

Somersworth Hilltop Commission

Draft Minutes

March 3, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT: Marty Dumont, Bob Belmore, City Manager Bob Bellmore. City Finance Director Scott Smith, School Superintendent Jeni Mosca, Councilor Jessica Paradise, State of NH Department of Resources Peter Michaud, Chris Smith, Madeline DeSantis, Sarah McGraw and Chair Councilor Martin Dumont.

Marty Dumont called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm in the council chambers on the above date.

1. Approval of minutes from 2/4/16

City Manager Belmore moved to approve the minutes of January 4, 2016, second by Superintendent Jeni Mosca. VOTE: Unanimous

2. Workshop

Peter Michaud began the workshop asking what is the best use of the Hill Top School. He used an example from another historical re-use project. He presented a matrix for comparing potential use options with potential outcomes.

The Commission is tasked with presenting recommendations for City Council to approve. Zoning? Rezone for multipurpose use.

Maddie FOS worked with council to approve. Bob will look at zoning. Organizations and individuals interested in hilltop.

The workshop utilized the matrix to analyze each potential option and potential issues/ outcomes for each option. Below are thoughts from the workshop.

Options

1. Status Quo
2. Public park/demo
3. Public park/ building rehab
4. Mixed use
5. Rehab: city
 - a. McConnell center / city owned city developed
6. Rehab: public private
 - a. Discover Portsmouth / Historical society: funded with input from the city

- b. Oaks
- 7. Rehab: private
 - a. Great Falls School

Zoning Issues

1. Establish interest
2. Admin Impact
3. Tax base
4. Public Benefit
5. Financial Impact
6. Legal Issues

Peter Michaud stated that going forward there needs to be a package of assets, liabilities and a process.

Status Quo:

City continues to maintain building. No zoning issues. No established interest. Doesn't help tax base. Some neighborhood impacts. No coverage for vandalism. Administrative impact: Building inspections, basic maintenance. Some legal issues. Public relations: violation of ordinances.

Public Park / Demolition:

No zoning issue. Established interest: some Tax Base: none Bob Belmore said there would be no revenue. Peter Michaud inquired about demolition costs. A Park could increase property values. This option would not be taxable. There would be a loss to a recognized Nationally Recognized building. Losing recognized national registered building. There is a cost to demolition and developing a park. The Pines park is too close.

Public Park/ Rehabilitation:

Zoning: Depends on use. In order for a rehabilitation it is important to know who the tenants will be. Established interest: cultural commission, possibility of an ice rink. Tax base: depends on use. Administrative impact: moving it towards rehab. City Value: mixed use draws traffic. Financial Impact: rent, legal, maintenance. Grounds keeping contracted out. City run building will require funding. Legal: liability, lease arrangements, scale Notes: desire to have ice rink

Maddie: rehab city owned what happens to back. green space. Build a building. City ownership of public space doesn't mean public park.

City owned/ Rehabilitation:

Zoning: no issue if used for government purposes. Depends on use /overlay zone. New zoning was passed on March 4, 2013. *Ordinance section 30 hilltop school property zoning overlay district. 10.13: government facility, private educational, museum, clubhouse, community center, communications, professional business offices, bed and breakfast, athletic, amusement, daycare, artisan studio, artisan production shop, open land and fields for sports. Other uses accessory, café, grocery, store.*

Public Park / Rehabilitation:

Established interest: some. To make building accessible will take investment. Is there a city interest? Scott Smith said it was hard to tell but there might be. Rely on past votes. Mixed? Scott, referendum, incremental tax increase. Tax base: public facility nontaxable, value of property, depends on use. Administrative Impact: Short term and long term.

Mr. Belmore said that utilities water sewer fees, billing, support adds value. Financial: rehab money Mr. Michaud said that LCHIP awards maximum of a \$400,000 matching grant. Moose Plate Grants won't pay for whole rehab. Scott Smith suggested volunteer labor that adds to civic pride. Timberland hold massive volunteer days. Legal Issues: various, depends on use

Private/Redevelopment:

Zoning: depends, private development, often includes housing options, would require amendment. Established Interest: List of organizations to occupy, Private developers (warm), Tax base: nonprofit: maybe. Administrative Impact: Short term costs

Scott Smith departed from the meeting at 7:17 pm

Value to City: yes, improving property that was vacant, serving new use, vitality. Potential loss of greenspace. Financial Impact: minimal to city, long term positive. Legal: no encumbrances, minimal short term, positive long term.

Notes: When building was available for private investment it happened during an economic downturn. What is market now for housing redevelopment? Has it changed?

Mixed use: Residential / Commercial / retail: for profit or nonprofit or both. Could combine use of city owned property with private use. Ownership could be privately owned or publicly owned.

Zoning: amendment required for mixed use based on definition of mixed use. Tax base: non-profit would result in low commercial use. Administrative impact: potential impact Interest: mixed/ high. Value to city: positive impact Financial: depends on development if the city retains ownership won't be footing bill of development. Legal: Public / Private Partnership.

Next meeting: April 6 at 6:00 pm

It was suggested to give another tour of the Hilltop School possibly invite the Cultural Commission before next meeting. It was decided to conduct the tour before the meeting on April 6.

*Superintendent Jeni Mosca motioned to adjourn second by Councilor Jessica Paradise. **VOTE: Unanimous***

The meeting was adjourned at 7: 40pm