West Newton Armory JAPG

Notes from February 4, 2020 Meeting

Newton City Hall

7:00-9:00 pm

JAPG Members in Attendance: Barry Abramson, Mitch Fischman, Jonathan Katz, David Koven, Anita Lichtblau, Ted Hess – Mahan, Sue Parsons

Others in Attendance: Eamon Bencivengo, Housing Development Planner, Barney Heath, Director of Planning, and members of the public

Meeting called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Approval of 12/12/19 and 1/21/20 Meeting Summaries
Both summaries approved unanimously by the JAPG.

Appointment of Rotating Secretary
Barry Abramson volunteer to serve as Secretary for the meeting.

Housing Choice Grant RFP Review

Committee discussed consultant RFP

Question was raised about whether level of detail on engineering matters (e.g. utility connections) in most recent edits is necessary for study and RFP. Suggestion was made that consultant be requested to propose a la carte scoping and pricing for such detailed study items with determination to be made by City as study evolves.

Committee agreed City should request DCAM provide whatever relevant info (e.g. Phase 1 environmental, survey, appraisal (doubtful)) in its possession which can be provided to potential consultants. (Not discussed, but any such info can be provided to prospective consultants as available, i.e. wouldn't delay RFP issuance waiting for that)

Committee agreed to revise draft language on iterative process to make clear expectation that consultant would present relatively early in process preliminary design concepts (with preliminary implications re. HTC eligibility, consistency with DCAM requirements, cost, financial feasibility) for plausible alternatives which City (and committee) in consultation with consultant would then consider and then winnow down options for further study. There might conceivably be another round of presentation and winnowing prior to determination of final alternatives for fullest conceptual design and study. This would be determined as the study evolves.

Question was raised as to whether RFP and study scope should include a "No Thanks" alternative (i.e. likely H&B Use of demo with mixed-market rate and affordable housing). City Staff felt State would not accept explicit inclusion of such a scope item but agreed that study of 100%

affordable housing might include alternative which could provide design and cost information that would provide foundation for committee analysis of such an option.

Question was raised as to whether on-site services for specific affordable housing resident communities (e.g. veterans) would be allowed under the State's $1 sale for a 100% Affordable Housing option. Staff reported that the State is accepting this in the Lynn Armory project. It was agreed that the study shouldn't get into specific targeting of specific affordable housing resident communities or services; these may come to the fore in responses to developer RFP and can be considered then.

Question was raised as to whether City could provide information on need for demand for specific affordable housing resident communities. City staff said it would look into that.

Question was raised as to whether the State would sell for $1 if areas of building that cannot be used for housing were to be for alternative use (e.g. basement for archives or possibly castle for non-resident municipal services if not feasible to use for housing). City staff said it was their impression that DCAM wants to keep deals simple. If relevant input on this can be gleaned it will be provided but this question may be deferred to see if its relevant in study.

Committee appeared to generally agree that satisfactory performance of full study (Phase 1 of RFP scope) could take longer than the 2-3 months available between contracting (estimated for late March) and June timeframe State anticipates. It was agreed that is should not be addressed in the RFP

Committee agreed that RFP should make clear activation of Phase II of scope (assistance with developer RFP) would be contingent on City authorization.

Question was raised as to whether City staff would avail itself of committee expertise in consultant selection. City staff proposed including a committee member on consultant selection committee. Committee selected David Koven to do that.

Question was raised as to whether the City would hold a pre-bid conference. City staff it would consider doing so.

City staff said the RFP would be issued within a few days and 3-4 weeks allowed for response. The suggestion was made that 4 weeks be allowed to facilitate assemblage of teams and thoughtful proposals for complex project.

There appeared to be general agreement that the committee's final report and recommendations should consider not only the 100% affordable housing option being studied by the consultant and alternative municipal uses, but also what would likely happen to the property in the "No Thanks" option and the relative efficiency of use of any City funds required in the 100% affordable housing option versus alternative off-site. Barney Heath informed the Committee that there are no City resources available to the Committee for additional consulting

<u>Brainstorm Session</u>

City staff said they would provide committee with info on other relevant DCAM Armory dispositions (e.g. disposition to City or developer, use, design approach/extent of preservation, HTC, DCAM sale price, etc.)

City staff said they would invite parties involved in Lynn Armory redevelopment to meet with committee.

A committee member reported that Robert Korf of Mark development had inquired about the armory for possible integration with his Dunstan Street project. It was agreed that it would be appropriate for the committee to meet with him to inform its thinking on the "No Thanks" option.

Question was raised as to whether there are any municipal uses that could be appropriate for the building. City staff recapped its understanding that building and site is not considered appropriate for public safety building and is in the lower tier of candidates for the proposed senior center and was not aware of other City facility needs that could make sense for the property, but could (would?) invite City facility director to return so committee could address this question with more confidence in its report.

Question was raised as to whether a cultural arts center sponsored by City could be considered a municipal use for purpose of State sale at 25% of value. Will City staff provide further input on whether and under what conditions City would consider this?

The committee discussed at a preliminary level some ideas for alternate use/design relating to questions of what would be allowed for HTC and MassHistoric purposes to be explored in consultant study as well as alternate "No Thanks" private development (e.g. demo and mixed market/affordable over a podium or alternate commercial uses).

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Next meeting scheduled for February 25th at 7:00 p.m. in Room 205.