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UNDERWOOD POOL PROJECT
Belmont, Massachusetts

BELMONT UNDERWOOD POOL BUILDING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING

March 13, 2014

Beech Street Center, Belmont – Community Room

Attending:

Underwood Pool Building Committee (UPBC) – Anne Paulsen (Chair), Ellen Schreiber, Joel Mooney (Permanent Building Committee), David Kane (Recreation Commission), Stephen Sala (Secretary & Permanent Building Committee), Adam Dash (Vice-chair & Warrant Committee), James Smith (Historic Commission)

Also in attendance – Peter Castanino (Director of DPW), Gerald Boyle (Director of Facilities), Tom Scarlata (BH+A), Deborah Marai (PCI); approximately 50 members of public, media, press

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 7:36 p.m.

1. Chair of the UPBC, Anne Paulsen, called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m. and welcomed all attendees.
2. Chair Paulsen introduced members of the UPBC, and later introduced Architect Tom Scarlata from BH+A, Owner Project Manager Deborah Marai from Pinck & Co., Inc., Town of Belmont Director of Public Works Peter Castanino, and Town of Belmont Director of Facilities Gerald Boyle. Chair Paulsen acknowledged the invaluable support of the Town liaisons.
3. Chair Paulsen stated that the UPBC is not here to advocate, but rather to provide information. There will be a question on 4/1/14 Town wide election ballot asking the Community if they want to continue with construction of a new pool; it is the UPBC's responsibility to inform the public about the project.
4. Chair Paulsen presented the agenda
 - Project update and presentation
 - Background/Chronology
 - Recreation Commission Update
 - Public Outreach
 - Presentation on the Pool
 - Q & A
 - Receive public comments
5. Background:
 - Chair Paulsen stated that due to health and safety violations, the Underwood Pool opened last year only with one-year variance. The UPBC was established to develop the pool project to schematic design and to bring it to Town vote. The schedule the UPBC is following is in attempt to not lose a season.
 - Joel Mooney presented the facts of the Chronology of the pool project
 - Underwood Pool is the first public outdoor pool/oldest in America
 - There have been repairs and refurbishments over years
 - Health and safety violations have been cited; one-year variance granted 2013
 - Board of Selectmen voted for a Feasibility Study to be completed
 - Board of Selectmen voted to proceed with Feasibility Study Option 1
 - Town Meeting Vote to appropriated CPA funds for Schematic Design
 - Town Moderator appointed the UPBC

- 2/10/14 Board of Selectmen voted debt exclusion language for new pool for 4/1/14 town wide election.
 - The Underwood Pool project is following the standard process for Town capital projects – Feasibility Study, Schematic Design and Debt Exclusion. If successful with the vote, the design will be completed and the project will be bid. The schedule the UPBC is following is in attempt to not lose a season.
6. David Kane provided an update from the Recreation Commission
- If the project moves forward, the Recreation Commission will develop and implement programming that meets Town needs; the Commission will seek Community input of programming – possibly questionnaire, survey and/or task force
 - The online survey Ellen Schreiber administered for the UPBC resulted in many important comments regarding pool programming and policies
 - The length of the pool season will be considered
 - The Commission's work on this is preliminary; if the project moves forward, will put processes in place so the pool can be used and enjoyed by the whole Community
7. Ellen Schreiber provided information on the Public Outreach
- There were 2 public input meetings held early on, one on a weeknight and one on a weekend in attempts to reach as much of the Community as possible. There was a third public input meeting as well, and now this public hearing.
 - Because not everyone can come to meetings, the UPBC conducted an online survey. There were over 500 respondents to the survey, all responses were read. The survey consisted of some quantitative questions, then series of open ended questions; some people took the opportunity to comment on policies (cost, programming, etc.). The UPBC tried to understand main points, the comments that were repeated over and over – such as diapered children in a separate pool. This information went to designers as part of what community asking for.
8. Presentation of the Underwood Pool project by Adam Dash accompanied by images
- There were 3 public meetings to solicited ideas, including 1 with a tour of the Underwood Pool.
 - One message came through was the need for multi-generation pool. Now, the pool is more for kids, families with small children. The goal is to make it for something everyone can use. Taking into account what everyone wants necessarily changes pool from what it is now; there is no point building a pool that won't solve problems it currently has.
 - The project has been brought through Schematic Design, 2 estimates.
 - Project goals were reviewed
 - Replace failing pool and non-code compliant bath house; the pool has been losing membership (financial issue)
 - Multi generation pool
 - Code compliant, pleasant restrooms and staff facilities
 - Respect and preserve historic value of site (avoid depressed "skating area", preserve sledding hill, etc.; puts restrictions on site)
 - Improve park access
 - Improve circulation and safety
 - Enhance connections to surrounding community
 - Outdoor amenities to encourage community participation
 - Site plan
 - Pool
 - ❖ Actually 2 pools for redundancy; if there are "accidents" or issues in one pool, can shut down one and keep other open.

