

Newburyport Redevelopment Authority

3/28/07

7:00 pm

Present: Nat Norton, Erford Fowler, Rick Taintor, Patty Dorfman, and Tim Brennan (8pm).

Public Comment:

George Roaf asked why any sort of construction was not being considered on the waterfront lots. Mr. Norton told him that the consensus was that there weren't going to consider building on the site. Mr. Roaf asked if building was prohibited on the site. Mr. Norton said that it was not and Mr. Roaf asked for this in writing. Mr. Taintor said that there were restrictions on the property but it didn't prohibit building entirely. He said that there would be a public workshop in June to discuss the plans for the property. Mr. Norton asked Mr. Roaf to submit his parking counts that he did to the Planning Department.

Minutes:

The minutes of 2/28/07 were approved as amended. Mr. Fowler motioned the approval and Mr. Taintor seconded. They were approved unanimously.

The minutes of the 3/7/07 meeting were approved as amended. Mr. Taintor motioned, Mr. Fowler seconded, and they were approved unanimously.

Sign/Façade Applications:

Mr. Sidford did not sign off on the application for Jonesy's Jewels so the application was held over until the next meeting.

Correspondence:

Mr. Roaf submitted a request for the NRA to consider a senior center on the waterfront.

The Yankee Homecoming Committee submitted a request to use the East lot for a monster truck show. Mr. Norton said that last year the gross receipts for the same time were \$2,656. He suggested that they submit a formal application to the NRA.

Treasurer's Report:

Mr. Norton reported that the total balance in the money market account was \$20,289.66. Funds will be transferred from the line of credit once a contract with a park planner is awarded. Mr. Fowler also reported that he had not yet looked at the electric bills but Mr. Norton said that he was able to view them and noted that the bills go up in the winter months and are consistent with last year's charges. Mr. Taintor motioned to accept the Treasurer's report and Mr. Fowler seconded. The motion was approved 5-0.

Parking RFP:

Mr. Norton said that the RFP would be sent to firms that have previously been interested in providing parking attendant services. Mr. Fowler said that he would like to

see the parking fee waived for senior citizens, possibly just Newburyport residents. Mr. Norton said that he was concerned about the loss of revenue to the parking attendant. Ms. Dorfman said that she would love to see the lots open for people on a fixed income and felt it would have a good PR benefit if the NRA allowed this. She said that there are many seniors that visit the waterfront every day. She also suggested exempting Yankee Homecoming week. Mr. Taintor suggested doing this on a trial basis and to evaluate it after a month. If it impacted the operator, they could give more of the fees to the operator. Mr. Norton suggested paying the operator \$.66 for every local senior that parks in the lot since this would not affect the proposal that was issued.

Maintenance of the lots:

Mr. Fowler said that the waterfront lots needed to be cleaned up. He suggested getting bids for the work and offered to get three bids prior to the next meeting. They would discuss putting in additional plantings at a later date.

Mr. Fowler said that he met with Lt. Siemasko on signage that would allow towing cars out of the lots. Mr. Norton said that Ms. Marcus sent certified letters to car owners that were illegally parked in the lots already.

Mr. Fowler also suggested either repairing or removing the benches in the east lot as they are bent and in bad condition.

Park Designer:

(Mr. Brennan arrived. Nancy Colbert, Director of Planning and Development for the City was also present for this portion of the meeting.)

The group added scores for each of the four firms with the lowest scores being the highest ranked. Vollmer ranked highest with 46 points, followed by the Cecil Group at 48 points, Halverson at 57 points, and Dodson at 100 points. Ms. Colbert said that this clearly knocked Dodson out of the running.

Mr. Brennan said that he felt that Halverson put many conditions and disclaimers in their proposal. He said that they did well on the Market Landing Park project but he ranked them low because of their answer to the Chapter 91 regulation concerns. Mr. Fowler noted that they said they were teaming with Horsley Witten but did not say who would be in charge of what aspect of the project. Ms. Dorfman said that she was also worried about the exceptions they put in their proposal and they also spoke least about funding sources. She felt that they seemed least familiar with the property and could possibly require more funds if Chapter 91 was an issue. Mr. Taintor thought that they did very well with comparable projects but their written proposal was not as good. Ms. Colbert suggested moving on if all members agreed that Halverson was their third choice. She agreed that they did beautiful design work and showed a large range of design styles but felt they were the least familiar with Chapter 91 regulations and the waterfront issues.

