

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

REAL PROPERTY REUSE COMMITTEE AGENDA

MARCH 23, 2010

7:45 PM
Room 209

The Committee will hold a brief introductory meeting to review the following items:

#150-09 DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT requesting a discussion re the potential redevelopment of the Austin Street municipal parking lot in Newtonville for mixed-use development, including affordable housing.

Reports (without attachments) from May 26 and November 24, 2009 are attached.

#160-09 DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT requesting discussion of potential redevelopment of a block of land bounded by Willow, Centre and Lyman Streets, to include the existing 60,850 sq. ft. Fire Department headquarters and Station #3 site.

Report (without attachments) from June 23, 2009 is attached.

#212-08 ALD. YATES proposing that Section 2-7 be amended by requiring that branch libraries funded in whole or in part by neighborhood contributions be only made available to the original donor neighborhood association, its successor organization, or similar organization serving the same needs.

#470-08 ALD. HESS-MAHAN & BRANDEL requesting a discussion with the Executive and Planning & Development Departments re the development of a city policy with respect to augmenting cell equipment rental income by leasing municipal properties.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Danberg, Chairman

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

REAL PROPERTY REUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

TUESDAY, MAY 26, 2009

Present: Ald. Merrill (Chairman), Ald. Salvucci, Johnson, Danberg, Brandel, Fischman, and Gentile; absent: Ald. Baker

Other Aldermen present: Ald. Linsky and Albright

Also present: John Wilson (Newton Housing Partnership), Phil Herr (Chair Comprehensive Planning Committee), Rob Gifford (Economic Development Commission)

City staff: Michael Kruse and Candace Havens (Planning Department) and Linda Finucane (Clerk)

#150-09 DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT requesting a discussion re the potential redevelopment of the Austin Street municipal parking lot in Newtonville for mixed-use development, including affordable housing.

ACTION: HELD 7-0

NOTE: Alderman Linsky voiced his support of this item before he left to attend the Committee on Community Preservation. Phil Herr gave a PowerPoint presentation (attached) and an overview of HAPI, the Newton Housing Plan Initiative, whose goal is to help the city implement housing-related aims, particularly those articulated in the Comprehensive Plan. The 11 organizations that participate in HAPI have held 5 workshops and identified approximately a dozen actions including exploring several public sites for potential reuse. Alderman Johnson noted that the concept of developing the Austin Street lot with reconfigured parking began in 2005. Last year, interns for the design firm Sasaki Associates included development of the lot of as part of a sketch plan made for Newtonville square. That sketch showed one large residential structure. HAPI envisions a mixed residential/commercial development. The committee agreed that although the existing parking lot appears to be underutilized, it is important to retain a number of parking spaces for the existing businesses and the Senior Center.

The purpose of bringing this item before the committee – where the process will begin if a proposal is submitted and the parking lot declared surplus– is to get a sense of the physical, economic, and political feasibility for a public/private partnership development. Currently, the concept is in a preliminary stage and several steps away from the city's issuing a request for proposals. If the sense of the committee is positive, the goal is to put together a package of information by the end of 2009 so the city can begin the formal process for such development. If there is no positive sense, then at least the impediments will be identified and can be addressed. Mr. Kruse asked for a straw vote from the committee this evening.

In response to questions relative to the current economic downturn, Lynn Sweet, of LDS Consulting and a member of HAPI, said that now is the time to plan and that to developers and financiers a project this size is considered small and therefore less risky.

The Chairman asked the committee for a straw vote as to whether the Planning Department should proceed to put together a package to present the committee and the public. The committee voted 7-0-1, with Alderman Gentile abstaining, in the affirmative. The item was held, as were the other items, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Carleton P. Merrill, Chairman

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

REAL PROPERTY REUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2009

Present: Ald. Merrill (Chairman), Ald. Salvucci, Danberg, Fischman, and Baker; absent (Ald. Brandel, Johnson, and Gentile)

City staff: Linda Finucane (Chief Committee Clerk), Ben Solomon-Schwartz (Senior Planner), Candace Havens (Chief Planner)

Also present: Phil Herr, Newton Housing Action Plan Initiative (HAPI)

#150-09 DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT requesting a discussion re the potential redevelopment of the Austin Street municipal parking lot in Newtonville for mixed-use development, including affordable housing.

