



Town of Swampscott
Hadley Elementary School Reuse Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 25th, 2021 – 6:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

HADLEY REUSE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Joan Honig, Adrian Rodriguez, Angela Ippolito, Bill DiMento, Jay Sullivan, John Peterson, Justina Oliver, Laurie Lebbon, Matthew Kirschner, Stephen Perdue (Chair), Nicole Dooley, Whisky Wolinski, Brian Rooney, Gary Barden, Janell Cameron

MEMBERS ABSENT

Lydia Scott Muolo, Martha Cesarz, Laurier Beaupre

OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT

Molly O'Connell, Senior Planner; Allie Fiske, Director of Communications and Special Initiatives; Peter Spellios, Select Board; Neal Duffy, Select Board

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 p.m.

VOTE TO PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

On **MOTION** (A. Ippolito) and **SECONDED** (J. Honig) it was **VOTED** by roll call to approve the meeting minutes of April 6th, 2021. The motion passed with Unanimous Consent.

Chair Perdue gave a brief introduction. All sub-groups will be reporting on their efforts tonight and there will be time for Q & A after each presentation.

PRESENTATION FROM ARTS & CULTURE SUB-GROUP

J. Peterson presented as chair of the sub-group. The Arts & Culture sub-group explored many potential uses, such as: performance space (indoor and outdoor), working studios for artists, culinary arts, community classrooms, and gallery space. The group acknowledges that they may not need the entire structure, and focused on the basement area and auditorium. They also recommend uses that provide a monthly activation of space for the community to engage in, which would dovetail with civic programming around some of these uses. Some of the regional examples include Lydia Pinkham building and the Cabot Theater. The group also engaged with ReachArts to ask about their programming and space needs. There are a number of grant funding opportunities, as well as ways to provide revenue through ticket sales or rents once operational.

W. Wolinski mentioned the theatre was considered as an indoor/outdoor space, with a possible patio extending towards Linscott Park. J. Peterson noted the idea was to engage the community with multiple options for performances and programming.

A. Rodriguez stated that there is not a lot of maintenance or upgrades required to accommodate working artist studios, since tenants prefer paired down space that allows them to work.

B. Rooney asked if the group considered partnerships with other organizations. J. Peterson said yes, partnerships would be essential to making certain spaces work.

Chair Perdue asked if ideally the space would be leased from a non-profit or other entity that managed the building, who was leasing space from the town. J. Peterson confirmed, and stated that the whole building would not feasibly be arts space and should be shared with other groups to help drive revenue.

J. Oliver asked if the group talked about the annex versus the main building. J. Peterson said not really, they would be flexible.

Chair Perdue asked what specific spaces the group considered. J. Peterson said the basement for classes or working studios, reusing the auditorium as a theater, and using the 1st floor hallway as a gallery. The types of uses fall into 3 categories: performances and events, visual arts, and studios.

A. Ippolito noted that the conversation around the back of the building (Linscott-facing) is supposed to lead people in and provide additional public engagement.

J. Cameron mentioned that the building doesn't really have a kitchen – most of it was removed.

PRESENTATION FROM CIVIC/NON-PROFIT SUB-GROUP

L. Lebbon presented as chair of the sub-group. The Civic/Non-profit group is really focused on providing a true community center to Swampscott, and looked at a number of different uses that could be incorporated within that based on the ultimate desires of the Town. Those uses include: dance/art studios, adult education, meeting rooms, teen center, community theatre, young children's area, and a town museum. They also thought about providing a recreation office. The group thinks the best use of space is on the basement and 1st floor of the main building, and suggests the annex be removed to allow for additional green space and parking.

There are a number of grant funding sources as well as public funding tools to help support this, and the remainder of the building could be commercial space rented to tenants to provide revenue. The group spoke with the Nahant Preservation Trust, who rehabbed the Valley Road School in a similar fashion. The Town would continue as owner but a long term lease would be provided to the main developer/tenant. Last but not least, many community-focused uses were mentioned and supported in the community survey.

A. Rodriguez asked about the expansion of the recreation department and whether or not its feasible to run the programming. L. Lebbon said yes – the current recreation director has many ideas of new types of programming that could be available if more space was dedicated to

recreation. Additionally, there are many crossovers with arts & culture uses and some spaces could be multi-functional. They don't envision the recreation department running all of the programming; in some cases, like a daycare, a private entity will manage operations. J. Cameron noted that there is no dedicated space for the recreation department now, and this would be able to provide that and more.

There are opportunities to approach regional operators, such as the YMCA, who may be able to take/manage a lot of space and provide rent.

Chair Perdue asked about the question of ownership. L. Lebbon replied that the town could remain the owner but sublet to other uses. The group suggests that the non profit development model used by Nahant Preservation Trust be followed here as it will mean less expensive construction.