Mr. Norton noted that Halverson and Vollmer showed projects that were constructed. He said that most of the Cecil Group's projects were master planning, etc. He thought that Halverson and Vollmer demonstrated that they have the capabilities of building a park while the other two did not. Mr. Brennan cited Lawrence Mills and Salem Willows as parks the Cecil Group has completed. Mr. Norton said that he felt that the most important factor was design, along with public interaction, regulatory knowledge, etc. weighing equally. He was also concerned that the Cecil Group does not have an engineer on staff as Halverson and Vollmer would. Ms. Colbert suggested narrowing the choice to the two top firms since there was such a clear division between the four groups. She added that she didn't believe that there was a wrong choice between the top three groups and felt that all were capable of doing the project.

The group then decided to focus on the top two choices. Another ballot vote resulted in the Cecil Group ranking highest with 6 points and Vollmer had 9 points.

Mr. Norton said that he was concerned that The Cecil Group does not have an engineer on staff. He also said that they have a reputation of being salesmen and was concerned about whether or not they could actually deliver. He said that one of their references complained that they got hyped on an idea that they were not in favor of which ended up wasting their time. He also said that Vollmer has the reputation of going the extra mile, while the Cecil Group would hold strict to their contract.

Mr. Taintor noted that Vollmer seemed like they weren't knowledgeable about low-impact development. He was also concerned that they wouldn't do as well with public presentations. He felt that the Cecil Group was the more exciting choice between the two. He said that the Vollmer projects didn't seem as special and Mr. Fowler agreed.

Ms. Colbert said that Vollmer has done a solid, decent job in Newburyport and they were very familiar with the waterfront. She also said that she has never had any problems with the Cecil Group and they have dealt well with the public in the past. She said that both firms have information already on the waterfront so she suggested calling the Cecil Group since they ranked first to negotiate a contract and if the members concerns were not addressed they could move on to Vollmer.

Mr. Brennan said that he chose the Cecil Group from the start as they were already familiar with the area having done the parking plan several years ago. He suggested choosing both firms to do designs so that they would have more to choose from. The other members disagreed due to time constraints and funding. Mr. Taintor felt that the NRA should be more action-oriented and choosing two firms would only get them to the public forum stage. He said that this would result in the NRA spending twice as much.

Ms. Dorfman said that the public has the impression that the NRA doesn't build consensus and is insular. She felt that this would be a unique opportunity to show the public that everyone will be involved with the project. She also said that the Cecil Group has a lot of experience in consensus building.

4 out of 5 members agreed to choose the Cecil Group with Mr. Norton being opposed. Mr. Taintor suggested asking the Cecil Group to come in to meet with members again. He thought they should prepare themselves with questions to ask about projects that have been built, price constraints, budget, engineering, etc. Mr. Brennan also asked to confirm that the previous plan that they did for the waterfront represented the maximum parking allowed on the property. Mr. Norton also suggested asking what the additional \$5,000 would be used for. Mr. Taintor said that he would notice the other firms to tell them they haven't made a decision yet but were talking with one firm. Another meeting with the Cecil Group was scheduled for 4/4/07 at 7pm.

Officers:

Mr. Taintor motioned to elect Mr. Norton as permanent Chair and Mr. Fowler seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Norton resigned as temporary Treasurer. He then motioned to appoint Mr. Brennan as Treasurer and Mr. Fowler seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Signs:

Mr. Norton said that the Sign Book was issued in the late 60s and is very outdated. By using the current Sign/Façade application, the NRA has been applying the wrong regulations. Mr. Taintor has drafted a zoning amendment that would take away the review authority from the NRA and return it to the City. Mr. Taintor said that it could be reviewed at the next meeting. Mr. Norton suggested uniformity in the entire Central Business District.

Media Communications Policy:

Mr. Norton said that it was very important to send a uniform message from the NRA so he suggested implementing a communications policy. Mr. Fowler thought that members should be allowed to speak with the media if they were not representing the NRA as a whole. Mr. Taintor suggested having a designated spokesperson for the board. Mr. Fowler said that he would not support this policy if he had to vote.

The meeting adjourned at 9:48 PM.

Sincerely,

Dianne Eppa
Note Taker