

Newburyport Redevelopment Authority

2/28/07

7:00 pm

Present: Janet Marcus, Nat Norton, Erford Fowler, Rick Taintor, and Tim Brennan.
Atty. Carol Powers also attended.

Ms. Marcus said that she spoke with Carol Wolfe at DHCD, who is John Fitzgerald's senior. She stated that there was no such thing as an Urban Renewal Completion Plan and DHCD would be disinterested in reviewing one. She said that the NRA owns the property and the only requirement they have is to develop the property using public input and conform to the needs and desires of the community. She also said that if parking was proposed, it must be in a central area and be paid parking. Ms. Wolfe was unable to attend this meeting but said she would be available in the future to talk with the group if desired.

Minutes:

The minutes of 1/24/07 were approved as amended. Mr. Taintor noted that out of 13 people at the pre-proposal meeting, 11 groups were represented, and only two companies that attended didn't respond. Mr. Taintor motioned to approve the minutes and Mr. Fowler seconded. They were approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Norton reported that there was a total of \$20,705.11 in the two NRA accounts. Payments were made to National Grid, the note taker, and a bank fee for excess transactions in the money market account. \$114.33 was received in interest income. Members discussed the cost of electricity and whether or not the lights were on a sensor. Mr. Norton also recommended taking out enough funds to cover the cost of the park planning contract prior to signing contracts. Atty. Powers also said that she has arranged for a college student to index the NRA files so she would be submitting an invoice for that soon. Mr. Taintor motioned to accept the Treasurer's Report and Mr. Brennan seconded. The motion was approved 5-0.

Sign/Façade Applications

Representatives from the Phoenix Room were in attendance. They said they had submitted an application to the Planning Office however, it was not signed off by Mr. Sidford, and the Planning Office never received the application. The application was for an awning and a second floor sign on Inn Street. Ms. Marcus noted several errors on the application. She said that the applicant needed the building owner's signature (or signature of whomever the corporation designates as the signatory), the applicant should be listed as Jim Rogers, and the business owner's address must be included. Mr. Taintor noted several different frontage figures on the application. He also questioned if the NRA could approve the signage because it was on the second floor and is not allowed. The members discussed how to proceed with the application noting its errors and the fact that second floor signage was not allowable. It was decided that Mr. Taintor would draft a motion denying the application and making a recommendation

to the Zoning Board, which would alert them to the NRA's concerns. It would also give the applicant more time to complete the application. Mr. Taintor said that he would have the motion ready by the next meeting, which was then scheduled to be at 7pm on Wednesday, March 7, 2007. Mr. Rogers said he would submit the completed application by March 6th.

Mr. Brennan left the meeting.

An application for signage was received by Arthur S. Page Insurance Agency. Mr. Sidford signed off on the application and noted that a 10' clearance to the sidewalk must be adhered to. The application was approved 4-0 on the condition that there would be a 10' clearance over the sidewalk.

An application for a sign and an awning was received by A to Z Method, Pleasant Street. Amanda Mulholland, owner, added her home address and phone number to the application. Mr. Taintor asked the applicant what the reason was for the frosting on the front corner windows. Ms. Mulholland said that her business is an exercise studio and she wanted the frosting in order to give her clients some privacy. Mr. Norton asked if she had considered shades instead. Ms. Mulholland said that she wanted to get the maximum light and felt the frosting would give a cleaner look. Mr. Taintor suggested frosting only the Unicorn Street side and leaving the front alone. The proposed awning was to be black and white, similar style to the two awnings next door. The group questioned whether the existing sign that would be replaced was actually a second floor sign. Mr. Marcus suggested lowering the sign to the brick wall adjacent to the Unicorn Street window. Mr. Norton motioned to approve the relocated sign and awning and Mr. Taintor seconded. It was approved 4-0.

RFPs for Park Planning

Seven responses were received by the Planning Department. Ms. Marcus said that the amount of responses received showed the great interest in the project. Mr. Fowler asked Mr. Taintor to draft a score sheet to assist in the choosing of a planner. Mr. Taintor suggested choosing up to three respondents to be short listed by Wednesday's meeting. He also suggested asking Planning Director Nancy Colbert to assist with the review of the RFPs. Ms. Marcus suggested inviting Council members if Ms. Colbert was to be present in order to represent both the legislative and executive branches of government. Mr. Fowler and Mr. Taintor didn't feel it was necessary to get the Council involved at this point as Ms. Colbert or her representative would only be sharing their expertise in an advisory capacity. A short list of potential planners would be decided upon at the 3/7 meeting. It was agreed that interviews for the short listed planners would be held on 3/26 and a winner would be selected at the regular meeting of 3/28.

