

West Newton Armory JAPG
Notes from September 10, 2020 Meeting
Zoom Meeting
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
FINAL

In attendance:

JAPG: Kelley Brown, Jonathan Katz, Anita Lichtblau, Ted Hess-Mahan, Sue Parsons, Mitch Fischman, Larry Bauer, David Koven, and Barry Abramson.

Newton Planning Department: Amanda Berman, Director of Housing and Community Development, Eamon Bencivengo, Housing Development Planner, Barney Heath, Director of Planning,

Newton Law Department: Andrew Lee, Assistant City Solicitor

Consultants: Affirmative Investments, David Ennis, Adam Goldstein, and Michael Kaufman
Members of the General Public and Ward 3 Councilor Malakie.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting (05/27/2020)

Unanimously approved by roll call without reading or comment

2. Affordable Housing Consultant Introduction

Affirmative Investments (hereafter AI) was introduced and presented a PowerPoint presentation which was later distributed to Committee members, involved members of the planning department and Andrew Lee of the Law Department. See presentation for specific details.

3. Affirmative Investments Presentation

- a. Introduced members of its team and outlined its experience and qualifications.
- b. Since founding in 1984 has worked on projects creating over 6,000 units of housing with a cost of more than 750 million dollars
- c. Quickly ran through examples of its work and the work of DHK its architect.
- d. Explained scope of its services and schedule

1) Oversee and Integrate Third Party Reports – Complete end of Sept

- Consultant & subconsultants visited site on August 18 through 20. Subconsultants (civil, structural, environmental, HazMat, historic and legal) will have reports complete by end of September. Armory is not on National Register.
- AI is reviewing affordable housing developments in Newton

2) Develop Design and Financing of Four Development Scenarios – Complete end of Oct

- Scenarios will explore variables in the following categories.
 - Degree of demolition vs renovation and adaptive reuse.
 - Segments of population to be served (family, homeless, special needs, veterans, etc.)
 - Income level to be served
 - Sources of financing available depending on choices above.

3) With Stakeholders Select 2 Preferred Scenarios & Produce Final Report – Complete end of Nov

4) If City Proceeds – Assist City in Developing RFP for Developers – Early 2021

4. JAPG Questions & Discussion

a. Levels of Demolition Permitted

State special legislation discusses land parcel and says nothing about building. Building is not listed on National or State Register even though its survey form is in state MACRIS database. Could total demolition be an option? AI was under impression that only head house had been preserved at Plymouth and Natick. This is incorrect as in both cases the Drill Shed walls were also preserved.

b. Population to Be Served

AI will not define need. Planning Department stated that there is need in all categories. Discussion evolved to thought that a decision may be made on what is feasible to fit on the site with parking under historic preservation guidelines and City development guidelines that a developer can finance. In AI finds feasible scenarios and City proceeds, RFP will be written to allow a broad range of options. Given small site, parking requirements may also steer choice of population.

c. Income Level to Be Served

Choices are 80%, 60% or 30% AMI with 30% or income assumed going toward rent. The Commonwealth through DHCD targeting 10% or more for 30% or less of AMI. Planning department stated that the City's need is for all categories of population with target of 50% or below of AMI.

d. Permitted Cost per Unit

State tax credit is based on \$500,000/unit which is where study will start out. Higher costs have been allowed and City has mentioned \$550,000/unit as an adjusted cost in Newton. AI will start with scenarios targeted at \$500,000/unit with possible adjustment higher as process proceeds.

e. Selection of Final 2 Scenarios

Planning Department will select final 2 scenarios with input from JAPG. Planning Department will also work with AI on parameters of the 4 scenarios to be developed.

AI complimented and thanked for their presentation and invited to stay or leave as desired.

5. Planning Department & Law Department Presentation of Proposed JAPG Schedule

- August 14, 2020 - Special Legislation signed by Governor.
- 31 December 2020 - City must notify DCAMM by if it intends to purchase property either for affordable housing or another municipal use.
- 31 March 2021 - If City elects to purchase property it is expected to close on purchase in first quarter of 2021

Working back from 31 December date, law department has drafted the following schedule

- October 16 2020 - JAPG Report due to allow 1 month before public hearing
- November 17 2020 - Real Property Reuse Committee (RPRC) regular meeting with public hearing on JAPG report & recommendation
- December 17 2020 -RPRC scheduled for a regular meeting for discussion and vote on JAPG Report and recommendation.
- December 21 2020 - Full City Council to discuss and vote on RPRC recommendation at regular meeting.

6. JAPG, Planning Department, Law Department Discussion

- a. As Planning Department feels that AI must have a month to come back with the four initial scenarios, JAPG will not have the benefit of any housing consultant input or discussion by date report is due.
- b. It was suggested that JAPG could finish all other sections of report by 16 October and leave recommendation and discussion of options blank.
- c. JAPG members expressed frustration with a schedule that is fundamentally unworkable and does not allow a recommendation to be made with the report.
- d. Chairman Hess-Mahan postulated a new schedule that would have AI present 4 scenarios at a JAPG meeting on Oct 15 with two weeks for JAPG to comment on 2 scenarios to be further developed and a preliminary recommendation on feasibility of proceeding with purchase based on consultant preliminary info on October 30.
- e. This would move RPRC meeting and public hearing to about Nov 27.
- f. Hess-Mahan commented that arranging RPRC meetings to fit special schedule needs has been common practice in the past.
- g. Committee agreed that the response to the RFP developed by the City for developers would be the real determinant of feasibility and viable scenarios. JAPG would like to see scenarios in the form of Pro Formas.
- h. Upon questioning it was agreed that there is very little risk to the City if through the RFP process the use of the property for affordable housing is determined to be not feasible as property would revert to DCAMM with no penalty to the City.

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm

Respectfully submitted

Lawrence C Bauer – JAPG Member