

Repositioning Committee Meeting Minutes
November 8, 2022
11:30 am

Committee Present: Gregg Warren, Joe Whitehouse, Yolanda Winstead, Liz Edgerton.

Committee Absent: Arne Morris.

RHA Board Present: Eric Braun.

RHA staff: Liz Edgerton, Laura McCann, Jennifer Morgan, Donna Perez, Gwen Wall

Visitors: Charles Francis

Review and approval of minutes of October 11, 2022

Commissioner Winstead moved and Mrs. Edgerton seconded approval of the Minutes from October 11, 2022. A vote being called, the ayes and nays were as follows:

Aye: Liz Edgerton, Gregg Warren, Joe Whitehouse, Yolanda Winstead.

Nay: None

Interim Executive Director Report

Mrs. Edgerton said we had our second meeting with the Heritage Park Master Planning team on November 2nd (it was a virtual meeting). One of the things that we talked about were the Master Plan architect. We are planning to put out an RFP for the Master Plan architect. We were going to submit this to a few architect agencies – one being Moseley (they were the original commission on the proposal that Brinshore had submitted). The other one was JDavis, who we used for our initial concept plans. They also mentioned that they wanted to send it to Torti Gallas and Partners (Washington, DC is one of their offices). Gregg Warren also suggested sending it to Cline Design. We are only going to send it to those four that have been named. If there are any others, I will need those names as soon as possible to send to Brinshore.

Commissioner Warren clarified that Brinshore would be doing the RFP, and not RHA.

Mrs. Edgerton said that is correct.

Mrs. Edgerton said the plan is to have the RFP ready for our review by the next team meeting, which is going to be on November 16th. The team wants to choose the Master Plan architect before we finalize the Master Plan schedule.

Commissioner Warren asked if RHA will be involved in the interviews.

Mrs. Edgerton said we haven't discussed that. We were going to discuss it at the next meeting. However, I'm going say that we should have someone from our team walk through that process of selecting the architect. They'll do it similarly to how RHA does it. Once we get the proposals back, we will have an evaluation process that we go through. We have not yet selected who will be doing that evaluation.

Commissioner Warren asked whether we want to have any Commissioners involved in those interviews since you have Commissioners that have a good amount of experience with this, as well as staff.

Mrs. Edgerton said she can make that recommendation. How many Commissioners are you thinking about?

Commissioner Warren said I don't have a proposal. I just threw that out as a question that maybe we can discuss to see if the committee thinks that would be useful.

Commissioner Winstead suggested that involving the commissioners might slow down the process.

Commissioner Whitehouse said he would worry about that as well.

Commissioner Warren asked if it would still be an issue if it did not slow down the process.

Commissioner Winstead said if you're trying to get it done quickly, trying to schedule Commissioners might cause a delay.

Commissioner Whitehouse said I won't have a problem if somebody wants to attend it. However, I think this is one of the reasons we have Brinshore is to run with this. The architect is very important to the project.

Commissioner Warren said he has a bias to having at least a local firm involved. I don't know who is familiar with the City Hall and the processes of approval. Maybe there are two different architectural firms that could be chosen. One that is conceptual and then maybe a local firm.

Commissioner Whitehouse said that is done frequently, especially in the site plan approval process, which is critical. It's nice to have somebody locally when they know how to prepare documents for the city. Having been through permitting, it's nice to have somebody in town who knows the rules of the road.

Commissioner Warren said that could be advice you can pass along to Brinshore.

Commissioner Winstead asked if that could be part of the criteria for the evaluation process, if that's a concern.

Commissioner Warren said yes.

Mrs. Edgerton said I did tell them we want to make sure it is someone that has North Carolina experience and knows the rules for the local area. I also want to remind the committee that the RHA Board must approve whatever architect is chosen.

Commissioner Warren said we have given you some guidance on this and we're opening up the possibility of Commissioner participation, if that would not affect the schedule. Once you have a schedule in place, maybe you can just put it out there and find out if anyone has the time to commit to that.

