

**EASTHAMPTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL RE-USE COMMITTEE**  
50 Payson Avenue, Easthampton, MA 01027



**Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, February 8, 2021**

**Chair: Joe McCoy (JM)**

**Board Members:**

X	LJ Clark (LC)	X	Pamela Means (PM)	X	Chris Korczak (CK)
X	Brad Riley (BR)	X	Patrick Brough (PB)		

**Absent:** None.

**Recording Clerk:** Zoe Ingram

**City Planner:** Jeff Bagg (JB)

**Consultant:** Emily Innes (EI)

**MassDevelopment Program Manager:** Ben Murphy (BM)

**City Procurement Officer:** Mike Owens (MO)

**Guests:** *Attendance taken through live Zoom meeting.*

- None.
1. Call to Order: JM at 1:06pm via remote participation.
  2. Presentation by MassDevelopment for due diligence
    - BM from MassDevelopment was at the meeting to give presentation. Gave a brief introduction to MassDevelopment's work and the connection to working with surplus municipal properties. They have been working with JB on how they can help with the RFP process.
      - MassDevelopment provides a consultant to municipalities. One consultant is VHD (civil engineering company) will give existing conditions/utility, site survey, and conceptual drawings for the 3 sites. Crowley will be brought in for the appraisal.
      - LC asked if Easthampton is entering contract with MassDevelopment through MOA. *BM stated yes, it is easy for them to bring in consultants for these projects.*
      - JM pointed out this seems preliminary and they are not working on the use of buildings. *BM clarified yes, they look at what is there currently and a small portion is what could possibly go there.*

- JB spoke to the grant they applied for to cover the due diligence aspect and then explained how they started working with MassDevelopment instead. For example, at Maple School, there is no survey or infrastructure information currently. There are trees/a fence and the survey will help identify who the trees belong to.
  - Going from schools to housing will change the demand on infrastructure. They do not have an understanding of water/sewer, but the consultant has the technology to gather this information.
  - Survey data will also help figure out sidewalks/crosswalks/parking.
  - BR pointed out the possibility of total demo of structures, asked if this is specific to current building or does it include if a larger building goes in its place. *BM clarified that they look at existing conditions, not building specific. Property boundaries, water/sewer/street infrastructure in the area. It is possible the infrastructure can't currently handle what is proposed, but what can the city do upgrade the infrastructure.*
  - JB also spoke to how all 3 properties will get an appraisal and the cost to acquire the property. Before the city can offer lower than market value, the appraisal needs to be done.
  - JB asked if this work is common for MassDevelopment. *BM stated that they are used to working with municipalities on the RFP process.*
  - PB asked if this is specific to the outside of the building, instead of inside for issues such as asbestos. *BM said yes and they do not think there is a benefit to looking internal.*
3. Continued review and discussion of reuse criteria, weighting and priorities
- EI shared a presentation of the draft evaluation criteria that the group has come up with so far.
    - EI spoke to how the group can give developers the option to meet 1 or 2 of the criteria items.
    - “Community Connections” wording came from discussion with ValleyCDC and they like to include a connection from affordable housing to the surrounding neighborhood.
    - Number of sites in proposal: There are advantages to working on all sites at once.
  - EI looked to hear back from the group on how they feel about this criterion.
    - LC found the criteria draft helpful.
    - JM was also impressed. Acknowledges the categories are broad, but include all the information they spoke about.
    - PB asked what AMIs are: EI clarified it is Area Median Income. Affordable housing can be provided at different percentages, which is advantageous.
    - PB asked why these aren't city responsibilities. *EI explained that developers will be getting properties for less than market value. In exchange for getting these properties for a lower cost, this criterion must be met. JB also spoke to Downtown Strategic Plan meetings and how residents reiterated that they hoped to see these things.*
  - JB asked if group would like to see mixed use aspect added to this list.

- CK would not want to lose affordable housing by including mixed use. CK also inquired if there can be a maximum AMI and EI said yes and that might be something they want to include.
    - JM spoke to there being some degree of mixed use in order to generate tax income for the city. *EI says there will be a generation of income through property taxes for the city and she will check with ValleyCDC.*
  - PM inquired about possible legal action against developments. *JB spoke to Smart Growth Overlay and how Pepin is excluded, but they are working on fixing that. Housing is allowed by right in that zone, which is a benefit to developers and removes appeal period. After the board votes, there is no appeal process like a Special Permit where abutters can bring the project to court and delay it.*
  - JB shared that the city is also working to amend restriction to housing on first floors in the zoning. State is reviewing zoning and should be fixed roughly by April/June.
4. Review of preliminary schedule for RFP process
- EI shared a presentation with the RFP timeline. ValleyCDC will be presenting on March 8th. Final review of draft RFP planned for April 12th.
    - EI shared the City Council and School Committee schedules. In March, they will look to speak to the City Council Property Subcommittee.
    - School Committee is meeting on April 12<sup>th</sup> and they want to give clarification to anyone interested in the RFP and declare that property is surplus (conditional).
    - City Council will then have to accept declare the property as surplus (conditional). Draft will then go back to the property subcommittee.
    - Final approval planned for June/July.
  - JB spoke to first step with School Committee. They do not need to review the draft RFP. He also mentioned that the new Mountain View school has substantial completion date for the end of April.
  - PB asked for timeline/if there is a plan for when the teachers will be removing their stuff from the old schools. *EI has spoken to the Superintendent regarding this. Teachers will have a week or so to remove things from their classrooms, rough timeline of before the end of July.*
  - JB noted that this question should go into the FAQs and points out they will not be moving as fast as White Brook.
  - CK asked if there is a plan to interface this plan with the Property Subcommittee, to make this committee's thinking clear with that committee. *EI hopes that members of this committee will join the City Council meetings to share thoughts of what went into the RFP. JB included that they would act as ambassadors.*
  - JM asked when there will be a RFP ready for February meeting. There will be a presentation to the Property Subcommittee in February.
  - JM shared his concerns that there will be confusion over who is creating the RFP. *JB will continue to check and figure out the role of the group and council, but it is their understanding that the City Council can make recommendations to the draft and the Mayor has the authority to create the group to prepare a draft.*
    - JB stated that he plans to look into this before going to the Property Subcommittee.

- MO asked where total demolition versus preservation comes up under the draft. *EI did not include it as the group did not come to a decision on it.*
  - EI stated she is going to work mixed use into the categories based on discussion.
5. Review and discuss FAQ's
    - EI encouraged the group to think of more questions and questions that came up throughout meeting will be included.
    - CK shared that he would like a place for links to documents and these meetings and timeline. *JM also mentioned original meetings where public comment was taken – recordings of community projects. JB stated he does have a webpage available and will include this information.*
  6. Review of minutes
    - None.
  7. Public speak
    - None.
  8. Next meeting: TBD, planned for March 8<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm.

*On a motion made by JM and seconded by PB, it was unanimously voted by roll call vote to adjourn. Adjournment time: 2:20pm.*