

October 26, 2005

In Attendance: Jan Marcus, Erford Fowler, Nathaniel Norton, Rick Taintor, and note taker Diana Lord.

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by chairperson Jan Marcus, who presented the agenda for the meeting.

Jan asked that the group move the design review of Agave Mexican Bistro to the beginning of the Agenda, and all agreed. Owner Dawn McCandless proposed replacing eight windows located on the second and third floors, on the street side of 50 State Street with Pella true-divided light windows. She will also be replacing the windows on the rear of the building. A sample of the window was presented by Ms. McCandless. **Motion made and seconded: To approve this application.** This motion passed unanimously.

The Minutes of the September 28, 2005 Meeting were reviewed and edited. **Motion made and seconded: To approve the September 28, 2005 Minutes as edited.** This motion passed unanimously.

Nat Norton presented the Treasurer's Report dated October 26, 2005. He noted that the loan balance is \$5,000 less than reported, since the third quarter payment of \$5,000 had been recently made. He also noted that he was talking with a loan officer at the bank to determine the viability of locking into a lower interest rate (presently at 6.75%). Jan suggested that the group consider putting \$60,000 to \$65,000 into a short-term certificate of deposit since this would garner a more competitive rate than leaving the money in the money market account. It was noted that \$30,000 to \$35,000 appears to be the amount needed to fund operations annually. Nat will gather more information on this proposal from the loan officer. Jan also recommended that the end-of-year payment to the bank be increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Jan and Nat are working on five-year long-range financial plan for the NRA.

Jan reported that Mary Lou requested that the NRA schedule an additional meeting in November to discuss the public questionnaire and results of the parking survey. It was agreed that this meeting would be held on November 15, 2005 at 6:00 PM. Jan will determine space availability and advise the members of the meeting location. Neither Erford nor Diana will be available for this meeting. Diana will attempt to schedule a stand-in note taker.

Regarding the property survey, Nat noted that will contact Carol Powers to determine the status of the deed research. He also stated that the surveyor would need access to city records, old maps, etc. Erford suggested that Nat coordinate access with the city clerk's office. Nat also reported that he had informally discussed shared parking with the Lagasse group last month. They will be asking their architect to consider this suggestion. Nat proposed that the city and the NRA ask the planning office about the availability of funds for a more professional and in-depth parking occupancy survey. He suggested that all lots be surveyed in order to determine a pattern of use. All agreed to keep the parking survey on the NRA agenda.

Rick Taintor and the group reviewed his e-mail of October 17, 2005 presenting draft zoning ordinance amendments to replace the external sign regulations of the Urban Renewal Area. The group complimented Rick on a job well done. A discussion regarding enforcement followed, and it was agreed the NRA's role should be formalized regarding jurisdiction. Rick noted that the sign book makes the regulations enforceable; however, the sign book does not make the NRA the enforcer. Jan suggested that each year the NRA identify one member to perform a walk around to bring egregious sign violations to the attention of the NRA, which would then ask that the building inspector issue a letter to the violator.

Jan proposed that when the NRA makes its presentation of draft zoning ordinance amendments to the city council, the cover letter should suggest that the council consider expanding the design review beyond the Urban Renewal Area to include the central business district and also that the language should be expanded to include sandwich boards and sidewalk displays. Jan suggested that all signage should be processed through a board of architectural review, which would have responsibilities beyond the scope of signs. Rick agreed to draft such a cover letter setting forth the discussion points. Erford noted that he will sponsor the proposed amendments, and the city clerk will assist the NRA in scheduling and preparing the presentation to the city council. Erford suggested that the proposed amendments be targeted for the second city council meeting in January, at which time the proposal will be referred to the planning and development committee of the city council. Erford stated that the Chamber of Commerce has formed a committee working on a proposal to help the city regulate sandwich boards and sidewalk displays. Erford will talk with Bill Piercey and follow-up with Rick in terms of content for the cover letter.

Erford asked Rick if other communities fine violators of sign regulations. Rick answered in the affirmative, noting that \$300/day is the norm. It was agreed that the cover letter to the city council would also present the possibility of fines for violations.

Jan stated she would like the RFP for the new parking attendants to be issued in January 2006, meaning it would need to be reviewed by the NRA in December. Erford suggested that an advertisement be placed with the Massachusetts Municipal Association and Rick suggested that the group also consider using the Good & Services Bulletin. Nat suggested that the group consider expanding collection times beyond weekends, and Rick mentioned charging only for the West lot on weekdays. Members expressed concern about charging during the week since this would affect the downtown workforce. It was agreed by all that this conversation should remain on the table.

Regarding an RFP for food vendors, all agreed that a meeting should be held with the Waterfront Trust to discuss this matter. Jan will ask Mary Lou about the timeframe for such a meeting.

**Motion made and seconded:** To adjourn the meeting at 7:30 PM. This motion was passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana J. Lord, Recorder