



**MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE
ON BUILDING Re-USE MEETING
Wednesday, August 30, 2006 at 7:30 a.m.
City Hall, City Manager's Conference Room**

The Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Building Re-Use met on Wednesday, August 30, 2006 at 7:30 a.m. at City Hall in the City Manger's Conference Room.

Present were City Manager John Bohenko, Assistant City Attorney Suzanne Woodland, Economic Develop. Program Manager Nancy Carmer, State Senator Martha Fuller Clark. City Council Representatives Laura Pantelakos, M. Christine Dwyer and Ken Smith. Also present were Beth Shepard-Rabadam, Tom Heany and Richard Cyr.

The Chair Heather Hurtt called the meting to order at approximately 7:35 a.m. The members introduced themselves and gave their background reactive to this committee.

Laura Pantelakos, City Councilor and State Representative, would like to see some of these buildings taken care of.

Richard Cyr started an ad agency in 1987, sold it about 18 mos. ago and now with an estate brokerage and development company with Gregg Whalen.

Tom Heaney, local real estate broker, moving back to Portsmouth after seven years. During his seven years in Goffstown was on the Goffstown Planning Board for about four years.

Beth Shepard-Rabadam, Portsmouth resident, Urban Planner, Historic Preservationist and currently working at institutional planning at University of Southern Maine.

Elaine Boucas, City of Portsmouth, Recording Secretary

Senator Martha Fuller Clark, by training an architectural historian and preservationist. Lived in Portsmouth for 35 years and happy to be on this Committee.

Nancy Carmer, Economic Development Program Manager, works for the City Manager and staff for City's Economic Development Commission.

City Councilor Ken Smith, 14 years on the Planning Board, 8 years on the Historic District Commission and looking forward to getting some of these properties back on the tax rolls.

John Bohenko, City Manager since 1997, this being the third community being Manger and is looking forward to working with this Committee.

Heather Hurtt, Corporate background in sales and marketing strategy as well as communications training and has been doing consulting for non-profits, most recently the Music Hall and also works for a company in Seattle doing sales and presentations skills training for Fortune 500, also real estate development.

Chris Dwyer, City Council member and Council Representative for the Planning Board, involved with a lot on community non-profits, Chair of Arts Speak.

Suzanne Woodland, Assistant City Attorney. The City Manger stated Suzanne will be here to go over some of the issues relative to restrictions on the deeds which are many in most of the buildings that the City owns.

The City Manager informed the members of the Committee that any e-mailings are under “Right to Know” law.

Suzanne Woodland stated that if there is a conflict of interest it should be put on the table if they are working with a particular agency or group, these issues need to be discussed and as appropriate those people would need to step back from voting on a particular recommendation. The City Manager asked if anyone had any questions, to please call him and he will make sure you receive an answer.

Ken Smith requested that he not receive any e-mails, he does not use e-mails for City business.

Council Dwyer uses e-mails frequently as she travels. The City Manager suggested it would be helpful if he or Nancy were copied in order for them to be kept in a file if anyone should ask for them.

The Chair presented the members with Mayor’s Marchand’s 3 goals which Beth Shepard Rabadam read aloud for the benefit of Council Dwyer.

- I. To define a set of objective criteria for evaluation City ownership of property in Portsmouth.
- II. Conduct a comprehensive use analysis and make recommendations for future uses.
 - A. Conduct current-use analysis to understand the baseline.
 - B. Inventory and identify future needs and priorities.
 - C. Identify and recommend future uses that would be appropriate (per criteria) for city-owned buildings in Portsmouth
- III. Develop an application/review process for non-municipal tenants of city-owned buildings
- IV. Develop building stewardship policies for non-municipal tenants of city-owned buildings.

Councilor Dwyer had provided the City Manager with her Draft Ideas for Mission Statement which were similar to the Mayor’s in a shorter version.

1. Building/land values: establish criteria
2. Public Benefit: Develop consensus on functions
3. Recommendations: apply criteria and benefits

Senator Clark recommended considering the whole issue regarding disposition, the ability of the City to place certain kinds of easements on these buildings in terms of protecting historical integrity.

Councilor Dwyer agreed, criteria for both retaining and disposing of City buildings.

The City Manager stated that many of the buildings do have restrictions on them and will go over them.

Senator Clark stated the need for a general discussion on the whole issue of easements.

The Chair Heather Hurtt suggested a discussion of what we think the most efficient way to go about accomplishing these goals beginning with establishing criteria.

Councilor Ken Smith said a good starting point would be the base line of what the City's current policy is. It goes through City Council, Council refers to Planning Board, Planning Board has a set of criteria and recommendation is then made back to City Council.

The City Manager stated any disposable land has to go to the Planning Board.

Councilor Dwyer stated this Committee needs to be familiar with the Master Plan and identify some consensus around what direction do we think the Master Plan gives us, or augmenting or changing or building criteria related to any of these goals.

The Chair agreed and suggested the next step is for the members to review the Master Plan in depth prior to the next meeting and obtain a current criteria being used by the Planning Board.

The City Manager stated that the City rarely dispose of property.

Senator Clark referred to the South Meeting House and Player's Ring being two examples where we leased buildings to non-profits and asked the City Manager what lease arrangements we have with all the non-profits in this building?

