



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

BOARD OF SELECTMAN Minutes September 26, 2018 – 6:15PM Town Hall

Call Meeting to Order

Executive Session called to order at 6:15 pm and Rob Scherer explained that pursuant to G.L. c. 30A sec 21(a)(3) to discuss litigation, specifically 0 Tri Street Partners, to consider the purchase real estate in which the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body. Once Executive Session has been completed the board will enter open session

Chair Rob Scherer called the regular session meeting to order at 8:30 pm. Present at the meeting were Rob Scherer, Steve Mitchell, Yolanda Greaves, Carl Hakansson, Joe Magnani and Town Manager, Michael Herbert.

Old/New Business

Board of Selectmen Policies and Procedures

Michael Herbert explained that he wanted to discuss how the Board of Selectmen interacts with town staff. Michael finds that at time the direction from board members may provide confusion for an employee.

Boards and Committees / Legal Counsel

Michael Herbert mentioned that we should look to develop a formalized process for Boards and Committees to access Legal Counsel.

Carl Hakansson explained that although he agrees with having a process he wants the board to understand that at times situations arise and the process may not be able to be followed because of time constraints.

Public Safety Building Process

Michael Herbert asked Joe Magnani to explain the Public Safety Building process. Joe mentioned that at the first meeting the committee elected officers and discussed a media blitz. Michael feels it is important to note that they will be looking to meet with different groups to explain what the process is and help to answer any questions.

Carl Hakansson wants the public to understand that there are wetland delineations that need to be determined and he wants to be sure this is done before we go to Town Meeting.

Michael Herbert explained that test pits had been done already, but we have not done the delineations. Additionally, Michael said that he has asked to have the work done and we need to permission from Fafard to access the land around our site.

Yolanda wanted to understand if we should be doing wetland delineation prior to getting support from Town Meeting for the project.

Michael Herbert says that he has confidence in HKT that their professional recommendation was that we could build our facility at that location.

Strategic Disposition of Town Owned Properties

Michael Herbert prepared a list of town owned properties in preparation for the October 18th public forum. Michael stated that the board meets and discusses items but the take away always leads to 5 people with different agenda's instead of one board agenda. He wants to board to compromise and decided on how to move forward in a cohesive manner.

Michael explained that at a prior meeting the board had identified focusing the October 18th public forum on the Valentine Property aka 133 West Union Street, 433 Chestnut Street aka Hall House, Warren Barn, Girl Scout Property and the Sibson Property which is located on Olive Street. Additionally, the board wants to be sure they want to understand how 22 Eliot Street works into the "Warren District".

Carl was wondering if the board should create a committee to look at property use.

Establishment of a Cultural Districts

Steve Mitchell explained that he has talked about creating Cultural Districts which would allow us to file for grants and other resources. He explained that he is looking to see if the board is supportive of this effort. Board member provided consent to move forward with exploring the creation of a District.

Joe Magnani said that really hoped to see Valentine Properties used like how Holliston uses their historical barn.

Adjournment

Joe Magnani made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Yolanda Greaves with a unanimous vote of 5-0-0.

This agenda is subject to change and includes those items reasonably anticipated by the Chair to be discussed at the meeting. Not all agenda items may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

Currently Owned Properties

Property	Cost	Size	Restrictions	Potential Uses	Open Space/Protected	Units Counted Towards SHI	Commercial/Economic Development	Historical Structures Preserved
Valentine Property	3,500,000	28	CPA Recreational and Historical restrictions on the entire property	Small scale farm with farm-to-table style restaurant in farmhouse. Can utilize barn as recreational/cultural/theater	23		5	2
Chestnut Street (Hall) House	145,000	1	None	Potential to use as arts and cultural center or museum. Could also possibly be sold/donated to a private party for restoration and residential use with restrictions	1			1
Warren Center Barn	145,000	1	None	Restore/Recreate as milking barn for Warren District. Perhaps use as museum.	1			1
Girl Scout Property	400,000	20	None	Expanded space for the Ashland Recreation Department and outdoor programming, including amphitheater. Partnership	20			
Sibson/Weston Nurseries Property	400,000	30	CPA Recreational, Open Space, and Affordable Housing Restrictions	Small affordable development through Habitat for Humanity on 2 acre Sibson Parcel. Utilize rest of property as open space with trails.	30	4		
Nicolo Property	925,000	35	Open Space	Open Space. Incorporated as part of Ashland Town Forest. Already starting to prepare extension of trails and new trails.	35			
22 Eliot Street	0	20	Open Space	Restored farmhouse. Can be used as museum and unofficial meeting space. Base of operations for Framingham State University programs or Town of Ashland programs	20			
6 Cherry Street (Housing Trust)	250,000	1	Affordable Housing	Corner Spot through agreement with the Affordable Housing Trust through December 2018. Trust has the option to transfer property back to the Town of Ashland to continue	1			

