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Town of North Reading
Massachusetts

Community Planning

TOWN CLERK
NORTH READING, MA

MINUTES
WORKSHOP

Tuesday, May 14, 2019

Mr. Warren Pearce, Chairperson called the Tuesday, May 14, 2019 meeting of the Community Planning Commission to order at 7:30p.m. in Room 14 of the North Reading Town Hall, 235 North Street, North Reading, MA.

MEMBERS

PRESENT:

Warren Pearce, Chairperson
William Bellavance, Vice Chairperson
Christopher Hayden., Clerk
Ryan Carroll

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.

66 Winter Street - discussion

Mr. Pearce stated that he has had conversations with Mr. Heffron regarding development at 66 Winter Street. In the process of doing the Master Plan and working with MAPC, one of the issues that has always come up is that the town does not have an established center and one of the reasons is the way the town was set up, so we are looking to find a way. Mr. Heffron's property is a good location to start this project. Mr. Heffron also agreed that it would be a good thing to do with his property.

Ken Heffron owner of 66 Winter Street stated that he has a vision for this property which is a mission to develop this property he thought of his father (Milty) who owned an asphalt company on Rte. 62. A couple of years ago he was thinking about what he would want to do with the property located at 66 Winter Street. He was approached by a couple of developers that wanted to buy it as a paving company. He realized that selling this property as a paving company was not something he wanted to do and didn't think the town wanted it. He envisioned a new town hall, senior center and youth center, but he was told that the town would not be interested in this type of development. He wants to be one of the first people to come to the town and be known as "the guy who came to the Town of North Reading" and created a legacy for his father. He would like to develop three buildings and have a plaque with the following attached to one of the buildings. (The Heffron Building or the Heffron Memorial and cap it off with "Uncle Milty's Place", so that forever people will drive by and say "You know Uncle Milty's Place, or I have to stop and pick something up at Uncle Milty's Place." He said that in one of the conversations with the Planner, Danielle McKnight, she stated that the town had an interest in use in that area. He has a well-known, reputable builder in Wilmington who builds commercial and residential and he told him that he wants him to be a part of this project or he would not do it at all. He produced photos (see attached) of three buildings that currently exist in Wilmington. He has started the project by hiring engineers, he expects in the next couple of months that the plans will be complete and he will be submitting them for permitting process. Building one and two will have two floors with two bedroom apartments and commercial on the ground floor. Building three will have twelve condominium units with two bedrooms. The only thing that can stop this project from happening is the town.

Mr. Pearce stated that the CPC would like to see some type of development that involves the town, but the town has never done this before. This is something that they would have to sit down and decide what they would like to see there.

Mr. Sean Delaney, Chairperson of the EDC asked Mr. Heffron if this is not done, will he sell to the town.

Mr. Ken Heffron stated that he would like to propose to the town to lease the property. He would like the town to pay the interest on the money that he is going to firm up and whatever period of time it takes the town and then make a balloon payment to him at the end of that period or set up a number of possible terms for payment. He wants to make it as easy for the town as possible. He will keep doing the project because he cannot wait.

Mr. Sean Delaney stated that he does like what Mr. Heffron is proposing, but if he is on a six month timeline this is not enough time for the town to make a decision.

Mr. Hayden stated that when they previously met with Mr. Heffron to discuss this property he provided these pictures and the CPC did like this project.

Mr. Pearce stated that he thinks that if the town sat down within the next month and made a commitment to Mr. Heffron, he would be okay with that.

Mr. Delaney stated that this would have to go to town meeting and that would not be until October.

Mr. Rich Wallner of the Select Board stated that he walked this property two years ago. He asked the CPC when the 10 year plan from MAPC would be completed.

Mrs. McKnight stated the CPC will be looking at the draft Master Plan this evening and then it will be released for public comment and would probably be completed in the summer.

Mr. Wallner stated that a survey was done and a lot of the town residents would like to see a downtown and this was one of the areas.

Mr. Heffron stated that he has spoken to people and they do want to see a downtown instead of travelling to another town or city.

Mr. Wallner stated that there is going to be a problem with sewerage and wanted to know where they were at with the money that would be dispersed to allow for the feasibility study for a package treatment plant.

Mr. Pearce stated that they already have the funds and could facilitate to do the study. If we knew if we were going to move forward with this we could ask that it be included into the study.

