

NEWBURYPORT REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Meeting Unofficial Notes
February 7, 2011
7:00PM

Attendance: James Shanley, Patty Dorfman, Adam Guild, John Morris, Tim Brennan (8:00pm).

Erik Svan and Barry Abrahamson were also in attendance.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Real Estate Advisory Services: Barry Abrahamson of Abramson & Associates, Inc provided the members with an introduction to the services he can provide for the Newburyport Redevelopment Authority.

- Current Waterfront consists of 4 acres, all used for parking
- It is the consensus of the NRA board that parking is an inappropriate use for the waterfront.
- There is a segment of the population that wants to see all four acres as additional park.
- Mr. Abrahamson has a pre-conception that adding appropriate development could help activate and make for a better waterfront park than using all 4 acres as additional park.
- Mr. Abrahamson feels that a good urban waterfront needs to be “activated”.
- He feels that development however, should not “turn its back” on the park.
- He feels that development may be able to provide financial support for park, though that needs to be studied more.
- He feels that it would be understandable if the population of Newburyport feared the idea of just turning the property over to a developer.
- He feels that people need to see a proposal demonstrating “The Great Place”.
- This proposal would benefit from showing comparative waterfronts or elements thereof to help people to conceptualize the idea of development.

Organizational Logistics:

- Tension between the NRA and the City can be mitigated or eliminated if they can agree on a shared vision for waterfront and strategy for achieving it.
- There could also be tension between the NRA and the public. The public may fear that the NRA will push a plan that they don’t like.
- Stakeholder buy-in is essential to progress

Process:

- The process to get to a Request for Information or a Request for Proposal can vary. The spectrum within which the NRA operates can vary from a very wide open “fishing expedition”, where very few parameters are outlines, to a “complete plan” laid out by the NRA via an RFP that is put out to bid.
- Mr. Abrahamson feels that somewhere in the middle is the point where the NRA would receive the most benefit.
- The middle ground would allow the NRA to utilize the developer’s creativity, but still provide enough guidance to make it achievable from the developer’s perspective.

- The NRA needs to be able to demonstrate a degree of community/city support for the project.
- The degree to which the NRA outlines its wishes will influence the up-front costs to the NRA.
- The middle ground is to get conceptual buy-in from the public and the City to some mix of development and park.
- Mr. Abrahamson prefers moving from a Request for Qualification to an RFP process.
- The NRA can do this without the process of choosing simply the low bid.

Stage I: Qualifications and Concept

Stage II: Concept

Road Map:

- NRA will have to “feel it’s way”
- NRA will have to address political issues
- NRA will have to address technical issues
- If the City does not (from its own resources), commit to a parking solution that replaces the spaces currently owned by the NRA, any development will be stymied.

NRA Board Member, John Morris, suggested that the Merrimack Valley Transit Authority, New England Development and the City may partner together to fund a parking garage. Mr. Abrahamson questioned whether MVTA would provide any significant funding if its not a park and ride garage and Mr. Shanley stated MVTA funding was for design only, not construction.

Mr. Abramson raised concern that a parking partnership with New England Development recognize the value enhancement to developer from off-loading parking into off-site city garage in terms of freeing up additional development capacity and potential competition with development on NRA property which could also benefit from this approach.

Mr. Abramason felt it was important to specifically define “Where the City stands on the parking issue”.

Ideas about stakeholders meetings were discussed. Mr. Abrahamson suggested that if the City is the primary partner, and they have a financial stake, it put them in a different league than other stakeholders.

NRA Board Member, Adam Guild, questioned whether Mr. Abrahamson should do some more investigation to demonstrate comparable properties.

John Morris proposed that Mr. Abrahamson, NRA Chair, James Shanley, and City Planning Director, Andy Port meet with the Mayor. Adam Guild suggested that NRA board Member, Patty Dorfman, attend this meeting as well. James Shanley agreed to set up the meeting.

John Morris made a motion to adjourn, James Shanley seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 9:25pm.