

Newburyport Redevelopment Authority
City Council Chambers
October 8, 2014
Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Tom Salemi called a regular meeting of the Newburyport Redevelopment Authority to order at 7:06 p.m.

2. Roll Call

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

3. Minutes

Bob Uhlig moved to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2014 meeting as amended. Leslie Eckholdt seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

4. Election of Officers

Bob Uhlig moved to reappoint Tom Salemi as Chair. Leslie Eckholdt seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Andy Sidford moved nominated Bob Uhlig for the position of Vice Chair. Leslie Eckholdt seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

5. Harbormaster's Facility

Bob Uhlig recused himself from the discussion. The City is in the process of seeking an Order of Conditions from the Conservation Commission for the proposed Harbormaster's facility, along with a Chapter 91 license from the State, and the site plan review process is being followed for the Planning Board. Because elements of the project would be on NRA land, Geordie Vining requested that the Chair sign as a co-applicant for the permits. As a part of the project the fishermen's monument would be moved to NRA property. The sewer line that would run along Custom House Way to the new facility would cross NRA land at the access road to the fish pier.

Mr. Vining requested the AUL on Waterfront Trust land be released. Carol Powers said she has prepared a release for the AUL on the west side of Custom House Way. She said she did not know it extended to the opposite side of the way and would need a plan reference in order to be able to release it.

The NRA is being asked to allow the fishermen's monument to be placed on its property. There would be no conveyance of land. Ms. Powers said the NRA would need to be compensated for the right to use the land. She said the NRA is under a legal obligation to receive full and fair market value for the use of its property. Mr. Vining responded that while he understands the NRA's need to collect revenue, the revenue is to be used to enhance public spaces, which is a goal of the project. Ms. Powers added that

there is no existing easement or legal document that allows vehicles to travel across NRA land to access the fish pier.

Leslie Eckholdt suggested the material for the access road be of something other than asphalt. Mr. Vining said additional resources from the City or the NRA would be needed if the project were to be expanded beyond the Harbormaster's facility.

Tom Salemi moved to authorize the chair to sign the permits with the understanding that as the design elements are defined, the plans are presented to the NRA, which will have final approval of the design of its property.

6. Transfer of Rights of Submerged Tidelands

Leslie Eckholdt said she and Carol Powers spent a day conducting research at the land court in Boston. They will continue to actively work on the issue and might have a report for the next meeting.

7. DEP Site Work

Tom Salemi said Adam Guild authorized ESS to begin work. A report must be submitted to DEP in November.

8. Joint Meeting with City Council

The members commented that the conversation with City Councilors was beneficial. They would be interested in holding a second joint meeting after a plan for their property has been developed. They might wish to pursue CPA funding at that time.

9. Dumpster

Carol Powers distributed the revised agreement for the dumpster area. The amount of compensation is to remain the same. The dumpster is to be emptied at least twice a week and more if the amount of use requires it. The Board of Health will be named on the signage on the enclosure as the contact for safety issues. The restaurant will be informed the enclosure must be locked.

Leslie Eckholdt moved to approve the lease agreement. Andy Sidford seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

10. Public Space

The members agreed they wish to pursue the acquisition of furniture to expand the park in small areas in 2015. Bob Uhlig will present alternatives at the next meeting. The City is in the process of going out to bid for the re-grading of the parking lots. This would be an opportunity to reconfigure the lots to accommodate the furniture.

Leslie Eckholdt said the parking lot was not clean after the Riverfront Music Festival. She said that while the City is responsible for the maintenance of the lots, the NRA members should be more involved with the care of their property. She suggested they each be responsible for walking through the property once a week. She would be responsible for the first week each month, Bob Uhlig the second, Andy Sidford the third and Adam Guild the fourth. Any concerns would be conveyed to the City Clerk.

11. Parking Agreement

The parking agreement with the City will expire December 31 and should be revised before being renewed. The number of spaces should be reduced and the maintenance of the lots and meters discussed.

12. Tree Maintenance

Bob Uhlig met with Joe Brown and Edith Heyck to assess the condition of the trees on Waterfront Trust and NRA properties. He said in general the trees are in good condition with the exception of those near the parking lots. He made recommendations on pruning and removal and identified the trees that present hazards. A joint meeting with the Waterfront Trust to tour the properties will be scheduled for November 1 at 8:00 a.m.

13. Annual Report

The NRA is obligated only to file its annual report with the Mass. Department of Housing and Community Development, but will make a copy available to the Planning Office as well.

14. Secretary's Report

Leslie Eckholdt said she contacted Patty Dorfman about the duties of the secretary, one of which is the posting of meetings. She would like to set the dates for the meetings for the upcoming year. She will notify the Mayor's office, the City Clerk and the Custom House that she is the contact person for the NRA. She will speak with Dianne Boisvert about keeping the website up to date.

15. Treasurer's Report

Adam Guild was not present to give the Treasurer's report. Leslie Eckholdt moved to authorize Adam Guild to pay the National Grid bill. Andy Sidford seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

16. Mission Statement

At the joint meeting with the City Council the NRA members were asked if the mission statement would be changing. Carol Powers prepared a memo on the history of the NRA to provide context for the mission statement. She said the language of the mission statement was derived from statute.

Leslie Eckholdt said in her opinion the mission statement is dated and the NRA should not be bound by it. She said housing or businesses are not needed on NRA land and the direction is towards open space. Andy Sidford said the tasks of redevelopment authorities have changed, as they are facing different challenges now than they did in the past. Bob Uhlig said the City lacks sufficient funding to create and maintain parks and NRA should address this issue collaboratively with City officials.

17. Upcoming Meetings

Upcoming meetings will take place on November 12 and December 10.

18. Public Comment

Joanie Purinton thanked Carol Powers for her summary on the history of the NRA. She said the redevelopment authorities were created to revitalize blighted areas and are now going out of business all over the country as blighted areas are being eliminated. She said the waterfront is not a blighted area and does not need to be revitalized. She offered to establish a fund for the park, saying many people would be happy to contribute.

Joe DiBiasi said he believes the parking lots are a blighted area. He would like to think in terms of keeping the waterfront accessible rather than open and recommended the mission statement not be changed.

Sandy Small said the NRA had succeeded in its mission when the downtown is viewed as a whole.

Rob Germinara said he likes the spirit of cooperation he heard during the meeting.

Joe Brown said the NRA has done a good job of redeveloping State Street and Inn Street. He said revenues from central waterfront parking should be used to maintain the park.

A discussion took place on how volunteers might work to expand and maintain the park. The members of the Committee for an Open Waterfront would be a source for volunteers and might be able to assist with grant writing.

19. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.