

## NMI/Starmet Re-use Planning Committee

Meeting Minutes

August 7, 2020

Consistent with the Town's "Temporary Policy Directive and Guidelines for Public Meeting and Public Hearings conducted Via Remote Participation Due To Covid-19 State of Emergency," this meeting was conducted as a Zoom meeting, and the public was invited to view the meeting. The meeting was identified by the meeting ID 848 6624 2563.

The committee reviewed charts of data from the on-line survey as of August 6, 2020 and a letter sent to the committee from a Concord citizen Brian Rosborough on July 19, 2020... .

### PRESENT:

Members: Gary Kleiman, Andrew Boardman, Jim Burns, Pam Rockwell, Karl Seidman, Paul Boehm.

Others: Marcia Rasmussen, Director of Planning & Land Management Department (DPLM)  
Linda Escobedo, member of the Select Board  
Kate McEneaney, member of the Planning Board  
Brian Rosborough, Concord resident

Nancy Hauser and Heather Carey helped start the online meeting and left before it was called to order.

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 am.

Gary informed everyone that the meeting was being recorded.

**Plans to develop committee report.** The committee needs to start reporting out on our work on the site, prepare our final report, and think about a public meeting by November. Gary will share information about ownership issues, and would like each committee member to write up 3-4 paragraphs on our work, so that we can distill the key lessons learned to the select board.

Gary will provide an outline for our report at the next meeting in September. Gary suggested the report will be organized with these sections:

- Committee charge
- Data collection
- Conceptual examples
- Run through the issues
- A final recommendation section

Paul suggested that we add some comments about how COVID-19 may have impacted future uses of the site and our work, since there is major economic uncertainty, and our new reality might have uncovered the need for new types of municipal spaces than what we might have considered pre-pandemic.

Karl felt that it was important to add a section about the next steps, to describe the pathway to redevelopment, because eventually people will need the fiscal details even though we will not have that information for our report.

**Review results of online survey about reuse.** As of August 6, 2020, the survey was answered by <70 people, which is a low response compared to other Planning Board surveys, and shows that we need more outreach about we can expect from the cleanup and reuse options. Gary still feels this gives us a good sense of the flavor of the Town's response. Andrew pointed out that the response was really broad, without a focus on any single idea, and this suggests that the outreach was successful.

Gary presented his charts that summarized the survey responses to each question, and the committee expressed appreciation that Gary had developed this helpful representation of the data. The committee discussed each question.

Respondents to question 1 supported a wide variety of potential uses for area A-1, the part of the property that is already developed. Notably, municipal uses were much more popular than private development uses.

About half of the respondents to question 2 thought that housing should be considered at the site, and half did not. Those who responded positively to question 2 were asked about specific types of housing (question 3.) Respondents to question 3 might have had a slight preference for affordable housing, but were open to a wide range of housing types.

Respondents to question 4 had a preference for some trails, platform, or educational areas in reuse zone C, with only a small number of respondents suggesting that we leave these natural areas untouched. The issue of actually developing these spaces is moot since reuse zone C is within the boundaries of the wetlands bylaws. Paul pointed out that if you take into account that Question 4 allowed for multiple responses, people overwhelmingly replied, "let's do something more than trails."

Respondents to question 5 demonstrated a statistical preference to use at least some of the soil from reuse zone A-2 as clean fill for the areas that will be excavated as part of the remediation. Andrew thinks that the net environmental benefits analysis will help inform the opinions of the people who said they only wanted to use 1/3 or 2/3 of the area of the site for fill. Paul will investigate how much of the hillside could be needed for the site and when the environmental assessment will be completed.

Only a small group of respondents to question 6 prefer not to have outdoor recreation uses in reuse area A-4, which is currently undeveloped. Many respondents selected all the potential outdoor uses of the site. It is clear that people generally are not biased against outdoor uses of the site.

Question 7 was a solicitation of comments, and we received a wide range of comments which will be given to the Select Board.

