

TOWN OF MADISON

CONNECTICUT

06443-2563

MEETING DATE: Thursday, August 23, 2018

MEETING PLACE: Town Campus, Room A, 8 Campus Drive, Madison, CT

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Ad Hoc Academy Building Guidance Committee

Members Present: Sarah Barrett, Rob Card, Jerry Davis, Henry Griggs, Bob Hale, Kathryn Hunter.

Members Excused: Tom Scarpati.

Others Present: Al Goldberg, Board of Selectmen.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m.

II. Public Comment

There was no initial public comment.

III. August 23 minutes

The August 23 minutes were adopted without objection. Mr. Griggs noted that Committee members are welcome to extend their remarks.

IV. Report of the Developers Subcommittee.

Jerry Davis reported that a proposal by the Horton Group has been received. The Developers Subcommittee has reviewed the proposal and asked for a meeting.

Ms. Hunter noted that the Horton Group proposal has come to the Committee from the First Selectman's office after and outside of the Town's RFP process and asked if it is appropriate for the Committee to accept and review it. Members responded that it is within the Committee's Charge to review proposals and options and that any issues related to municipal process are for the BOS.

The discussion went to the “moving target” issue, with the Committee concerned that it have all proposals in hand for purposes of defining viable options in advance of the Committee’s kick-off meeting with Great Blue Research polling firm.

MOTION: Mr. Hale moved that the Committee send a formal request to the Board of Selectman asking for a formal cutoff date for receiving developer proposals. Mr. Card seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Griggs said he would follow up on the motion.

Continuing the Developers Subcommittee, Mr. Davis reported on a telephone interview with two principals of Dakota Partners. Among the elements of their proposal are an affordable housing component with age restrictions and use of the Academy building’s gymnasium as community space. Dakota did not have an immediate reaction to the inclusion of the Island Avenue School property in a possible larger transaction. They did note that their proposal is contingent on funding, zoning, and environmental approvals. Mr. Hale noted that creating affordable housing will help the Town reach state guidelines. Mr. Davis explained that in this instance the term “affordable” is defined by ratios related to the median income of New Haven county residents.

Ms. Hunter said the once the Developers Subcommittee completes its interview with the Horton Group it will produce a simple table laying out the key elements of the four proposals received so that the Committee can easily compare them side by side.

V. Beginning Discussion of Property Related Materials.

The discussion turned to a recap of existing studies and reviews of the Academy Street property that could affect the Committee’s eventual recommendations. Ms. Hunter has been reviewing the files. She noted that Fuss & O’Neil had prepared a Hazardous Building Materials Inspection Report in 2015 and that the Hazardous Materials Opinion of Abatement Costs dated May 22, 2018 (provided to the Committee by Dave Anderson) is based on Fuss & O’Neill’s 2015 report and appears to be thorough and detailed. Ms. Hunter also mentioned that a Phase One land review had been commissioned by the Town in 2015 and that based on past uses and historical land and other records, Phase II (testing) was not recommended. Ms. Hunter noted that she has not found a professional report/testing regarding soils and groundwater levels for septic purposes.

Mr. Hale asked about impacts of other proposed uses of the building, such as relocating some Town offices. He said the Committee will need specific help to get a better handle on costs and benefits of various proposals for community use. Mr. Davis noted that operating costs will be a big element in any recommendations that Committee could make. Members agreed that the Committee requires a better understanding of the Colliers cost estimates provided by Dave Anderson to determine how they match up against the Committee’s assessment of community uses. Ms. Hunter said that it is appropriate for the Committee to probe the many assumptions in the estimates from Colliers. Mr. Davis cited the need for more specificity, and Mr. Card stressed the Committee’s need to “drill and grill” not only to

determine the validity of the cost projections, but also to equip the Committee to defend them publicly.

VI. Other Uses Subcommittee.

Sarah Barrett reported on a meeting she had with two individuals from Centerbrook Architects to discuss the idea of a Hand Cooperative (market concept) in detail. The Firm has many capabilities that could be of help as that idea is developed further, including searching for a possible partner, vendor or manager and market assessments. The Centerbrook members stated that they could work with Colliers International, but that it is up to the Town to formally invite and engage Centerbrook into any plan/proposal for Academy. Ms. Barrett clarified that her exploration and discussion with Centerbrook was not official Committee business, rather investigative.

Mr. Davis raised the question of assessing risks to the Town as it reviews all proposals. Can the project, no matter how attractive, be successfully carried out? Mr. Hale suggested that there are various risks attached to ownership versus rental, and also to high-end housing condos and affordable condos versus rentals. Ms. Hunter noted that the Committee has yet to define “viable option” and that may be the next step in agreeing on what options may be brought to public poll/survey.

VII. Report on Tour of Academy building.

Several Committee members toured the Academy building. Members in attendance discussed how the existing layout might support the various proposed uses.

VIII. Committee Timeline for Research, Public Education, Work Products Etc.

The discussion turned to a possible timeline for the Committee’s work. Mr. Hale noted the desirability of establishing an end date. Mr. Davis said he is concerned that some developers may lose interest if the process drags on after the end of the year.

Mr. Card suggested it would be helpful to hear from the pollsters on the timeline, and suggested that from the current standpoint, the project can feel like “boiling the ocean.”

Mr. Davis remarked that another element of the Committee’s work that needs careful attention is the possible tax revenues that would flow from each proposal, which shouldn’t be too difficult to quantify, and increased economic activity, which is harder to project and quantify.

Ms. Hunter cautioned against publishing an “end date” until the Committee meets with Great Blue and has some consensus on the viable options to be included in the poll/survey.

It was agreed that Mr. Griggs will reach out to Great Blue to schedule the kick-off meeting with the Committee.

X. Public Comment.

Dick Passero requested that the new proposal from the Horton Group be made available at the library. Mr. Griggs said he would follow up on that request and also ask that the proposal be posted on the Town website.

XI. Adjournment

Ms. Hunter moved that the Committee adjourn, and Mr. Davis seconded the motion, which passed without objection. The Committee adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

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