

MINUTES OF THE
EMERY ESTATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

JUNE 13, 2012

PRESENT: Dan Condon (Chairman), Pat O'Leary, Laura Gedutis-LeBarron, Mary Heinrichs, Mary Jordon-Roy, Bill McCarty, Ron Boretti and Cathy Torrey

ABSENT: Janelle Quinn

OTHERS: Jim Clarke, Bob Luongo, Cecil Group (Ken Buckley and Margaret Collins) and Lee Hultin-Recording Secretary

Chairman Condon called the Emery Estate Advisory Committee meeting to order at 7:00 pm at the McCulloch Building, 182 Green Street.

Approval of Minutes:

Mary Heinrichs made a motion to approve the minutes of May 10, 2012 and was seconded by Bill McCarty. Voted 7-0

Chairman Condon stated that by the end of this meeting he hopes this committee will be close to a final draft report. There is an open house scheduled for this Saturday, June 16th at Emery Estates. Next Thursday, June 21st will be a public forum for comments on the draft report.

Review of Draft Report:

Ken stated that the Cecil Group looked at the physical improvements to the Emery Estates and the costs associated with it. He would like to talk about a management hierarchy and the implementation of a plan. Financials were very conservative based on the town being the management. Implementation will be done through an RFP process with criteria. Minutes have not been attached to this report but the committee would like them added.

Comments from the Committee on this report:

Dan stated that a lot of work went into preparing this report however he feels it is too much of a Cecil Group report and not enough of an Emery Estate Advisory Committee report. He would like to add "Emery Estates Committee recommends..." and then explain the outcome. He thinks the committee needs to give true recommendations that they agree on and perhaps this was not portrayed that way to the Cecil Group. Ken said they could have an executive summary that would be the advisory committee's recommendations. Dan also would like the Emery Committee members listed first and the hiring of the Cecil Group should be mentioned.

Under Summary of the Plan, Dan doesn't believe the committee actually recommended the three options in that specific order but rather all three equally. He would also like to see public use as its own section.

Pat would like to add sustainability to the summary.

Ron does not agree that the CSA was a top priority of the committee. He likes the executive summary idea or a mission statement. The goal is to let the people of the town use the property and social events are to keep it running with revenue but this doesn't really benefit the people of the town. He thinks they need to rethink the 1st, 2nd and 3rd priorities and how they are presented.

Mary Heinrichs thinks this report best summarized the committee's feelings all along.

Dan said on page 3 the vision of Emery Estates reads well, but should read that this committee recommends the following in no particular order.

Laura agrees that this report should be from the committee. Cathy disagrees, she read that report as being from the committee.

Pat stated she would like financial and sustainability added to the vision. On page 4 under drainage it says "all runoff from the site drains to the lower properties, which in some cases is causing problems for the lower neighbors". She would like it to say "they don't want it to cause problems". Under Parking – she would like them to add more content and refine it to read low impact development. On page 2 she would like to add Town of Weymouth agreed to purchase the property from Town descendants. On page 14, preferred uses- it says it would include a seasonal farmer's market to support public use of the site. Is this a farmer's market on site or part of the existing one at Town Hall? It was stated they would have their own farm stand on site and have a presence at the farmer's market. She would like them to say more about the artist workshop. On page 16 it shows the handicap spaces next to the house and the committee decided to put them to the left of the garage and also clarify parking spaces, is it a grass lot? Also clarify power capacity or is it part of the work to be done.

Cathy said under goals they should add that they will be doing restoration to the building and landscaping. In all the case studies referred to, the places are already restored. After talking with Jeff Richards, the property was not purchased for the house it was purchased for the land. Walter Flynn has also stated the same thing. The house is not glamorous in any way. Ken said Highfield Hall looked like a tear down before their restorations. Cathy said if an outside group is coming in, it would need to be professional and that needs to be emphasized. If it's being renovated then there has to be a cost to use it. There is not a lot of money in grants for restorations; it is in programs and education.

Laura said she is concerned about the town demographics. Are the people in Weymouth willing to pay \$600 for produce? We are not Newton. Margaret said this could be split into half shares at \$300. She likes the report as well.

Mary Jordan-Roy agrees with the idea of an executive summary. Under assets, the very last line mentions "encroachments" what is this? It was stated when neighbors have encroached onto the Emery Estates. The financials are doom and gloom to her. The town cannot afford to manage this property. She believes it needs to be leased put out an RFP giving a low rate in exchange for improvements. She wants to see a 5 year plan showing it in the black. For the restoration of the building she would like to see a partial renovation of the bottom floor to be able to start using it. She doesn't recommend keeping the children's house. She would like to see the parking flipped over to the other side of the house. It was stated the grade is not as good on that side. Mary understands this but would like them to think outside of the box. Also, a 40 foot buffer for the neighbors is not a lot. She would like to see something in this report about the short term goal. Is to use Emery Lane and the long term goal is to build a driveway off Commercial Street. Her three big points are Emery Lane, parking issue and asked them to talk about off site parking a little bit more. The financials need to be clarified more.

Pat asked if they could phase in the amount of public events in the RFP? It was stated yes. Pat also stated that on page 28 the financial data used from 2009 is not current and asked if Cecil could use more current data. Margaret said she would update this information with more current data.

