

West Newton Armory JAPG
Notes from October 28, 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,

Members of the Public

1. Review of 10/19/20 Meeting Summary

Larry

- In AI's Scenario 1A you are not using whole building so you are not eligible for tax credits
- Need more complete narrative for the scenarios

Ted

- At this level you do not get much detail-massing study
- To apply for tax credits you can't touch much of anything
- Lynn not being able to change much
- Wouldn't be eligible for tax credits with 1A changes

Barry

- Did AI say that 1A would not be viable
- In the family housing what supportive services do you need?

David

- At this scale you do not need that much supportive services as you would refer people to outside providers
- For people with special circumstances homeless, veterans etc. may need to budget something
- Site manager would not sit there
- 8x8 room for custodial supplies etc.

Amanda

- Housing Partnership members would disagree, very set on supportive services on site and would see the need for some community space on site

Meeting Summary unanimously approved pending revisions.

2. Timeline

Eamon

- next JPAG meeting is set for November 10th
- Reuse Committee meeting which includes the Public Hearing is now rescheduled for December 16th (30-60 day window after submission of report)
- Report would be submitted to the City Council

Ted

- JPAG members encouraged to attend Reuse Committee meeting
- Want to finalize the report for submittal week of the November 9th
- Want to discuss outstanding issues at what people are thinking about

Anita-

- Clarification of the JPAG Committee charge?

Ted-

- feasibility of affordable housing, municipal use or nothing at all

Jonathan

- want to be able to get concerns and issues identified in the report and the vote

David

- the City indicated that is interested in having them pursue this with DCAM as affordable housing
- Would want to say that the RFP might mean that the City may have to put in more funding than it might make sense to use the resources on a different site

3. Final Report Recommendation Discussion

Ted

- Some members of the Newton Housing Partnership were pleased that there were feasible scenarios but were concerned about livability
- It would be helpful for people to identify their concerns

Mitch

- likes family housing scenario and thinks it will get tweaked persuaded by Newton Housing Partnership that family affordable housing is the need
- More units and it is a good idea
- Full demolition should not be ruled out
- Concern about outdoor space and accommodating families
- Location perfect for senior housing
- Don't know the historic piece of the puzzle

Larry

- Project recently came before Historic Commission

Barney

-Meting was just informational about the process

Barry

-Question of limiting scope of RFP

-Important to ensure project is an efficient use of City financial resources

Ted

-better to leave the options open on the RFP and leave it to the City and their consultant

-Need for affordable housing for every one of these populations in Newton

-Inclination to leave it open as to what population gets served

Larry-

-Armory is a historic resource –keeping the Head House is important and total demolition should not be considered

-Scale is important –keeping it to 4 stories instead of 5

-Where space that is not usable the City should negotiate for other City uses

Anita

-Supports using it for affordable housing

-Important to state that we do not want to demolish the Head House

-Massing is important don't want to go beyond 4 stories

-City should be looking at Dunstan east and how this fits in to this area of Washington Street

-Would want City to determine what type of housing in terms of the greatest need

-Public transportation is still an open issue (MBTA may be changing the bus routes)

-Parking- could possibly rent spaces from the Nursing Home spaces

Barry-

-Limiting the type of housing not something he has expertise but if there the City has a priority hope they express it

-Approval should be conditional with the proviso that the project is physically and programmatically viable

-Need sufficient on-site parking

-Streetscape and building height and scale should be consistent with the neighborhood

Kelley

-Preservation of the Head House

-Demolition will be a non-starter

-Family housing is a value statement and the City should try and make it work here at the Armory

-If marketplace can't respond to family we should look for something else

-Concern about too much subsidy money going to this project

-Want to make sure it moves quickly and that DCAMM will take it back

-Doesn't agree with the limit on height

-A lot of families live in apartment building without open space and would love to live in this building

Sue

- Maintaining the Head House and opening up those windows
- Funding will cover Scenario 2 and 3
- Likes family housing
- Not wedded to 4 or 5 stories
- Not that concerned about parks
- Be careful on combination of affordable housing and City uses

Ted

- DCAM's position is one or the other in terms of City use or affordable housing

Jonathan

- 4 stories
- Context of Dunston East
- Adequate parking
- Alternatives analysis if we get beyond 500k or 550K per unit
- Issue of whether the City funds can be used to these funds to support affordable in a mixed use
- Question on City policy regarding accommodating affordable housing in one project as opposed to integrating it into more of a mixed income housing development

David

- if you go over 60% of median you lose eligibility for low income tax credits

Ted

- High upside for acquiring for affordable housing and there is reversion option in the legislation
- Would be out a dollar and time
- Fairly small project close to amenities
- Would prefer subsidizing mixed income but will leave it to the City
- Nursing Home is part of the context
- Would want to be flexible on population and height
- Wants it in context with existing neighborhood and Dunston East
- Limited by site and lack of parking in terms of scale
- State wants historic preservation-wants to keep the Head House –not sure how the window renovation would work
- Mass Historic Commission-not sure how much they will let us change
- Supportive of demolishing the drill shed to make it usable
- Tough building lots of constraints-thinks AI has done a good job
- Larger contingency would make sense
- Physically and programmatically viable
- Not concerned about outdoor space
- We can mention the populations we would like to be considered

Jonathan

- Have AI carry 20% contingency

Barney

-Will raise the contingency concern with AI

Mitch

-If they were given more height they might be able to create outdoor space

Barney

-Have been talking to AI about a point system

-Height will be in the permitting phase

-RFP will provide preferences

-Would be helpful if the JPAG report were an appendix to the RFP

David

-Suggested the group look at Finch Cambridge, a project he recently completed

Ted

-He will sit down with Sue and Planning Department will come up with a draft of the final report that will be circulated to the group for review prior to the meeting on 11-10

Jonathan

-Will try and put concerns in a summary chart that can be reviewed by the Committee along with the meeting notes

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm

JPAG Comments Summary Table

	Mitch	Kelly	Anita	Barry	Jon	Sue	David	Larry	Ted
Project Massing									
4 stories			X		X			X	
Do not restrict height	X*	X				X			
Maintain neighborhood context (including street scape)			X		X				X
Keep Head House		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Open to full demolition	X			X					
Population to be Served									
Preference for Family	X	X							
Leave preference to City			X	X	X				X
% AMI Target Ranges									
Project/Unit Cost									
Contingency not adequate at this stage					X			X	X
Concern about disproportionate amount of City funds to be allocated if project gets too expensive		X			X				
Other Comments									
Sufficient parking	X			X	X				
Physically and programmatically viable				X					
Public transportation concern			X						
Move quickly		X							
Reversion of Armory back to DCAMM									
	Mitch	Kelly	Anita	Barry	Jon	Sue	David	Larry	Ted

*Allow for greater height to allow for more usable green space, recreation area(s) for family housing