

MINUTES OF THE
EMERY ESTATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
APRIL 14, 2016

PRESENT: Pat O'Leary (Chairwoman), Mary Jordan-Roy, Cathy Torrey, Laura LeBarron, Bill McCarthy, and Heidi Lewis Smith

ABSENT: Janelle Quinn and Ron Boretti

OTHERS: Mayor Robert Hedlund
Bob Luongo, Planning Director
Nicholas Bulens, Administrative Coordinator

Chairwoman Pat O'Leary called the Emery Estate Advisory Committee meeting to order at 6:00 pm at Town Hall, Mayor's Office, 75 Middle Street, Weymouth.

MAYOR'S UPDATE

Mayor Hedlund said that the Weymouth High School had contacted him to ask if they could use the Emery Estate for the Junior Prom and has approved their request.

Bill McCarty showed the Committee and the Mayor a t-shirt he designed for the Emery Estate. The Committee could sell these to raise money.

Mayor Hedlund left at 6:25 pm.

Introduction of Bob Luongo, the new Planning Director

Bob worked with the Town of Weymouth for seven years before taking a job as the Planning Director in Saugus, where he worked for the last three years. When Jim Clarke retired, Bob applied for the job.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Bill McCarty made a motion to approve the minutes of March 26, 2016 and was seconded by Laura LeBarron. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY

OLD BUSINESS

Nick Bulens reviewed his memo regarding the preliminary considerations for developing an RFP for Emery.

Purpose

- What specific use(s) does the Committee want to see?
- What public benefit is provided by the use(s)?

- Does the Committee want to preserve the building(s)?

Terms of the Contract

The town is considering a 10-year lease because that's the longest it can be without legislature approval. A conservation restriction could be offered as long as it's with a nonprofit.

Conditions

Since the town will retain ownership of the property, it must explain the oversight role that it intends to play:

- Loose oversight – Operator provides a simple annual report to the Mayor or a standing committee.
- Strong oversight – Operator provides a detailed annual business plan and evaluation report to a standing committee, and each plan must be approved by the Committee and the Mayor. This is similar to the oversight role described in the Town's first RFP for Emery.

Incentives

- Weak incentive – long term lease only
- Intermediate incentive – long term lease and conservation restriction
- Strong incentive – long term lease and conservation restriction with promise from Town Council and Mayor to fund capital improvements

Nick stated that he provided the contact information to the Mayor for the Trustees of the Reservation but cannot confirm that they connected.

Nick stated any lease or contract over three years would require Town Council approval before going out to bid. The procurement process for a lease will require the Town to (1) declare the property available for disposition and identify any reuse restrictions and (2) determine the value of the property before soliciting for bids.

Bob Luongo said because the town acquired the land with CPA funds, we may need the conservation restriction in place prior to offering a lease. But the committee first needs to answer the questions of "purpose" that have been laid out.

There was a brief discussion on the Junior Prom which is scheduled for April 29, 2016 at the Emery Estate. They are renting a tent, floor, lighting, and bathroom trailer. The kids will be shuttled from the high school and trash removal still needs to be resolved.

Mary said she would like to see outdoor recreation both passive and outdoor functions at Emery. The Committee agreed. They would also like to see community and private events. They would like at least four public functions each year while still allowing people to have private functions.

Bob Luongo reviewed ideas for the RFP with the Committee. The Committee needs to be very specific. Because the property is residential it needs to be rezoned in order to open the house to events. Bob said if it were zoned as open space, it could create a problem with the house because we have to figure out an appropriate zoning use. Technically, the Town bought the property for open space. Since 97 percent of the property is open space, we could tear down the house and that

would create more open space, which is acceptable under the CPA. Or we could restore the house, which is also acceptable.

Cathy Torrey said she is very frustrated as she represents the Historic Commission, and they want the house to be preserved. She does not believe there has been any effort to try to preserve the house. Now five years later she is hearing about issues with zoning and the way it was purchased. There are a lot of mixed messages.

Bob Luongo said the way they purchased the house does not prohibit them from preserving it. Preservation is an eligible activity should the committee wish to pursue it. If the committee wants to take the house down, that can be done as well. Either way, it doesn't matter.

