

MINUTES OF THE  
EMERY ESTATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

APRIL 25, 2012

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OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK  
WEYMOUTH, MASS.

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

ABSENT: Ron Boretti

OTHERS: Jim Clarke, Cecil Group (Ken Buckley, Josh Deval 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 February 16, 2012 and was seconded by Laura LeBarron. Voted 7-0

Mary Heinrichs made a motion to approve the minutes of February 29, 2012 and was seconded by Cathy Torrey. Voted 7-0

Mary Heinrichs made a motion to approve the minutes of March 28, 2012 and was seconded by Laura LeBarron. Voted 7-0

**Committee Discussions on Public Forum and Use Options:**

*Bill McCarty arrives at 7:05*

Chairman Condon would like to have a group discussion on information this committee has heard from the public. The committee created a list of priorities, concerns and wants that they have.

**Priority List:**

- Open space and walking trails
- Draw public
- Events that hold 75-100 people inside and 300 outside with a tent.
- Farming/community supported agriculture
- Social events (free community events)
- Bring Farmer's Market there

- Artist gallery/studio for the barn.
- Small restaurant
- Community Center
- Camera on top of the cupola
- Tea parties, Holiday House,
- High School Student Studio/Spa

#### Discussions:

Bill likes the social events as there will be times when people cannot use the property and this will mitigate this problem.

Pat would like to look at someone to manage this property for a few years to get some money to start with.

Janelle would like to see us look at local people to run events at Emery. Perhaps someone like Stockholder's who could also have a small restaurant there.

Mary Roy likes the small restaurant idea but we need to have capital first to sustain the house. Perhaps this could be done gradually.

Bill would like to see the restaurant do the upgrades and we would guarantee a lease.

Pat suggested using a kitchen truck or portable facilities to use the outside for events. Pat also suggested not enhancing parking onsite, using Legion Field and make people walk up the hill.

Community Center-Cathy suggested classes (music, art, cooking, exercise, drama, etc).

Laura doesn't think there will have to be much renovations to the second floor to be able to do this.

#### Concerns:

- Parking
- Access/driveway (use Emery as emergency only)
- Drainage
- Underage drinking in the woods
- Deed restrictions due to CPA funds
- Restrooms
- Need to raise capital fund
- Funding sources (Mass. Department of Agriculture Resources has grant programs)

#### Discussions:

Janelle suggested looking at Milton Hospital for an idea on a driveway on a hill.

Mary Roy would like to ask the town to look for additional funding sources. She handed out information she researched on Massachusetts Agricultural Environmental Enhancement Programs, Matching Enterprise Grants for Agriculture Programs and an FY2012 MDAR Buy Local Grant Programs Funding Summary. Norfolk Agricultural Schools has their own tractors and maybe we could partner with them and use the kids for interns during the summer as they need this for their graduation requirements.

Pat reminded the committee that another public comment was that community farming is a great idea but maybe we shouldn't waste this beautiful open space with a view on a community farm. Maybe this is an opportunity to identify another better suited location in town that could be purchased with Community Preservation money that wouldn't have any parking issues.

Dan likes the idea of a farm up there in particular as it would draw people there. Bill likes the idea too as the restaurant could use the produce from it.

Janelle went to the real Mount Vernon last week and handed out some information she gathered. Agriculture is huge there. They have gravel walkways and use their gardens as landscape and outline them with flowers. The gardens absorb a lot of water. They have an Inn on the side and is used as a restaurant/function facility.

#### **Wants:**

- Preserve views
- Buffer around the property
- Business to local businesses
- Restore house and grounds to original
- Efficient use in management
- A Friends of Emery Estates
- Preserve the history of the site

#### **Discussions:**

Cathy would like the "Friends" to be a nonprofit 501 c3 so they can raise money.

#### **Public Comment:**

Doris Kenison, Idlewell Street- She would like to see outside classes and craft shows. Also suggested a one way driveway off of Commercial Street with an in and out (one lane).

Jordan Bagen, 52 Putnam Street-He is with Troop 2 and would like to do an Eagle Scout project up there. His stepmother and grandmother worked up there. He would like to put up benches and a walkway to enjoy the view of Boston.

Mary Roy made a motion to write a letter of support to the Mayor backing this Eagle Scout project and was seconded by Laura LeBarron. Voted Unanimously.

Jim Clarke suggested that he work through his office to coordinate this. The only concern is that they don't know what the future use will be yet but will work with him.

Jordan also said Troop 2 is interested in renting land near the Heights Club to use for campouts.

Robert Twain, Idlewell Street – Could you put an emergency phone out there and add telescopes to enjoy the view? Could you use the Voc-tech for cheap labor?

Doris Kenison said the Garden Club has a daffodil project and would like to plant bulbs for free up there in the fall. If the committee doesn't want them in the ground, they could use old fashion planters.

Diane Crisileo, 25 Emery Lane – She also suggested getting the word out there about Emery because a lot of people will do things for free. People in South Weymouth have no idea what Emery Estate is.

Marsha Fortna, Queen Annes – She knew Mr. Emery and he used to have a Bible club for teenagers and she would like to know some of the history of the house as she is very interested in it. She would like to volunteer to help in any way. Mr. Emery worked for Billy Graham.

Walter Flynn, 9 Regina Road – The history of this estate goes back a lot further then when the house was built in 1903. King Oak Hill was significant when the Pilgrims first came to the United States.

