

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Re-Use of 251 Bartlett Street (Creek Athletic Club)

June 2, 2008 – 6:30 p.m.

Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

City Council Present: Mayor Ferrini, Assistant Mayor Blalock, Councilors Novelline Clayburgh, Dwyer, Smith, Kennedy, Spear, Raynolds and Pantelakos

Staff Present: John P. Bohenko, City Manager; Robert Sullivan, City Attorney; Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director; and Kelli L. Barnaby, City Clerk

Mayor Ferrini called the work session to order at 6:30 p.m. He announced that the City Council will be discussing the Re-Use of 251 Bartlett Street (Creek Athletic Club) this evening.

Councilor Spear said he had concerns with the lease of the building and reviewing the possible uses it did not seem that the Creek Athletic Club fit any of the criteria established by the Building Re-Use Committee. He said in discussing this issue with others, here are some possible approaches:

- Lease the building to the Creek Athletic Club at a market rate
- Sell the building at market rate
- Enter into a lease-to-own agreement with the Creek Athletic Club
- Use the building as a publicly managed facility similar to the Greenleaf Center. The Creek Athletic Club could rent the building on an hourly, as needed basis

Councilor Spear outlined the findings by the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Building Re-Use as follows:

- The City require that before the end of the lease, current tenants develop and demonstrate a public benefit as part of their mission
- The City assess property and increase the annual rent from \$1/year to the annual property tax amount; increase would begin at the beginning of the next lease period
- The City apply all lease revenues to property stewardship and to the adjacent park in the case of the Creek Athletic Club. This procedure should be reviewed annually.

Councilor Dwyer addressed the guidelines from the Building Re-Use Committee for non-municipal public uses.

1. Affordable Housing – provides 20 or more units of affordable housing (120 percent or below of median income; restricted in such deed or other instrument as appropriate)
2. Green Space – promotes or creates more green space in Portsmouth
3. Recreation – provides recreational opportunities for Portsmouth residents that address unmet needs (e.g. additional playing fields, centralized recreation center, aquatic center, indoor year round playground, skating rink)
4. Arts, Culture & Education
 - a) Provides small performance or exhibition space (up to 150 persons) for which there is unfulfilled local demand, e.g. dance, music, theater, film, art
 - b) Promotes strategic cultural activities that contribute to and enhance the quality of life for Portsmouth residents, e.g. children's museum, independent film theater, aquarium, art museum
 - c) Provides space for educational opportunities for which there is an unfulfilled local demand, e.g. continuing education classes for adults, after-school programs, non-traditional educational programs
5. Economic Development
 - a) Preserves and promotes the historic architecture central to the identity and economic vitality of Portsmouth as a tourist destination, e.g. maritime museum
 - b) Promotes the tourism industry in Portsmouth, e.g. visitor's center, information kiosk
 - c) Provides incubator space to attract entrepreneurial professionals

Councilor Pantelakos informed the Council that the Committee added the reference to public benefit use for a building.

Councilor Raynolds said the Committee was very thorough, well run and there was a public process.

Mayor Ferrini asked City Manager Bohenko if we have received inquiries for re-use of the building. City Manager Bohenko said that the Fire Department has expressed interest in creating a museum. He said that the City Council may need to do a more long term lease and criteria for public benefit as well as address the maintenance of the building.

Councilor Novelline Clayburgh informed the City Council that the Creek Athletic Club is 75 years old and she views it as a part of the history of the City. She said she would be interested in hearing how the neighborhood feels about the building and its current use.

Councilor Smith said the Committee did not vote to sell the building and it should be maintained. He said he would like to see the Creek Athletic Club remain and possibly create a long term lease for them.

Councilor Pantelakos spoke in support of the Creek Athletic Club remaining at 251 Bartlett Street.

Assistant Mayor Blalock said he would like to see the Creek Athletic Club maintain stewardship of the building. He said that this is one of the fabrics of the City. He advised the City Council that he spoke with several people in the neighborhood who support the Creek Athletic Club remaining in the building.

Councilor Reynolds said that the use of the building by the Creek Athletic Club is a respectful use however; we need to decide if it is the best use for the community. Councilor Spear said he wants to ensure that the building is being used in the best interest of the City.

Councilor Kennedy said that many individuals in the neighborhood do not understand what the Creek Athletic Club is. She supports the increase in rent for the use of the building and encourages a long term lease. She suggested that the Creek Athletic Club make themselves known to the neighborhood. Mayor Ferrini said it is important that the Creek Athletic Club has interaction with the neighborhood.

At 7:10 p.m., Mayor Ferrini closed the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kelli L. Barnaby, CMC/CNHMC
City Clerk