Gary solicited comments from the public, and Kate suggested that she believes that leaving the site totally undeveloped should be left as an additional option. Pam pointed out that the site is not free, the Town lost/used real money because of this site over the years, including tax and utility fees, loss of firefighting equipment to contamination after responding to a fire at the site, hours spent on inspections and oversight by fire and health staff, legal fees for enforcement actions, and having to purchase an alternate site for bus storage. Karl pointed out that there may be ways to develop the site without the Town actually paying anything more.

The committee discussed how the survey results will be shared. The survey results will be presented in the final committee report, and the A-2 results will be discussed again at the September meeting when Paul has more information from EPA.

**Examples of past superfund cleanups.** Karl and Kate have been reviewing 200 superfund sites on which EPA has reuse information available. They have identified about 20 sites that are similar in type and size to the Concord site. They will write a 1-2 page summary of the process and a 1 page summary of each site, and then select a few of these sites as good examples for public outreach.

Gary suggested that we will use these details for an appendix in the Committee report. We will need 2-3 examples included in the report, but in the appendix we need to be sure that we have examples for each type of financial arrangement:

- Public/private partnerships
- Private Ownership
- Town Owner with a developer who has a long term lease
- Town Owner and landlord

Jim is also looking for examples of housing developed on a badly damaged site, perhaps outside the superfund process. He will pass on any examples he finds to Karl and Kate. Jim also mentioned that at a recent CHTC meeting, several members spoke about their preference to have money generating facilities at Starmet so that the Town would have money to fund affordable housing in other areas of Concord. They felt that putting affordable housing directly on this site is distasteful. This was an opinion expressed to the Committee early in our work by Todd Benjamin, and is now being echoed by a number of affordable housing advocates. Paul pointed out that the Committee will need to address both the human uses of the site and the financial options of the site.

Gary mentioned that he has asked Peter Lowitt to speak to the committee at our next meeting about redevelopment at Devens, in particular about sustainable design and what the cleanup experience was like.

**Discussion of a fourth development concept, a cloud computing facility that funds an environmental institute.** Concord resident Brian Rosborough has developed an idea about how to redevelop the site, and discussed it with Paul. Paul and Brian presented it to the committee. Area A-1 would be developed into a cloud computing center (a server farm) which is the kind of business that has really low occupancy, but has a high societal benefit (especially in times of high computer need, like the current pandemic.) This could be giant warehouse structure, covered in solar panels. Some of the space in this building could be leased out to

other types of users. Most of the rest of the site would be left undisturbed, but reuse zone A-4 would house an environmental institute (like the Aspen Institute) funded by the cloud computing center.

The cloud computing center could be developed as a lease or as a public/private partnership. Gary asked if we know that there is a particular interest in a cloud computing center from one of the major companies, and Brian responded that he had not heard from a particular company, but that Cloud computing businesses like Google, Apple, or Amazon are looking for outlets to show that they are environmentally responsible, and are looking for sites.

Paul thinks that the "Concord Institute" idea is a new concept and an important option. Gary would like this to be fleshed out as a fourth concept for our consideration. Brian compares it to the Schumaker Center or the Aspen Institute, and points out that it would be a future oriented place.

Karl wants to know how much land is needed for a cloud computer center, and pointed out that a consortium of Boston universities put their computer center at a site where hydropower provided a low cost energy source. Does our site have enough low cost energy for such an endeavor? Gary suggested that maybe we could work with MIT to look for innovative energy uses at the site, geothermal perhaps.

Brian will work on a more complete description of the idea for the report.

Paul will try to arrange a site visit for Brian, Gary, Marcia, and members of the Select Board.

**Public comment.** Linda led a discussion of Brian Rosborough's credentials. Brian founded Earthwatch and is on the boards of trustees of several academic institutions. He worked on the Town's climate action plan.

**Next meeting.** The next meeting is Friday, September 4th. The agenda will include:

- Redevelopment at Devens described by Peter Lowitt.
- An outline of the committee report.
- Legal institutional arrangements.
- Update on the environmental impact assessment by Paul Boehm.

If anyone would like to add to the agenda, please contact Gary.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Rockwell, Clerk