

Peter Fitzpatrick Feasibility Committee

February 19th, 2019 / 7:00 pm / Peter Fitzpatrick Building, 45 Main Street, Pepperell, MA

Attendees

Dave Lavender, Grover Pillsbury, April Healey, Deb Fountain, Bill Greathead, Amanda Huntington, Craig Hansen, Dave Herman (7:20 arrival)

Public attendance: Andrew MacLean (town administrator), Brett Pelletier (consultant)

Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 7:01pm.

Mr. Hansen provided an update regarding the Town Planner and Town Administrator wishing to pursue a grant from Mass Development for the purposes of doing a feasibility study, specifically with regards to the land behind the building and its suitability for housing. Mr. Hansen introduced Town Administrator Andrew MacLean and asked that he provide some background.

Mr. MacLean addressed the committee with the following;

Town Planner Lisa Davis has looked into a grant from Mass Development for a formal feasibility study. This grant would pay up to \$50,000, with any additional expense needing to be covered by the town. With this grant we can hire professionals such as architects, engineers, and land surveyors. They will provide a more in depth study than this committee is capable of.

April Healey voiced concerns regarding rapid disrepair the building will fall into if not occupied. "Demo by Desertion" begins very quickly for a vacant building. There is also the high cost of insurance for the vacant building.

TA - I want a more thorough study that will look at housing in more depth.

April and Craig - We did gather data and analysed housing in depth as an option. From the data we researched and the housing developers we met with regarding a housing project, we concluded this site is not ideal for housing.

TA - We need to have professionals analyze the space and give us our best possible option. This committee mainly focused on how the building sits today.

Grover - I find your lack of faith in our committee insulting. Each possible avenue was researched for close to a year. We only stopped short of full commercial options because the town has voted down a rezone multiple times.

TA - I feel if we market the the idea of a rezone to the town correctly it will pass.

TA - I do appreciate what this committee has done. Offering the matrix you have provided will cut the costs and time for the professionals to come to a conclusion. We need to explore all options and find ways to generate revenue.

Dave Herman - Does the cable studio want to rent?

Bill Greathead - They have a great deal worked out where they are.

Deb Fountain - I have reached out to Lisa Davis two times regarding our findings for housing and other uses. We have not heard any response from her. We would have appreciated being put in the loop. Why were we not involved in the Mass Development process from its inception?

TA - Lisa Davis and Himself met with Mass Development for multiple reasons. Not just the PFB.

Brett Pelletier - We did look in depth of all options. He appreciates that Mass Development will "open the walls" but you have to have a certain amount of restriction on the project's scope. The higher the analysis the the harder it is to know what is economically feasible. The report will become speculation and hypothetical.

TA - There are many unanswered questions in regards to housing

Craig Hansen - We want what is best for this building. I feel there is a preconceived notion you and the town planner are entering into this new feasibility study with. You seem to be disregarding our findings and delaying getting the building occupied. In doing so, you will lose out on anchor tenants who could cover the costs. A tenant will not move into the PFB with only a 1 or 2 year lease - they are looking for longer term.

TA - We can resolve access issues to the back part of the parcel with money, taking down portions of the building, etc. I don't want to define what our options could be without the detailed report.

Brett - If it is a priority for the town to use the site for affordable housing there would be only a moderate tax gain.

TA - Affordable housing could bring in \$100,000 a year in tax revenue.

Brett - The scope of the project has now evolved. This committee doesn't have the technical wherewithal to gather the detailed data the TA is now requiring. The next step is for the TA to plan a scope for Mass development to follow.

April Healey - Why are we making a proposal if we have a different group making a different proposal

TA - We should make our recommendation that includes the Mass Development proposal

Dave Lavender - 8 months ago this committee was told to come up with the best use as the building stands today without costing the town additional money

TA - There is a company that can help with financing projects. They take on projects then the town "leases to own" it back. This may be an option that allows us to implement Mass Development's recommendations. Mass Development mainly focuses on development of housing and job creation. Let's find the "sweet spot" of providing the community what they want while still making money.

Brett - Don't ask Mass Development "what you should do". Go in with a plan they can focus on. Make statements like "how do we get there"? They will provide the town with reasonable options, not a magic solution.

Deb - Does the committee continue to work with Mass Development?

TA - there is a place for the committee to be involved. Stay together as an informal group and become the voice of the community.

Craig - Will an informal group help us to remain part of the decision making?

Dave Lavender - We want to continue to be involved in the process.

TA - Yes, this committee's involvement will be crucial. I had no intention on staying here as long as I have. I honestly thought I would pop in for 15 min, sorry for taking up your entire meeting.

Craig - Did we get the roof study?

TA - yes, there are 2 options that were presented:

1. full removal and replace ~\$200,000
2. Patch what is needed and plan for full removal / replacement in 3-5 years.

Bill Greathead has patched the roof leaks and will plan to do more in the Spring.

TA - Thank you all for your time.

[TA exits the meeting]

April - wants to address Brett Pelletier's efforts in helping us. Now that the project has evolved she doesn't want to take anymore of his time he has generously donated.

Brett- likely outcome of a \$50,000 survey doesn't buy a lot of time or data. A physical condition report on the building would be your best bet. If Mass Development focuses on the building and not the backlot for development the \$50,000 physical conditions report will be valuable when leasing space to potential tenants.

April to Brett - We don't want to take up any more of your time "you have been amazing" and we appreciate you.

Brett - Now that the direction for the project has changed, after he delivers his final report, his portion of work has been completed.

Bill - We need to make sure Brett gets credit for all the time he has so generously donated to this project.

Brett - Thank you, let me leave by saying this "you can't solve a problem if you don't know what the problem is" he cautions us not to waste too much time "grasping for straws"

Brett Politier has left the building.

The committee discussed a thank you gift and/or town proclamation as recognition for his efforts.

April - Should we still aim for March to show the BOS our final report.

Bill - We may want to wait until after April past the elections.

Craig - We need a motion to lock down our next move

Discussion opens.

Amanda makes a motion to delay the BOS presentation until after the April elections with a date yet to be determined. Seconded by Bill. Motion passed unanimously.

April makes a motion not to present at Town Meeting as planned. Grover seconded. Motion passed 7-1 (Craig opposed).

Bill motioned to adjourn. April seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned 9:42pm

Next Meeting

March 5th 7:00 - Peter Fitzpatrick Conference Room