ACTION: REFERRED TO 2010-2011 BOARD

NOTE: HAPI representative Phil Herr and Planning Director Mike Kruse presented this item to the Committee on May 25, 2009, when the Committee voted informally to support the concept. Mr. Kruse was at the Zoning Board of Appeals this evening, but Mr. Herr joined the Committee. Mr. Herr said that since May, additional studies were undertaken and various plans for reuse were discussed in HAPI workshops in June and September. HAPI will take it up again at its final workshop on December 17 and Mr. Herr anticipates that following that workshop, the study report incorporating a draft Request for Interest will be presented to the Mayor-elect. He reminded the Committee that out of the 8-9 sites identified for potential development by the Comprehensive Plan the Austin Street lot was chosen because it looked the least troublesome. Other than a grant of \$10,000, many people, including architects John Wilson and Rick Heym, have worked pro bono.

Site issues include infrastructure: water service in Austin Street is only a 6" main and the sewer line has a history of backups. The Engineering Division has recommended that a TV inspection be performed to determine the adequacy of storm drainage facilities. The intersection of Walnut and Austin Streets nearly-but-not-quite opposite Newtonville Avenue is seriously flawed and should be redesigned and reconstructed whether a new development occurs or not.

Because the parking lot is currently zoned Public Use, a rezoning will be necessary. HAPI recommends that a Business 4 District, which abuts the site, would be appropriate and allow more height – probably 4-5 stories maximum. A modest sketch shows a 4-story building above one below-grade level and containing about 18,000 sf of business floor area, 18 housing units, and sufficient parking for both the new uses and replacement spaces for the ones displaced from the parking lot. A more aggressive sketch shows approximately 24,000 sf of business floor area, all retail, and 30 housing units, plus required parking for the new uses and replacement spaces. Currently, the lot contains 159 parking spaces, of which 129 are available to the public, and a Goodwill trailer. Recent parking studies show that on average 81-90 spaces are occupied daily.

An aggressive alternate could create 58 jobs, 5 more Cabot School pupils, 1,290 trip ends per day (a 15.7% increase), new growth tax levy of \$304,000 with a net revenue after costs of \$40,000. Mr. Herr pointed out that if the site is transferred with no cost to a developer, the real cost is to replace the parking, which is approximately \$15,000 per space. Other gains would include the infrastructure improvements. Ideally, the project could be underway in 2011.

Should the new Mayor choose to proceed, additional steps include:

- refinement of the RFI by City staff and others
- issuance of the RFI
- review of responses by City officials/organizations including the Economic Development Commission and the Housing Partnership
- declaration of surplus by the Commissioner of Public Works and subsequent reuse process through the Board of Aldermen
- issuance of a Request for Proposals

Mr. Herr agreed to the Committee's request to return to its successor so that it might have a look at the refined RFI. The Committee then thanked Mr. Herr and asked him to convey its appreciation to the other members of various organizations who have worked on this proposal, and voted to hold the item and refer it to the next Board.