Bill would like to see the vision in the beginning of the report to let people see what needs to be achieved in order to use this space. Put it in the forefront of people's minds that we need to do this instead of what the alternative was, which would have been a huge development of homes. He also asked Cecil Group to break out \$1.6M figure for restoration by floors. On page 32 CSA membership is confusing as the 12 hours of work required is per season not per week.

Ron agrees the report is very well written. The building costs for the unit renovations seem high to him. He asked for a breakdown of this number. Ron asked if this was to make it all mahogany and transform it into something it never was before? Which doesn't seem right to him. Ken said it is for a higher quality building. Ken will break down this cost. Ron also asked to have the rooms in the building described in text, not just a diagram. He would also like to have the report say they are recommending a combination of uses and not prioritize them.

Mary H. likes the report. The reaction from the committee visits for the CSA seemed hopeful and she was disappointed with the numbers. She was disappointed in the renovation numbers and doesn't want to compete with the school department for money. She would like the committee to consider mothballing the building until they have the money. We are not a wealthy community and are concerned about the long term prognosis to make it financially feasible to renovate the building. Cathy agrees and would like to see a nonprofit formed such as a "friends"

to take the burden off the town. Dan saw the “friends” as a management option and not fundraiser. Cathy sees it as both. Cathy is not sure it is worth it to renovate the building. Ron said we could lease it out to someone for a low rent in exchange for renovations. Mary asked if we did a long term lease would we still need to go through the bid process and REO. It was stated no because it will not be the town hiring for the renovations it will be the private company that is leasing the property. As long as we don’t tell them what to do for renovations.

Pat would like to see us take the same approach as we did with Fogg Library by doing the outside of the building first. Mary H. is very concerned that the building will be our own demise.

Ron questioned on page 37 table 7, it shows a loss of (\$144,700). Why would we want to go down this road? Ken said you wouldn’t want to, that is why you would lease it out. It was asked how would the deficit go away with someone else? Ken said that several local operators have told them that they would make money and are very interested in this location.

Dan asked them to remove Emery Lane as an Emergency Access in the future as it will be used until the entrance off Commercial Street is completed.

It was stated that figure 10 talked about a Bed and Breakfast and the committee is not recommending that. Why is it in the report? It was stated to show that the use was an option. Pat asked to have it removed. Mary R. said if you are putting out an RFP it show that there are 9 potential bedrooms. It was decided to leave it in there but make it clear the committee is not recommending 10, 11 or 12.

Dan said the 2.8 acres for CSA is more than we discussed. It maximizes the area and moves the parking to the other side of the farm.

Laura said on page 37 you show building and ground maintenance at \$50,000 and on page 7 under case studies you use \$18,867, why is there such a discrepancy in numbers. Ken will check the math on this and get back to the committee.

Jim Clarke said this report is very well written. He would like them to add that the management piece will need the expertise, include management in the implementation phase and also put together a time line. Maybe the building waits and the CSA starts with short term events.

Ken reviewed the format that he will use for the slide presentation at the public forum.

Ron is concerned that the financial data shows a negative and residents will want to know why we would go forward with something like that. Perhaps that is why we shift the risk to the private sector by going out for an RFP.

Cathy would still like us to be looking at a community center of some type.

Mary R. asked where we would put the caretaker and the equipment for the CSA. It was stated the caretaker could be on the first floor and have use of the kitchen.

Public Comment:

Walter Flynn, 9 Regina Road stated that he thinks the committee is taking too narrow of an approach for recommendations to the Mayor. There are additional choices to consider. Remember this land was purchased for open space, five members already admitted this evening that you haven't even discussed walking trails, the vista management or what steps to take next to build the vista. There is poison ivy everywhere and the trees need to be trimmed. This is not a historical site and to use CPC funds it would need to be designated as a local Historical building. The Community Preservation Committee did not care if the building stayed or not when they voted to purchase it. He would like to see more recommendations given to the Mayor.

Ron asked if they could stage in the \$3 million dollar renovations by prioritizing what should be done.

Mary Roy said she wished she saw these numbers at the first or second meeting because the direction would have been different.

Bill said someone had suggested that they just think about redoing the façade.

Pat would like to see them concentrate on open space, view and walking trails. Then some good management to help restore the house with a plan.

Dan agrees with what Pat is saying. Once this document is released they can't take it back. Perhaps they can put the house on the back burner and focus on what the public can do there with public access.

Pat is concerned about the cost of shares for the farm.

A resident spoke and she believes you can rent out the house as is, with very little money put into it. If you give away the management of the property you will lose control of the property and will not be able to protect the neighbors. One person can do this, you do not need three.

Cathy runs the Abigail Adams House and there are grants but usually you need to match them and they are difficult to get as they are drying up.

Ken suggested that they do not make a lot of changes to the report now, wait until after the public forum and then make the changes.

Mary H. will take some picture of the property for the cover of the report.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is scheduled for June 21, 2012 at 7:00 pm. at the Abigail Adams School Auditorium.

Adjournment:

Laura LeBarron made a motion to adjourn at 9:15 pm and was seconded by Mary Heinrichs.
Voted Unanimously

Approved by:

Mary Jordan-Roy, Clerk