Mr. Michael Gilleberto, Town Administrator stated that he met with Mr. Heffron and Mrs. McKnight a few years ago to discuss this property. At this meeting it was difficult for them to provide a firm answer to Mr. Heffron at that time. Their feedback about the desire for mixed

use was only after they could not answer the question of what they would want to do from a town standpoint. The mixed-use was not an immediate response. It was really that they could not give an answer to the proposal of a town developer construction project, so he does not want these two to get mixed together.

Mrs. McKnight stated that initially they had a lot of trouble actually answering the question of would the town be willing to get behind some kind of re-development project for town use, such as a town hall. They just didn't know yet because there was not a town consensus. At the time, the CPC was working on a rezoning to allow mixed use there.

Mr. Gilleberto stated that part of that relates to some of the creative proposals for financing, which leads to his next question. If the town didn't need financing to acquire the property would Mr. Heffron be open to an out-right sale to the town.

Mr. Heffron stated that it would depend on the time-frame.

Mr. Gilleberto stated that his understanding of this is that Mr. Heffron is interested in generating revenue on the property, sooner rather than later.

Mr. Heffron stated that is correct.

Mr. Gilleberto stated that the Select Board has had some limited discussions about this property, although there were multiple ideas discussed for this property, have sort of coalesced around a singular position on it. He thinks that they wanted to hear this discussion tonight before doing that and the board has had some turn-over from the election with two new members which will obviously contribute to whatever decision the board comes up with. If that position was to be identified and was to include a municipal facility of any sort, there is a facility Master Plan that is on-going and this is something that will take some time. As they try to sort out what is the future for the existing facilities and where do things need to go. He doesn't offer any of this to discourage what Mr. Heffron has brought forth, but he does offer it as somethings that need to take place. He is optimistic that the timeframe for the June 2020 Town Meeting, they would have the study complete. He thinks that is more realistic than the October 2019 Town Meeting. It may be that that doesn't relate, but he would think that if they're talking about a municipal facility, it would.

Mr. Pearce stated that he believes that the Select Board would have an easier time with their decision, if there was a more fully developed plan, which they couldn't really do until they got to the point where everyone understood what Mr. Heffron's position was, so they'll know what the possibilities are moving forward. If we can get a relatively unanimous decision on this, we can then present to Mr. Heffron some kind of a plan. If the timeframes are realistic and we can present it to Mr. Heffron, he can then give us his answer.

Mr. Delaney stated that maybe that's incorporated into what you said, but isn't the starting point where the sale price is. Until we know what the asking price is, how do you have a discussion?

Mr. Pearce stated that the discussion this evening was to get everyone together to see if everyone agreed it was something we should move forward on. We can then try to put together a basic plan that we would bring to the Select Board, along with a price and an example of the terms, to see if the Select Board says yes or no.

Mr. Delaney stated that before he can go back to the EDC about acquiring the property, he would need to know what the asking price is.

Mr. Pearce stated that he wants to be able to show what the town would be getting for the asking price.

Mr. Delaney stated that it's raw land. That's what you're getting. The analysis has to be what does the town want to put there and what's the cost of that. All of that factors into whether or not Town Meeting is going to approve it. We're sitting on money from the Pulte property and he would hate to see the town purchase the property with the foresight that this is our new downtown, but it sits there for the next decade or two. The town has to do due diligence and if the town is going down this road, you have to have consensus as to what the town wants to use this property for and a cost factor of what it will be to construct.

Mr. Pearce stated that he believes in this vision.

Mr. Wallner stated that he fully embraces the ten year study. It's a combination of all the studies the CPC has done so far. More than 400 residents said they wanted it, especially with the package treatment plant.

Mr. Pearce stated that he remembers when there was a battle over the purchasing of the Ipswich River Park. They were almost not going to do it because there was a proposed subdivision and this made the costs higher, but they persevered and got it done.

Mr. Tom Ollila of Wilmington stated that Wilmington has the very same issue. They have a strip mall, not a downtown. The buildings that are shown in the pictures are there, but they don't make it a downtown.

Mr. Carroll asked if it would work as a stand-alone project.

Mr. Pearce stated that the vision would be to have a new town hall which would generate foot traffic.

Mr. Rudloff asked if Mr. Heffron is expecting the town to pay the same as a private buyer.

Mr. Pearce stated that the legacy portion is the most important to Mr. Heffron.

Mr. Hayden stated that once Mr. Heffron receives approval for the plan the price on the property is going to triple.

Mr. Pearce stated that if they pay interest only for five years, it will then pay for itself.

Mr. Rudloff stated that the Master Plan did not really talk about this property.

Mrs. McKnight stated that it did not mention that property unparticular, but it does mention a more centrally located town hall in the Main Street area.