The City Manager responded the Seybold non-profits we received an \$800,000 grant from Rockingham County and Community Development Block Grant. Part of that agreement to update and to do the work there was to lease to non-profits that haven low or moderate benefit to citizens of the Seacoast. This is the criteria, if they are not a non-profit, benefiting low or moderate incomes they cannot be in the Seybold buildings. The rent is based on our operating costs and is adjusted each year. We are into the fourth or fifth year of the twenty year requirement. It was a huge upgrade, the air conditioning had to be upgraded, a new elevator put it, the wiring had to be upgraded and we were able to do this at no cost to the taxpayers but we did have requirement to keep it for low-moderate income for 20 years.

The Chair suggested delving into the criteria at the next meeting and to become familiar with the Master Plan and more information as well as current criteria being used for various non-profits.

The City Manager stated he felt it important for this Committee to recognize two things aside from the need of getting criteria and goals set up. We are fast approaching the move of the existing Library and in the 2nd week of December we will have a vacant building downtown and feels this should be prioritized by this Committee. There will be a lot of discussion either to dispose of the property or keep it in the City inventory to lease to non-profit or profit. Whatever happens we will need to get back to the City Council and decisions will have to be made. Feels this very important building in the central business district that needs to be addressed immediately and feels this should be concentrated on as soon as possible.

The Chair agreed and felt the sooner the criteria is developed and there is some foundation, the easier it will be.

Senator Clark stated that since we are trying to do a more comprehensive elevation, when we understand that perhaps the disposal of the Portsmouth Public Library has driven the creation of this Committee that we need to make sure we evaluate what happens to it in a larger context.

Laura Pantelakos stated that no matter what this Committee says, the last word is the City Council and will be pushing the issue so that it is not an empty building and won't go down hill like the Lafayette School.

The Chair asked what the Committee thought was a realistic time line for this Committee to iron out what we think the criteria should be?

Richard Cyr responded that Councilor Dwyer's draft ideas is an easier time line to set to, they seem to be very simple, clear, identifiable objectives we can achieve in a reasonable time frame.

Councilor Smith stated there are some leases we need input for the current leases of some of our buildings, such as the Athletic Creek Building, the Sons of Italy at Plains Field, etc. Agrees with Richard by cutting it down to what Councilor Dwyer laid out is more down to depth and a good starting point.

The Chair suggested taking the approach for now to check back with the Mayor, have him attend our next meeting and right now focus on phase I, items on 1. and 2.

The Chair then referred to the Building Inventory of Select City-Owned Properties.

The City Manager went through the basic information for each of the buildings: The Creek Athletic Club, Lafayette School, Library, Plains School, Rock Street Garage and South Meeting House (Children's Museum). The information included the Assessor's card, aerial map, map, Lease, photograph of the building. The City Manager explained that the leases are on a year to year basis and goes to the City Council on an annual basis.

Attorney Woodland explained some of the restrictions on the buildings.

Senator Clark asked if the City had a copy of the 1976 Adaptive Re-Use Study. The Advocates prepared it with Bob Thorenson and she may have a copy. It looked at different ways that building could or might be used.

The City Manager asked if anybody can think of any information that might be useful on any of the buildings, he will try to get it.

The City Manager informed the Committee that the schools are not under our jurisdiction, any school that has not been turned over to the City is still under the jurisdiction of the School Board.

The Chair referred to the Master Plan and the few key areas to review for the next meeting, Page 41, Housing; Page 55, Community Facilities; Page 73, Recreation and Page 75, Cultural and Historical Resources. This will be the key to our discussion around criteria. The other document is the Cultural Plan which is also important and was presented to the members.

Senator Clark thought it may be helpful to have information on Connie Bean Center and Player's Ring.

The City Manager responded that the Player's Ring would fit the criteria of this Committee, but the Connie Bean would not, it is an active municipal facility that has recreation programs. The Manager stated we are not looking to dispose of the Connie Bean Center. The City Manager will have this put into a reference binder for availability.

Councilor Pantelakos referred to the Armory, Reserve Center. The City Manager stated this will not be out of use by the Military until 2012, so it won't be available any earlier than 2012.

Richard Cyr recommended that the Committee determine that the Phase I objective would be re-use of the buildings in the binder and strategy to establish a criteria for these buildings, address the public benefit issue giving specific recommendations to the City Council on each one of the buildings and attach a time line to it. If you come up with a very specific objective, very specific strategies, very specific recommendations tied to a time line, it will get done and accomplish something.

The Chair suggested for the next meeting condense our goals more, develop time line plan strategy, the Mayor will attend so that if there other goals that Committee members feel are too over reaching, it can be discussed. Start discussing generic criteria. We do need go get some focus. Come back next week with some suggestions on how to consolidate to make the process efficient.

Using these properties as a prototype for the rest, establish best practices for these, a process which we can evaluate the others if there is ever a need.

It was decided that the Committee would meet every other Wednesday with the next meeting scheduled for September 6, 2006 at 7:30 a.m.

The City Manager informed the Committee that the reference book will be ready next Wednesday.

Senator Clark recommended site visits to all of the buildings.