

NEWBURYPORT REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Meeting Minutes

Special Meeting

September 23, 2009

7:00 P.M.

In Attendance: Patty Dorfman, Rick Taintor, John Morris, Tim Brennan (7:42), and James Shanley (7:43)

Attorney Carol Powers was also in attendance.

Each member shared what their priorities are for the NRA.

Patty Dorfman:

1. Hire a part-time executive director
2. Apply for grants for remediation and develop the park. Ms. Dorfman feels that the NRA should be developing the east parking lot as parks and should be appraising the west side to find out its value. Aesthetically, the streetscape continuing makes a lot of sense. The NRA should not build around a windshield view. The NRA also needs to be responsible in what they build and be able to maintain it. The board needs an endowment to maintain what is put in place, otherwise it will not be helping anyone. The NRA should focus the park on the east side where there truly are views. They should get the back lot of the Custom House appraised as well. The NRA should look at the west side lot as a separate parcel.

Mr. Morris asked if Ms. Dorfman would use the existing plan to develop the east side lot. Ms. Dorfman stated that the NRA may want to reevaluate the design.

Mr. Taintor stated that he believes that the east side should be developed first.

Rick Taintor:

1. Figure out NRA's relationship with the City. There needs to be a better working relationship.
2. Wrap up the Cecil contract. They came up with the concept plan but still need to come up with a recommended phasing plan, a refined cost estimate, and a final report.
3. Coordinate with the Waterfront West project to development the land. A municipal harbor plan may be one option because it would allow them to designate different things in different places such as the NRA providing the parking and Waterfront West provides the open space. Waterfront West is not looking to develop in the near future but it is something to keep in mind for the future. Mr. Taintor thinks that it is important for the NRA to develop cooperative relationships with adjacent property owners. Previously, the NRA had discussed adopting a collaborative model where all of the players sat at the same table to discuss development of the waterfront. Ms. Dorfman believes that these discussions should be

facilitated by an outside person. Ms. Powers noted that this is where an executive director could come into play as well. Mr. Taintor spoke with Mr. Green of Waterfront West and noted that Mr. Green is concerned that the NRA's plan would take away too much parking and that would hurt the Waterfront West project.

4. Get rid of responsibility of approving signs.

Tim Brennan:

1. Hire a part-time Executive Director. He sees the primary responsibility of that position to be to obtain funding. There is plenty of federal money available to build a waterfront park.
2. Waterfront Development. Mr. Brennan does not think the board should begin development with just the east side. He believes that the first 50% away from the water should be green space. He believes that the NRA should move forward in developing both the east and west lots with 50% of both being green area. The Cecil plan needs to be finalized and then the board needs to hire someone to do a design/construction plan. A must for him is an additional lot. The final details can be worked out between the board members. They are not going to make everyone in the city happy no matter what they do. He does believe that most people in the city will probably be happy with 50% green area back from the water. The remaining 50% of land should be landscaped parking that is paved. It would be easy to rip up the pavement and expand the park or put buildings up. He is open to either direction. The board should leave the options for the second 50% of the property open.

Mr. Shanley is not convinced that Chapter 91 requires that much green space. This is the type of issue that an Executive Director could research. He has real concerns with the Cecil plan. because it has inherent weaknesses and will be underperforming. Mr. Shanley does not think the plan is going to help the city in the long run and the board would not get a lot of revenue value out of the property with this plan. He believes the original mission of the NRA was economic development for Newburyport. That is the only reason to have a redevelopment authority. The board has gone through a process and is in the position of doing something that will not be an economic driver. He is concerned about obtaining funding to build and maintain the park. The city doesn't take care of its existing parks now. Mr. Shanley is concerned that if the NRA builds the concept plan that it will create a significant maintenance issue for the city. It could be funded by parking fees but that's another topic. The plan calls for the space to be heavily programmed and that requires someone to make something happen in those places. Who is going to maintain coordinate the programming? It all takes money.

Mr. Brennan stated that it sounds like Mr. Shanley doesn't believe that 50% of the space should be green. Mr. Shanley said that was correct and that he believes that the waterfront has a very adequate open space park for a small city. Mr. Shanley noted that 47% of the land mass in Newburyport is protected in one way or another. That is a significant number. He does not think that building right up to the water would ever be accepted in Newburyport and he is not convinced that that would be the right thing to do. He has been hearing from members of the

public that since the property has been purchased by the city that it now has to be passive public space. He does not agree with that idea. The NRA has a responsibility to the community to come up with the best public plan, that respects chapter 91, and helps out with the municipal budget. Mr. Shanley thinks that a lot of money is being left on the table with the current concept plan.

Mr. Taintor asked if Mr. Shanley would use the NRA property to generate revenue for the City. Mr. Shanley said yes, that is what he believes that is what should be done with the property.

Mr. Brennan asked if board members could agree that the first 50% of the land in front of the waterfront be green and the second 50% would be fully developed. Mr. Shanley has a problem with how the land would be divided up in this manner. He suggested that instead of dividing it up that way that the board figure out how to incorporate working, functional public spaces like on Inn Street. Spaces work depending on the quality of the things around the edges. It creates atmosphere and activity. He's concerned that all of the edge uses of the proposed plan are weak. A parking lot is a weak edge use. The space needs things that activate the space all the time.