Mrs. Edgerton said the next discussion we talked about was the community engagement and the Communications Plan. Just to give you an update, we sent the resident letters last Thursday. We also sent out the press release yesterday. Laura McCann can share that information with the committee.

Mrs. McCann said it was our contacts that we had listed, plus Simone Robinson's (P3) contacts.

Commissioner Warren asked if there were any inquiries from the press release.

Mrs. McCann said not as of 10:00 am this morning.

Mrs. Edgerton said what was discussed is to have a potential open house or a kickoff meeting, once the Master Planner has been selected. That would be with the community and the residents. One thing that was brought up in community engagement was that the soft skills are going to be critical through that process. We want to make sure we have MWBE representation through that process.

Mrs. Edgerton said I shared with you the list of items that Brinshore had asked about. Among those were some questions. I invited the committee to respond to some of those questions and we'll talk about those today as we work through this. Those are the last things that we are trying to get so we can move forward.

Commissioner Warren asked that the final press release be sent to the committee.

Mrs. Edgerton said the last thing they talked about was who was going to prepare the MDA (Master Development Agreement). I'm going to be in contact with Banks Law Firm to get started on that MDA.

Commissioner Warren asked if the Master Development Agreement would be developed before we have a Master Plan.

Mrs. Edgerton said no, I don't think so. But I think it's something we can start getting them to work on. I was going to discuss this with EJP when we meet tomorrow.

Discussion regarding Heritage Park master planning process, development ideas and communications

Commissioner Warren said I sent out a draft of my thoughts to guide discussions to see if we are generally all on the same page with regard to the process and the development principles, etc. I set this up as a way to help shape a conversation today.

Commissioner Warren asked if it would be useful to track through a discussion of whether we are all on the same page with this list.

Commissioner Whitehouse said I read it and would be glad to go through it again with everybody. I think it looks reasonable – I assume what we're going to do is provide this to Brinshore as a guide.

Commissioner Warren said yes.

Commissioner Whitehouse said it will be good to see what their process is. I imagine a lot of it is pretty much the same.

Commissioner Warren said yes – and I think EJP has experience doing this as well. I think you're right – once we track through this and say that this sounds reasonable and we think this is a good outline, we can ask Brinshore to look at it and offer suggested changes, modifications, and/or enhancements to this list. I think this is just laying out expectations and assumptions.

Commissioner Warren said one of Brinshore's first questions was how we involve residents and whether we will show them any plans. I'm guessing that there will be surveys, focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and then design charrettes, etc. That's what I've done in the past at DHIC and I think that's what EJP has done in the past as well.

Commissioner Whitehouse said I wonder if it would be helpful to have a kickoff meeting to walk through all of this together. Everybody can talk about it, rather than passing something back and forth. I just think that we might be able to get a lot more done in a short time rather than remaining in our own camps.

Commissioner Warren said he talked about having Brinshore and EJP on this conversation today and I think there were some scheduling questions. Given that they had just had a kickoff meeting the week before, she thought it might be useful for us to feed them something and then maybe come together.

Mrs. Edgerton said we have talked through this. Yes, they want to get the residents more involved. We want to get their thoughts and ideas as we're putting together these plans. However, we're still somewhat early in our meetings with the Heritage Park team. I thought it was a bit early to go ahead and start inviting them to our Repositioning Committee meetings. Maybe in the next couple of meetings it would be more informative by that point.

Commissioner Warren asked if it would be useful to track through this, amend and revise as necessary, and then give it to them so they can come back to us with their responses. At that point they can give us more detail about how they intend to go forward with this.

Commissioner Braun said I think that's a good idea because it's similar to keeping the drafting of a contract. Whatever the committee suggests sets the tone and the expectations (as long as you go with the open mind that you're going to listen to what Brinshore suggests).

Commissioner Winstead asked if we are following the outline that the MOU gives us for what we're doing. I feel like we're putting the cart before the horse a little bit here. If we go back through the MOU to see what the next steps are, is this aligning with that? Are we following along with how we said we're going to do things in the MOU? We don't want to usurp what we laid out in the MOU and confuse this process. Not that there's anything wrong with this list. I'm just asking when is the appropriate time to engage in those conversations with them based on the MOU and what are we supposed to be doing at this point based on that?