Nick stated that the Committee should not worry about the rezoning of the house until it decides what use it wants to see. The Town should be able to zone the property to accommodate any appropriate use.

Mary said we can't open the house for public use the way it is now. As a Committee we need to figure out what to do with the house. Could we extend the back side of the house to make it bigger so it is more user friendly? Bob Luongo will check to see if this is prohibited. He will reach out to Stewart Saginore, executive director of the Community Preservation Coalition.

Laura LeBarron made a motion to preserve the building and was seconded by Cathy Torrey.

Discussion

Mary wants to know the definition of preserving the building.

Cathy said preservation means doing the things that need to be done to keep the house from falling apart. Restoration would be something like taking down the shutters and restoring them to their original state. Sometimes preservation means updating.

Nick said that the Town's Construction Supervisor John MacLeod has advised that roof must be replaced and the lead paint needs to be removed if we want to keep the building.

Mary said that during the walk through, Cathy told her that preservation could mean bumping out the back of the building. Mary has always made it clear that she does not want to go back to the town for more money. There could be grant opportunities. She is not comfortable taking a vote until she sees some concrete numbers on the costs.

Bill McCarty agrees that he would like to see some numbers, as well. Tearing down the property isn't free. Would it be more cost effective to fix the roof, remove the lead paint, and restore the outside of the building so we can preserve it and buy ourselves more time to come up with uses, grants, etc.? John McLeod told Bill that in order to use the interior of the main house, it needs a sprinkler system.

Mary said she found a report from the Town's Inspector of Buildings, dated February 25, 2015. An estimate to bring the building up to date was \$495,000 for the roof, asbestos, lead paint, windows, rear canopy, basement, and exterior paint. Updating handicapped access and providing additional bathrooms was estimated at \$275,000. Ground work would be an additional \$230,000. This totals \$1 million dollars alone. There are code issues for public use, as well. This email was from Jeff Richards, Inspector of Buildings, to Jim Clarke, former Planning Director.

Cathy said the house could be historical without being on the national register.

Bob said you could incorporate into an RFP a requirement that an operator of the estate will restore the house for functions and offer so many events per year to the town.

Bob said that he and Jim Clarke visited similar properties. None of them were making any money, and they were far superior to Emery. The bird's eye view of Emery is wonderful, but the interior was not built with character. It was made to be very functional for a family.

Nick said there are very few grants opportunities for repairing the infrastructure of public buildings. They just don't exist. Every historical grant he has reviewed requires that a property be on a registry of some kind or be of a certain age. These grants are typically not large- perhaps up to \$100,000. The Fogg restoration project received a grant for only \$50,000. There are private grants out there from foundations, but 99 percent of them only give to 501(c)(3) nonprofits. They will not consider giving to a municipality. In his experience, most grants received by towns and cities for building repairs are earmarks from the state legislature, not grants won competitively from open programs.

Mary said she looked into getting earmarks at the state level but hit a wall because the property was bought with CPA money.

Bill said he has a friend who is the producer of "This Old House," and she selects the houses. Bill asked her to take a look at Emery but there were several issues:

1. The builders are on the North Shore, and they like to keep to locations in Boston and the North Shore.
2. They like properties to be residential with homeowners living in them. They have to be guaranteed that a certain amount of money will be invested by the owners.

She did say Emery could be a side trip for them, if the town had a plan in place. They could visit during construction which would be good PR.

Bob said this might be good publicity before we put the RFP out there.

Nick said if we put an RFP out there for a 10-year lease and say we want someone to restore the house but don't offer financial assistance, we will not receive proposals.

Cathy said Maryann, Superintendent of the Adams National Parks in Quincy, approached her and she offered to help save Emery by getting it on the Historical Register. It takes a minimum of one year to get on the register. This is an example of other resources that we have not tapped into.

Pat said maybe the RFP should only include the land or grounds at this point.

Nick said that the building has value as a back drop. However, even as a back drop, it needs to be structurally sound, and it needs a face lift to be desirable.