PRESENTATION FROM COMMERCIAL SUB-GROUP

J. Sullivan presented as chair of the sub-group. After talking about multiple types of uses, the group settled on 2 use cases. The first: a full mixed use commercial scenario, which could provide space for almost anything in addition to commercial area. There is a sliding bar in terms of how much space would be dedicated to commercial vs. other, and the ultimate setup would probably be decided by the funding. This case would provide the greatest flexibility for the Town and tenants. Uses discussed are: food/beverage, office/coworking, general retail

The second case would be a boutique hotel that includes a restaurant and function space. This idea was brought up initially during the visioning process and in the community survey, although the group had concerns that it would be possible. Chair Perdue and staff reached out to a regional hotelier, Lark Hotels, who indicated that Swampscott would be a great market for a small hotel and that the location would serve the use well.

In either case, the group envisions the annex being taken down, with the possibility of a new annex if needed. The group also recommends an RFP process to hear from the market, and mentioned a few funding sources including: low interest loans from Mass Development, Historic Tax Credits, and possible grants for certain uses. Providing additional commercial activity for Humphrey street would meet the economic needs and goals described in the Town's Master Plan.

J. Peterson asked about size of the boutique hotel and how many rooms would be needed. Chair Perdue responded that 35 rooms would be the minimum, plus a food/beverage option since Lark Hotels noted that the revenue split is 50/50.

L. Lebbon asked about ownership models for both cases. J. Sullivan responded that in both cases, the Town could remain owner if long-term leases were offered. Additionally, if the Town did not want to remain owner, there could be conditions built into the RFP and final contract. The group also discussed parking and the Tourist Overlay district.

J. Oliver asked if the top two floors of the main building could be hotel with the bottom two being civic space. J. Sullivan thinks the issue there would be the need for a restaurant space, which requires at least 5,000 sf.

B. Dimento noted concerns about adding another restaurant to compete with the existing tenants on Humphrey Street. N. Dooley disagreed, stating that more places means more opportunity and draws more people.

J. Peterson spoke about historic tax credits, which would be useful since while the building is historic, its not fully on the register which means there would be more flexibility.

PRESENTATION FROM AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUB-GROUP

J. Honig presented as chair of the sub-group. She outlined the group's goals and the requirements in the Housing Production Plan which call for a certain percentage of the Town's housing to be affordable (which we are not meeting) and for the reuse of old school buildings as housing. The group voted on recommending senior housing as a specific use, based on the location of the site, potential design of the building, and the need for more senior housing as the community ages. The financing available for affordable housing through the Low -Income Tax Credit Program (LIHTC) allows a developer to significantly cover costs with no financing gaps, which will be essential to rehabilitating the building due to the myriad of needs. This creates a significant financial incentive for this use.

J. Honig reviewed how these tax credits work and are applied and reviewed the site as compared to Machon, as well as the Machon development costs and how they were supplemented by the LIHTC funding.

[Note: A. Rodriguez out at 7:40 p.m.]

She also reviewed the state's Qualified Allocation Plan and the priority it gives to housing for seniors, which helps ensure these types of projects are funded as opposed to, for example, live/work units. She noted that there are many qualified non-profit housing developers and the Town should have no trouble finding one with an RFP.

[Note: B. Dimento out at 8:00 p.m.]

The sub-group recommends two cases: #1) a sole residential use; and #2) a mixed-use option that is primarily residential, with a secondary non-residential public use. She noted that while the group supports #2, that space could not be funded through LIHTC and would need a separate funding source, so she has concerns as to the feasibility. The Town could continue as owner of the site and the building could be condo-ed so that the public space is separate from the residential.

L. Lebbon asked about the type of public space considered and referenced the Swampscott For All Ages report, which called out the need for a "multigenerational space." J. Honig said they did not get into the details about specific use, and she would defer to a developer on design.

L. Lebbon also asked about the exterior space and about whether or not the group considered incorporating the playground. J. Honig mentioned that she reviewed the Linscott Park documents which, to her, seemed to indicate it would be possible to move the playground onto the park. L. Lebbon did not agree with this action and hopes the playground can remain on site somewhere.

J. Oliver asked about whether or not the group considered live/work units. They did not, as J. Honig states they are not a priority for DHCD funding.

Chair Perdue offered a summary of everything that the committee has heard tonight, and noted that we have started bringing these use and ideas together into full scenarios. He encouraged the group to think about use categories being Engines (that can provide revenue/funding) and Caboozes (that will need to partner with an engine). The Affordable Housing and Commercial groups represent those engines, and the Arts & Culture and Civic/Nonprofit are the partner caboozes. He asked the committee to think about use compatibility in the following categories: financial, physical, ownership, and project schedule.

On **MOTION** (J. Sullivan) and **SECONDED** (J. Cameron) it was **VOTED** to adjourn the meeting. Unanimous consent.

Meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

True Attest,

Molly O'Connell, Senior Planner

Minutes APPROVED by vote of the Hadley Elementary School Advisory Reuse Committee

This meeting was video recorded.