

Board: Select Board / Water Commissioner's Meeting
Date: Monday, August 22, 2022
Location: Erving Elementary School, 28 Northfield Road, Erving, MA 01344

Select Board Present: Jacob Smith, Scott Bastarache, William Bembury
Finance Committee: Debra Smith, Daniel Hammock
Capital Planning Committee: Jacob Smith, Debra Smith
Board of Assessors: Daniel Hammock, Mark Burnett
Conservation Commission: C. Mark Blatchley, Morning Star Chenven, Carolyn Berg
Planning Board: Jacquelin Boyden, Debra Smith, Melanie Burnett
Historical Commission: None
Also, Present: Bryan Smith, Mariah Kurtz, Warren Boyden, Glenn McCrory, Robert Holst, Philip Wonkka, Elizabeth Sicard, Jennifer Eichorn, Maureen Black, Jessica Atwood, Jason Robinson, Claude Jeanloz, Charlene McDonough, Edward Hines
Press: Otis Wheeler, BNCTV; Tyler Bourbeau, BNCTV; Julian Mendoza, Greenfield Recorder

At 7:04 PM **Chairman Smith** called the joint meeting of Select Board, Finance Committee, Capital Planning Committee, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Board of Assessors and Historical Commission to order.

Discussion of the Status of the IP Mill Property and Future Initiatives

Mariah Kurtz, Assistant Town Planner, provided an introduction to the joint meeting regarding the former International Papermill (IP Mill) property, providing an overview of the purpose of the session and the anticipated structure. Mariah provided an overview of the IP Mill cleanup and redevelopment efforts to date. Mariah explained that the original Mill construction occurred in 1902 and that buildings were added to the complex over the century as the use of the property and the needs of the Papermill evolved. Mariah explained that the current complex contains eight (8) distinct buildings with sub-buildings. Mariah reviewed a handout that was made available to the public for the meeting.

Mariah reviewed the request for interest (RFI) and request for proposals (RFP) processes that had been used by the Town in the fall of 2021 and the spring of 2022. Mariah explained that as a result of the RFI process, interest was expressed by two (2) developers to create housing at the site. Mariah explained that the Select Board used the RFP process to attempt to sell the property because the process gives the Town more control over the final use of the property because it uses a comparative criteria process. Mariah explained that at the end of the RFP process the Town did not receive a proposal. Mariah clarified that the Town can be specific about the use of the property, but it cannot predetermine specific businesses or buyers as the process must be open and competitive. Mariah explained it is an option for the Town to lease the property, but the Town would need to consider if it has the capacity to manage a lease scenario and retain ownership of the property. Bryan Smith, Town Administrator, added that the Town would still have to conduct a competitive public process for a lease scenario.

Jessica Atwood, Economic Development Program Manager from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), discussed the FRCOG's role in supporting the required environmental assessment work with the property. Jessica discussed the hazardous building materials inventory that was conducted and the resulting remediation that was recently completed through the Brownfields Cleanup Grant Program with MassDevelopment.

At 7:20 PM the meeting broke into small discussion groups to consider the following questions/prompts:

1. What was your relationship with the IP Mill in the past?
 - a. Did you or someone you know work there?
 - b. Have you ever visited the property when it was in use?
 - c. Have you ever explored the section of the Millers River which runs alongside the property?
2. What is your relationship with the IP Mill today?
3. Have you followed what efforts the Select Board has made to redevelop it so far?
 - a. See the summary titled "Redevelopment of the Former IP Mill" dated May 16, 2022
4. For officials who visited the mill on August 15, 2022, share your reflections on the current state of the complex
5. Are voters willing to allocate more funding towards any of the below? Grant funding has been leveraged for most of the work completed so far.
 - a. Match funds to secure more grants
 - b. Selective demolition
 - c. An updated estimate on the cost of full demolition
 - d. Completing full demolition
 - e. Advertising to a wider audience if we complete another Request for Proposals
6. What should the next steps with this property be?
 - a. Release another RFP
 - i. How do we define the "most advantageous use"?
 - ii. What uses are we open to vs not open to?
 - iii. What do we change in the RFP to attract developers?
 - iv. Are there any new market sectors we can reach to attract developers?
 - b. Auction to highest bidder
 - i. This option is typical for municipalities when they take properties for unpaid taxes. This option does not take into consideration the use of the property, only the bid price
 - c. Keep the property and redevelop it ourselves, become landlords
 - d. Keep the property, redevelop it, and use it for a municipal use
 - e. Do nothing
 - i. Insurance expires August 25. We have submitted paperwork to renew but are unsure if it will be successful.
 - ii. As the building continues to deteriorate, arson, erosion, collapsing occurs the town is held liable
 - iii. How does the real estate market change over time?