The following items were referred without discussion to the 2010-2011 Board of Aldermen:

- #212-08 ALD. YATES proposing that Section 2-7 be amended by requiring that branch libraries funded in whole or in part by neighborhood contributions be only made available to the original donor neighborhood association, its successor organization, or similar organization serving the same needs.
REFERRED TO 2010-2011 BOARD
- #470-08 ALD. HESS-MAHAN & BRANDEL requesting a discussion with the Executive and Planning & Development Departments re the development of a city policy with respect to augmenting cell equipment rental income by leasing municipal properties.
REFERRED TO 2010-2011 BOARD
- #160-09 DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT requesting discussion of potential redevelopment of a block of land bounded by Willow, Centre and Lyman Streets, to include the existing 60,850 sq. ft. Fire Department headquarters and Station #3 site.
REFERRED TO 2010-2011 BOARD

Respectfully submitted,
Carleton P. Merrill, Chairman

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

REAL PROPERTY REUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 2009

Present: Ald. Merrill (Chairman), Ald. Salvucci, Danberg, Baker, Brandel, Gentile, and Fischman; absent: Ald. Johnson; also present: Ald. Mansfield and Swiston
City staff: Michael Kruse (Director of Planning & Development) and Linda Finucane (Chief Committee Clerk), Chief Joseph LaCroix (Fire Department)

#160-09 DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT requesting discussion of potential redevelopment of a block of land bounded by Willow, Centre and Lyman Streets, to include the existing 60,850 sq. ft. Fire Department headquarters and Station #3 site.

ACTION: HELD 6-0 (Baker not voting)

NOTE: Mr. Kruse explained to the Committee that the purpose of this item, which grew out of the work of the Newton Centre Task Force, is to explore the possibility of re-developing a privately owned parcel and Fire Department headquarters and fire station #3 sites that abut it at the intersection of Willow, Centre, and Lyman Streets (PowerPoint attached). The MWRA owns the parcel over its aqueduct along Lyman Street. The City has an easement from the MWRA and although no building can occur on the aqueduct, the proposal includes raising the grade level with Lyman Street for more usable green space. Nino and Giancarlo Micozzi, who own the parcel that contains the Dellaria Salon, and their architects, TBA Architects and Archiart Associates, are proposing a private/public partnership that would include a new fire station and headquarters funded in exchange for the right to build approximately 100 housing units and approximately 50,000 sf of commercial/retail space. The proposal incorporates smart growth criteria and green environmental standards. The cost of the parking garage may be shared between private and public funds, depending on the number of spaces required for private residences and spaces available for the public, currently estimated at 168 spaces. The parking component would accommodate the displacement of the existing parking spaces in the Newton Centre triangle lot, which the Newton Centre Task Force Report recommends converting to green space. Chief LaCroix noted that fire station #3 is scheduled for a \$3 million major renovation in three years. In order for a proposed public/private partnership redevelopment to move forward, he will need to declare both Fire headquarters and Station 3 surplus, but is not yet prepared to do so at this preliminary stage.

This evening, Mr. Kruse was seeking direction from the Committee as to whether or not it would like the Planning Department to proceed to study the potential development. A summary "step-by-step" of the reuse process is attached; however, because the existing reuse ordinance was developed to deal primarily with closed school buildings it contemplates neither this type of proposal nor the proposal to develop the Austin Street

municipal parking lot discussed by the Committee last month, so some deviation from or creativity in establishing steps is inevitable, e.g., step 5.

Several Committee members had questions about the process and the issuance of a request for proposals. Mr. Kruse pointed out that ownership of the Dellaria parcel is a key factor in any proposed redevelopment and that any project will need a zoning amendment(s), a change of zone and a special permit, affording the public and Board of Aldermen many opportunities for input and review. Alderman Danberg gave a brief overview of her work as a member of the Newton Centre Task Force and raised the possibility of obtaining federal grant money. Alderman Mansfield was supportive of the concept in general. Upon a motion by Alderman Salvucci, the Committee took a straw vote and was unanimous 6-0 in support of the Planning Department taking steps to study the opportunities and constraints to redevelopment of this block of land for a mixed-use project. Mr. Kruse anticipates reporting to either this Committee or its successor some months from now. The item was held 6-0, with Alderman Baker not voting because he left the meeting to attend the Committee on Community Preservation Committee.

All other items were held without discussion and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Carleton P. Merrill, Chairman