Bob asked if we isolate the building and work on other initiatives, why don't we just have the town create trails and keep it passive and a viewing area with open space? When we start doing events up there, however, we will still have an issue with not being able to use Emery Lane as an entrance. Several members of the committee disagreed with this, saying the road is an easement owned by the town. We have talked about being good neighbors but right now Emery Lane is the entrance. Where will the parking be for outside events up there? Maybe events need to have transportation coming and going.

Mary asked if we put an RFP out there for usage as open space, do we need to address the zoning issue as it is zoned residential. Bob said he will need to look into this. It was suggested to add the carriage house to the rezoning portion as the generator is in there, and it will need to be used for electricity outside.

Nick does not see the value of the land for a lease of three or five years without parking, access, or improvements to the outside of the house. The Cecil Group report reviewed a number of case studies of older homes being used for event venues. In every case the property was run or owned by a nonprofit, and fundraising accounted for at least one third of the income. Renting alone did not make sufficient money.

Cathy asked if we land banked the house, would the Trustees of the Reservation have more interest in the property? Nick said it is hard to know. The Trustees did provide a letter of interest over a year ago. It said that the annual cost of maintaining the property would be at least \$30,000. If the Trustees put their name on a property, they are going to keep it pristine. But their letter also said the property requires capital improvements first.

Laura suggested the Town do events up there for a year without going out for an RFP, as a way to get the word out.

Bob will talk to Jeff Richards to see what it will cost to do minimal outside work on the roof, copula, etc. and start planning some outdoor events up there.

Southfield works with an events company to coordinate their farmer's market and food truck rodeos for publicity. Nick will look into this to see if we can work with someone to be an events coordinator at Emery. Nick reminded them that the public does not want the Estate to be an operating expense for the Town. This means that we will expect the coordinator to work for free and make their salary from events at the property. He does not believe this would work. If we want to work with an events coordinator to organize outside events without any capital improvements to the Estate, we will need to pay someone like Southfield does. Because the land is purchased with CPC funds, Bob and Nick will look into whether or not this would be a possible.

Heidi said she previously worked for a company that organized and catered affairs. She believes they would love to use the outside space because it is so different and has beautiful views. They own their own tent.

Pat wants Bob and Nick to use the committee more as a resource.

To do:

- Bob will get figures on securing the building
- Bob/Nick will contact Southfield and then draft an RFP for someone to run events on the open space.

Mary Jordan Roy made a motion to withdraw the motion to preserve the building and was seconded by Laura LeBarron. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY

Laura LeBarron made a motion to land bank the building while we look for alternatives, pursue the open space ideas, and create an RFP for an events coordinator to hold events. She was seconded by Cathy Torrey. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY

Pat summarized the Committee's discussion, stating that the building will be separated from the grounds for the time being, and consideration of the building as an historic structure will be pursued by Committee members with consultation with the Community Preservation Coalition. Bob said he could reach out to Stuart Saginor with the Coalition.

Discussion on Junior Prom

Bill McCarty spoke with them and he offered to take pictures on the "red carpet."

Nick said the town isn't doing much. We have offered use of the land and electricity. The kids are responsible for everything else. If the committee wants to be involved, he can give them a contact at the high school, and they can reach out directly to volunteer.

Cathy said that anyone wanting to volunteer will need to be CORI'ed.

The members asked whether or not they could roam around during the event. It was stated no because it was a school event, and they needed permission from the schools to do so. The committee just wants to see what works and what doesn't.

List of 5 ideas from members

Food truck, concerts, a taste of Weymouth, bible study reunion, car show, dog show, art show, movies, movie on history of Emery, trick or treat, Christmas event, holiday market (sell wreaths and trees), guided nature walks, something in conjunction with the farmer's market at Legion.

ADJOURNMENT

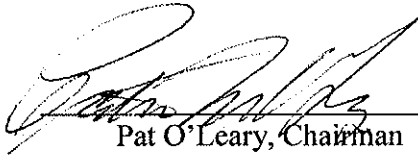
Mary Jordan Roy made a motion to adjourn at 7:45 pm and was seconded by Laura LeBarron.

VOTED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted by:

Lee Hultin
Recording Secretary

Approved:



Pat O'Leary, Chairman

Date

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