**Waterfront West Ad Hoc Meeting**

**Draft Minutes**

Nov. 20, 2018

Councillors present:

Jared Eigerman, Chair Greg Earls Andy Port

Heather Shand Charlie Tontar Leah McGavern

Larry Giunta Barry Connell

Joe Devlin Sharif Zeid

Afroz Khan

**Public Comment:**

**Linda Lambert**- 58 Merrimac St. Her neighbors at Horton’s yard feel powerless. After listening to last week’s meeting, she is concerned that as each new building is built flood waters from this depressed area will be dispersed causing Horton’s Yard to flood. She also wanted to correct figures developer is using for height of their building. The building is 44 ft from the ground to highest peak on its Merrimac Street side, and has a 14 ft grade level drop on its other side facing the river. The Horton building needs to be incorporated into the NED design as height of their buildings will affect views, air flow, and privacy for Horton Yard residents. Concerned that using McKay’s Wharf as main entrance will cause traffic concerns, especially when you add pedestrians to the mix. While the garage was being built the use of pile drivers shook their building even though it was across the street. What will happen to their building when the pile driver is being used next door? She was also concerned about what contaminants might be found in the ground and what plan is in place to protect those who live in Horton’s Yard if contaminates are found and need to be removed? She voiced concerns about the effects of this project on the entire town. Feels a lot of public benefits are being given away.

Louis Foster- 58 Merrimac St. Many questions about this project. Referenced River Act that effects 200 ft either side of river bank and asked if council was aware of it. He has concerns about architectural design of project.

**Dr. Mike Young**, retired More people are being diagnosed with asthma and millions of gallons of sewerage are being dumped in river. That sewerage contains chemicals. If these buildings are built in flood plan and they are flooded what harmful chemicals will those residents be exposed to? He recommends more compassion and less materialism. Would suggest that Mr. Karp donate all this property to city of Nbpt. so, residents can make this a much more human area.

**Jim McCauley**, 27 Storeybrooke Dr. It became clear at the first meeting that this is a difficult parcel and needs special handling. All the areas of concern that have been discussed were there when the developer purchased the land. Height and density are the 2 critical areas of this development. Under the current proposal the entire population of Lime and Federal Street would be condensed into this development.

**Madeline Nash**, 19 Arlington St. Shared that the affordable trust had sent a letter (Nov 16, 2018) to Ad Hoc Committee with regards to Waterfront West. Chair acknowledge the committee received letter and all had copies of it.

**Sheila Taintor**, 10 Dexter St. Concerned about “sacrificial” use of space for commercial use. Concerned that with the projected sea level rise will have short term life effect on proposed commercial space causing blight to the city. Feels all building space should be handled as if it were residential space.

**Councillor Eigerman** began the meeting by asking the members if they felt the plan was consistent with the historic downtown. Discussion followed: Buildings downtown are right on street with sidewalk in front. Mention was made that it would be good to ensure sidewalk is wide enough for wheelchairs and have ability to add trees. Height was another area of concern and ways it could be addressed such as set back of upper floors were discussed. Our current zoning does not take into consideration things placed on roof – heating/air conditioning units. Elevation also plays a role in height as it helps in adding an additional floor to building. A diagram of what the various building heights would look like in comparison to Horton’s Yard was shared. (<https://www.cityofnewburyport.com/sites/newburyportma/files/uploads/wfw-heights_diagram.pdf>) It was suggested that a study be done of what the various heights would look like from the Gillis bridge as that is how many would view the project. NED did submit one photo of the view from the bridge highlighting the heights of current buildings (<https://www.cityofnewburyport.com/sites/newburyportma/files/uploads/sample_view_of_ww_from_gillis_bridge.pdf>). Discussion followed about the different views one would have of project: from Salisbury side of river, Gillis Bridge, rail trail (by old Mr India site), McKays Wharf , Merrimac Street, and into the side from either side along proposed riverfront public access (i.e. former Black Cow looking west, and Michael’s Harborside parking lot looking east). Concern was raised about the proposed hotel archway between two buildings – area near former Black Cow. It was felt an archway would make area feel like it was private property and block view to the proposed public space. Discussion about what kind of view city would want from public space followed. It was also shared that the area closer to Michael’s can’t be used for building as it is wetlands.

**Rishi Nandi**, member of planning board, submitted cross-section to show how additional floors would fit atop ground level, accounting or flood plain and future sea-level rise. Resident Rick Taintor had submitted a view from the Clipper City Rail Trail (near old Mr. India site). Councillors felt even though this only showed two views it was very helpful to see how building heights would affect views. Recommendation was made to identify which of views from list are the most important and then go from there. A map that included elevations would be helpful.

**Councillor Tontar** stated that too many buildings massed together would give project a “Lowell” look and that isn’t what residents want.

Consensus of the group was that the south west corner of the project is the best location for higher story buildings. The theme of the buildings was voiced as a concern. Would like to see smaller buildings near water so they look more like period – 3 story building would be more appropriate not the 4 story buildings proposed. A 5-story building near Merrimac street would give the most area for residents to live that would be outside of the flood zone, but not appropriate for behind Horton Yard. Much discussion about the use of multi-building heights throughout project using elevation to help give the appearance of a lower building.

**Chair Eigerman** then asked for discussion on how much retail space would they feel was appropriate and do we want a hotel? The consensus was that the hotel is needed some even expressing it was mandatory. It was stated that the developer was not pushing this so what would cost (trade-offs) to city be for this?

**Mayor Holaday** stated the latest discussion was for a 120 room high end hotel without conference space. Discussion followed that the developer had mentioned using other space in project for rooms and most agreed to that. Most of the councilors were flexible with the amount of retail space, but did expressed concern about cost to rent that space. The idea of having office space was also discussed.

The project is required to have 12% affordable units. The Affordable Housing Trust letter states they would prefer that to be between 15-20%. Developer did inquire about having the affordable units off site. Most agreed they wanted units on site as it is needed to provide diversity and many agreed percentages should be raised.

**Chair Eigerman** asked Andy Port, City planner, to prepare document to show Councillors how 5-10,000 ft. of retail space could be set up within project and how 5 story building on Merrimac Street would look. **Councilor Zeid** also asked that group start looking at list of things the city would request of developer for city.

 Next meeting is November 29th, 6:30 – 8pm Council chambers.