

Newburyport Redevelopment Authority

3/7/07

7:00 pm

Present: Janet Marcus, Nat Norton, Erford Fowler, Rick Taintor, and Tim Brennan.

Ms. Marcus said that she sent another letter to the Firehouse regarding the maintenance of the way that Not Your Average Joe uses and the trash area. She said that the NRA has always charged for the use of the trash area and they made an exception for the Firehouse when NYAJs came to town. She urged members to revisit this issue and consider fees for use of the site.

Ms. Marcus recommended engaging Geordie Vining in the Planning Office to review the park planning proposals. Mr. Taintor said that Nancy Colbert has already been invited and she was eager to join the group. Mr. Norton noted that Mr. Vining has worked with about three of the respondents to the RFP already.

Ms. Marcus suggested voting for a chair to fill out the term until June 30th. Mr. Taintor and Mr. Norton suggested waiting until Mr. Fowler was present to vote. Mr. Norton motioned to elect Ms. Marcus as temporary chair and Mr. Taintor seconded. All voted in favor.

RFPs for Park Planning

Mr. Brennan selected Vollmer Associates, Halverson Design, and the Cecil group to shortlist. He said that the Vollmer package was well prepared, they did a preliminary plan, and were not afraid to make suggestions. He also said that they worked on the Newburyport boardwalk project. He said that Halverson had experience in Newburyport and the design of the waterfront park. Two of the employees are residents of Newburyport. Mr. Brennan said that the Cecil Group was familiar with waterfront projects and made a good presentation. He said that in general, some other respondents did not have as good experience and some could not complete the job fast enough.

Mr. Norton said that he chose the same three firms to shortlist. He felt that there was a big separation between the quality of these three firms and the others that responded. He felt that the other firms' proposals were more generic and showed no knowledge of the history of Newburyport. He said he was impressed by Vollmer's laying in the issues out on the table and felt they had a stronger engineering background than artistic. Mr. Norton added that the three he chose have worked in Newburyport in the past and have a good track record. He noted that the Cecil Group has looked at the waterfront before for parking. Mr. Norton said he was not sure what work Horsley Witten would do in conjunction with Halverson. He said that those three were fully qualified to do the plan.

Mr. Taintor chose Vollmer Associates, Halverson Design, and Dodson Associates. He said that he has worked with Dodson before and they included a Chapter 91 meeting

with DEP as a basic task in their proposal. Mr. Taintor said that the Cecil Group is known for being expensive. He was also concerned with the contingency costs. Mr. Taintor said that the hard costs for construction were also very high. He felt that Dodson was more concerned with cost constraints and also suggested doing the project in phases. He felt that all but MKA were qualified to do the plan. Mr. Taintor said that Vollmer and Dodson had a detailed scope of work and budget, and the Cecil Group sounded like Chapter 91 may not be an issue. He also said that the Cecil group had left many questions unanswered and their reputation concerned him. He said that he preferred Dodson because they were a low-key operation and were focused on the available resources. Mr. Brennan asked Mr. Taintor if he ever had any issues because of their location. He said they did not.

Ms. Marcus said that the fancy accoutrements that Halverson proposed were troublesome to her, along with their construction cost estimates. She said she was impressed by Dodson's proposal although she was concerned about their location. She noted that they are a small firm but are experienced with large projects. Ms. Marcus said that the Cecil Group's response was uninspiring and that Vollmer was her favorite choice although she was not too crazy about their proposed plan they included. She also noted that the waterfront area should not be built just to accommodate Chamber concerts.

Mr. Taintor felt it could be bad judgment on Halverson's part to include Horsley Witten as a partner because of the potential appearance of a conflict of interest. Mr. Norton also noted that the principle of Halverson was Bob Uhlig, a member of the CPC, to whom the NRA applied for a grant from.

Mr. Brennan motioned to invite four firms (Halverson, Vollmer, Cecil Group, and Dodson) to be interviewed. Mr. Norton seconded and the motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Fowler arrived. He stated that he was in agreement with the four chosen firms to be interviewed.

Mr. Norton suggested calling referencing for the four firms prior to the interviews to flush out some issues beforehand. Ms. Marcus suggested asking all four firms the same questions, then some specific ones, so that all firms could be evenly compared. Interviews were scheduled for March 26, 2007.

Election:

The Board discussed whether or not it was permissible to vote for chair. Mr. Fowler said that the regulations imply that voting should be held at a regular meeting of the board, not a special meeting. He said that he didn't want to violate the bylaws by voting at this meeting. Ms. Marcus disagreed that the vote must be taken at a regular meeting.

Mr. Fowler nominated Mr. Norton as temporary Chair of the NRA and Mr. Brennan seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Norton then resigned as Treasurer. Mr. Taintor then nominated Mr. Norton as temporary Treasurer. All voted in favor.

Signage Application:

Mr. Taintor motioned to deny the application for second floor signage and an awning at the Phoenix Room at 19 Inn Street. Mr. Fowler seconded. Mr. Norton said that a letter would be written to the Zoning Board citing their decision.

Reference checks for park planner:

Mr. Norton said that he would write a letter to all the firms stating who the NRA chose to interview. It would be sent via email and mail.

Mr. Taintor and Mr. Norton agreed to do the reference checks.

Mr. Brennan suggested asking open ended questions. Mr. Taintor suggested asking about the timetables for the project along with budget questions. He also suggested asking the references about the firms' estimates in comparison with the actual costs of the projects that they completed. Mr. Fowler suggested asking the firms about their approach to handling public meetings and if they were familiar with low impact designs to handle water runoff issues. Mr. Brennan suggested asking about any complaints or disappointments the references had with the quality of the plans that the firms presented. He also wanted to ask about their impression of any subcontractors they used.

The meeting adjourned at 8:48 PM.

Sincerely,

Dianne Eppa
Note Taker