

Newburyport Redevelopment Authority

6/27/07

7:00 pm

Present: Nat Norton, Tim Brennan, Erford Fowler, Rick Taintor, and Patty Dorfman

Public Comment:

No public comment was made.

Sign/Façade Applications:

a) Lively Girls – 15 State Street

Jay Kahn of the Sign Center requested to put up a 14 s.f. sign and a 9 s.f. sign at 15 State Street. He said that the sign design was vibrant and the store would be targeted towards 8-15 yr. olds. Mr. Taintor asked if the applicant had looked at any of the recommended historical colors. Mr. Kahn said that the proposed colors were the ones the applicant preferred and was aware of the recommendations. Mr. Taintor said that he was not happy about the application and said that most other applicants are more accommodating to the Board's requests. Mr. Fowler said that he was always concerned about opening a Pandora's box if they allowed this store to use vibrant colors. Mr. Taintor said that the proposal was a slap in the face to Newburyport and that it was inappropriate. Mr. Kahn requested a continuance in order to review more choices with the applicant. Mr. Taintor motioned to continue the application to the next meeting and Mr. Fowler seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

b) Provident Bank – 1 Merrimac Street

Mr. Kahn presented the same sign as the existing with the brand logo of green and white instead of green and gold. All other requirements are met. Mr. Taintor disclosed that he was a corporator of the bank. Mr. Brennan motioned to approve the application, Mr. Fowler seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.

c) An application for an attorney's office at the corner of Market Square was received. Mr. Kahn said that it met color and size requirements and had the support of the condo association. Mr. Taintor said that the NRA could not approve second floor signs and they would need to go before the Zoning Board for approval. Only door or directory signs are allowed for above first floor businesses. Mr. Kahn requested to withdraw the application.

d) Christian Science Reading Room – Pleasant Street

A request was received for an awning to match the neighbors next door to the business. It would be a deep green color. Mr. Taintor motioned to approve the awning, Mr. Fowler seconded, and it was approved 5-0.

Waterfront Use Request:

Bob Gagnon proposed to run a lemonade stand on the NRA lots with some of the proceeds going back to the NRA. He said that he carries proper insurance and would

agree to clean a 50' radius around the stand. He agreed to work with the NRA on any potential problems. His cart would be 5' x 30" and would not obstruct any cars or pedestrians.

Mr. Taintor told Mr. Gagnon that the idea of having food vendors was discussed about two years prior and was not looked at as favorable. Mr. Norton said that the Waterfront Trust was opposed mainly because of the trash issue. Mr. Gagnon said that he would not be taking away from any business downtown and could even promote local eateries. Mr. Brennan suggested including a donation box to help the waterfront, fireworks, etc. Mr. Fowler suggested experimenting with a few vendors to see if it could be done right. He said he was dead set against the idea last year but has reconsidered.

Mr. Taintor said that if the NRA were to agree to using vendors, they should think about where they should go, solicit public comment, and put out an RFP. Mr. Norton agreed and thought that they should at least get Waterfront Trust approval. Mr. Fowler suggested trying it out during Yankee Homecoming. Mr. Gagnon agreed to return to the 7/10/07 meeting with a completed application.

Mayor:

Mayor Moak was in attendance to reiterate that he was putting together a parking plan and would like to work with the NRA during the process. He said that he hoped that the NRA was considering phasing the park project as it would also take the City time to replace the parking that was being removed from the lots. He clarified that he has never once expressed the desire to have the lots completely blacktopped although many people have been saying that he has. Mayor Moak said that he had previously expressed the desire to have about half the NRA property remain parking which would satisfy the desire for more park and better access to the waterfront while still allowing people to park there.

Mayor Moak said that he was also looking at Cushing Park as the location of the proposed Senior Center. He said that it was his understanding that the NRA was not interested in building anything on their property other than maybe a comfort or info. station. Mr. Norton said that he issued a letter to Mr. Roaf stating that the NRA does not know of any prohibitions or restrictions against building a senior center on the waterfront. The NRA had previously voted that they did not want any structures on the site but that was not included in the letter. Mr. Brennan said that he still thought a senior center on the waterfront should be considered. Mr. Taintor noted that a senior center would take away parking and at the same time, also increase the demand.

Mayor Moak said that he hoped the NRA could work with the City, through the Planning Director Nancy Colbert, on the plan for the future. Mr. Taintor said that Ms. Colbert was invited to the next meeting and suggested meeting regularly. Mayor Moak said that it was his preference to keep a minimum of 250 – 275 spaces on the site. At most, he proposed 350, which is only half the NRA land. He said that it was also important to consider the cost of the maintenance of the property with the reduction in income. Mayor Moak was also concerned with funding as the Boardwalk project and other large

projects were competing for similar funds. Mr. Taintor assured him that the NRA was planning financially for the project also and said that other funding was available.

Mayor Moak noted the lack of parking on upper State Street near Prince Place. Mr. Norton said that the downtown had enough supply of parking, just in the wrong location. He said that the upper end of lower State Street was the most developable spot downtown other than the Waterfront West. The Mayor suggested the possibility of moving parking somewhere in this area. Mr. Norton suggested leveraging Standard Parking's services to the City to see if the Planning Department could use their expertise in planning for a paid parking system.

