

Adams School Reuse Committee

Meeting Minutes - Thursday May 10, 2007, State of Maine Room, City Hall 7:00

Committee Members: Matt Thayer, Co-Chair, Dick D'Entremont, Cythia Fitzgerald. City Staff: Alex Jaegerman, Planning Director, Carrie Marsh, Urban Designer, Amy Grommes Pulaski, HCD Program Manager (note taker)

Alex opens the meeting and thanks everyone for coming to City Hall for the meeting.

1. Presentation of New Designs Submitted by 5/10/07

Matt welcomes everyone for coming and states there is one more board that has been submitted. Matt introduces representatives from The Building Collaborative, Jonah and Jordan.

Jonah introduces the board and the Building Collaborative vision along with the list of groups interested in this project. Some of the themes presented include a community center, reuse of the existing Adams school building, intergenerational programs, performance space, plus shared mixed use. Their plan includes a cut through the existing building; add a kitchen and a learning café with gallery space. There is potential for retail etc. Sustainability green space will be located in the existing playground space which would include culture and history of the town like a boat and trolley car. Green houses would be constructed on the roof, solar panels on all the roofs, wind turbines, community gardens and a park.

Jordan explains that the designs include cooperative housing, elderly, families, immigrants, young people and artists. One building would include elder housing the other would be mixed income housing with a diversity focused. Retail, mixed use business structure with an open market space with vendors outside in summer inside in winter.

One focus is how to reduce car dependence through shared vehicles and community bikes. The group presented the idea of making Wilson and moody one way streets with diagonal parking to reduce traffic.

The group created a preliminary budget, and listed funding sources.

Their goal is to build community here on Munjoy Hill, building collaboration, based on the community process created here with this committee and moving it forward. They are planning to do a community survey to find out more about what the community wants for example: how do we make it more walkable etc. This neighborhood can be a model for around the City and around the Country. We are planning on going to a national conference in California to learn more about collaborative partnerships of nonprofits.

Matt questions whether they think it's important to save the building?

Jonah replies that it is an important building and structure in the city. Many people have attended school there and it is named after one of Portland's great educators. Plus it is better for the environment than tearing it down. However, typically to build community is not tearing it down and than trying to build it again from scratch. It's not evolutionary. We want make the transition more gradual. It will grow slowly and grow organically and economically.

Matt questions their vision whether their senior housing pieces is it for elders in good health or is it for elders who need more assistance, such as a continuum of care.

Jonah replies that it would need to be explored more fully. The group would like to know more about what the community wants, but there are elder co-op organizations.

Dick questions what the square footage is for each of the specified spaces, for non-profits, green, housing, etc. plus costs per square foot. Alex relies those specifics aren't required now and can be determined later.

Eric says he likes the response to why to keep the building. He questions if the building torn down, do they think that the non-profits belong on the site.

Jonah replies yes, because it was a school and had a history of community space and therefore is appropriate. He further explains that they are looking to totally transform the existing building.

Dick says he looked against the original Munjoy Hill Neighborhood meeting when this was discussed. The community rated a number of elements, four stars being the highest rating. The following categories received four stars: open space, ugly existing building, and income generator for the City. Carrie says that we do not need to decide to keep the building.

Carrie presents an email she received from Deborah Jabine of 26 Munjoy Street. She presents her priorities in text form: housing, community facility, retail space and venue, emergency and service vehicle access, green space, parking.

2. Review of all Team Presentation Boards from 04/28/07

Matt asks Carrie to hand out the of the dot exercise.

Carrie explains the outcomes of the green dot exercise. The highest priorities for land use: Park/plaza/ playground (21), Mixed income/ affordable housing (17), Multi use housing/ flexible (17), Senior or diversity of housing (15), Mixed use small scale retail, coop, coffee, grocery (13), community center (12).

Dick continues to summarize themes by the boards: walkway through the site, green space, mixed housing, community use, parking to some degree, two designs had transportation pods. He sees a cluster around common themes, which is a positive sign.

Matt thinks it would be useful to prepare something to summarize all the themes now that submissions are in. Alex agrees.

Dick states that each board summarizes its desire for housing, number of units, and there are identified units. Each team identified the priorities to them on the board.

3. Remaining Steps and Timeline

Alex summarizes that the first step would to have an extended meeting next time where the committee would have a chance to engage with the boards and look more in-depth to find common elements. The big questions are to what end, RFP? RFQ? Normally proposals are put out as a piece of property/ proposal to go forward. It's important when the RFP goes out its important to identify/ specify the identified by the committee criteria and communicate the priorities. That way the developers/ responders to the RFP have an idea of how to develop good designs. Alex explains that Amy suggested having a committee workshop. This would give the committee the opportunity to discuss their own thoughts and ideas while also incorporating community input. Staff would take the results from this workshop to create the report that would go to council in June or July. Before that happens it would go back to the committee and community for review.

Matt questions the difference between the RFP/ RFQ and the process and outcome that comes out. Alex explains the differences.

Ed Democracy questions how often the city does a RFP/RFQ. Alex responds probably 90% is RFP. Some engineering contracts utilize RFQ. Alex explains that the RFQ helps to identify capacity/ experience and can lend itself more to technical projects. Amy explains that it is also can be used to identify companies with more experience in specific area of focus, for example green design.

Eric questions who makes the final decisions. Alex responds that one of the Council committees makes a recommendation to council, normally either the housing committee or community development committee.

Question: From time RFP/RFQ is issued how much time would it take to break ground and what happens to the site in the meantime? Alex responds that once it is advertised till the deadline for submissions of 6-8 weeks. Than there is an indeterminate amount of time the city uses to review the proposals – normally 6-8 months. This includes picking proposal, to negotiating deal. Then it's the development planning stage which also takes several months. It could take a year after the RFP to breaking grounds. But he does not know what will happen in the mean time.

Eric thinks one year is optimistic. He also wonders how to upkeep the building in the meantime. It could be a target of vandalism.

Question: Instead of building a fortress, can we utilize the space for the community. This is the best way to prevent vandalism.

Odelle Brown say there were several community members worried about this and have been discussing this with Anita LaChance in the City Manager's office. A Company of Girls (ACOG) has entered into a month to month lease with the city and it will be used as a community space.

The city is assisting ACOG and the community has a protected space. She just signed a lease today. They will get the lease May 15. ACOG will be the sole leaser but can coordinate additional community organizations.

Ed Democracy states that some of the girls who participate in ACOG went to Adams school. He advertised a clean up day on May 19 10-2.

Question: can ACOG keep up the outside as a playground? To give the neighborhood an accessible space for kids to play.

Matt says there is some issues or coordination with the city. Parks and rec takes care of certain spaces but the city needs to step it up.

Matt introduces senior housing as an overlooked topic. One idea is to create a continuum of care so people can live a lifetime on the hill. He is curious how small a site can used for this purpose. He wants to have a separate meeting to talk with certain people who will provide some of this feedback. He is willing to coordinate this and report back to the committee.

Alex explains that the committee is over the fact finding phase, but if the chairs think it was overlooked they can explore this idea.

Jonah questions the time line. Alex say that the this should be done by the end of June. Next meeting will have a 5:30/ 6:00pm start. Talk of bringing in a facilitator. Eric thinks this a great idea.