- ❖ The design of the pool includes a progression from shallow to deep.
- ❖ One is "family pool" with zero entry, seating area, deeper pool area with slide; the other is multi-use pool with diving, another deep area, and a large area to be used for lap lanes, open swim or play.
- ❖ The new design is for a smaller pool than existing pool – but smart sized and more efficient than existing pool.
- Bath houses
 - ❖ East bath house on Cottage Street, with an entry that faces Concord Avenue and filter building
 - ❖ West bath house in location of existing bath house
- Increase safety at existing parking, discourage travel wrong way up Cottage
- Create walkway at edge of Cottage within current land of park (doesn't make Cottage Street smaller). Use resource of Wellington School: parking during evenings and weekend availability; the walkway is to create a safe path.
- Fencing around pool; area inside the pool expanded a bit to allow for more grass inside pool area.
- Not touching culvert, but proposing to cover it with dirt and plant grass.
- Proposed drop off on Concord Avenue.
- Trees/Landscaping
 - ❖ Proposing to fill in tree line on Concord Avenue
 - ❖ Thin and get rid of dead and invasive trees on Cottage Street, add and build up understory; don't disturb – keep, enhance.
- Image with new proposed pool and existing pool dashed in – shows location, size and shape of existing and proposed
- Bath houses
 - Code implications - the Underwood Pool facility is not code compliant now.
 - Plumbing/health code requires 16 toilet and 16 shower fixtures, which cannot fit in to a building the size of the current bath house; result is more square footage than currently have in existing bath house.
 - This is one of the reasons the proposed design has a smaller pool; the original design required 20 toilet and 20 shower fixtures, resulting in an even bigger bathhouse. The current design balances a pool size to service needs of the Community using it while keeping the bath houses in scale/not too big.
 - One building would be large; the design splits the program to keep the scale of the buildings in line with the adjacent neighborhood.
 - Proposed location of bath houses in part due to site restrictions
 - ❖ Existing bath house and part of pool/deck are within the existing wetlands buffer; Conservation agent recommended that anything built on the west side stay within current size and composition, and not encroach further on the wetlands buffer; it is a dicey proposition to build a larger building or in a different location within the buffer.
 - ❖ Riparian buffer also needs to be considered.
 - ❖ Cannot build on culvert and avoid the depressed "skating area"
 - ❖ Hill on south side, starts to rise not far from existing bath house
 - ❖ One building where existing is and one on Cottage Street makes sense. The one on Cottage Street engages the street, is in scale with houses
 - East bath house
 - ❖ The East bath house is actually 2 parts with a fence between them, further breaks down massing.
 - ❖ Program 1st part: control (entry), toilet/shower/changing, first aid. Benefit of having individual toilet rooms with doors visible from pool

- ❖ Program 2nd part: pump/filter house; 2 pumps because 2 independent pools – cost more than one pump, but not twice as much as if had 1 pump for 1 big pool. Current pump house is partially below the water table; floods because of high ground water; pumps constantly running
 - West bath house
 - ❖ Additional toilets/shower/changing, lifeguard room
 - Aesthetics & Construction
 - ❖ Historic Commission recommends not designing a bath house that attempts to look like the existing bath house
 - ❖ Sloped roofs to maximize potential for future solar panels
 - ❖ Louvers and vents, open and airy; some mechanical ventilation to meet Code
 - ❖ Unheated, uninsulated, for summer use only; durable
 - Architect's renderings showing what pool/bath houses will look like
 - Financial
 - Schematic Design Estimated Total Project Cost \$5,200,000
 - Why is Schematic Design total project budget estimate more than Feasibility Study estimate?
 - ❖ OPM fees not in earlier budget; this is required and is money well spent
 - ❖ Current estimate includes additional contingencies and escalation
 - ❖ Feasibility Study included only scope within the fence that defines the Underwood Pool; the current design addresses additional improvements outside of this area trying to improve outside of pool itself
 - ❖ The redundancy of a 2-pool scheme adds a little bit of cost
 - Funding for
 - ❖ \$298K CPA 2013
 - ❖ \$2M CPA 2014 proposed
 - ❖ \$2.90M debt exclusion amount
 - Tax implications
 - ❖ \$6.11 per \$100,000 assessed value of single family home
 - ❖ For the average single family in Belmont of \$782,700 - \$48 for first year, declines each year for following 14 years/life of bond
 - Operating Costs and Maintenance
 - Pool water costs are expected to not change
 - Pool electricity is expected to increase
 - Chemical costs are expected to decrease
 - Pool maintenance requirements are expected to be the same or decrease
 - West bath house could be closed at non-peak times; flexibility with 2 houses
 - Summary:
 - Adam Dash stated the UPBC has tried to explain the choices made for the design of the new pool; the UPBC listened, has taken all comments seriously and will do so going forward
 - The design tries to meet needs of as many constituencies as possible
 - The UPBC knows the design will not please everyone, but the Committee believes this is the way to go
 - James Smith reiterated that the project represents a commitment to this generation but also to future generations; providing recreational opportunities going forward in light of what the land was originally donated for.
9. Q & A: Adam Dash noted that the public hearing is being recorded and filmed
- Resident : Bike racks in plan?
 - Tom Scarlata: Yes, some existing and add new

