



# Easthampton City Council Property Committee

## 2-5-26 Meeting Minutes

---

### Members Present:

Councilors JP Kwiecinski (JP), Kiam Jamrog-McQuaid (KJM), and Tom Peake (TP)

### Others Present:

Michael Owens (City Procurement Officer), Nathan Markee, Lawrence Rhone (Farmer Veteran Coalition), and Heather Takle (Renewal Initiatives)

#### 1. Called to order by Chair JP Kwiecinski at 6:00 pm

- a. The group gave introductions, including the members of the public present.

#### 1. Approval of prior meeting minutes

- a. JP: There are no previous minutes to approve

#### 2. Public Speak

- a. None

#### 3. Old Business

##### a. Town Lodging House (75 Oliver St.) – referral for disposition

- o JP: This property served for something like 125 years to provide a place of refuge to people who were down on their luck. It has undergone many makeovers but has been vacant for the past seven or eight years. There is a historic preservation restriction, an agricultural preservation restriction, and an affordable housing deed restriction.
- o M Owens (MO): Valley CDC had a potential project that they withdrew; now there is another developer interested in buying and operating the property as housing and services for veterans. In the process of drafting an RFP to set the guidelines for the disposal of the property.
- o MO summarized the draft RFP goals and benefit categories and noted that the draft is currently under review by the Planning Director.
- o MO also summarized and clarified some points on the draft appraisal delivered to the committee. Property appraised at \$47,444, which is in line with expectations, given the overlapping deed restrictions. MO noted that a primary goal of the property's disposition is public benefit, specifically affordable housing and a veterans training program, rather than maximizing the monetary return for the city.
- o MO will continue to collect relevant information on the property, draft a purchase agreement, and finish drafting the RFP. It should come together over the next 60 days or so.
- o Heather Tackle emphasized that time is of the essence for their project, as the sooner they can start, the sooner they can apply for funding, such as tax credits and grant programs. They specifically mentioned that an important grant application deadline for the Mass Development



Underutilized Property Program is coming up in May, which requires site control to apply

- TP raised questions about the proper way to discuss the proposed project details before the RFP is finalized. Should the questions focus only on the process? Or is this an opportunity to ask questions about the project?
- KJM also asked about potential concerns with public procurement rules, and MO clarified that there are no concerns as long as the process remains an open competition
- After discussion, it was clarified by MO and Councilors TP, KJM, and JP that this discussion should be focused on the RFP and disposition process rather than the details of the proposed project
- JP: Process starts with declaring the property surplus and available for disposition
  - TP: What is the correct process for declaring this property as surplus?
  - MO clarified that the city has to make sure no other department has a use for the building, with the existing restrictions. At the request of councilors TP and JP, MO will reach out to the other departments to confirm that there is no interest in this property.
- Councilors discussed the specific documents that should be available in the RFP, including the deed restrictions and previous city property records
- JP raised the question/prior discussion of subdividing the 54 acres was discussed; while a previous proposal considered subdividing the two acres around the house, the current thinking is that it should be sold whole for a farming project
- In response to question raised by TP, councilors discussed keeping the RFP as generic as possible while prioritizing public good and requiring a financially viable plan, although it was noted that the complexities of the property make broad interest unlikely, and we will likely get only one response
- KJM requested clarification on the names associated with the appraisal, as "Advocates for Human Potential" (AHP) was listed as a potential proposer, which differed from the Farmer Veteran Coalition and Renewal Initiatives
  - Heather Tackle explained that AHP, a mission-oriented for-profit consulting company, is Massachusetts-headquartered and initially partnered with the Farmer Veteran Coalition, but then seeded the non-profit Renewal Initiatives for this project, which they now support as a fiscal sponsor, providing bridge financing.



- Heather Tackle clarified in response to a question about their project financing, which includes a financing stack composed of affordable housing debt, grant programs like the Community Preservation Act funds, Mass Development's Underutilized Property Program, EOHLC funds, and historical tax credits
- MO & JP confirmed that the next steps are to return to the next meeting, having reviewed the updated draft RFP, and moving forward with declaring the property surplus and referring it for disposition
- Councilors discussed a PILOT as a factor in evaluating potential proposals, referenced other examples of properties in the city with a PILOT agreement
- Councilors discussed arranging a property walk-through, noting that a site visit would be offered as part of the RFP process. Due to scheduling conflicts and the snow on the ground, they determined that any site visit would need to be scheduled on a weekend or after the snow melts, likely in April
- Councilors discussed getting feedback from the Affordable and Fair Housing Partnership on the RFP
  - Heather T: clarified that they were holding off on formal engagement with the partnership until after a conversation with HLC regarding the affordable housing restriction, which is a key bottleneck; HLC approval is needed for any transfer of the restriction.
  - Heather T: The goal is to inform the partnership later and gather their feedback for the proposal, ideally leading to a letter of support before the RFP proposal deadline, pending the HLC conversation

#### 4. New Business - None

#### 5. Next Meeting Date

- a. JP, KJM, TP discussed on potential meeting dates, and set a hold for 2/16 at 6 pm

#### 6. Meeting adjourned