Mr. Francis said it's at the committee's discretion. Whatever you think is appropriate. There's nothing in the MOU that precludes that.

Commissioner Warren asked where the committee would like to go in this discussion – would they like to track through these points to see if there are any modifications, or do we take a different path?

Commissioner Whitehouse suggested they quickly go through it.

Commissioner Braun said I have been participating in the Housing Crisis Group and one thing that I have considered is that there is always a little bit of distrust in the community and residents about whether we're really listening. I would suggest involving residents early and not waiting until there are a couple of draft masterplan concepts. They're going to receive that as we've already decided what we want to do and we're not really listening to them.

Commissioner Whitehouse said that's a good point. Brinshore asked if we will have planning meeting for residents to provide input prior to seeing any designs.

Mrs. Edgerton said during our last meeting, it was discussed that the first plan is to get the Master Planner on board and then to start having those resident engagement meetings. Initially there will be meetings with the residents, maybe the Board Members, and the stakeholders in the community before they're putting conceptual plans out there. That is the process we will go through, and the residents are going to be heavily involved in giving us their thoughts and what they would like to see on the site. That's going to be at the front end.

Commissioner Whitehouse asked if they have already outlined the process.

Mrs. Edgerton said this was part of the discussion we had at the last meeting, because we talked about the community engagement. It's still so early at the beginning of the process, we haven't really outlined it, but we had these discussions. I let them know that this was going to be

important for us and that it's going to be a big deal for our residents and our community and we want to make sure that we are involving them through this process.

Commissioner Warren said we all agree with that.

Mrs. Edgerton said with the next meeting we'll start to get more into the details and we'll have more to report back. Initially we're just wanting to get this Master Planner on board so that we can start moving forward and so that they are there from the beginning of the process as well.

Commissioner Warren said you definitely need the master planning team, whether or not it is the architect or a separate entity to be involved in that process. That's been my experience (and it was Durham's as well).

Mrs. Perez asked Commissioner Warren about offering childcare during these engagement meetings – what does that look like? She asked about his prior experience with this.

Commissioner Warren said he has no prior experience with this. It was simply a question because we knew there are a lot of children at Heritage Park and teens as well. I throw that out as a question maybe Brinshore or EJP has some ideas.

Mrs. Edgerton said she thinks childcare may bring on some other liabilities.

Commissioner Warren said he thought, for the Dix Park planning process, there were some local residents that were receiving some modest stipends to help get community involvement going.

Commissioner Braun said P3 has conducted many public meetings and they may have insight into childcare. It's typically just a room where kids can go and play and there's somebody there to monitor them. P3 may be able to give us some insight into how that was done. In terms of the Dix Edge Area Study, they hired a "Community Ambassador" and it was a resident of the area. That person helped go door-to-door with flyers. This was somebody that the neighborhood felt comfortable with, and they could identify with, and that seemed to be helpful. There could be an opportunity that we could pay a resident or two to help us distribute and encourage people to come. You might also consider interpreter services. The city started to have a Spanish interpreter. Even if it's not utilized, it sends a message that we're trying to outreach with people. The city might have resources for that we could use for that.

Commissioner Winstead said this is about trying to remove barriers to make it easier for people to participate.

Commissioner Warren said, regarding the transportation piece, DHIC did that at Washington Terrace and I think it was greatly appreciated by the residents. We were meeting at a community center about a mile away and we had a shuttle going back and forth to get people there and back.

Commissioner Warren said offering childcare, identifying lead residents and organizers are just thoughts that maybe they ought to look into, or maybe they have experience with it. These are really just suggestions.

Commissioner Warren said we now have a new contact list (the stakeholder list that was sent out). I think we will send out something to all Board Commissioners asking them to review it one more time if they have any names or additions. If not, we'll forward it on.

Commissioner Whitehouse made the correction that it should be "City Council Member" and not "City Commissioner".