Laura LeBarron said cleaning up the Estates would be a good community service for the high school kids.

Lisa Beatrice – 75 Mount Vernon Road East, she loves the idea of community farming. She suggested contacting larger corporations to use the property as a retreat house. South Shore Hospital needs one and they could pay a monthly fee and have country club living. This would keep the local stores busy with food, flowers etc.

Pat said that she already brought up the Chair of South Shore Hospital to the property and the feedback she got was that they tend to get things for free. Lisa said there are a million others that need it.

Doris Kenisons said that tiering the landscape will help with the drainage. She also suggested calling Marshfield Agriculture.

#### **Consultant Review and Evaluation of Uses:**

The Cecil Group was contacted by someone who wants to put money into the property and use it for foster kids to live and work there.

### **Presentation of Case Studies:**

Margarett Collins reviewed several cases with the committee. Information was distributed to the committee members on the following locations:

CSA Farm - A comparison was made to Newton Community Farm, is about 1 acre of land and they have 47 full shares at \$570 and 97 half shares at \$350.00. Most people take half shares due to the expense. It is owned by the town and managed by a nine member board with 5 committees (Education, Events and Outreach, Preservation and Buildings, Communications and Fundraising). They house a farmer who is paid \$33,000 a year, there is an apprentice farmer paid \$14,000 and a part time education events coordinator of about \$14,000. They have classes every week-end.

The total revenues for 2011 were \$154,000 and the expenses were \$148,000, the net operating income was \$5,970. The farm realized a profit of \$24,000 before depreciation.

Event Venues – Highfield Hall: It is owned by the town and is operated by a nonprofit. It has a 60 square foot garden, Queen Ann style house. It holds 100 people for a sit down event inside and 200 people for a sit down event outside with a tent. They have a 4,000 square foot pad for a tent. Weddings are their most profitable with an 80-85% return, smaller events are not profitable and would like to cut them out, but they have an obligation to the community to do them. The house is open week-days April through October with a \$5 admission. They have concerts, cooking classes, moziac classes, childrens classes and Holiday events. All the gardening is done by volunteers.

Financially in 2010 their revenues were \$588,000 (53% was from fundraising), weddings/functions were 15% and programs produced 9%. Expenses were \$832,000 their biggest expense was salaries. Before depreciation they lost \$20,000.

Willowdale Estates – is in Topsfield, it's 15,000 sq ft. It is owned by Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Reservation. It was renovated under the State Historical Curatorship Program. The Fandetti-Forsythe family bid on the project and they spend \$2 million in restorations. It holds 130 people inside and 250 people outside under a tent. They have 65 parking spaces and use valet parking which is outsourced. They had 145 private events and 90% (125) are weddings from May through October. They have about 6 public events and have a staff of 25 people. This is a very professional place.

Financially their annual revenues are \$1.5-2 Million and their net profit is \$250,000 to \$300,000.

Codman Estates- it is located in Lincoln, MA and is owned by Historic New England. The main house is 6,000 sq feet and is used as a museum for arts and furniture. Events are held in the carriage house which holds 65-70 inside and up to 130 outside with a tent. This is comparable to Emery Estates. Seventy-five percent of the summer weddings use the tents. Community access is limited. There are two full time event supervisors and support staff.

Lyman Estates – Owned by Historic New England, 1600 sq ft house on 37 acres. It holds 140 people inside and up to 170 people outside under a tent. Holds 45 private events a year. Community Access is limited. Opened once a month in the summer for \$6.00 admission.

Historic New England is a nonprofit that has been around a long time and they usually receive properties by bequest and they manage them.

Discussions: None of these will match Emery Estates exactly but Codman Estates is the closest.

Pat states that our asset is the view. Could we reach out to some of the people from the Bible Group that met here as they may want to donate to the preservation of the property.

Ken reminded the committee that the management of a farm is very different from the management for events.

Everyone seems to agree that management is key with this property and we need a strong executive director for the estates.

Mary Roy said there will be a lot of mixed uses at the Emery Estate and suggested bring in an event planner or wedding specialist to talk to them. Ken said they have talked to Lantana's and they are very interested in the property. He will arrange for them to come to a meeting. The idea would be that Lantana's is responsible for the building and maintenance of the grounds in exchange for being their rent free. Pat believes this should be a short term agreement that could be revisited in 5 years. Most groups will want a long term lease agreement if they are putting a lot of money into it.

Ken said the committee's next step is to look at financials. Bill asked how much money do we want to make? Jim Clarke said over time it will change, in the beginning as long as we break even we will have done well.

Jim Clarke recommended this committee come up with 2-3 options that will be presented to the Mayor from this committee.

Ken handed out a Draft Use Evaluation Form for everyone to review as homework. This will be discussed at the next meeting once everyone has had the opportunity to review and set priorities and they will do the dot exercise.

**Next Steps:** will be to prioritize and look at financials. Also to look at private or non-profit management. Cecil Group will invite in 1-2 people to discuss some options with the committee and how they could make it work.

**Next Meeting:**

The next meeting is scheduled for May 10, 2012 at 7:00 pm. at the McCulloch Building.

**Adjournment:**

Cathy Torrey made a motion to adjourn at 9:00 pm and was seconded by Laura LeBarron.  
Voted Unanimously

Approved by:

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Mary Jordan-Roy, Clerk