

NEWBURYPORT REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Meeting Minutes

February 25, 2009

7:00 P.M.

In Attendance: Nat Norton, Rick Taintor, James Shanley, and Tim Brennan

Absent: Patty Dorfman

Public Comments

There was no public comment.

Sign / Façade Applications / Waterfront use requests

Black Dog - Sign

The applicant previously submitted the appropriate paperwork and pictures of the proposed signage. The sign will be projecting perpendicular on a mahogany-type sign post. The proposed sign will be made of high density foam, with embossed graving, and the trim on the sign will be Essex green and maroon. It will be an oval sign with signage on both sides. They would also like to install a trail board-type of sign that would indicate The Black Dog General Store and an additional single-sided oval sign above the side entrance to the building. The oval signs are 33 x 43 in size. The applicant displayed an example of the proposed double-sided oval sign.

Mr. Brennan made a motion to approve the sign application with the addition of the single-sided oval sign.

Mr. Taintor seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

Local Historic District Study Committee

Sarah White and Linda Smiley of the Historic Study Committee were present to discuss the local historic district study. The committee was formed in 2007.

A national register historic district does not protect historic assets. They can review and present a mitigation plan but the plan does not have to be put in place. A local historic district only protects the exterior of a house that is visible from a public way. An overview of the Local Historic District Study Committee was given. They are in the process of writing guidelines and an ordinance. In Massachusetts, an LHD is not part of the zoning code. The committee took a public opinion survey to see what people know about the Local Historic District and what is protected within it. They sent out about 2500 surveys and got 896 surveys back. The margin of error was plus or minus three percent. The majority of people either wanted an LHD or wanted more information about it. The majority of respondents had lived in Newburyport for a long period of time.

Board member asked how LHD enforces historic regulations if not part of the zoning.

Response:

There is a process (Building Inspector puts a stop work ordinance and/or a meeting with Merrimack Valley Planning) and steps to take but no formula for what would happen if LHD regulations are violated. There can be different LHD's within the city and every LHD can have separate guidelines. They are trying to make guidelines applicable to the neighborhoods within that LHD.

Discussion of current sign review process.

Mr. Taintor has drafted by-laws for the sign approval process in the downtown area. There is a sign review process where an applicant has to come before the NRA and get sign approval before they can get a building permit if they want to put up a sign in the downtown. Currently, it's an unclear process. If the LHD comes into play, there would still be a mechanism within the zoning ordinance to regulate signage in the downtown.

The sign book allows more signage than the NRA allows. There are a number of problems with the sign review process right now. Mr. Taintor is trying to codify things that make sense that are different than the sign book and to expand the area to something that makes sense. Local Historic District is concerned with color and style so that it might make sense to have them review signs in the LHD. A third option is having a board that is focused on design review.

Linda Smiley suggested that if an LHD is formed then if the NRA has established sign review guidelines that the LHD could then take purview over sign approval. The LHD does not have much experience with sign review and would look to the NRA to provide language for the guidelines.

If there is a Newburyport National Register Historic District it would make sense to have some authority over sign review or at least be able to state it's position on specific sign requests in the downtown area. There should be a ZBA safety valve in case the LHD sign review process is not working well.

Discussion of how the NRA, Zoning Board, and LHD would be involved in the sign review process. The NRA is looking to streamline the process and ensure a uniform look throughout the downtown.

Linda Smiley stated that the NRA has much more stringent regulations than what the Historical Commission would be looking at from a historic perspective.

NRA cannot find any documentation of the NRA's authority to oversee design review process for signs.

Approval of meeting minutes

Minutes of the January 28, 2009 meeting.

Approval of minutes deferred to the March 18, 2009 meeting.

Treasurer's report

There is \$124,000 in the savings account and a zero balance in checking. There is still an outstanding check for \$598 to Salisbury Landscaping. Mr. Norton just gave Salisbury Landscaping that check. Mr. Brennan just got an additional bill from them. It appears that Salisbury Landscaping's numbers are incorrect.

Rick Taintor made a motion to approve payment of \$150 for meeting minutes and \$397.76 to National Grid.

James Shanley seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Norton also has invoices for \$540.51 and \$165.42 to VHB for LSP services.

Mr. Norton asked about the line of credit with the bank. Mr. Brennan stated that it appears that the bank closed it out but he has not talked to them yet.

MA Development Grant Application

James Shanley has begun to fill out the application. Discussion of information that must be submitted. Mr. Shanley will meet with Carol to get more detailed information on what to include on the application.

Mr. Norton noted that Tanya had suggested looking at the whole lot. Discussion of what to include in the scope of the request. Discussion of when federal EPA funds will be available for this type of site testing and assessment.

Park Planning

Board agreed that concept plan is acceptable. Mr. Taintor will speak to the Cecil Group to obtain a cost estimate before having a public meeting. The public meeting will be scheduled for late April or early May.

LSP Proposals

Mr. Norton reviewed all of the proposals and tried to come up with a short list of proposals that the NRA can review in further depth. He narrowed it down to seven out of the seventeen proposals. Most of them seem to be in the \$25,000-30,000 cost range. Discussion of whether to have interviews with candidates or just ask questions over the phone. Mr. Norton stated for the record that he is currently negotiating a job with Ty and Bond. Mr. Norton suggested that board members meet next week to give everyone time to review all of the proposals before making a selection. Board members will meet on Tuesday, March 3, 2009 at 6pm.

NRA correspondence / news

Email from Cliff about pay-to-park machines. Mr. Norton has a meeting with the Mayor to talk about snow removal, maintenance of the parking lot, and parking. Mr. Shanley had a conversation with the Mayor who agreed that there needs to be more contact between the NRA, the Mayor, and the City.

Mr. Shanley asked if the board members would want to fund his enrollment in the PPS conference in Savannah, GA. It would be \$750 for the conference, airfare and room for about \$500. On March 13, 2009.

Mr. Taintor made a motion to spend approximately \$1250.

Mr. Brennan seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

Rick Taintor stated that on April 1st and 2nd there will be a Summit on Sustainable Cities in Portsmouth, NH. www.cnunewengland.org Summit 2030.

Adjournment

Mr. Shanley motioned to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Taintor seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:56 P.M.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Stone

Minute Taker