

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



Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 8, 2021

Chair: Joe McCoy (JM)

Board Members:

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

Absent: TH, PM, LC

Recording Clerk: Zoe Ingram

City Planner: Jeff Bagg (JB)

Consultant: Emily Innes (EI)

Guests: *Attendance taken through live Zoom meeting.*

1. Call to Order: JM at 5:05pm
 2. Public Speak:
 - None.
 3. Minutes:
 - None.
-
1. Continued review and discussion of reuse criteria (based on Downtown Plan), weighting and priorities
 - EI broke down the disposition purpose
 - Shares the three examples RFPs, wants to look at how specific other towns have been with their objectives and goals.
 - Clearly define what is acceptable and unacceptable, what is advantageous vs disadvantageous.
 - Affordable housing, mixed income, artist live work, and mixed use didn't make it onto line but has been mentioned
 - JM asks if putting it one place gives it more emphasis over others. He mentions that there has been talk about public space use, and how would that be included in the disposition? How do you know where to put things?
 - EI states you want to be as close as possible to what you want.

- JB looked at Town of Adams disposition. They have a reference to things they prefer, but they state they will accept other concepts. Public use concept is included in the disposition process.
- EI suggests they begin thinking about/brainstorming why the buildings are being disposed.
- JM mentions affordable housing should be put in objectives. He believes some people will want to see income generated for the city so mixed use.
 - PB asks if these are objectives or part of the disposition purpose. JM clarifies yes this is part of his disposition purpose.
- JB mentions how a general disposition statement is hard to form without mentioning how the sites are different. Maple may incorporate public parking, as well as a public space/pocket park.
- CK asks how to tackle the different sites and how they can do this process without deciding if its multiple RFPs or a single one.
 - CK thinks to tackle them as 3 different RFPs.
 - CK asks why would it be highly advantageous to have 3 different developers vs. a single one. JB mentions one school may get a good fit, and the other 2 may not.
 - PB thinks some contractors would not want to deal with 3 properties because they can't break off 1 property they want.
- JB has heard from affordable housing developers that they would want to provide more units and they may receive more tax credits. At 20 units they won't get tax credits, but at 40 units and up they become eligible for a bigger pot of tax credits.
 - EI confirms that a colleague of hers has heard that 40-60 units is the sweet spot.
 - JM also mentions how allowing a teardown could also allow for more units, versus having to retrofit a school.
- CK asks about the "RFP market" and if these are common and if developers are looking at many options.
- EI does not think there is a glut of them. She did one recently that received 2 responses, but there are a lot of factors that could decide that. Thinks that developers would like to know what the public wants and flexibility to respond to the market.
- JM mentions that he does not believe it should be 100% affordable housing and PB agrees. He believes residents would be upset to see it completely not for profit and that they should just give them to Williston.
- JB mentions how the city will be getting the affordable housing they need and it is not Williston as it is giving affordable housing to the community.
- JB shares that MassDevelopment spoke to how expensive it is to demolish a building and it may be more cost effective to renovate.
- During the next meeting, EI hopes to allow the committee to speak more to individual buildings and demolishing vs renovating and if this is a menu of choices.
- JM asks if we specify buildings that can or cannot be demolished. JB thinks it would be difficult to specify because they would need justification.
- Main St historic inventory has just been completed (at least for the exterior of schools). All schools are eligible to be put on the national registry of historic places. Developers could pursue this and get the historical tax credits.
- CK has question regarding the grant that the city didn't get for the environmental review and what is happening with that. JB mentions this is part of the due diligence

- and the city is still looking to partner with MassDevelopment to get subcontractors to do the work. The city may or may not have to repay them for this service.
- Water/Sewer infrastructure will be reviewed; underground infrastructure may need to be updated.
 - JB mentions that the committee may skip a meeting in January and look to meet again in February. They will review the disposition timeline in January and workout a contract with MassDevelopment.
 - JM asks if preservation of the buildings came up strongly. JB believes it was mentioned, but that is something they need to look into to see if it is feasible.
 - JM thinks the downtown properties may be nice to allow for tear downs, but he thinks there is a lot of sentiment attached to the buildings.
 - CK mentions that there were a couple of people that wanted to keep the schools, but majority didn't want that to sacrifice other things they wanted.
 - JB also recalls a group wanted to see Maple demolished for parking and save the others. Thinks the flexibility is key.
 - EI also mentions that people will become more aware that this process is happening and may share preferences for other things.
 - PB asks a process question and mentions how schools will be occupied until September, asks if the work of this committee is the end all be all? Assumes City Council will share their thoughts.
 - JB mentions this will be more of an advisory. There will be a report and RFP document moved to City Council. A subcommittee will review and send it back to City Council to review. JB expects questions from public and councilors.
 - Believes the Mayor will have the authority to accept changes or not, but will have to verify.
 - EI mentions if they make the RFP too restrictive, the buildings will continue to stay on the city budget and need to be maintained.
 - JM mentions it will be good for the committee to know and questions and answers and align with the goals of the current City Council. PB agrees and if it is in their precinct they may care more.
 - EI thinks a record of choices and why they chose them would be helpful.
2. Review of minutes (September 15, 2021 and October 13, 2021)
- September 15, 2021
 - PB motions to approve minutes, CK seconds, all in favor to approve
 - October 13, 2021
 - JM mentions to date needs to be adjusted to October
 - CK motions to approve, JM seconds, all in favor to approve as amended
3. Public speak
- None

JM takes motion to adjourn at 6:15pm. CK motions, PB seconds, all in favor to adjourn.

Next Meeting:

To Be Determined