Mrs. McKnight asked the CPC what they need to give to the Select Board to move forward. Should it be a plan for this particular property or a plan that phases in the surrounding properties?

Mr. Pearce stated that the Select Board may want more detail before making a decision. There should be a workshop to discuss the ideas of what the town would want there.

Mr. Rudloff asked if there was money to do a Master Plan or concept with that area of Rte. 28 and Rte. 62.

Mrs. McKnight stated that a couple of years ago Town Meeting approved \$50,000.00 to initially do a plan for approximately ten properties in that vicinity, including this one. The idea was to see what could be developed there and can the properties be joined in a shared package treatment plant, assuming that we were never going to get sewer in that area. Shortly after receiving the money, the talk became very serious about getting real sewer. So, it was put on hold because if it was coming, it would be a factor in the study. So, we still have the \$50,000.00 which could fit pretty neatly into this because it basically says what we would be looking to do.

Mr. Bellavance stated that this is a great starting point.

Mr. Pearce stated that once they make the move other property owners may want to be included in the plan. He would defer to other towns/communities to see what they have done to create these public/private partnerships and use it as a model.

Mr. Bellavance stated that getting the information out there is the most important.

Master Plan - discussion

Mrs. McKnight stated that she owes MAPC comments. The way this was going to work was she asked that the CPC give the initial comments before opening it up to the general public to say that we have this Master Plan draft, publish it on the website, get the word out, target the advisory group and get their feedback, but before that the CPC made the major edits. There were some sections that she thought were missing some very important information in regard to the zoning. Because the document is so long she just wrote up the summary of her comments and would like to know if the CPC agrees with these comments and is it okay to send to MAPC, along with any comments/feedback the CPC might have.

Mr. Rudloff stated that that he did review the documents and although his only complaint with the survey is that it did not reach the younger residents. He did speak to some of these people and they would like to have a center of town and restaurants.

Mr. Pearce stated that there is more response to this Master Plan than there has ever been before. Maybe the outreach should have gone into the school and sent home with the kids.

Mrs. McKnight stated that she believes that School Superintendent Jon Bernard did send something home for the first Community meeting.

Mr. Hayden stated that Mrs. McKnight has done a great job on the comments and should send it in to MAPC to review. In the meantime we can continue to review what she has red-lined and set a time at one of our regularly scheduled meetings to discuss it.

Mrs. McKnight stated that there are going to be concurrent reviews on this.

Mr. Pearce stated that they have to set up some time to put something together for the Select Board and probably need to come up with a basic plan and talk to Mr. Heffron about it. He should also attend a meeting with the Select Board to answer questions.

Mr. Hayden stated that the Select Board is going to want to know what Mr. Heffron's is asking for the property. It should be done in Executive Session to avoid the price getting out.

Mr. Bellavance stated that basically we should be looking at the RFP from Wilmington so that we can develop our RFP.

Mrs. McKnight stated that at some point they will be able to say what the town needs will be for the town hall. We can also look at the market analysis that was done by MAPC to figure out what could reasonably do well there, but they are going to need to know development costs.

Mr. Bellavance stated that we are going to have to come up with how this is going to be funded to make it come to fruition. Maybe come up with a full plan and go out to bid with contractors/developers.

Mr. Pearce stated that in order for this to work for the town. Reading and Andover do not own all of their buildings and the town does not want to be a landlord. How do we put the town hall in there? Do we do it as a condo, where the town owns that section of it?

Mrs. McKnight stated that she would put this on a meeting for discussion after the June Town Meeting.

Little Meadow Way – Endorsement of Street Acceptance Plans

Mrs. McKnight stated that Mark Clark of the Water Department has some issues with the water services after inspecting them and would like to CPC to wait until town meeting to endorse the plans or recommend acceptance.

Planning Administrator's Update

Park & Ride

Mrs. McKnight wanted to make sure she was correct that the CPC did not want to consider the Kitty's Restaurant parking lot.

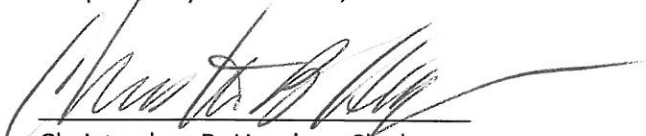
Mr. Pearce stated that the rear parking lot is in a flood plain.

The consensus is to eliminate this from the list.

Mr. Hayden stated that there might be parking at the old Zayres building.

Adjournment at 9:30PM

Respectfully submitted,



Christopher B. Hayden, Clerk