

Newburyport Redevelopment Authority
City Council Chambers
October 6, 2016
Minutes

1. Call to Order

Acting Chair Bob Uhlig called a regular meeting of the Newburyport Redevelopment Authority to order at 7:08 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Leslie Eckholdt, Bob Uhlig and Andy Sidford. Marian Levy and Tom Salemi were absent.

3. Minutes

Leslie Eckholdt moved to approve the minutes of the September 21, 2016 meeting. Andy Sidford seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

4. Old Business

Waterfront Lot Improvements

Bob Uhlig said the NRA is working to create a framework for an expanded park rather than designing one. Open space must be added in a meaningful way to both the east and the west. Accessibility and views to the river must be enhanced and year-round restrooms added. The amount of parking should be reduced so that the number of spaces does not exceed 240, rather than the 340 that currently exist. Finally the Rail Trail must be located in such a way that a conflict between cyclists and pedestrians would not exist. Andy Sidford said the NRA is a steward of the land and would not dissolve until a unified plan for the waterfront has been developed.

The discussion began with a review of the plans that have been created over the years. Two current NRA conceptual plans have been developed based on the commonalities between these past designs. Past plans have all included an increase in the amount of green space, usually near the water, and a decrease in the amount of space allocated for parking. The plans have differed in the way the open space would be filled, but these details are not being considered at this time. The primary decisions would involve the size and shape of an expanded park.

The two current plans differ from each other with regards to the location in which the Rail Trail would cross the park. Also, one plan would offer a visual corridor between the street and the water while the other would include a radial geometry to the east and west from Market Landing Park. In both plans the parking areas would be buffered with green space so that cars would be less visible from the street. More open space would be added near the water.

Some members of the public were concerned about the Ways to the Water. Bob Uhlig said a strict adherence to their historic alignment would create many different spaces of the same size and would limit the park design. Instead the ways might be recognized but given a different form. They might not not be paved their entire length.

The response to the plans by the members of the audience was favorable. The plan with the radial geometry was preferred. The audience members expressed interest in expanding the park area to the west of Upper Custom House Way. They also wished for a more literal representation of the Ways to Water to be added to the plan.

The conceptual plans will be refined for further discussion at the next meeting. The next step would be to identify funding sources for the construct of an expanded park and a mechanism for funding its maintenance.

5. Treasurer's Report

A copy of a letter to Mayor Holaday was received. The letter was sent from a woman who fell on ice on NRA property in December. She is seeking \$12,500 for lost wages and pain and suffering. The expense should be covered under the City's insurance policy.

Bob Uhlig moved to authorize payments not to exceed \$300 each for a new rib for an umbrella and to winterize the irrigation system. Andy Sidford seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Leslie Eckholdt reported that on September 30 the balance in the checking account was \$11,473.60 and the balance in the money market account was \$258,475.83. A check for approximately \$30,000 for parking revenue from July was received but has not yet been deposited. Andy Sidford moved to approve a payment to Gretchen Joy in the amount of \$150 for minute taking for the October 6 meeting; to Tom and Gretchen Joy in the amount of \$265 for Pop Up Park maintenance from September 18 to October 8 and irrigation system repair; to the Greenskeeper in the amount of \$150 for the maintenance of the planters in the parking lot in September; and to Carol Powers in the amount of \$22,200 for 111 hours of legal services between December 2014 and August 2016. Leslie Eckholdt seconded the motion. She recommended that beginning October 1 legal bills should be received for a maximum period of one quarter. The motion was unanimously approved.

6. Secretary's Report

A meeting to present an updated park plan will be scheduled for Wednesday, October 26 at 7:00 p.m. The next regular business meeting will be scheduled for Wednesday, November 9 at 7:00 p.m.

7. Council's Report

None

8. Adjournment

Bob Uhlig moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:47 p.m. Andy Sidford seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.