



*Aquidneck Island Reuse Planning Authority*

*Representing the municipalities of Newport, Middletown and Portsmouth, Rhode Island*

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Public Hearing Minutes

Thursday, July 14, 2011

6:00 p.m.

LOCATION: CCRI Newport Campus Auditorium

## **Public Hearing**

The meeting was called to order at 6:07 p.m. by Chairman Fred Faerber.

### **I. Project Overview**

- a. Julie Oakley, Property Reuse Coordinator (PRC) for the Aquidneck Island Reuse Planning Authority (AIRPA), conducted the presentation for the public hearing. She welcomed distinguished guests, provided a project overview, and explained the agenda for the hearing to the attendees.

### **II. Reuse Plan Scenarios and Conveyance Mechanisms for the five surplus properties**

- a. Navy Hospital
  - i. J. Oakley presented the context of the Navy Hospital parcel, reviewed the vision of the property by AIRPA, summarized the Notices of Interest (NOI) received for the land, presented the preferred reuse scenario, and described the recommended conveyance mechanism. J. Oakley then asked if there were any public comments on the Navy Hospital.
  - ii. Public Comment 1 - The speaker was a resident of the Point neighborhood in Newport and an abutter to the Navy Hospital property. She said the neighborhood suffered from serious traffic congestion and that the roads could not carry the new traffic that will be created by the proposed mixed-use development at the Navy Hospital site. The City of Newport must address the traffic problems before any redevelopment occurs.
  - iii. Public Comment 2 - Bill Corcoran, Aquidneck Island Reuse Planning Authority (AIRPA) board member from Newport, said that the City Council and Planning Board had both voted to endorse the mixed-use land use as detailed in the reuse plan. They also endorsed the use of a public benefit conveyance (PBC) for the submerged and shoreline sections of the parcel and an economic development conveyance (EDC) for the remaining upland parts of the parcel.
- b. Navy Lodge
  - i. J. Oakley presented the context of the Navy Lodge parcel, reviewed the vision of the property by AIRPA, summarized the NOI received for the land, presented the preferred reuse scenario, and described the recommended conveyance mechanism. J. Oakley then asked if there were any public comments on the Navy Lodge.
  - ii. Public Comment 1 - Jan Eckhart, AIRPA board member from Middletown, said that the Town Council and Planning Board endorsed the land use and conveyance mechanisms as described in the reuse plan. He added that Middletown had

incorporated the parcel into a broader plan for a new town center on West Main Road.

- c. Defense Highway Properties
  - i. J. Oakley presented the context of the Defense Highway Properties parcel, reviewed the vision of the property by AIRPA, summarized the NOI received for the land, presented the preferred reuse scenario, and described the recommended conveyance mechanism. J. Oakley then asked if there were any public comments on the Defense Highway Properties.
  - ii. Public Comment 1 - Richard Adams, AIRPA board member from Middletown, said the Town Council and Planning Board had reviewed and endorsed the land uses and conveyance mechanisms recommended for Defense Highway in the reuse plan.
- d. Tank Farms 1 and 2
  - i. J. Oakley presented the context of Tank Farms 1 and 2, reviewed the vision of the property by AIRPA, summarized the NOI received for the land, presented the preferred reuse scenario, and described the recommended conveyance mechanism. J. Oakley then asked if there were any public comments on Tank Farms 1 and 2.
  - ii. Public Comment 1 - Fred Faerber, AIRPA Chairman and member from Portsmouth, said that the Portsmouth Town Council and Redevelopment Authority said the town spent six years preparing for the surplus of the Tank Farms. They decided the town should not assume liability for the parcels because of environmental concerns, and instead they decided to use a planned unit development ordinance to regulate development on the site. The Council and Redevelopment Authority both endorsed the reuse plan's recommended land use and conveyance mechanism for the site.

### III. AIRPA Board Vote

- a. J. Oakley then asked the AIRPA Board if they were ready to make a motion regarding the preferred reuse plan for the five Naval Station Newport surplus properties. Dick Adams made a motion to accept/approve the preferred reuse plan as presented by J. Oakley for inclusion in the final documentation to be submitted to the Department of Defense and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. B. Corcoran seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

### IV. Conclusion

- a. J. Oakley concluded the meeting by reviewing the dates and milestones that will be met in order to complete the planning process for the surplus properties.
- b. J. Oakley then opened the meeting up for any additional comments, questions or concerns.
  - i. Public Comment 1 - Senate Teresa Paiva Weed asked what the next steps would be in the reuse planning process and how AIRPA and the three Aquidneck Island municipalities intended to finance the transfer of the properties through an economic development conveyance. J. Oakley responded that details of financing would be determined through negotiations with the United States Navy.
  - ii. Public Comment 2 - State Senator Lou DiPalma asked whether the Narragansett Indian Tribe, which had expressed interest in the surplus properties early in the process, would have another opportunity to gain control of the land. J. Oakley

responded that there was little the Tribe could do at this point in the process to take ownership of the properties.

- iii. Public Comment 3 - An attendee asked what the timeline would be for transferring the property. J. Oakley said it was difficult to provide an accurate estimate given the number of unresolved issues with the properties. Rich Tenga, of the Department of Defense's Office of Economic Adjustment, added that the NEPA environmental review process could not begin until the reuse planning process was complete.
- iv. Public Comment 4 - An attendee asked why the US Navy had decided to demolish the chapel on the Navy Hospital property. J. Oakley responded that the Navy had determined that the structure was so deteriorated that it had to be demolished for safety, environmental, and health reasons. B. Corcoran added that the City of Newport had not given up on using the chapel footprint for another structure. The outcome will be dependent mainly on a ruling from the State of Rhode Island's Coastal Resources Management Council.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7:05 pm.

Submitted by:

Julie Oakley, Property Reuse Coordinator  
Aquidneck Island Reuse Planning Authority

And

Chris Witt, Director of Planning and Communications  
Aquidneck Island Planning Commission