



CITY OF NORTH ADAMS, MASSACHUSETTS

Redevelopment Authority

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**REGULAR MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**January 13, 2020**

**Members present** Chairman Paul Hopkins, David Bond, Kyle Hanlon, and Michael Leary

**Members absent**

**Others present** William Meranti, Building Inspector, and Zac Feury, Project Coordinator

**Call to order** 5:30 pm

**Public hearings new business**

- **Continue discussion on amending URP**

Chairman Hopkins opened the public hearing to Zac Feury. Mr. Feury addressed Member Leary's question from the last meeting regarding the expiration date of the URP. Mr. Feury spoke with a representative from the DHCD and according to her the expiration date is actually September 7, 2021. The review process is a 60 day process which would mean that an amendment would need to be submitted by June 30, 2021.

The office of community development will meet with Jeff Fasser from BSC Group to go over the work that they did on the Heritage State Park assessment and get more information from them.

Member Leary stated that he just had a follow up question regarding the friction between the Redevelopment Authority and the City Council. If the Redevelopment Authority makes the recommendation to extend the Urban Renewal Plan and the City Council says no, where does that leave the Redevelopment Authority? Mr. Feury does not know the answer. Member Leary clarified that more specifically, what will happen to the Heritage State Park property. Mr. Feury explained that if the URP is allowed to expire, the city will lose a tool that is valuable to the city.

Chairman Hopkins inquired about who will own the property if the URP is allowed to expire. Mr. Feury stated that he did not have a definitive answer but his guess would be that it would be an inactive entity or the Redevelopment Authority would transfer ownership to the city.

Chairman Hopkins requested that Mr. Feury remind him, for the sake of repetition, why keeping the parcels at the south is an advantage. Mr. Feury showed some maps that were provided by the BSC Group and spoke of a plan amendment that went to a public hearing and was approved by the Redevelopment Authority, was determined to be consistent with the city comprehensive plan by the Planning Board but as far as he can tell, never went to City Council.

Mr. Feury explained the locations of two parcels in the northern node and one in the southern node to the board. The project area runs through a portion of parcel number 151-0-59. The zoning map was recently updated and one of the reasons for the update was to eliminate split parcels but because of the way the URP was written,

there is still that one split parcel remaining. The purpose there would be to incorporate all Redevelopment Authority land within the URP.

Mr. Feury pointed out another map showing existing land uses within the project area as well as another map with the proposed land uses. As a part of the amendment that was drafted by the BSC Group for 2017, it also recommends incorporating into the amendment a mixed use for that extended area.

Chairman Hopkins clarified that mixed use gives us latitude. Mr. Feury confirmed. If you were to leave that exempt, it is just saying that it would be exempt from property taxes. Basically, in order to be in accordance with the plan, it would have to be mixed use residential. Making it mixed use provides more flexibility should any development occur there.

Member Leary stated that he thinks we are facing an uphill battle with City Council and he does not understand the benefit of them voting no unless they want to eventually take over the property.

Chairman Hopkins stated that Mr. Feury had a recommendation for the board to ask for a joint hearing. Mr. Feury stated that the first thing the Redevelopment Authority should do is determine the proper course of action. As mentioned at the last meeting there are questions that need to be answered; should the plan be amended, if so, should the plan be extended; if so, how long? Should the boundaries be expanded? If so, in what direction and what should be incorporated? In 2017 the amendment that was put forth included those three parcels. If more is to be incorporated, that should be decided so we can get to work on revising the plan that was drafted previously. In order for this to happen, it has to go through the local approval process which requires a public hearing (it doesn't have to be a joint hearing). The Redevelopment Authority would then have to vote to approve the amendment as drafted. The Planning Board would have to vote to determine that the amendment is consistent with the city's comprehensive plan and then it would have to go to City Council. There is a balance here. We are on a timeline and once it goes to City Council, it can get kicked around for a while. From a staff perspective, they would like to move as quickly as they can but still be provided enough time to actually craft the right amendment.

Mr. Feury's questions to the board are: Do we want to do an amendment; how long do you want to extend it; and what parcels do you want to include? There is an argument to be made clearly for incorporating three parcels owned by the Redevelopment Authority, that is clear. An argument could be made to go further with it and a counterargument to that could be made.

Member Hanlon stated that he is in favor of extending the timeline. If incorporating the properties that the Redevelopment Authority already owns jeopardizes the time extension then he would be against incorporating it. That's going to be the hang up of the City Council and they are going to not extend the duration because of the land act re-designation/the inclusion into the footprint of the Redevelopment area. At that point, he would be against it, but there's really no way of phrasing that without holding the public hearings and seeing where the chips fall.

Member Hopkins inquired about whether Mr. Feury needed action from the board tonight. Mr. Feury stated that he did not need action but would like some guidance on how the Redevelopment Authority would like to craft the amendment. Mr. Feury thinks the boundary should be extended to incorporate those Redevelopment parcels but going any further than that could certainly jeopardize the extension of the time which is really the key thing. Member Hanlon agreed. Mr. Feury stated that getting those parcels in is important as well.

Member Bond inquired about the timeline that we are looking for, for the extension. Mr. Feury explained that the prior amendment went to 2025; it was a four year extension from the expiration date. That was now approaching 3 years ago. In conversations that they've had with DHCD, they recommend a 10-year extension to 2031. Member Hopkins clarified that if there is an extension for that amount of time, we could kill it at any time. Mr. Feury confirmed.

Member Bond stated that he agrees with Member Hanlon regarding extending the timeframe and adding those three parcels doesn't seem out of bounds. There are strategic advantages to retaining what the urban renewal district allows you to do and by not doing that it creates a little bit of uncertainty when you don't have to.

Member Hanlon stated that it also may make it easier for potential developers if they can deal with it all under one. If it is only mixed use, it would certainly make it easier for developers to put together a package for the whole site and incentivize use of the whole site. As opposed to the added cost of a lawyer for two different parcels.

Member Hopkins stated that it does not sound like there needs to be a vote tonight but there would be a need to meet again in the near future to finalize this. Mr. Feury stated that in the meantime they will work on updating the amendment from 2017 bringing it forward to 2020 in accordance with the board's comments. They will schedule a meeting with the board to review the amendment and then schedule a public hearing date and restart the process that was abandoned in 2017.

Member Leary clarified that if there is a joint public hearing, it would be with the Planning Board. He noted there is a logistical issue due to two members of the Redevelopment Authority also sitting on the Planning Board so there would need to be a plan with a quorum and the vice president would need to run the meeting. Mr. Feury stated that based on the minutes from 2017, it was not a joint meeting. Member Leary confirmed that it was just sent to the Planning Board.

Member Leary requested to add the reorganization of the Redevelopment Authority officers to the next meeting agenda.

**Adjournment** Chairman Hopkins requested a motion to adjourn. Member Leary made a motion to adjourn. Member Hanlon seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 5:49 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Michelle Ells  
Redevelopment Authority Secretary