

NEWBURYPORT REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
Minutes of Meeting – November 15, 2005

In attendance:

Janet Marcus, Mary Lou Supple, Nathaniel Norton, Rick Taintor.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by Chair Janet Marcus.

Old Business

1. Firehouse property.

Janet Marcus noted that follow-up is needed on the required quarterly cleanup around the dumpsters, and she will contact the Firehouse to request a report on the quarterly cleanup.

2. Custom House.

Jan noted that the Maritime Society has put some funds into property upgrades at the Custom House, which is NRA property. She volunteered to write to the Society to request a summary of investments and expenditures.

3. NRA Attorney

Jan reported that Carol Powers will not be able to continue serving as the NRA's legal counsel due to serious health problems. Jan emphasized the importance of completing the deed restriction during 2006, and asked members to identify other attorneys who might be able to provide legal assistance.

4. Sign Regulations

Rick Taintor distributed a draft cover letter to the City Council regarding the proposed zoning ordinance amendments relating to sign regulations in the Urban Renewal Project Area. Members will review the draft letter and the proposed zoning amendments for the November 30 meeting.

5. Land Survey

Nat Norton noted that the surveyor is getting ready to start the survey of the NRA's waterfront properties, but needs the research on deeds from the Salem Registry. It was not clear whether Carol Powers had instructed a deed researcher to start this work. Mary Lou and Jan will follow up on this.

6. Questionnaire on Downtown Parking and Waterfront Lots

Members discussed the planned questionnaire on the use of the waterfront lots and on downtown parking facilities. Mary Lou Supple questioned whether distributing a questionnaire would be useful since the Mayor-elect has such a strong opinion on the direction that the City should take. Nat suggested that the NRA communicate with Mayor-elect Moak regarding the NRA's interest in converting a significant amount of land at the waterfront from parking to an expanded park.

Nat also suggested that the NRA meet with Mayor Clancy regarding the status of State funding for parking facilities in downtown Newburyport. Mary Lou stated that the funding will disappear unless the City moves forward with the construction of a parking garage in combination with expansion of the waterfront park. Nat suggested that Mayor-elect Moak may intend to continue pursuing the State grant funds in some way.

Members discussed the relationship between the park/parking issue and the City's fiscal position. Concerns were also raised about how the questionnaire will be presented, and in particular the need to avoid the appearance that the NRA would make its decision about the waterfront lots through a referendum process.

It was agreed that the questionnaire should include a presentation of facts so that respondents can provide informed opinions. Among the points that should be highlighted are:

- The NRA is an independent agency;
- The NRA, not the City, is the owner of the waterfront lots;
- The NRA has a responsibility to the City to use this land in the best manner;
- The NRA intends to adopt a deed restriction that will permanently define the extent of parking and other uses of its waterfront property,
- The NRA supports the use of outside funding (state and federal) for both park expansion and creation of parking facilities;
- The NRA is looking for community input on appropriate uses of these parcels;
- There is room to expand the park area without impacting the parking demand and supply equation for all but a few weekends in the year.

Mary Lou and Rick will draft preliminary questions, to be emailed to members in advance of the November meeting.

It was agreed to invite Mayor-elect Moak to the NRA's December 21 meeting to discuss the waterfront lots and downtown parking issues.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Taintor