Commissioner Winstead said we should add Passage Home as a service provider to the list.

Commissioner Braun said the only thing I would add, based on our experience with the CEO search and doing outreach, would be to make sure we are clear on what the expectations are in terms of the effort made reporting back on who they contacted. Some people are hard to get in touch with and somebody might have contacts with them. I would think about how you want that to occur in the expectations and reports and information you're going to get back.

Commissioner Warren clarified that we should document even if people don't respond to your effort.

Commissioner Braun said yes, because they may not return a call from the Brinshore team, but they might return a call from you or somebody else. Also, how they tried to contact them. Sometimes by sending one email they could tell you they've reached out but that doesn't mean it was enough effort to meet your expectations. These are just some things to think about.

Commissioner Warren said another item to consider is creating a Steering Committee. At our retreat, EJP mentioned that there was a very large Steering Committee created in Durham. Does the committee have thoughts regarding this or should we wait and see what EJP and Brinshore recommend? Are there objections by the committee to consider it?

Commissioner Whitehouse said I think what you're saying is that you'd like to see that as a minimum.

Commissioner Warren said this is just something to consider. Does the committee want to see a Steering Committee?

Commissioner Whitehouse said he would like to hear what they think. There is good and bad to it and I'd love to hear what their experiences have been and how best to do that. If you do have a strong Steering Committee, they can be very helpful. If it gets unruly and out of control, it can take you in a ditch very quickly. It has to be managed correctly.

Commissioner Warren agreed. He said the Durham committee was approximately 40 people and that might have been too large to be effective.

Commissioner Whitehouse said that is too big.

Commissioner Warren said we look forward to their responses on that suggestion and see what they have to say.

Commissioner Warren said in regards to participants in community meetings, given my experience, neighbors will be participating along with residents. It could be that we get more neighbors and stakeholders than residents at some of these meetings and I don't know how to deal with imbalances – if there are more voices from outside the community than inside the community. I throw that out as a question because I don't have an answer to that.

Ms. Perez asked if Kia Baker's responsibilities in her contract also extends to interviewing and coordinating residents. Speaking to your question about whether community meetings might include more stakeholders or neighbors than residents, would Kia be able to assist in her engagement with the residents and encourage them to attend these meetings?

Commissioner Warren said I don't know but that's a good question to ask.

Commissioner Braun said from my experience recently, I have talked to Stormie Forte a couple of times, and she's been very clear about wanting to help us with some of the activist community that might have concerns about Heritage Park. I would suggest, whenever you have community meetings, there may be six or seven key people you want to have at those meetings – from the neighborhood and residents – and you might put someone in charge of reaching out to those people consistently to try to get them there. You can recruit them to make them feel that their participation is elevated in terms of their attendance. I would keep Stormie Forte on list and try to identify six or seven key people that you really want to try to have at these meetings consistently.

Mrs. Edgerton said, besides Stormie Forte, does the committee have recommendations for who those other key members would be to have at these meetings?

Commissioner Warren asked what district is this.

Commissioner Braun said it is District D (new Council Member).

Commissioner Braun said it depends on who starts showing up at the meetings. I don't know that you can necessarily tell who the key people are today. I'm just suggesting, as you go forward, if you think there are key people you really want you should make a special effort to invite them and encourage them to show up.

Commissioner Warren said Raleigh Raised might be able to help us get people there as well. They have credibility with elected officials as well as contacts, so they are a resource.

Ms. Perez asked if the Raleigh Raised representatives attend the housing crisis meetings.

Commissioner Braun said not recently. He said Sonia Barnes and some of the pastors in the community would probably like to be involved in this process. He can give staff those names, if interested.

Ms. Perez said that could be a good a good set of connections.

Commissioner Braun said they are still meeting – however, it's a much smaller group. I think the key people that are still meeting would appreciate being involved, or at least have an opportunity whether they choose to be involved.

Commissioner Warren said those are all good points. It sounds like, with some minor modifications, the participant list is good and the number of community meetings will be three to four. We'll see what Brinshore and EJP have to say about that. We welcome their commentary on that.