At 8:03 PM the full meeting resumed, and small group members reported out.

Jessica Atwood reported from their small group, noting it was helpful for group members to discuss the experience with the old Mill buildings. The group members discussed interest in the Town prioritizing development that supported outdoor recreation and public access. The group members discussed concern about the site being left undeveloped for another 20 years.

Jacquelyn Boyden, Planning Board Chair, reported from their small group, discussing the sense of urgency to act on the property. Jacquelyn explained that the group was surprised that the complex had areas that could potentially be re-used. Jacquelyn explained that the group would like to have the comparative criteria from the RFP process shared publicly, separate from the available public documents. Jacquelyn added that the group would like the Select Board to consider requiring the full demolition of the complex for a proposal to be considered as advantageous during the RFP process. Jacquelyn noted that the group discussed the potential to salvage buildings 2 & 8 but raised concerns about demolishing the other structures and leaving potentially leaving building 2 unstable. Jacquelyn explained that the group discussed a preference for a redevelopment approach that created a road on the back side of the property. Jacquelyn also asked the Select Board to consider creating an economic development board to oversee the redevelopment of the property. Jacquelyn discussed the potential to explore a shared municipal use of the property as well as the group's support for trying the RFP process one more time.

Morning Star Chenven, Conservation Commission member, reported from their small group, noting the potential to encourage a unique re-use of the space to attract people to Erving. Morning Star discussed the potential to prioritize a redevelopment option to create a "cutting edge" space with arts and cultural interactions. Morning Star discussed a preference for a redevelopment option committed to sustainable architecture and discussed a focus on end user recruitment.

Mark Burnett, Board of Assessors member, reported from their small group, noting that the Town's public safety officials are concerned about the current state of the complex. Mark discussed the group's conversations on the investment of time and funds that the Town has made in the property. Mark explained that the group discussed support for full complex demolition. **Selectman Bembury** also discussed the group's preference for the Town to continue to explore the use of grant funds for the property. **Selectman Bembury** added that the property could be considered for senior housing or the possibility of relocating Town Hall or other municipal buildings.

Daniel Hammock, Board of Assessors chair and Finance Committee member, discussed general agreement with previous statements that had been made by the other small groups. Daniel explained that their small group had discussed using grant funds for selective demolition. Daniel explained that the group did not like the idea of the Town auctioning the property to the highest bidder with no Town control over the redevelopment of the property and the future use. Daniel explained that the group discussed the potential use of the property to allow for affordable housing with the importance of balancing the need for some housing within limits and the potential impacts on Town services and the character of the Town. Daniel explained that the group discussed the potential for the Town to create a destination. Daniel explained that the group discussed the potential subdivision of the property and creating the necessary lot sizes and to allow the Town to retain specific properties for public use. **Chairman Smith** discussed the need for more community education on what affordable housing is.

Mariah summarized that she has heard the need for updated cost estimates for partial or full demolition of the complex as well as the need to understand the impact of potential redevelopment options on taxpayers. Mariah added that the Town has been working with engineers and contractors to finish the installation of a new pump station and force sewer to support the property that has been paid for with grants. Robert Holst, Chief of Police, discussed the investment that has been made by the Police, Fire, and Highway Departments to care for the complex. Mariah discussed the goal of creating an e-update list for IP mill information that participants can be subscribed to receive future updates as they are available.

Carolyn Berg, Conservation Commission Member, discussed the potential to use the EastWorks redevelopment in Easthampton, Massachusetts as an inspiration for a mixed reuse. Morning Star discussed the Orange Innovation Center in Orange, Massachusetts as another example. Mark discussed the challenges experienced in Turners Falls, Massachusetts with mill property redevelopment and noted few success stories. Mark asked for more information on the consideration of housing costs and Town services. Mark discussed concern about potential uses that will cost the Town services or nonprofit services. Mark also expressed concern about resistance towards individuals that are cautious about housing proposals. Edward Hines discussed approaching the IP Mill redevelopment with a focus on the Millers River and making the property a destination that's use aligns with the river. **Selectman Bembury** discussed the importance of ensuring that each proposal presents costs comprehensively and are creative in the approach to financing.

Chairman Smith thanked attendees for participating and sharing their ideas. **Chairman Smith** noted that more meetings on the redevelopment of the property are anticipated in the future.

Adjournment

At 8:31 PM **Selectman Bastarache** made a motion to adjourn the joint meeting. **Morning Star Chenven** seconded. **Vote:** Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,



Bryan Smith
Town Administrator