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UNDERWOOD POOL PROJECT
Belmont, Massachusetts

BELMONT UNDERWOOD POOL BUILDING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING

February 25, 2014

Belmont Town Hall – Board of Selectmen Conference Room

Attending:

Belmont Planning Board Members - Michael Battista (Chair), Karl Haglund, Charles Clark, Elizabeth Allison (Vice Chair), Joseph DeStefano, Sami Baghdady, Jeffery Wheeler (liaison)

Underwood Pool Building Committee (UPBC) – Anne Paulsen (Chair), Stephen Sala (Secretary & Permanent Building Committee member), Adam Dash, Joel Mooney

Also in attendance – Peter Castanino (Director of DPW), Chris Rotti (BH+A), Deborah Marai (PCI)

Call to Order: See item 2. below.

1. Planning Board Meeting was called to order

- Chair Michael Battista introduced Planning Board members
- First item on the agenda is an informal meeting with the UPBC

2. Introduction to Underwood Pool project

- UPBC members/team introduced themselves.
- Anne Paulsen reported that the meeting had been posted as joint UPBC and Planning Board meeting, but there is no UPBC quorum
- Anne Paulsen said that the Underwood Pool has been a great amenity for community for over 100 years, but over past 10 or so years it has begun to fail; examples include issues with the pump house, the bottom of pool and non-code compliant bathhouse.
- Anne Paulsen reported that in 2012, the State Board of Health granted a one year variance for pool use in 2013; the Board of Health believed the pool to be in violation of the Code. This led to Town Meeting decisions for proceeding with a feasibility study, and eventually funding for a schematic design to be developed.
- Anne Paulsen said the UPBC is in front of the Planning Board today to informally present the Underwood Pool schematic design, and she hopes the Planning Board will support the project.
 - The team tried hard to respect the existing historic site; it was decided that the pool stay in its current location
 - The design needed to work within the confines of the existing site: there are traffic issues; part of the site is in wetlands; the area is congested; it is in a neighborhood; parking is difficult
 - The design makes some adjustments to the larger site: fix up tree line on Cottage Street; provide sidewalk on west side of Cottage Street; improve safety in the small existing parking area, including make it harder for cars to go wrong way up Cottage Street to pull into the parking area; proposed drop off on Concord Avenue
 - The site is historic, but the project proposes to build a pool for the 21st century
 - The cost of the project is \$5.2M; the pool area itself is just shy of \$4.5M, but the project adds other amenities on site and includes soft costs and contingencies.

3. Underwood Pool Project Schematic Design

- Schematic design image package was passed out to the Planning Board
- Chris Rotti from BH+A (the architects) presented the schematic design
 - 1) Aerial view: image addresses whole site/park; the project goal is to redevelop the park for the whole community
 - 2) Project goals were reviewed
 - 3) Close up view of primary development area; Chris Rotti reviewed design:
 - ❖ Site strategies: need to not affect wetlands any more than current pool does; stay out of depressed skating area; address water run-off from hill; keep pool in existing location; clean up tree line on Cottage Street; create continuous sidewalk on west side of Cottage Street from School Street to make access to site safer and easier
 - ❖ Pool concepts: 2 pools for redundancy (if one pool needs to be shut down, the other can stay open); smaller pool area now than existing, but more efficient
 - Bathroom strategies: Code requirement for plumbing fixtures results in a much larger bathroom than exists now; design seeks to keep built elements in scale with neighborhood, therefore the required bathroom program is broken up into 2 buildings – east bathroom along Cottage Street, and west bathroom in the location of the existing structure; because of the adjacency to the Wellington Brook, the Conservation Commission indicated the building on the west side needs to be kept within the footprint
 - 4) Close up of pools - different zones: one pool has zero-depth entry area and is shallower overall for new swimmers and waders; small side on south side; other pool has larger area for lap lanes or other activities (flexible), and 2 deeper areas, one with a diving board
 - 5) East bathroom, filter building and plumbing requirements - required to have 16 toilets and 16 showers per Code; BH+A developed a scheme as efficient as possible given the requirements; East bathroom has control, first aid, showers/changing/toilet rooms (some single use, some combined); entrance to pool complex faces Concord Avenue
 - 6) West Bathroom – tried to put as much as possible in this building to keep Cottage Street building as small as possible; includes lifeguard room and additional showers/changing/toilet rooms
 - 7) Proposed drop off on Concord Avenue; straight shot to pool complex entrance
 - 8) Cross section through Cottage Street – propose thinning of weed trees and distressed trees to create clean, forested edge look
 - 9) Three images, different views of bathroom designs - keep as simple, small scale and compact as possible; maximum height is 15'; simplicity of materials
- Anne Paulsen noted the design does not call for elaborate pools or bathrooms; two pools for redundancy; simple, but fulfil the needs for summer use
- Adam Dash added the reasons the cost of the project is different than the Feasibility Study number:
 - The Feasibility Study reviewed options for a new pool location and did not review different design options for a new pool complex in the current location; feedback from the public was for a pool that catered to all members of the community, not just young children.
 - The Feasibility Study option for a new pool in the current location only considered scope within current fence lines, whereas this project moves the