Commissioner Whitehouse said whatever we can do on an outbound campaign will help us on many fronts. Also, being transparent and being open and forthcoming and proactive will be helpful. If we can do that, I think we'll be good.

Commissioner Braun said there is a local firm, to the extent we need anybody for video and promotion-type items, called The Grid. They did the video for RaleighForward (the group I founded) and they were very reasonable and community oriented.

Commissioner Warren said, regarding current design development principles and assumptions, we've always been consistent about that. I just said that home ownership units are not contemplated as part of RHA's development plan. That was one of the Brinshore's questions. Do we have any disagreement with that or do we want to keep that open?

Commissioner Whitehouse agreed. I don't think this site lends itself to homeownership. I could change my mind if somebody came up with a really creative plan, but I don't see it.

Commissioner Warren said city and county funding generally wants to see at least 25% of the units targeted to 30% AMI, which is not inconsistent with our objectives. I don't think we want to have a concentration of more than 25% in a particular development of 30% AMI.

Commissioner Whitehouse asked he is thinking it should be more spread that out? More of a mixed income?

Commissioner Warren said yes.

Commissioner Whitehouse said I agree with that. I think we need to push for a mixed income development.

Commissioner Warren said that would not necessarily mean if we had the first phase that we build all 122 units for 30% AMI. It might be done over time. And if we stick to that 25% number then we need to get at least 488 apartments on site if we hold to that standard for 122 units.

Commissioner Whitehouse said we know that 122 is our minimum. When the city/county funding generally wants to see 25%, is that in a building?

Commissioner Warren said that is in a development.

Commissioner Whitehouse asked if they're only going to fund one portion at a time.

Commissioner Warren said one financing plan at a time – upwards of 200 or 300 units in one phase.

Commissioner Whitehouse said, depending on how this development is put together, that could change across the site.

Commissioner Warren said yes. I think it would be good to get Brinshore's view of this. I think what we heard in Chicago is that they were very keen on mixed income.

Commissioner Whitehouse said we've talked about reserving that one piece on the one side. Maybe that helped with some funding, but maybe we need it.

Commissioner Warren said this is getting into technicalities, but income averaging is now available for LIHTC projects. You can go above 60% AMI up to 80% AMI – as long as you have some at less than 60% AMI. We could have a good range of incomes in developments up to 80% AMI. I would to see what Brinshore has to say about that.

Commissioner Warren asked if there were any comments about the plan going up to five stories.

Commissioner Whitehouse said he's always been ready to go a little higher.

Commissioner Warren said the problem is combustible construction. Can you go any more than five stories with stick built?

Commissioner Braun asked if there is anything about mixed use beyond childcare? Stormie Forte mentioned to me it would be nice to have opportunities for residents to have a potential small business, like a barber or a salon.

Commissioner Whitehouse said that is in the question for Brinshore also.

Commissioner Warren said there nothing in there about other retail opportunities. We probably need to add something along those lines that they ought to explore that as well.

Commissioner Braun mentioned a service provision – like a health clinic or something. Explore those options with Brinshore as well.

Commissioner Warren said let me go back and then add the idea of services and retail.

Commissioner Whitehouse said just kind of a mixed use.

Commissioner Warren suggested emphasize mixed use more.

Commissioner Whitehouse said I think that's a good idea.

Commissioner Warren asked if we have some five-bedroom units there, too.

Mrs. McCann said it is 8 and 12 that make up the four and five bedrooms. I can't remember if there are 8 or 12 but it's one of those two numbers.

We had a resident meeting where we had families that were concerned about the five-bedroom unit.

Commissioner Warren said I think is an open question. I will add five bedrooms to the list.

Commissioner Warren asked about structured parking being a possibility. In addition, split buildings with parking underneath is another option.

Ms. Perez said I support that very strongly. I think that both of those items should be considered specifically with the topography of the property. We could really maximize the creative parking options – for example, under the buildings – if we can design them properly. I'm concerned about the zero park option. I hope that we can find a way beyond that. I know that the revised zoning ordinances allow us to do that, but I think structured parking would definitely be well received.

