

TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION

October 20, 2008

A work session of the Jamestown Town Council was called to order at the Jamestown Town Hall in the Rosamond A. Tefft Council Chambers at 93 Narragansett Avenue at 6:30 p.m. by Council President Julio J. DiGiando, for the purpose of discussing plans for the future use of the highway barn at Fort Wetherill. The following members were present:

William A. Kelly
Barbara A. Szepatowski
Robert W. Sutton, Jr.

Also present:

Bruce R. Keiser, Town Administrator
Heather R. Lopes, Deputy Town Clerk Pro Tem
Michael Sullivan, DEM Representative

Absent Michael White, Vice-President

A power-point presentation was given by Bruce Keiser, Town Administrator. The Council reviewed the reuse plan adopted by a previous council in 2005. Mr. Keiser reviewed the layout of the property and location of the current building and the dimensions.

The four (4) top options presented were:

1. A shore dinner hall layout with a seating capacity of approx. 200 persons.
2. Community meeting space to be used for social gatherings; lectures; meetings; teen dances; and similar functions of this type.
3. Island artists have contacted the town in the past year to use the location for studio space and classes.
4. Wedding reception/ banquet hall requiring a full kitchen for catering; seating & reception areas.

Regarding option #4, Narragansett Towers was used as a comparison for cost basis and frequency of bookings. The Narragansett Towers business has grown tremendously since first inception to a year round booking calendar.

A leased general commercial business, such as a restaurant, was discounted by previous Council due to added volume in the area on a very regular basis. The community theatre option limited use to the general community and the options to generate income were very few.

Different design options were reviewed with a concern for parking areas and overall beautification of the area.

A review of the renovation cost from 2005 was discussed, including the types of renovations that would be required.

The option of subdividing the land was discussed. The northern lot (Lot A) to be rezoned as R80, to coincide with the surrounding Dumplings and residential area. It is thought that Lot A would have a possible sale value of around \$1.5 million. Lot B could be retained by the town with the current building with some combination of the proposed alternatives.

Item is being revisited with this Council to discuss further options such as

- Zoning as C.W. with options for a commercial marina; boat storage & repair facility; or condos on “Lot B”. Selling “Lot A” would then be an option.
- RI DEM possibly has an interest in expanding their facilities & creating a marine research facility.
- Subdivide and with return money retain highway barn or sell both parcels

DECISION CRITERIA

- Public benefit- number of residents and quality of life generated by community use
- Economic analysis- will require approximately \$1- 1.5 million in construction expense and how to offset the cost
- Economic return from sale and allocate to other town projects

6:57 p.m. Council President opened to public comment. The following residents spoke:

Richard Allphin; Harry Wright; Arthur Christman ; Frank Meyer; Joe Tiexiera; Bill Munger; Susan Little; Eric Galley; Victor Richardson; Jillian Meyer

Mike Sullivan of DEM shared concerns with any use increasing the number of people in the area on a regular basis, the need for potable water and wastewater treatment with a commercial facility. Mr. Sullivan supported the present use by the boating association as well as an RIDEM research facility with education center. Mr. Sullivan asked that DEM be included in any further discussions and decisions.

Councilor Sutton spoke of the historic value of the building, further stating that there are groups that do not want the building destroyed. Councilor Sutton agrees that the property should remain water dependent with a working waterfront. Subdivision should not be decided until after the use of the building is determined.

Councilor Szepatowski questioned DEM’s interest in being renters or owners. She also stated that she sees it as a positive to work with groups like DEM, EPA, URI, and RWU towards a research facility.

Councilor Kelly states the Ft. Wetherill Boat Owners Association should be protected. Wedding / Catering facility not a real possibility, he believes a storm of protest would ensue.

President DiGiando states the septic issue would need to be addressed. The property cannot share a septic system with DEM. President DiGiando questioned how DEM would handle the current septic if they took over. Also discussed was whether there are

hazardous waste possibilities with building, and should a Phase I assessment be done. He also states the subdivision possibility is good if no use for the current building can be found.

Discussion ensued between council members over hazardous materials. Councilor Szepatowski suggested going straight to a Phase II – soil sample.

Lisa Bryer agrees the property should remain water dependent. She believes the property is an asset to the community and used Conanicut Battery as example of the town having a positive impact on their properties.

President DiGiando would like to see certain information ascertained before the next discussion. The information would be to update the numbers from the Narragansett Towers for comparison of a similar use and the cost of a sewer line for the property.

Councilor Kelly stated his concern regarding the building being vacant and susceptible to vandalism.

Rosemary Enright would like more info on the historic value of the building. It was asked that if the property was purchased by DEM, would they consider installing a Class A boat ramp, which the island lacks. Mr. Sullivan stated DEM would analyze the issue to make a determination.

Several audience members state they feel majority of the town residents should rule as to the final decision. Several residents also stated they would have liked to have seen more publication regarding the worksession.

The work session adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Attest:

Heather R. Lopes
Deputy Town Clerk Pro Tem

c: Town Council Members (5)
Town Administrator
Town Solicitor
Administrative Circulation