

Public Safety Property Reuse Working Group
January 31, 2023
7:00 PM
Ipswich Town Hall
25 Green Street, Resource Room

Minutes

Working Group members present: Gordon Harris, Chair, Linda Alexson, Janet Craft, Michael Dougherty, Scott Glosserman, Laurie Paskavitz, Jeff Poirier, John Sarni, Paul Seaman

Not present: Donald Greenough

Gordon Harris called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Committee members and other attendees introduced themselves.

Citizens Queries:

James Warner, Ipswich Housing Partnership and Chair of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, expressing the Housing Partnership's and Trust Fund's interest in the committee's work, not specifically for either police or fire station buildings.

Approval of Minutes

Vote: Michael Dougherty moved to approve the November 29, 2022 minutes. Laurie Paskavitz seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Community Gardens

Janet Craft introduced Tanya Rosenbaum and Carolyn Walfield, representing the community gardeners, and then gave an update since the last meeting.

Janet and Michael have met with Tanya and Carolyn, and also with Jeff Putur (Cemetery & Parks) and Vicki Halmen (Water Department), and have visited the proposed Bialek Park site using the Kimball Avenue entrance. There is a large gravel driveway and the site would be the grassy area on the left.

This site meets many of the requirements for the community gardens. It's close to the former site, gardeners can walk to it, and there is full sun. Gardeners would take responsibility for soil testing. Janet had a separate meeting with Rick Clarke (DPW), and Michael has reached out to Ipswich Youth Soccer to ascertain their needs for that site. The new space should accommodate at least 20 garden plots and have access to water.

Michael met with Ipswich Youth Soccer. They really only use this site as a backup when other town sites are not available. IYS will be talking with the town manager regarding overall use of fields, and in the meantime, there is the other grassy area that IYS can use if needed.

Michael reported on his meeting with Vicki Halmen (Water Dept.) re: providing water to the site. Currently, the water line for that area is across the street. The town would need to tap into it, go across Kimball Avenue and put in a spigot and meter. The meter at the current garden site can be moved to the new site. The request to Vicki should come from the Water Commissioners, so the recommendation to the Select Board should be specific, including that this is the best in-town location

to meet the needs of relocating the gardens, there is enough room to expand down the road if needed, sufficient parking is available. Further discussion with Vicki is necessary to determine the tasks and estimated costs. The meter would be out at the street, but a trench may need to be dug for a hose to run to the garden site with a spigot installed.

There was discussion about property lines, location of the hose and spigot.

Phase 1 would be replicating the amount of space; Phase 2 could be consideration of additional plots and a structure that could house equipment, tools, rain barrels, etc.; Phase 3 could look at potentially more sites, work benches, etc., but this is the best location. Visibility is good, which could generate more interest in the gardens.

There was discussion about a split rail fence to separate the garden area from other parts of the park, the parking lot, etc.

This would be a town-sponsored community garden, as opposed to the prior site being owned by the Church. The Church charged a fee for use of water; the town would consider a similar fee to offset the water cost, and should look at options for maintenance, grass-cutting, etc.

Scott asked if this would entail the garden club having a ground lease, if there would be a waitlist, future expansion. There was discussion about who would govern and what would the process be. A management policy should be worked out in advance with the appropriate town offices (Select Board, Town Manager, Cemetery/Parks, ReCreation, etc.).

Raised beds were discussed. Carolyn suggested that might be the preference. Soil testing wouldn't be needed with raised beds.

Next steps: Michael and Janet should meeting with Town Manager, Jeff Putur, Rick Clarke; research current land use agreements; look into cost estimates with the town departments; bring information back to the committee for development of recommendation(s). Discussion followed about draft recommendation(s).

Scott asked about electricity, lighting. Carolyn noted there has been no night gardening. There are no lights at the Pineswamp Road garden site.

Gordon suggested approving the rough draft of the recommendation. Linda preferred not to do so until there we have better information as to land use, management, etc., and a more refined proposal. The committee has more work to do and will likely need to meet a couple of more times before a presentation is made to the Select Board.

Tanya spoke to researching grant opportunities for this project and is reaching out to area businesses and farms (i.e., Appleton) and will report back. The more financial resources that can be tapped into, the better the gardens will be. There was discussion about rain barrels and drought management for the gardens.

Carolyn passed along the excitement and gratitude of the gardeners for the committee's work on exploring alternative locations for the community gardens.

Michael left the meeting.

Discussion of Statement of Interest submitted by Karen Morad

Karen Morad introduced herself, talked about her background, and presented her concept for mixed use retail and a gathering space at the fire station building. Does not have a formal plan or specifics as to types of stores, businesses, etc., yet. She envisions 1-3 retail spaces, a community space and preservation of the historic building.

There was general discussion about what the arrangement could look like (i.e., retail on the 1st floor; community room upstairs; using individual bays for businesses), potential financing, ADA compliance. Possibilities for the community space are endless (i.e., youth gathering; non-profit dinners, etc.), and potential next steps.

Future Meetings and Update on Working Group Charge

Linda relayed that the new public safety building project is projected to cost significantly more than originally approved, and thought is being given to maintaining one or both of the existing facilities for one or more public safety operations (i.e., storage of boats, etc.). It is unknown at this time whether one or both of the facilities will become available. The Select Board has requested that the Reuse Working Group complete their recommendations for the community gardens and then put the building reuse efforts on hold until the status of those two facilities has been determined.

John Sarni attended the Public Safety Building Committee meeting last night and gave a summary to the working group

There was general discussion about the small number of statements of interest, possibly due to the unknown status of the current buildings. We have not yet received the Harvard study report. The first step should be to recommend whether the building(s) should be torn down, sold or leased, but we don't yet have enough information about costs, zoning, etc. The scope of the Harvard study had changed significantly since it began. The semester is over, and Scott will reach out to see when we can expect to have the presentation. In the meantime, the committee will hold off exploring options for building reuse until we know more about the town's needs for the current police and fire station buildings.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, February 21, 2023 at 7:00 PM.

Adjourn

Vote: Linda Alexson moved to adjourn. Janet Craft seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM.

Submitted by Linda Alexson