

NMI/Starmet Re-use Planning Committee

Meeting Minutes
September 4, 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 870 6760 2853.

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
Lee Smith, Concord Housing Development Corporation
Peter Lovitt, Concord Resident
Tonya Gailus, Prescott St.
Brian Rosborough, Elm St.
Elizabeth Rust, Commonwealth Ave

The meeting was called to order at 8:04 am.

Gary read the instructions for participation, and informed everyone that the meeting was being recorded.

Accept Minutes from June 12 and August 7. Karl and Linda provided edits to the August 7 draft minutes. There was a discussion about the level of detail included about the survey results, report organization, and future agenda since the committee continues to receive survey responses and the report and agendas have changed. Fluid information like this will include timestamps in the minutes and be updated in future minutes.

Karl made a motion to accept the minutes from June 12 and August 7 as amended, and Andrew seconded it, and the minutes were accepted unanimously.

Presentation by Peter Lovitt about redevelopment at Fort Devens. Peter Lowitt, Concord resident and Planner formerly involved in the Devens redevelopment, led a discussion about his experiences with the redevelopment of the Devens regional enterprise zone in the towns of Ayer, Harvard, and Shirley. The enterprise zone is the successor to Fort Devens, a military post that operated from 1917 to 1996.

The Devens project required significant infrastructure upgrades and property incentives. There were stringent requirements that new buildings meet high home energy rating standards and used green building techniques. Low impact development standards were set to protect water resources and manage stormwater at the site. Residential developments included at least 25% affordable units.

The Devens project received high ratings from regional development and environmental organizations.

Like the 2229 Main St. site, the Devens site had activity use limitations that restricted the use of groundwater wells. The use limitations also required public sewers and a soil management plan that was overseen by the Base Closure Team. Soil removal was tightly regulated because this site potentially had unexploded ordinance. The site was cleaned up to residential and industrial cleanup levels based on the zoning of individual areas of the site.

Peter made some personal comments.

Karl noted that there is affordable housing on the Devens site, and asked how far away the residential areas were from the previously contaminated areas. Peter pointed out that Devens is the size of Watertown, and there is plenty of space there that was never contaminated. Additionally, Devens had a lot of military housing, where the contamination was from leaky heating fuel tanks, and that was easily cleaned up to residential standards. Areas within the enterprise zone were zoned residential or commercial based on the prior use of the area, and the residential areas are far away from areas that contained heavy contamination or ordinance. Karl pointed out that there are uncontaminated areas on the Starmet site as well.

Paul asked about how the funding worked at the site. Peter pointed out that the State of Massachusetts is the owner of this site, because the towns realized that they did not have the resources to redevelop the base on their own, and so they ceded sovereignty of the site to the State for 40 years. The redevelopment funding included 200 million dollars from the state budget that was used to upgrade infrastructure: build roads, set up new water supply lines, new sewage treatment, and stormwater management. Building permit fees were waived for solar and wind power energy supplies.

Peter pointed out that energy use and waste stream management are important considerations. A server farm development could double the electricity needs of a small town like Concord. But server farms generate a lot of waste heat, and perhaps compatible businesses that could use that waste heat could be co-located at the site. Devens also used that principle in their development planning: that the waste stream from one company is the source material for another company. This helped give the new development a green footprint and supports eco-efficiency.

Jim asked about whether there was local opposition to redevelopment at the site. Peter pointed out that the locals were actually really grateful and supportive for all the redevelopment at the site.

The question was asked about why so much public money was required for the site. Peter pointed out that the military base did not meet any local standards, so bringing sewers and other infrastructure up to code was a very large investment.

Discussion of the committee report. The outline for our report has changed since our last meeting. The committee will add a description of the committee charge to the opening section of the report. The Master Plan concept section will describe 4 different development scenarios: heavy municipal use of zones A1-4, heavy commercial use of A1-4, mixed use of A1 only, and the server farm concept. All 4 concepts will share the features that zone C will remain undeveloped with trails and outdoor environmental education sites, that there will be a ring road for access around zone A-1, and that soil in zone A-2 may be used for backfill.

Paul started a discussion about phasing development at the site. It was agreed that this could be discussed in section 3 as part of the overview of the 4 development scenarios.

Karl started a discussion about key findings and conclusions. The committee decided that a section about findings and conclusions could be added to section 4, as additional specific issues. The last section (5) will include a roadmap to redevelopment with particular action items for the Select Board and future committees. This will include a section about making the case to take ownership of the site.

Marcia will start work on sections 1 & 2. Paul will write of the use of area C in section 3, and the heavy municipal use scenario (with Pam). Marcia will write up the heavy commercial use scenario, and Gary will write up the mixed use scenario and Paul will work with Brian on the server farm/Concord Institute scenario. Committee members will also write their issues sections, and then the committee will get together to discuss how specific our recommendations should be.

Karl pointed out that the fiscal information will not be known, and Marcia pointed out that COVID is changing the needs of our community. Paul still felt that we need to come up with action items for the next steps.

Gary will update the outline with additions, authors, and deadlines and send it out for review. Committee members will work on their respective pieces and get drafts back to Gary. Please send text for the report only to Gary, not the whole group.

Next meeting. The next meeting is Friday, October 2nd.

Net Environmental Benefit Analysis of using onsite fill. Paul has sent out a memo from the remediation contractor that details the work that will be done to give the committee an analysis that describes the relative environmental tradeoffs between trucking in backfill to restore the site and using a significant portion of the hillside in reuse zone A-2 along Rt 62 as backfill. Please send comments directly to Paul only, and do not copy them to the entire committee. It is expected that this information will not be available until the end of the year. The July deadline for a decision about whether to use the onsite source for backfill has become obsolete, but we will want to have that recommendation in our report by the end of the year.

Public comment.

Peter Lovitt commented that he did not want to see Concord put affordable housing at the 2229 Main St site, instead develop the site in a way that generates revenue for the Town to pay for affordable housing in other areas of the Town. He felt that the perception of putting affordable housing on a previously contaminated site is unacceptable in Concord.

Linda praised the discussion of the Devens redevelopment, and suggested that the committee should put considerations of zoning changes and green building standards as action items in the recommendations section of our report. Tanya thanked the committee for its work.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Rockwell, Clerk