fence line to incorporate more lawn in the pool area, addresses safety (parking improvements, drop off area), addresses access to the pool (sidewalk from School Street to take advantage of Wellington School parking when possible) and cleans up areas outside of the pool complex

4. Questions from Planning Board

- Sami Baghdady asked if the project will request a parking waiver; he said the bylaw is clear, and the team will need to know what amount of parking that is required. The team will review this matter.
- Sami Baghdady asked if street parking spots will be lost with the proposed drop off area and said he is concerned for children safety with a drop off near the bus stop. Anne Paulsen said 3 spaces will be lost seasonally for the drop off; the team will look into options for the location of the drop off.
- Sami Baghdady asked if the design for 2 bathhouses generates need for additional employees. Anne Paulsen said the design does not assume the requirement for additional staff; the lifeguard room is in the west bathhouse - lifeguards are required to cycle out of pool area, and can cycle in and out of bathhouses as well. Adam Dash added that west bathhouse can be closed down during non-peak times. Joel Mooney added that the design keeps much of the circulation on outside of building to provide for good visibility and oversight.
- In response to a question from Karl Haglund, Chris Rotti stated there is no work beyond the bathhouse on the west side. Adam Dash noted that because of the Wellington Brook, the project does not touch anything on that side of the bathhouse. Anne Paulsen noted there is an informal dirt path behind the bathhouse now and this will remain. Adam Dash added – don't want to touch that side of bathhouse, stream.
- Karl Haglund noted it would be better for the proposed new sidewalk to be on inside of trees.
- Karl Haglund said in his opinion, there should be shade trees near picnic area.
- Joseph DeStefano asked about outdoor showers. Chris Rotti said there would probably be one rinsing shower by each bathhouse, however these do not take away from the number of cleansing showers required by Code.
- Joseph DeStefano thinks the existing bathhouse has stood the test of time architecturally; his opinion is that the proposed bathhouses are more contemporary than anything else on Concord Avenue now, and they do not work architecturally. Chris Rotti indicated that the design started by looking at more traditional forms, however the Historic Commission steered the project away from that approach; their preference is an architecture that does not to match the neighborhood architecture but instead works with the landscape.
- Joseph DeStefano inquired about the use of the bathhouses for providing covered areas for picnicking. Chris Rotti noted that they had considered free-standing shade structures, but budget prevented this; Chris noted these could be added, and that they will take another look at the bathhouses to provide shade.
- Michael Battista agrees with Joseph DeStefano's comments on the architecture, would prefer to see something more traditional there.
- Michael Battista asked about the provision for handicap accessible parking spaces in the existing lot. Chris Rotti noted there are 10 spaces now, 2 handicap accessible, design calls for 8 spaces with 2 handicap accessible (lost 2 spaces by moving parking further away from Concord Avenue for safety reasons.
- Michael Battista asked if adding parking was considered further south on Cottage Street. Both Chris Rotti and Stephen Sala noted the slope in that area made

parking options difficult. Adam Dash added this would put more traffic on Cottage Street, whereas the design tries to keep as much additional traffic off of Cottage Street as possible. Anne Paulsen noted that the design proposes changes for the residences along Cottage Street, the design tries to keep a natural buffer between the neighbors and facility. Anne added that the project encourages the use of Wellington School parking whenever possible; there is already a crosswalk.

