

Town of Ayer

Senior Center Site Selection and Building Committee

******[DRAFT]**** Meeting Minutes from February 29, 2024**

Attendance: Katie Petrossi; Dennis Curran; Dan Van Schalkwyk; Ken Diskin; Dave Grubb; Ellen FitzPatrick; Dave Cibor; Carolyn McCreary

Absent: Chris Prehl

Also in Attendance: Robert Pontbriand (Town Manager); Alan Manoian (Director of Community and Economic Development)

Call to Order/Welcome:

K. Petrossi called the meeting to order at 6pm. She stated that due to technological difficulties this evening, the meeting will not be broadcast on the Zoom platform. However, the meeting will be recorded and broadcast later by APAC.

Approval of Minutes from February 8, 2024:

The Committee reviewed the DRAFT meeting minutes from February 8, 2024.

Motion: A motion was made by K. Diskin and seconded by D. Curran to approve the February 9, 2024 meeting minutes. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Review and Approval of RFP for Privately-Owned Land:

K. Petrossi provided an overview of the proposed RFP for privately-owned land. She stated that the previous RFP included Devens but since the direct charge and scope of this Committee per the Select Board is to identify a site(s) in Ayer this RFP should be revised accordingly. She stated that the Committee has two options, it could table this issue to the next meeting or authorize D. Van Schalkwyk and the Town Manager to issue the RFP for privately-owned land with the necessary revisions.

There was consensus by the Committee to issue the RFP for privately-owned land in Ayer only and to authorize D. Van Schalkwyk to make whatever appropriate revisions needed to issue.

Motion: A motion was made by D. Grubb and seconded by D. Curran to authorize the issuance of the RFP for privately-owned land in the Town of Ayer for a Senior Center and to further authorize D. Van Schalkwyk to make whatever appropriate revisions are needed to issue the RFP. **Motion passed 8-0.**

Presentation and Discussion of Architect Response Scores:

K. Petrossi provided an overview of the proposed scoring process for each architect's proposal.

The Committee discussed interviewing up to three architects.

D. Van Schalkwyk stated that the Committee could designate someone to check the professional references. He further stated that based on his scoring the top 3 were: Caitlin, BHA, and Abacus.

D. Grubb stated that he has worked with both BHA and Abacus on projects in his capacity in Billerica. He stated that BHA was removed from one project and was found to be “lazy” in their approach and not as open to our needs. They seemed to have a pre-determined vision of the project. He stated that in his experience BHA presents great, but the results do not match that presentation. He stated that he agrees we should interview up to three.

C. McCreary stated that BHA did not talk about site selection specifically.

E. FitzPatrick stated that she has visited projects by one of the three and she has concerns. But I do not want to poison the well. It is important that we interview and ask direct questions.

D. Curran confirmed that the interviews would be public.

K. Diskin stated that any architect could do the job. Most could do it. I was interested in other disciplines we may need or use. Catilin has the most comprehensive list of consultants. It is important that we select three to interview tonight.

D. Curran stated that BHA and Caitlin were his first two and perhaps Abacus as the third.

E. FitzPatrick asked about the previous experience the prior working group had with Abacus.

K. Petrossi stated that they are good consultants. They had a more limited scope and role with respect to the previous effort.

D. Grubb stated that Abacus has done two projects in Billerica. They have provided good guiderails. Abacus has been a good partner.

K. Diskin stated that with previous experience with Abacus, I felt that they dragged from meeting to meeting. I am apprehensive about them.

D. Curran stated that he liked BHA, and their portfolio showed the whole process. He would be concerned as to how Abacus would be different this time.

K. Petrossi stated that with respect to Abacus, we did not have a specific site when we first started working with them.

E. FitzPatrick stated that she has concerns about Caitlin.

K. Diskin stated that BHA did show two-story buildings and we may want or need a two-story building depending on the site.

K. Petrossi stated that she really preferred a one level building operationally and in terms of access.

K. Diskin also stated that the previous time, Abacus was also looking at a gym/community center component for the project which is now not the case.

K. Petrossi stated that Catlin is engaged with Senior Centers and gerontological concepts. All three firms are qualified.

The Committee, through its discussion and deliberations reached a consensus on the three architect firms to interview.

Motion: A motion was made by D. Grubb and seconded by D. Curran to interview Caitlin, BHA, and Abacus. **Motion passed 8-0.**

D. Van Schalkwyk offered to contact the firms and scheduled the three firms selected by the Committee to be interviewed.

Motion: A motion was made by C. McCreary and seconded by E. FitzPatrick to amend the meeting agenda to include brief site updates on the school property and on the Bishop Road property. **Motion passed 8-0.**

R. Pontbriand advised that Town Counsel is currently researching the school property to advise on the appropriate legal pathway if the Committee were to recommend that site. One of the key variables is how and for what purpose the land which the school property is located on was conveyed to the Town. More research needs to be done and is currently underway to determine what options there are.

R. Pontbriand advised that with respect to the Bishop Road parcel there needs to be a meeting with MassDevelopment regarding potentially moving the Bishop Road gate as well as discussing the possibilities of the triangular piece of land owned by MassDevelopment which abuts the Bishop Road parcel. There has yet to be a direct contact and meeting set up with MassDevelopment to discuss.

A. Manoian stated that based on his historic research in 1883 the land was bequeathed to the Town for use as a "poor farm". In the late 1950's it was determined to be used for the construction of an elementary school.

R. Pontbriand stated that the goal at this time is to have Town Counsel perform its due diligence and advise on the legal options with respect to potentially using a portion of the school campus land for the Senior Center. Additionally, a meeting with MassDevelopment needs to happen with respect to the Bishop Road location in terms of moving the gate and the triangular piece of land.

Public Input:

There was no public input.

Next Meeting:

The Committee agreed to have interview questions for the architect interviews submitted to D. Van Schalkwyk by March 15, 2024. D. Van Schalkwyk and E. FitzPatrick will check professional references and report back to the Committee.

The Committee scheduled its next meeting for the purposes of the architect interviews for Monday, March 25, 2024 at 5:30pm in the First Floor Meeting Room of the Ayer Town Hall.

Adjournment:

Motion: A motion was made by D. Cibor and seconded by D. Curran to adjourn the meeting at 7:35pm. **Motion passed (8-0).**

The meeting adjourned at 7:35pm

Minutes recorded and submitted by Robert Pontbriand, Town Manager.

Minutes reviewed and approved by the Committee on _____.

Signed: _____
Dennis Curran, Clerk