

West Newton Armory JAPG  
Notes from March 11, 2020 Meeting  
Newton City Hall  
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

JAPG Members in Attendance: Larry Bauer, Kelley Brown, Jonathan Katz, Anita Lichtblau, Ted Hess-Mahan, Sue Parsons

JAPG Members by Phone: David Koven, Mitchell Fishman, and Barry Abramson

Others in Attendance: Amanda Berman, Director of Housing and Community Development, Eamon Bencivengo, Housing Development Planner, Ward 3 City Councilor Julia Malakie

Approval of February 25, 2020 Meeting Notes

The minutes of the JAPC meeting of Feb. 25 were presented and approved unanimously.

Appointment of Rotating Secretary

Kelley Brown volunteered to serve as Secretary for the meeting.

COVID-19 Update and Next Steps

The guidance of March 11 to Board and Commission members regarding ongoing meetings from Mayor Fuller was reviewed. While permitting members to participate remotely, an in-present quorum would be required to hold an official meeting, by virtue of the Commonwealth's open meeting law.

Ted Hess-Mahan suggested suspending JAPG meetings until the end of March, with the expectation that the affordable housing consultant would come on board in April.

Sue Parsons agreed. She further suggested that the case studies of the other armory transactions proceed.

There was agreement that pre- COVID 19 deadlines were likely to slip in the coming months. As a result and in light of the Governor's emergency declaration and state officials cancelling local meetings, time is likely to be extended for JAPG work.

Consultant Update

Eamon Bencivengo informed the JAPG that the consultant selection committee, including David Koven (on behalf of the JAPG), Chairman of Real Property Vicky Danberg and the staff, would review proposals.

There was a discussion about further JAPG participation in the review process, but the staff said that the City Law and Purchasing Departments would discourage this. It was noted that favoritism might be alleged and the potential for litigation over the contract award might be increased by further engagement by the JAPG than has been afforded.

### Armory Matrix and Case Studies

Barry Abramson asked if the group work on the surplus armories was the best use of the members' time: perhaps it should be left to the consultant, who is more likely to have a single approach to compare and contrast the various armories. A suggestion was made for the JAPG members to conduct case studies on non-housing armories with the consultant to look more deeply into the armories that were converted into housing.

Larry Bauer said that it was not that difficult to do the case study research and suggested that the Mass Cultural Resources Information system (MACRIS) and the Mass. National Guard Archives were both good sources of information.

Regarding a question as to whether the Group should look into what other states have done with their armories, Ted Hess-Mahan said that Alice Ingerson, former CPC Manager, had a book on re-use of armories that explored other states. Ted asked Eamon to share the information provided by Alice to the JAPG. The individual assignments would be due March 27. Eamon was asked if DCAMM could provide the addresses for the armories to make research easier.

Sue Parsons asked if the next meetings could have the Lynn group and perhaps a non-housing armory re-developer.

### Armory Option and JAPG Report Discussion

Discussion began with Kelley Brown suggesting the JAPG conduct a more thorough search for municipal uses.

Amanda Berman agreed that the JAPG looking at options would be important, while noting that DCAMM has insisted on a binary choice for the City in using the Armory: affordable housing or a traditional municipal use.

Mitch Fishman said that despite DCAMM resistance to this idea, that some kind of mix should at least be investigated.

To examine other potential municipal uses, there was agreement that a canvassing of City departments would not yield much of use, as these department heads would be reluctant to propose a major capital project outside the normal channels of capital planning within the City. Therefore, a suggestion was made to ask Jonathan Yeo, the City's Chief Operating Officer, come to a future JAPG meeting to review public uses and resources. There was also a request that David Olson, the City Clerk, be brought in to a future JAPG meeting to discuss his archival use of the Armory. A question was raised that since the archives were not going to fully occupy the Armory, what other municipal uses would be compatible, such as a veteran affairs office.

There was discussion and agreement that cultural uses for the Armory should be considered, given what the building provides: a large gymnasium space, small offices, kitchen space. Amanda Berman cautioned that a City managed cultural or recreation center might be OK, but not a sub-lease to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party, based on the draft legislation.

Jonathan Katz asked how the appraisal would be done.

Questions were asked regarding the neighborhood context, such as changes as a result of the upcoming East Dunston 40B. As a result, the JAPG agreed that the neighborhood and Washington Street context were important to the JAPG evaluation. Amanda Berman recommended using the Washington Street Vision Plan as a place to assess the contextual benefit of the armory redevelopment.

Mitch Fishman thought that there might be benefit to the new 40B tenants that might leverage investment.

In brainstorming the future JAPG Report, Eamon Bencivengo presented an example of a report template and Table of Contents. He was asked to draft an example for the Armory report and circulate.

There was some discussion about the cost of affordable housing that would be in range for public subsidy programs. Amanda Berman noted that the Newton calculation was about \$550,000/unit. David Koven said there was a range, based on new vs. rehabilitation vs. limited renovation. Ted Hess-Mahan also said that CPC has its own standard.

JAPG Chair informed the Group that the meeting of 3/25 would be cancelled and an agenda for the next meeting would be developed by Staff.