Robert Hill Way (Housing Trust)	0	13	Affordable Housing and Open Space	Redirect potential 160 unit senior housing development to property described below and convert to open space	13		
Warren Woods	4,500,000	120	Open Space	Rehabilitated forest used for passive recreation	120		
125 Front Street (Redevelopment Authority)	100,000	3	Affordable Housing and Open Space	Currently being utilized as site of Farmer's Market.	3		
Cadillac Paint Property	0	3	Park and playground purposes	Utilize as park/open space	3		
Corner of Tilton and Cherry	0	1		Utilize as public parking for downtown area.			
Fafard Property (Donated Portion)	0	4	Municipal facility	Utilize as combine police and fire building			
	10,365,000	280	0	0	270	4	4
Future Properties "In Play"							
Main Street Fire Station	0	1		New private development. Site of potential restaurant brewery or arts center.			
Cedar Street Fire Station	0	5		Reuse for municipal purposes. Training facility or depot for Public Works department.			
Main Street Police Station	0	1		New mixed use development or reuse as parking.			
Rail Transit District Property	6,000,000	156		Site of potential affordable housing development similar to Ashland Woods or perhaps Robert Hill Way (60 to 160 units). This would be on an approximately 7 acre parcel. Also potential site of a new branch of the YMCA which could require approximately 10 acres. Remainder could be set aside for open space and commercial development including usage for the Upper Charles Trail and other nature pathways.	100	160	30

10-50 Main Street (Mill Complex)	8,000,000	8		development with affordable component. Current owner has a plan for 120 units. Potential developer has indicated that a development might need a residential component of	200			1
United Church of Christ Property	400,000	26		Open Space. Incorporate as Ashland Town Forest	26			
Kramer Building	700,000	1	Affordable Housing	Mixed use development with affordable component.	6			
Fafard Additional Property		6	Municipal Use, Open Space and Recreation	Upper Charles Trail, possible expansion of Woodlawn Cemetery. Increased access for public safety	6			
128 Main		1	Affordable Housing					
Joanne Drive	1,000,000		Affordable Housing	Purchase affordability restriction for 52 units				
Total	16,100,000	205	0		132		30	1

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To: Ashland Board of Selectmen
From: Michael Herbert, Town Manager
Date: July 5, 2018
RE: Town-owned Properties Planning Process

The Town of Ashland is in an unprecedented position to plan for its future. Buttressed by the acquisition of 283 acres totaling \$9.9 million, including \$5.1 million in just the last 2.5 years, we have a lot of opportunity to achieve tremendous progress for the community. However, with the addition of a few key parcels, we have the ability to plan even better to meet goals for the future and preserve many of the things that make Ashland a great town.

Attached please find a list of properties that the town owns, along with some possible ideas for each. The list also contains properties that are potentially "in play", meaning that there are active discussions to market or develop the property and the Town of Ashland can play a role in its future.

Taken together, the portfolio of properties could represent an exciting future for Ashland. It increases our economic development potential, our recreational assets, our conservation land, increases affordable housing (and protects us against 40b developments for decades, and preserves and restores historic properties.

Economic Development

Increased commercial development is important to the Town of Ashland, both from a financial perspective and a quality of life perspective.

While I still think our focus should be on the redevelopment of existing properties, I am also proposing that we find a way to purchase and utilize a portion of the Rail Transit District property for new commercial development, at approximately 20 acres. We can use this to promote building commercial space targeted to specific industries that the Board has previously identified as desirable; specifically, professional services.

Additionally, I am proposing that we would gift to the Metrowest YMCA up to 10 acres to be utilized for a new Ashland/Hopkinton/Holliston facility. While a non-profit, this development would provide a number of benefits to the Town, including the possibility of a pool facility in Ashland. The YMCA also partners with local communities on both youth and adult programs. Just as the Framingham YMCA serves as a destination for Sudbury and Wayland (and Ashland) residents, the Ashland YMCA could serve as a destination for our surrounding towns and could have a multiplier effect for more retail establishments.

The proposal also includes expanded parking to facilitate downtown commercial development, by at least 25 spaces and perhaps more, at the 10-50 Main Street Mill complex as well as the Main Street Police Station.

Another economic opportunity for Ashland is located at the recently purchased Valentine Estate. One idea has been to utilize the barn as a cultural venue similar to Vinegar Hill in Arundel, Maine. The

farmhouse and remaining acreage can be utilized as a farm to table style dining experience. This is another attraction that could serve as a destination for residents in other communities.

