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Town of North Reading
Massachusetts

Community Planning

TOWN CLERK
NORTH READING, MA

MINUTES

Tuesday, August 4, 2020

Mr. Warren Pearce, Chairperson called the Tuesday, August 4, 2020 meeting of the Community Planning Commission to order at 7:30p.m. via Virtual Meeting (Zoom, participants may call 1-301-715-8592, meeting code 9854300926.

MEMBERS

PRESENT: Warren Pearce, Chairperson
Ryan Carroll, Clerk
Christopher Hayden

STAFF

PRESENT: Danielle McKnight, AICP
Town Planner/Community Planning Administrator
Debra Savarese, Administrative Assistant

Mr. Pearce informed all present that the meeting is being recorded.

Mr. Pearce read the Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the North Reading Community Planning Commission IS BEING CONDUCTED VIA REMOTE PARTICIPATION. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. A reminder that persons who would like to listen to this meeting while in progress may do so by calling in 1-301-715-8592 and meeting code 9854300926.

Minutes

Mr. Carroll moved, seconded by Mr. Hayden and voted 3-0: (Mr. Bellavance & Mr. Rudloff absent)

that the Community Planning Commission vote to approve the minutes of June 16, 2020, as amended.

Mr. Carroll moved, seconded by Mr. Hayden and voted 3-0: (Mr. Bellavance & Mr. Rudloff absent)

that the Community Planning Commission vote to approve the minutes of July 7, 2020, as written.

4, 12 & 14 Concord Street – Special Town Meeting - Discussion

Mr. Pearce asked the CPC members if they were able to review the correspondence from the Town Administrator.

Mr. Hayden and Mr. Ryan stated that they did review the correspondence.

Mr. Pearce stated that there are a few things that concern him. The first item is that Weston & Sampson, who worked extensively with the town, on the sewer system, mentions that the buildings are hooked up to municipal sewer, which there is no municipal sewer down there. So, it makes you wonder about the veracity of the rest of the report. It appears that there is nothing seriously wrong with the property, other than some minor things and that some of the other contamination has never really reached it. It appears to have some evidence of pesticide, but nothing that Weston & Sampson identified as a serious environmental threat. The only other thing that they did point out is that the water table is very high throughout this property and that means that installation of septic systems may not be very suitable and there is a lot of fill on the property.

Mr. Hayden stated that there were some folks thinking that it would be a good place for a community garden area, but Design Consultants, Inc. noted that there are some heavy metals on the property and he doesn't think that it would make a good area for a community garden.

Mr. Pearce stated that although Design Consultants, did note some issues with the property, it did not trigger any environmental issues, and so he doesn't think that is a good reason not to put the community garden.

Mr. Hayden stated that they were below the levels, but putting it on Town owned property would be too risky and litigations are terrible on this stuff, today.

Mr. Pearce asked if the Select Board is looking for the CPC to give an opinion on buying one or all of the properties.

Mrs. McKnight stated that there wasn't a lot of time to ask boards and committees to give recommendation in time for the warrant to go to the printer and this is the reason that everyone is seeing this report now. The CPC doesn't have to make a recommendation before town meeting, but if they want to take a vote and it could be passed along, for it to be presented at town meeting, on Saturday.

Mr. Carroll stated that he did not have concerns regarding the report, but are we weighing in to say that we think it's a worthwhile purchase.

Mr. Pearce stated that he thinks they want a planning perspective to tell them if it's a good site for elderly housing or condos.

Mrs. McKnight stated that she doesn't think they want the CPC to do that just yet, but if the CPC wants to express an opinion, they can. The question is if the CPC would support the purchase.

Mr. Pearce stated that he is unsure if the planning board is meant to comment on a financial purchase without saying that we think it's a good idea because of this, or because of that.

Mr. Hayden stated that back when they were asked if purchasing the Smith property was a good idea, the planning board voted against it because of access and what were we going to do with the property. With this property the CPC has discussed that a corner of it could be used for a lift station and he still thinks that's a good idea. If we lose this property there is no other place on Concord Street to put a lift station.

Mrs. McKnight stated that the owner is selling all three parcels, but the town only has first right of refusal on the 61A parcel, but the town is looking at purchasing all three because it would improve the access.

Mr. Hayden stated that they could purchase the properties and hold them for housing stock. It's not a negative.

Mr. Carroll stated that he agrees with Mr. Hayden, from a sewer standpoint how many options we are going to have, coming down the road. He is hesitant because based on town history, there have been some bad decisions made on land purchases. In a town where taxes are already high and were looking for ways to mitigate that and to purchase a piece of land without a definitive plan for it, gives him pause. He is disappointed that there's no real direction to accompany a vote to purchase land at a significant cost.

Mr. Pearce stated that also concerns him to buy it just to have it with no specific use.

