

MINUTES OF THE UPPER FALLS AREA COUNCIL

DATE: September 20, 2018

LOCATION: Emerson Community Center

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Jo-Louise Allen	Anil Adyanthaya
Julie Irish	Marie Jackson
Maxine Bridger	Nina Kochs
Jeff Riklin	Jack Neville

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Councilor John Rice
Carol Stapleton

A. Approval of Minutes from the August Meeting

The minutes were approved unanimously.

B. Public Comment

C. Treasurer's Report

We had three major expenses: \$300 for the magician; \$1,000 for the band (covered by Northland); \$700 for the postcards.

We got \$540 from the events.

Northland offered to help cover more of the expenses for the day so:

Motion: Request another \$1000 from Northland for a total of a \$2000 reimbursement to cover the cost of Village Day. Motion passed unanimously.

D. Presentation by Northland on Proposed Needham Street Development

Representatives from Northland listed their goals for their project and showed a video of what the finished project will look like. They are planning for a total of 30% open space around the site and in the middle. They want a community playground along the Greenway, a Linear Park along Oak Street, an open area around South Meadow Brook, trees along the newly built Main Street. The organizing principle is buildings between green spaces. They expect 30% of the space to be retail.

They showed their movie which is also available on Village14 and on the City website.

The tallest buildings will be 7 stories. They are planning on 822 apartments. Parking for residents will be under the residential buildings, one per apartment. This is fewer spaces than required so needs a waiver. Northland is requesting a change in zoning to mixed use with density and parking waivers as part of the special permitting process. There will be 540 parking spots for retail customers, and 1100 spaces for bikes.

Northland listed seven goals for the project:

1. Have 7 acres of open spaces (30% of the site)
2. Enhance connectivity, including a privately operated and funded shuttle service
3. Celebrate permeability through access points
4. Honor the history of the site with a display of artifacts
5. Foster sustainability, have lots of trees, be environmentally friendly
6. Do no harm
7. Have a diversity of housing units, with micro units and "affordable rent" units.

There was then a period of questions (Q), comments (C), and answers (A).

C. The video showed no aboveground utilities.

A. It's a goal, but needs to be negotiated with the City.

Q. Scale of the retail establishments? Expected renters?

A. Small eclectic stores and restaurants. Renters will include millennials, and empty nesters downsizing.

Q. Fee to use the shuttles for non-residents?

A. Yes, but there will be wi-fi and better service than the MBTA.

Q. Have you considered 55+ owners or others buying their apartments? Have you thought about condos?

A. Yes and for now rejected the idea of condos.

A comment was made on the change in population density of Upper Falls if 822 units of rental property are added to the 1267 households now in Upper Falls. The density would be on a par with Boston. Just building the rental units at Avalon so overcrowded Countryside school that some UF kids now attend Angier or Zervas.

The response: To have parks and shuttles and a playground, the Northland vision, you need that kind of density. This is a historic project.

Some people welcomed the density but were worried about the traffic and skeptical about the shuttles. One person suggested that this project be thought of as its own village and not really part of Upper Falls.

C. The ratio of rental to retail is too high. There should be more retail, so it is more inviting to people in the outside community.

C. With this density we need another school.

Northland people commented, then, on their history and experience as landlords. They own over 25,000 units, and have been in business for 48 years.

Q. What about light pollution?

A. Do you want the Greenway lit? We are sensitive to the issue of light pollution.

C. Up and down Needham street are a lot of empty stores. Retail is suffering.

A. Our site will make all of Needham Street more robust. Restaurants are a core retail component. They will be first to lease.

C. People in UF agreed to 7 stories for the condos on Oak Street because they were replacing a smelly rubber factory. But the entrance/exit on Oak Street will be detrimental to the Village of Upper Falls; it's a non-starter. But I'm not against development.

There was a question about the houses backing up against the Greenway and whether they will light up the Greenway. Some people thought it would be nice and feel safer if the Greenway were lit at night. Others were concerned about light pollution.

A. The buildings will be set back 25ft from the edge of the Greenway.

Q. How much of the radio tower is visible from the complex?

A. Everyone will see it to some degree.

C. The TV tower hums. You can hear it at night and you can't open your windows.

Q. Best estimate on construction time? Length of time? Containment of noise?

A. There will be two phases. It will probably take until 2020 to get the permits, etc. Phase one will be the section closest to Needham Street; the Clark building will be a buffer to the construction. Until the second phase is started the site can be used for storage as the first stage is worked on.

Q. Comment on the building in Waltham.

A. 85% of the retail space is occupied and 98% of the rental space is occupied.

A question was asked about public transportation and shuttles for off-hours, like school meetings at night, and local trips. Northland responded that they were working with the 128 Business Council which has experience with transportation and shuttle issues. They have also surveyed people in the area about their needs.

A question was asked about service vehicles. Northland responded that the site will be open and permeable so the service vehicles will only be on private streets not public streets.

A question was asked about the need for an exit at Oak and Chestnut since there are 3 entrances already planned for Needham Street. Nobody in Upper Falls wants the Oak Street egress. They are worried about people cutting through from Needham Street along Tower Road. Northland responded that they are planning traffic calming fixes to slow down the traffic. They are planning two elbows in the section from Tower Road. They noted that if the site was all office space there would be more traffic and there was always traffic from Clark.

Q. City revenue now versus potential revenue?

A. They expect gross new revenue of 5 million; however, there are costs such as more school space, etc.

There was another comment on putting utilities underground to improve permeability of the site, and a question about light rail on the Greenway (it was noted this is opposed by the Upper Falls community).

Q. Do you have current numbers for transportation density on public transportation?

A. The people we hired are experts and have the current numbers.

There was a suggestion to think more about seniors than families for the housing, because rentals can lead to a transient school population. A transient school population is very hard on teachers and schools.

C. For transportation, go all electric.

C. Put in heat pumps and solar.

A. We will do whatever is economically viable.

C. The rendering is boxy, late capitalist architecture.

A. We are putting parking underground and are sensitive to commoditized late capitalist architecture. See our Merc building in Waltham. Some build to sell. We build to own.

Northland is now going before the Land Use Committee, and then before the City Council. So, this is the end of the beginning.

E. Review of Village Day

It was suggested that we have posters instead of postcards. We got the postcards back from the printers late, so they were mailed out late.

We need to get our act together earlier if we want to be on the City activity mailings.

There is a lot of potential for what could be at the site. Maybe next year a bocce court, maybe ice cream vendors, food trucks, a hotdog vendor.

The liquor store was concerned about parking.

At our next meeting we will look into fixing a date. Jeff will redo the banners. Maybe we can get a banner that goes across a street. Jeff will bring pricing for Upper Falls AC and Village Day banners.

F. Upper Falls T-Shirts

We will put this off to our October meeting. Shogun is reworking the original.

G. General Upper Falls News

The company that owns the square block of buildings on Chestnut/Oak/Ossipee is looking into historical plus national park approval for its renovations. In renovating they found more windows and pieces of the original casing and they are trying to match it. Whatever was brick will be returned to brick. The space will be all commercial. The entrance with the glass canopy will be eliminated and the loading dock will become the main entrance.

Julie offered to speak for the Area Council on Tuesday when Northland presented. Councilor Rice said he would text the approximate time that Northland would present.

The City is considering a new senior center, or multigenerational center, maybe 20,000 sq. ft. There will be meetings at Emerson about this, one tomorrow at 10 and one on November 16.

H. Public Comments

I. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:17