Commissioner Warren said the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency does have a minimum parking requirement.

Commissioner Whitehouse said we should probably survey our residents and see what the existing parking requirements are. We don't want to over park and we don't want to under park.

Commissioner Braun said the city has been pushing us for more density. One thing to say is that we can do more density, but you need to help us out with some structured parking. Maybe we can make it attractive to them to give us some funding to help facilitate that if we decide we need it.

Ms. Perez said we heard from some of the residents at preliminary meetings that they were concerned about overflow Red Hat parking coming into the Heritage Park parking lot. We would definitely want to be sensitive to that if we move forward with structured parking to make sure it is securitized. We can build as many parking spaces as we can and perhaps capitalized on that as an income stream.

Commissioner Warren asked for comments on the eastern portion of the site being reserved for later analysis, and a potential for market rate housing or other complementary uses. The structured parking opportunity might reside there, too.

Commissioner Whitehouse said that sounds consistent with what we've been talking about.

Commissioner Warren said the city plans call for the extension of West and Dorthea through the property. I did not say it's going to happen, but I'm guessing that it will.

Commissioner White house said if it's on the city's plan today, that's pretty cemented.

Commissioner Braun said one thing regarding the Development Agreement, the city hasn't done an official one yet. If we think that's going to happen, we might want to reach out to the city attorney, and informally ask her what's the best approach from her perspective to make this happen. And when should we start talking about that?

Commissioner Whitehouse said I think it's also going to be important for the Mayor and Council Members to impress upon her that this needs to be a workable deal – and it's not one where the city wins. It's one where the whole community wins.

Commissioner Braun said I agree with that.

Commissioner Warren said I think the way Larry Jarvis is thinking about this is that there will be a Development Agreement that would actually include the financing of the housing as well as the infrastructure.

Commissioner Warren moved on to financing assumptions. I'm not sure that we have any comments on this other than the fact that Brinshore doesn't know much about what City/County financing is all about. I tried to just give them several illustrations.

Commissioner Whitehouse said I'm sure they they'll dig into this more as well.

Commissioner Warren said what I'll do is make some modifications based on what we've heard today, and redline it and send it out to you all for just a quick review and comments. I think what we'd like is for Mrs. Edgerton to forward that on to Brinshore and EJP. Not much of this is cast in stone other than 122 units of rental housing with less than 30% AMI. We look forward to getting up with them and better understanding the process for Master Planning.

Mrs. Edgerton asked about plans for the next Repositioning Committee Meeting.

Commissioner Warren said I think that next step is up to EJP and Brinshore to get the architect on board. They won't come up with a schedule until they have an architect selected. When they are prepared to talk to us about the Master Planning process and schedule, that's probably when we can meet next. There were some other items that we're going to put on our agenda, including looking at design concepts for some of the other sites. We also have interviews with potential CEO candidates in early December so I'm guessing that we probably won't be meeting in December.

Commissioner Whitehouse said I know we have an awful lot going on and we're really starting to push now and we're looking at Heritage Park. One of the things that we had talked about at one point is really looking at RHA's remaining properties and looking at whether or not there might be some redevelopment potential on those sites as well. I don't know the correct timing for

that since staff is busy and whether or not maybe it's a third party that comes in. However, I don't want that to fall off our plate. I would like us to consider looking at more than one project at a time in the future.

Mrs. Edgerton said I would like to have that new position that the Board approved – a developer position, which I think the new CEO will hire. I think that's a good time to maybe start looking at some of those other properties. How do we plan to get acquisition in play?

Commissioner Whitehouse said that's a good point. I just wanted to make sure we don't forget about that. We have many great properties and many good opportunities out there. I'd like our new CEO to get on board and really push ourselves in that direction and see what we can do about expanding our programs.

Commissioner Braun said, for what it's worth, one of the key questions in our interviews and things we emphasized every time was the potential for redevelopment of our entire portfolio. That was one of the things we were interested in. So whoever's hired, there's going to be an expectation that's a high priority.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:30pm.