- Michael Battista asked if the depressed field area is to remain as is. Adam Dash noted the UPBC has been told not to touch this area.
- Michael Battista asked for clarification regarding the control point and access. Chris Rotti noted that the entrance is a straight shot from Concord Avenue, have to go by the control area to enter the pool complex.
- Michael Battista asked why the State does not count outside showers toward the required fixture count. Chris Rotti said the regulations are specific that required fixtures needs to be cleansing shower, not rinsing only. Michael added concern about security, feeling parents have better visibility of children at outdoor showers. Anne Paulsen did not that the design takes issues of security into consideration – example, single use toilet rooms in east bathhouse are clearly visible from the pool area.
- Michael Battista asked about use of solar power. Chris Rotti noted the roof slopes are designed to accommodate solar, but solar is not included in the project currently.
- Michael Battista said the Board does not deal with operating budgets, but expressed his concern anyway. He asked the team has looked into comparisons of past years' and proposed operating budgets. Anne Paulsen noted that this information is being put together for a meeting tomorrow night with the Warrant Committee. Chris Rotti noted there are added efficiencies with the newer pumps. Anne added that the 2 pools combined are smaller than the existing pool; 2 filters are more expensive but not double what one would be for a single pool of the same size as the 2 combined. In response to Michael's question about the ability to back-feed the filters to operate both pools if one filter went down, Chris said would need to upsize systems to have one system be able to do work of both.
- Michael Battista questioned the conservation issues preventing the west bathhouse from being larger. Chris Rotti noted the approach is to limit the amount of additional work in wetlands and buffer zone areas, and the Conservation Commission urged the project to take this direction. Adam Dash added the Conservation Commission probably does not want a building there at all, but will allow the same footprint (no larger) because there is one there now.

5. Public Comments

- Mr. McCarthy from 16 Cottage Street: He agrees with the pool and bathhouses. His concerns include: 1) raising level of pool, he believes this will raise the water level and lead to flooding; 2) 700 people in pool; 3) parking requirements being raised by the Planning Board; and 4) entrance to the pool and location of the East bathhouse on Cottage Street.
 - Joel Mooney clarified that the ground water will not be raised as a result of this project; the pool level (the water inside the pool) is proposed to be higher.
 - Peter Castanino added that the grate behind library, where the Wellington Brook goes into the culvert, was smaller before; he recalled a specific occasion where the grate got clogged with debris during a storm and there was flooding. After that new larger grate was installed; chances are much less than they used to be that the grate could get clogged and result in

flooding. Peter added that the last thing town wants to see if resident basements flooded.

- Chris Rotti clarified that 646 is the Code determination of occupant load based on the surface square footage of the pool, and this is what the plumbing fixture counts are based on. It is not the number of bathers expected to be in the pool at any one time. The occupant load of the existing pool is over 900. Adam Dash noted the proposed pool area is less square footage but more usable.
- Michael Battista noted with neighbor concern about the bathhouse on the east side, if the Conservation Commission is saying cannot make the one on the west side bigger, and cannot touch depressed skating area, what about south side? Chris Rotti noted the hill makes building on the south side a challenge – more expensive and more difficult to access. Adam Dash noted it would also be more difficult to make handicap accessible. Stephen Sala added that the team spent a lot of time looking at the different options and put a lot of thought into the Cottage Street bathhouse scenario. Anne Paulsen said the team looked at the site in terms of working within the limits of what is there now; south side building would change focus, might be an issue for sledders and would alter the historic nature of the park's landscape.
- Michael Battista inquired about storm water design. Chris Rotti confirmed there is a storm water system in the design for run off.
- Mrs. McCarthy from 16 Cottage Street: Her opinion is that there have been no neighborhood meetings on this matter. Some of neighbors came together on Sunday. They were at the first public meetings, but were not in Town for the January public meeting; they had not seen the pool plan. She feels process has been rushed; thought she understands why (schedule, that the pool may be closed down), she feels the time for community input has not been adequate. She will not vote in favor of the project as it is. Causes Cottage Street and Spinney Terrace neighbors to bear brunt – traffic (entrance in bathhouse on Cottage Street), safety, view/open space. She wants the main entrance kept on the west side and minimize the impact on Cottage Street. The project needs more time and neighbor input.
- Ms. Sapolsky: She feels there are not enough lockers given the possibility of theft. She feels the “adult pool” should be substantially reduced in scope – this is not a private athletic facility, Belmont tax payer should not fund people's hobbies.
 - Adam Dash noted that the area shown as lap lanes is flexible – roped off to create one or more lap lanes, areas left open for play or open swim. Anne Paulsen added that the part of the reason for these sorts of spaces is because the UPBC received a lot of public input on getting older kids/teens to come back and use pool, as well as comments from adults regarding their desires for the new pool.

6. Closing Comments

- Michael Battista note this was an informal presentation and conversation, he hopes the UPBC will consider the concerns that are being raised now. A full site plan review is required.

Attachments:

- BHA – presentation (similar presentation from Board of Selectmen meeting)

Respectfully Submitted, Deborah Marai, Pinck & Co. Inc.