RFP for Summer Parking

Ms. Marcus drafted an RFP for summer parking. She requested all additional comments to be submitted to her by 3/2/07. Mr. Taintor would have the notice put in the Goods and Services bulletin. Ms. Marcus said she would call Standard Parking as a courtesy to let them know the RFP would be released shortly. Mr. Taintor suggested

adding that the contract would have a renewal option. Mr. Norton asked if they should remove the \$8 parking fee for Yankee Homecoming. Ms. Marcus said that they have already been charging that amount for three years and would result in a reduction of income which was needed to finance the park project.

Ms. Marcus also noted that the NRA submitted a CPA application for funding for a park planner. She suggested applying again next year.

Parking Lots

Ms. Marcus noted that there were two or three abandoned cars in the East lot that would have to be towed. She also mentioned that there are commercial vehicles permanently parked in the West Lot that would need to be taken care of. In addition, there was an outstanding bill from Salisbury Landscaping for \$800. The Firehouse submitted a check to the NRA in the amount of \$250. The members decided to pay the remainder of the bill as soon as possible. Mr. Fowler also requested that they get quotes for landscaping services prior to having any additional work done.

Trash Storage

Ms. Marcus said that the Firehouse's lease has expired for use of the trash area. She said that the City has yet to take ownership of the area so she suggested a new lease. As the former manager of Not Your Average Joe's is gone, she felt that the NRA should reassert their ownership through NYAJs and the Firehouse. As the restaurant should be doing well financially, the NRA may consider charging for the use of the area. Mr. Norton suggested putting in language to cover the cost of the maintenance of the lot due to the delivery trucks using the area. Mr. Fowler suggested inviting the Firehouse and representatives of NYAJs to a meeting to discuss this matter.

Election

Mr. Fowler noted that the bylaws state that the NRA cannot elect an officer unless there was an actual vacancy on the board. Ms. Marcus then officially resigned as Chair of the NRA. Voting on officers would occur at the next meeting.

Fowler/Harris Proposal

Atty. Powers prepared a response to the draft motion submitted by Mr. Fowler which is on file in the Planning Office. She said that the NRA has City-wide planning jurisdiction and if inclined, can exercise eminent domain. The NRA also has the ability to act as their own Planning Office.

She noted that there was also very little funding sources available for Urban Renewal. Mr. Bill Harris said that he spoke with Chris McClay at DHCD who told him that it was possible to earmark funding for an Urban Renewal Plan. This would also give the NRA the opportunity to solve problems elsewhere in the City. He said that the City would be required to co-apply for some funding such as EOTC monies. He also noted that it is important to develop contacts at the top that may assist in obtaining funding. He noted that Newburyport is a model of a successful Urban Renewal and this may help them in obtaining money.

Atty. Powers thought that all past funding has been accounted for. She said that when she started representing the NRA in 1991, the NRA had no money. Once the files are indexed, she will do a close-out of the Urban Renewal funding. As of this time, there is no indication that anything is out of order.

Mr. Taintor asked if the design review authority has lapsed. He said he was uncomfortable reviewing façade changes if they were not allowed to. Atty. Powers said that she would look into this. She felt that they probably didn't have the authority to review façade changes any more.

Atty. Powers recommended against implementing an Urban Renewal Completion Plan Committee. She said she had not seen the letter from the City Solicitor and felt creating a committee would be premature since most funding sources are project specific. She also felt that the selected planner should have ideas on funding sources. Ms. Marcus suggested having a subcommittee to search for funding sources in the future. Atty. Powers said that she was consistently getting the message from the State that they don't want to be involved in any further plans the NRA proposes. She did say that the NRA should be first in line and be ready to go if and when funding becomes available. Ms. Marcus also urged members to contact federal and state politicians early in the process to raise awareness. The members did not vote on the motion since it was incomplete. Mr. Norton suggested sending a response to the Mayor anyway since he was the one to originally request a committee be formed.

Mr. Fowler asked if an audit of the financial records had been done. Ms. Marcus said that she would call Tom Ambrose to do it. Mr. Taintor suggesting having an auditor that was familiar with auditing governmental agencies.

The meeting adjourned at 9:42 PM.

Sincerely,

Dianne Eppa
Note Taker