussed the revisions to the Trust documents. She said changes must be made to the corporate form, such as the way in which officers are elected. It would not be possible to complete the revisions in the timeframe the Ad Hoc Committee put forth. The process would be a laborious one and the probate court must be involved. She added there should be a perpetual source of revenue for the maintenance of the park.

Bill Harris said movement is being made towards a consensus on the future of the waterfront. He would like to increase the park from the waterside. In his vision, the roll of the Harbormaster would be expanded. More revenue would be generated from the water and the Trust would be less dependent on parking income.

Andy Sidford and Bob Uhlig will prepare drawings for discussion at the next meeting. They said their goal is to facilitate the design process rather than generating an NRA design.

Leslie Eckholdt said she is concerned the public does not have access to the Ad Hoc Committee meetings.

### **5. Public Comment**

Wilbur Shenk asked if the NRA members would want their property to be transferred to the Waterfront Trust. He pointed out three members have indicated they would not want it to be given to the City. Mary Fitzsimmons, 7 Arlington Street, said the NRA property would be in jeopardy if it were not transferred to the Waterfront Trust.

### **6. Treasurer's Report**

Leslie Eckholdt reported that on August 31 the balance in the checking account was \$12,102.49 and the balance in the money market account was \$225,701.09. Bob Uhlig moved to approve a payment to Gretchen Joy in the amount of \$150 for minute taking for the September meeting; to Tom Joy in the amount of \$145 for Pop Up Park maintenance; to the Greenskeeper in the amount of \$150 for the maintenance of the planters in the parking lot in August; to the Waterfront Trust in the amount of \$1,370.87 for landscape maintenance in September; and to Rockingham Electric in the amount of \$80.16. Leslie Eckholdt seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

### **7. Secretary's Report**

The next meeting will be scheduled for Thursday, October 6 at 7:00 p.m.

**8. Council's Report**

Carol Powers discussed her efforts to find an attorney to work on issues involving the submerged tidelands. She will contact DEP about the matter. She submitted an invoice for her services for approval at the next meeting. The invoice includes a charge of \$1 per message for 1,368 emails with Tom Salemi in 2015 and 2016.

**9. Adjournment**

Leslie Eckholdt moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:33 p.m. Bob Uhlig seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.