Housing

With the construction boom over the last two or three years, Ashland is certainly experiencing fatigue in regards to residential development. While we have certainly taken steps to curb development over the last 2.5 years, we have paid a heavy price financially for it, and we still have not diminished our exposure to large apartment developments in less-than desirable locations. This is due to the state's affordable housing (40b) law.

As many know, there is a lack of what the state considers "affordable housing" in Ashland. Besides the moral argument of providing affordable housing for the workforce and seniors, nothing threatens the ability to plan for the future than having less than 10% of a town's housing stock as affordable. This is because under Chapter 40b, developers can essentially ignore local zoning (especially density requirements) and build whatever they want, as long as 25% of the proposed housing is considered affordable.

We can always deny a 40b application, but the result is that the decision can be appealed to the state's Housing Appeals Committee, which almost always finds in favor of the developer. One could argue that demonstrating a town's willingness to legally challenge a 40b developer could deter developers from submitting an application in the first place, but as Ashland continues to be a more desirable place to live, that strategy will probably not work, or developers will look to build even more units as a way to mitigate financial risk.

The strategy that gives us the he most confidence in maintaining our planning power is a willingness to reach that 10% quota, albeit in a way that best helps Ashland and not developers. A recent certification from the Department of Housing and Community Development marks our affordable housing stock at 450 units, which is 6.84% of the 2010 census count of 6,581 (10% would be 658 units)

The acquisition of the Valentine property reduced that figure by 99, so the next certification letter will probably be 351 units. Add to that the fact that the new census in 2020 will more than likely increase our total housing units substantially, raising the number of affordable units we will need to have to achieve compliance. I would suggest approximately 400 more units would not be out of the realm of possibility, bringing our total number of units counted on the SHI to 751.

It is with this in mind that I would encourage us to look at the following opportunities to increase our affordable housing stock:

1. Purchase the affordability restrictions for 25% of the units at Chestnut Place apartments, with the intention of counting all 206 units towards our SHI. This would be through the state's Local Initiative Program.
2. Explore the possibility of replacing the proposed Robert Hill Way senior housing development with a similar project on a piece of the Rail Transit District property. This would include 40 of the units designated for those making 20% or less of the median income. This would increase our number of units by 160.

3. Explore the possibility of creating 150-200 units of rental housing at 10-50 Main Street with 25% affordable, which would mean including all of those units in our affordable housing inventory. Again this would be done through the state's Local Initiative Program.
4. Partner with Habitat for Humanity to create 6 units off of Olive Street at the Sibson and Weston Nurseries Property.
5. Purchase the Kramer building next to Town Hall and redevelop as a mixed-use facility with affordable housing units on top with retail on bottom.

This proposal would allow the town to meet its affordable housing and immunize itself from 40b developments for not only this current decade but in the future decade as well. It would also lead to the successful rehabilitation of the most important parcel in downtown Ashland, allows for increased housing for our low-income senior population, all while not eliminating any green space in Ashland.

I am sure there will be people rightfully questioning why we would advocate for more housing in Ashland, and I think it is important to point this out to them:

1. With the Chapter 40b law, the question is not whether or not we will have 500 units of additional housing built, but whether we want to have control over where those units are built and if we want to position them to accentuate some of our other goals, like downtown revitalization and historic preservation.
2. We have a moral obligation to ensure that people who helped make this town what it is today have an opportunity to still live in this town.

Historic Preservation

Our current portfolio gives us the opportunity to save and restore a total of four properties for reuse: the Warren Barn, the Hall House, and the house and barn at the Valentine property.

Additionally, if we have an opportunity to play a role in the redevelopment of the Mill site, it would be the fifth property we could have a hand in restoring.

Finally, the Sibson barn could be restored as part of this process, adding an additional historic structure saved.

This all goes to helping preserve the character of Ashland.

Open Space

This plan also drastically increases the amount of open space in Ashland. Using currently owned property (including Warren Woods), the plan preserves 270 acres of open space in Ashland. If additional parcels are acquired, we have the ability to increase that number to 402 acres.

This is space that can be used for additional passive recreation features such as walking trails and the Upper Charles Trail.

Although discussed substantially under "Housing", the ability to meet our affordable housing requirements under the state's 40b law also gives us the opportunity to plan better for open space purposes. We could rethink our zoning to increase the amount of open space required per lot and utilize other unique tools to help impact open space.

Next Steps

The Board has previously discussed having a public forum to discuss these properties and their future use. In order to help guide the discussion, I would suggest that the Board frame the discussion as a way to realize some of these previously identified goals (economic development, affordable housing, open space, and historic properties). At that point in time we could present how the current portfolio can assist with achieving those goals utilizing the suggested uses.