

TOWN PROPERTIES COMMITTEE

(Previously known as the Town Center Campus Committee)

Minutes for May 20, 2020, 5:30 PM

The meeting was opened at 5:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nancy Butler, Ross MacPherson, Colleen Thompson, John Traynor, Jon Williamsen Members Absent: none

GUESTS PRESENT: Town Administrator Liz Dennehy, Selectman Mark Russo
BETA Group, Inc. representatives Stephanie Danielson (Principal Planner)
and Tom Loughlin (Civil Engineer)

NOTES: The above people will herein be referred to by their initials. This committee did not meet in March or April 2020 due to the Covid-19 shutdown. This meeting was conducted on a Zoom meeting platform with members participating from their homes.

ACTION ITEMS: **In bold print**

DISCUSSION:

1. Opening – JW read the Governor's orders of 3/12/20 and 3/15/20 which allow this Zoom meeting as a temporary change to Open Meeting Law during the COVID-19 shut-down. The meeting will be recorded to provide public access to the discussion. Committee members and guests introduced themselves. The meeting was turned over to BETA Group.
2. SD/TL: BETA Group has been hired by the Town to help develop a master plan, focusing on the Town Center Campus area. This project has been funded by a \$93,000 Planning Assistance Grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This plan will include increased housing units in Town as prioritized by the State's Housing Choice Initiative. This plan will include senior and affordable housing with an understanding of the what the cost to the Town would be – including land, financial, aesthetics, etc.

JW explained the history of this Committee, the previous Public Safety Building Committee, the building of the police station and the need to utilize the Town Campus area. He also spoke of some of the issues that will need to be addressed, including the lack of town sewer and water and the current layout of the area.

SD asked the Committee what type of housing they envision. JT said that as a senior citizen needing to downsize, he would like to see appropriate housing for this purpose and thinks the center location would be ideal. NB concurred. MR likes the idea of a vibrant useful Town center and would like to see small cottage-type housing. JT would like something more like Woodlands and said that it does not need to be visible from the road. JW noted that aesthetics will need to be considered because the Town House is on the National Historical Register, as is everything from the Town House to the Mayflower Road traffic light. JT raised the possibility of using the Town House building for other purposes. Depending on what grant money becomes available, the Town could be willing to build a new town hall, a fire station or whatever. We are open to different ideas.

SD said that she understands that this needs to be an incremental plan that can be completed in stages. MR agreed and said that we need a big picture master plan but that it would be nice to do something now that would be fun for the Town.

Discussion then centered around previous studies and engineering plans. There is some concern that the previous Town Manager may have discarded some of these things. **LD, CT and MR will look for these materials. LD will make them available to BETA.** LD will serve as the bridge between the Committee and BETA Group. JW mentioned the Rheinhardt Study. Though this study was more grandiose than necessary for Plympton, BETA would like to review it.

CT wondered if this plan would include other Town owned properties. TL said that the grant focuses on the Town Campus, but they will likely look at Woodlands and other properties near the center. The State is looking for increasing all types of housing units, not just senior and affordable types. He noted that seniors downsizing to smaller homes would make their larger houses available for younger families. RM said that he would like to see multi-generational housing rather than focusing solely on senior housing.

SD noted that the Housing Choice Initiative aims to create affordable housing, and this may not happen at the Campus site. TL asked if there is a need for Work Force Housing (such as fire, police who may need vouchers to help with the rent/mortgage), could also include people who grew up here and need starter homes.

SD asked if anyone has done any desktop analysis to determine the developability of other Town owned properties. JW said that Old Colony may have done some but not this Committee. There may be some issues with zoning because of the size of the lots. He mentioned the small housing units found in Scandinavian countries, harking back to MR's idea of cottage-like homes.

JW said that we need to look at everything with fresh eyes. We need to include the possibility of using the ball field land. We also need to consider the possible need for more land – if 26 acres allows us to do "X", what would more acres allow? We should plan on using the recently acquired adjacent five acres completely in a way that would draw people to the center and fit the character of the town. This could include walking trails, a small park, and/or a gathering place such as the ice cream shop once provided. There was some discussion about the wetlands in the area, the septic situation for the Town House and police station and whether any soil testing had been done.

SD said that she had walked the site and took some aerial photographs. BETA would also like to see any maps and plans for the area, including a map of the historic register area. **JW will send a link.**

The next meeting, which will include BETA group, will be held on June 10, 2020 at 5:30. It will most likely be a virtual (Zoom) meeting but could be a quorum of the Committee meeting at the Dennett School with the rest joining remotely, per the Governor's guidelines.

At 6:31 the BETA Group guests and LD exited the meeting.

3. Other Items presented by JW

- a. Building Lift – Plan on moving ahead as though the grant deadline will be extended. With the COVID-19 shutdown we could not hire an architect or make any other progress on the project. The original deadline of June 30th is no longer achievable.
- b. Storage Building – per our discussion at our last meeting, this project is tabled until more pressing issues are fixed.
- c. Priorities List – What issues do we have and what do we need to do to create complete long-term fixes, rather than piecemeal bandages. Additionally, some previously mentioned things have become urgent.
 - i. The Town Barn Roof has deteriorated to the point of holes and leaks. It has been put on this year's Town Meeting Warrant for \$100k. The Warrant Article also includes upgraded insulation to fix the ice dam problem which led to the damage of the roof.
 - ii. The Town House roof is leaking in a new place. We need a proper assessment of the entire roof. Fixing the roof is part of fixing the overall water problem in the building.
 - iii. **JW will provide an inventory of known issues for the Committee to prioritize.** What we can accomplish will depend on what State monies and grants may be available.

4. MINUTES: The minutes from the 2/26/20 meeting were approved as written. RM moved, NB seconded, passed unanimously. Approved minutes will be sent to the Town Clerk.

5. FINAL NOTES: Town Meeting will be held on June 17th at the Dennett School. Elections will be held on June 20th.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, June 10, 2020, 5:30 PM

ADJOURNMENT: 6:48 PM, NB moved, JT seconded.