Mr. Morris asked Mr. Shanley if it would be politically possible to re-introduce the ideas of developing the property after some people have spent so much time and money to take those development rights away. Mr. Shanley stated that he believes it would be risky. Ms. Dorfman stated that the demographic in the city has changed since the time when some people fought the development of the waterfront so ferociously. Discussion of how the Cecil Plan got to the point that it is today.

Mr. Morris noted that it sounds like the NRA needs to compromise or get ready for a significant battle because the public seems to want more open space. Ms. Dorfman noted that what she heard the public saying was that the NRA has to be able to sustain what they build.

Mr. Shanley noted that the NRA always seems to get in trouble because they present the whole deal and don't just attack things in little chunks. It's a level of change that's large and scares the public. He thinks the board should take a little bite of the project. His suggestion is to take one part of the plan and make something that is going to work and work well and is loved by the city.

Mr. Morris suggested connecting the way to the water with a green space. Developing buildings is a good idea but this may not be the time, economically, to do that. Extending the buildings down to the water would help to create some of the frame/square that Mr. Shanley suggested. The board can also gain more value out of buildings that are closer to the water.

Mr. Shanley suggested that the board could try to obtain an easement from the Waterfront Trust across their parking lot to create a street or extend Green Street to the waterfront. This would activate the Waterfront Trust's space as well. Discussion.

Mr. Brennan still thinks the board should compromise on a certain percentage of the space being green. He does agree with developing a certain percentage of the property.

Ms. Dorfman noted that it seems like everyone is saying to wrap up Cecil plan, go after the Brownfield funding, and focus on the east side because it has the Brownfield's money and it's more flexible.

The board needs to put together a job description and advertise the executive director position. Mr. Morris thinks that the NRA should hire someone that has experience in this type of position.

Mr. Taintor stated that he believes that the NRA has been too cooperative in keeping what is supposed to be temporary parking around until the City comes up with alternative parking.

Attorney Powers noted that the statutory mission is urban renewal. That is different than economic development. She is not sure it is a true statement to say that all redevelopment authorities are for economic development. The role of the NRA has changed over time. The huge urban renewal process has culminated to this project. This is the capstone and how that is placed is going to have a long term and an irrevocable effect. There are consequences of doing something or of doing nothing. Historically, there is a very vocal, organized, and savvy group of protectionists that are against development. Research on Chapter 91 might reveal that the NRA can develop a whole lot more than 50% but that may not be a prudent choice for the board. Attorney Powers stated that whatever is done is better than what is there now. At some point, doing nothing is doing harm.

Mr. Taintor suggested conducting a design competition where urban designers design a plan within certain parameters. Discussion of the parameters of the designs to be requested.

John Morris:

1. Get board members to coalesce around a plan.
2. Hire an executive director
3. Show the public that the NRA can do something by getting a small piece of the plan accomplished.

Attorney Powers suggested that the board create some marketing on who the NRA is to develop credibility once they choose a final plan. Mr. Morris thinks that changing from the concept plan that has been presented to the public will make the NRA lose credibility.

Board members agreed to start the process of hiring a part-time Executive Director. Board members will review the sample job description that was distributed and email their comments on the job description to Mr. Taintor by October 14th.

Discussion of what step to take to show public that NRA is moving forward.

Parking Lot Bumpers

There are numerous bumpers in disrepair and some of the metal spikes are sticking out. One woman has already been injured as a result of a fall due to a spike sticking out. Mr. Shanley

spoke with Charlie Nichols about the idea of him keeping an eye on the lots. Mr. Nichols does not want to perform repairs but stated that he would review the condition of the bumpers and report any issue to the NRA and pick up any trash in the lots for \$150 per month.

Mr. Brennan suggested that the board could have ND Landscaping inspect and repair the bumpers every two weeks for an extra \$25 per visit. Mr. Shanley noted that the board would still need to have someone monitor the parking lots for the spike issue.

Ms. Dorfman made a motion to hire Charlie Nichols to visit the lots every day and monitor the condition of the bumpers for \$100 per month.

Mr. Shanley seconded the motion.

The motion passed by a 3-2 vote.

Votes Cast:

Rick Taintor – approve

Patty Dorfman – approve

Tim Brennan – deny

James Shanley – approve

John Morris – deny

Mr. Brennan will obtain a proposal from ND Landscaping to repair the spikes.

James Shanley made a motion to move into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing property negotiations.

Rick Taintor seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Votes Cast:

Rick Taintor – approve

Patty Dorfman – approve

Tim Brennan – approve

James Shanley – approve

John Morris – approve

James Shanley made a motion to come out of Executive Session.

Rick Taintor seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Votes Cast:

Rick Taintor – approve

Patty Dorfman – approve

Tim Brennan – approve

James Shanley – approve

John Morris – approve

Adjournment

Mr. Shanley motioned to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Dorfman seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:55 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patty Dorfman

Secretary, Newburyport Redevelopment Authority