Mr. Carroll stated that he is in favor of Ipswich River Park, open space, community gardens. He just thinks that the position the town is in now, if you're looking at this purchase, it's got to be something that's going to reap some financial benefit to the town and he would be remiss to throw his support behind it without a clear indication that it's a development directive that were angling towards and not leaving it as it is.

Mr. Hayden stated that he doesn't even know where the funds are coming from to pay for this property.

Mr. Pearce stated that it's coming from the Pulte funds.

Mr. Carroll asked if they could make a recommendation with caveat of the anticipated use.

Mrs. McKnight stated that the CPC should express whatever the opinion you have about the purchase. If you are uncomfortable supporting the purchase because we don't have defined use yet, which we definitely don't, that would be a valid opinion.

Mr. Dan Mills of 5 Green Meadow Drive stated that he had concerns with the purchase of the property and wanted to hear what the perspective was on 4-14 Concord Street.

Mr. Carroll moved, seconded by Mr. Hayden and voted 3-0: (Mr. Bellavance & Mr. Rudloff absent)

that the Community Planning Commission vote to support the Town's purchase of 4-14 Concord Street.

Zoning Board of Appeals

17 Ridgeway Road – On the petition of Pam & Dan McIntyre for a variance from the front yard setback to construct a third bay to their existing two-car garage per the setback requirements, per the dimensional and density regulations.

- The CPC recommends considering impacts to the neighboring properties.
- The CPC recommends considering what the hardship might be for the variance request.

Main Street & Winter Street – concepts and next steps

Mrs. McKnight stated that she had a conversation with the town administrator, Mike Gilleberto and he told her to let him know when the CPC would like to be put on the Select Board agenda to discuss it. She also did some follow-up with Abacus and they are going to be preparing a memo to make recommendations for the next steps.

Mr. Pearce is concerned that the Coronavirus is going to affect the decision that the Select Board may make at this time. He would like to put the meeting with the Select Board on hold until they are sure that they have enough information to bring to the meeting.

Mrs. McKnight stated that she also spoke with Stephanie Daniels, planning director in Easton who explained that they had a similar, but different type of project there. They also have no sewer and they created a few districts. Their Select Board was extremely supportive and the Town Administrator did a lot of the direct negotiations with the developers. They were all in support of introducing a lot of housing to support the new commercial districts.

Mr. Pearce asked what their perceived impact on the school system was. Is their school system big enough where they felt that they could step out like that and not overload the schools, or not overwhelm the residents, because Easton is not a huge town.

Mrs. McKnight stated that she asked about that and was told that it was brought up, but was not the primary concern because enrollment has been trending down, as it has been in a lot of communities. It's not that it wasn't a concern, but it wasn't such a concern that they would allow that to stand in their way of what otherwise was going to be an important development. Because they saw the new tax revenue, not from the residential development, but from the accompanying commercial development. What was interesting too, is the way that they paid for everything. She would like to learn more about the infrastructure that they put in, because it's not just a large municipal system. Stephanie described that treatment plants were put in for individual projects, paid for by the developers and the town paid for infrastructure collection, along corridors and collecting from different parcels, with the collection done by the town.

Mr. Carroll asked at what point Easton started soliciting outside pricing for the potential development, in terms of putting together their development model, because he still struggles with how they are going to put together this model for the Select Board that contemplates all the costs and the future benefits without any sort of outside help from a developer or an outside firm that can build that model for us.

Mrs. McKnight stated that they did not do a complete model. They had a master plan that generally areas that were priorities for economic development, as we have also. They have a housing production, a sewer and wastewater management plan that also showed where in town that they wanted to target. As opportunities arose they worked out these deals. They went after Beacon Properties when they realized that there was a property owner who wanted to do something with their property and they needed someone who could make it happen, but could also pay for the infrastructure that they wanted to put in there. So, she doesn't think that they did a whole cross cost analysis for the project as a whole, but they outlined where they wanted the development to be, basically what type of infrastructure they needed and then they started at different points with each of these areas, as property became available to develop.

Mr. Pearce stated that they might look at their project a little bit that way too and call it phasing, but a development plan that allows us to do, as properties become available like a Master plan.

Mr. Dan Mills stated that he is not fond of the North Reading Center name that is being used for the Heffron property because that is not the town center and it is misleading.

Planning Administrator Updates

Facilities Master Plan

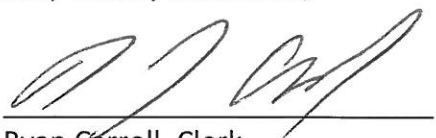
The contract has not been signed at this time.

Abacus contract

The contract has been extended through December.

Adjournment at 8:40PM

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ryan Carroll', is written over a horizontal line.

Ryan Carroll, Clerk