Mr. Taintor asked what type of role Ms. Colbert would play. Mr. Norton thought that it should be in an advisory capacity. Mr. Taintor said that he would contact Ms. Colbert to invite her to the meetings.

Maritime Society Update:

Bill Harris said that the Maritime Society has the responsibility of caring for the museum building. He said that they now have money for the windows and exterior to be fixed. The Community Preservation Committee gave them funding for six windows to be repaired. He said that their current lease goes to 2100 then it would revert back to the City. He wanted to open a dialogue to get the rest of the parcel that the Maritime Society is on under a long term lease. This would allow the NRA to retain ownership of the land and bank it in the waterfront dependent use category.

Mr. Harris said that they hoped to bring people in from the Boardwalk to the Custom House. They were considering bringing a replica ship to the site to raise capital. He also said that the Coast Guard may be interested in putting an antique ship on the lawn. He said that a long term lease would give the Maritime Society incentive to make effective use of the lot. They would be able to start with small improvements. If permitted, they would also be interested in having large ships dock on the river. The Maritime Society hoped to be able to make use of the property in order to increase their revenues. Mr. Harris asked the question "Does Newburyport want to remain active in commercial maritime activities?" He said he would return at the 7/10 meeting with an update.

Mr. Harris reported that the 217th birthday of the Coast Guard was 8/4/07 and the senior officials of the Coast Guard would be coming. NRA members were invited to attend. He said that they would speak on the history of the Coast Guard, etc. He requested to use the lawn for the proposed events from 8/1 to 8/5/07. Mr. Norton said that the C10 Foundation reserved the lawn for the Brew Fest. He apologized for not notifying the Maritime Society beforehand. The group discussed the best way to notify the Custom House in the event of a waterfront use request near the museum. Ms. Dorfman noted that it would be a moot point to notify the Maritime Society if they were allowed to have a long term lease on the land.

Correspondence:

George Roaf copied a letter he wrote to the Council on Aging regarding the Mayor's interpretation of what can be done on the waterfront.

Treasurer's Report:

Standard Parking deposited \$7,819.25 on 6/18, making the bank account balance close to \$24K. Mr. Norton suggested that an additional \$1,000 not be borrowed against the line of credit since by the time the Cecil Group contract is signed, there should be parking revenue in the account to cover the entire amount. Mr. Taintor motioned to authorize the signing of the contract without drawing from the LOC while depending on next week's revenue and Mr. Fowler seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

DEP Notice:

A letter was sent from DEP stating that the NRA is not in compliance. Mr. Norton forwarded the letter to Carol Powers who will formulate a response. He said that when Roger Foster proposed a hotel several years back, borings were done that found high levels of lead. An LSP was hired to address the situation. Since then, nothing has been done and DEP hasn't received any additional reports on the outcome. Mr. Norton suggested hiring an LSP to work with Carol Powers on the remediation at a rate of not more than \$2,000 to do the initial paperwork. He said that the DEP has threatened a \$1,000/day fine for each violation. He also thought that the lead that was found may be at depth, not the surface, and the assumption is that the fill is contaminated and that the lead may also be in the silt of the harbor bottom. Mr. Fowler suggested applying for brownfields grants. Mr. Norton said that there were also State and EPA grants available. He said he was cautiously optimistic that grants could cover at least some of the cost. Ms. Dorfman noted that she personally spent over \$30K to prove that hydrocarbons were not on her property after a soil boring showed it was .01 over the legal limit so she knew it would be a large expense.

Mr. Taintor motioned to authorize up to \$2,000 for an LSP and Ms. Dorfman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Parking:

- Mr. Norton updated the members on Standard Parking. He said that SP has suggested that the City manage senior passes. He would tell them that the NRA prefers that SP manage the passes as to not burden the City.
- SP wanted to start prior to 9am on Fridays as many local employees are already parked in the lot when they open. Mr. Brennan suggested that they start charging at 8am on the West lot and keep the option to park in the East lot for free until 9am.
- SP was being allowed to charge for parking on 7/5/07, the day before the 4th of July as many tourists were in town.
- SP still is requesting a storage location. Mr. Taintor offered the use of his garage if necessary. A parking booth would solve the problem though.
- Mr. Fowler thought that the senior parking system was confusing for the elderly and suggested allowing seniors to park in the west lot if they showed up there

incorrectly but also be told they need to use the east lot in the future. Mr. Norton said that the west lot fills up faster than the east lot and this may affect SP's revenues. He felt it was not too much to ask that they park in the west lot if being offered free parking. Ms. Dorfman said that if they have a placard already, they should already know that the East lot is the place to park. Mr. Fowler said that he wanted to let the public know that senior parking was free on the east lot through a press release.

- All voted in favor to allow Standard Parking to spend \$3,732 for materials to reconfigure the spaces.

Tony Furnari arranged to have the prisoners clean up the lots on the following Friday.

A quote was received from J.F. Spaulding Landscaping for weeding, mulching, pruning, and weed blocking. Mr. Brennan motioned to accept the quote and Mr. Taintor seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 10:17 PM.

Sincerely,

Dianne Eppa
Note Taker