- Resident 2/neighbor across street from proposed East bath house (wife):
Comments regarding flaws in current design
 1. Do not change entrance to pool; lower Cottage Street is already congested; current entrance is safer
 2. Do not cover existing culvert; incorporate more grass on south side instead
 3. Scale back to reduce cost
 4. Do not place large bath house and pump house on Cottage Street; single large bath house on west side makes more sense
 5. Retain open vistas for residents of Cottage Street and pedestrians in area; concerned about permanent loss of open space, loss of views to west; Resident 2 showed enlarged photos – view from house with open vista, changed view if a 15' high building was constructed across the street

Suggestions: As Belmont citizens, need to preserve the pool for future, but offer a pool project design that will be voted on. Better a delay than a "no" vote from Belmont tax payers.

 - Adam Dash:
 - ❖ Proposed design is to break up the scale of the required building scope; the UPBC did not want to put one long bath house on Cottage Street. The filter house should be on Cottage to be serviced, needs to be away from wetlands buffer. For the east bath house, the lower part of the roof is 9' high. The building is intended to be small, open air; smaller than houses on Cottage Street. The choice is not between this project and the current Underwood Pool – the current pool has health and safety violations, do not know if another waiver will be granted to open the existing pool.
 - ❖ Adam Dash: The proposed design is for a place to gather (a supervised area for older kids and for adults) and to learn to swim. No reason to do a pool project if do not address needs and fix problems. The design attempts to minimize impact Cottage Street. Know cannot meet everyone's needs.
 - ❖ If only had a bath house the size of the existing bath house or the proposed West bath house – the pool could only be as large as the "family pool" shown
 - ❖ This is most workable solution
 - Anne Paulsen: The design provides a 25' setback from Cottage Street to the East bath house
 - Adam Dash: The second photograph shown by the resident is not completely accurate – there is a space between the two parts of the East bath house, it is not a box, and there is an elevation/grade change of 2-1/2' as well, so the East bath house is even lower when viewed from across Cottage Street
- Resident 3: Concerned cost is too high; as a voter, what alternative do I have?
 - Adam Dash: The UPBC cannot take a position or advocate; the Committee's role is to move forward with Board of Selectmen's selection of Feasibility Study Option 1. If the vote for the project does not pass on 4/1/14, he does not know what happens with pool
 - Anne Paulsen: If the vote for the project does not pass on 4/1/14, the UPBC will go away, CPA money vote at 5/4/14 Town Meeting will be withdrawn
- Resident 4: Has an issue with appearance, particularly the appearance of the East bath house, the piece-i-ness of it. Concord Avenue is gateway to Concord Center; along it, the openness of the Underwood area, a large park with major trees. The existing oval pool appears to be a pond – as impractical as it is. Agrees with nothing blocking view from Concord Avenue, but not buying

buildings on Cottage Street; shanty appearance, breaking down of scale; building a public structure not appear to be temporary, high maintenance; promotes grouping building – too many buildings, too many fences, too many objects take away from park-like appearance

- Tom Scarlata: Size of buildings result of program/code requirements. Still have vistas. Fence around Underwood Pool site now, no change.
- Resident 5: Agree with Resident 2 and Resident 4
 1. Struggles with this or nothing; moving too fast, too many unanswered questions. What about intermediary step; do not need to move forward with this design.
 2. Zoning? He thinks does not agree there is a 25' setback to the East bath house (UPBC confirmed there is a 25' setback from curb line). Does not understand how the pool can be higher, what about the diving area?
 - Tom Scarlata: The majority of the pool is at a higher elevation, but the diving tank goes down lower. The pool will be properly designed to withstand the hydrostatic pressure of site; current pool is not. The pool deck is proposed slightly above existing culvert elevations.
 - Adam Dash: Charge from Board of Selectman is for the UPBC to trying to be proactive before the pool is lost; the old pool will eventually go away if something is not done. UPBC doesn't feel the process was too rushed; fairly simplistic project. UPBC answered all questions, understand that not everyone will be happy with the answers; it is now up to the voters.
- Resident 6: Thinks this is a fantastic design. Went to fall public input meetings, saw people responding and participating and she did as well. The functionality of the pool and the design are fabulous. Thinks views are preserved. Most of people in Belmont look out from their homes across the street at other houses that are 25' high. She is sympathetic to views changing – change is hard, but can be good. Her views changed when the Wellington School was built. She did not get everything she wanted, but she could not be happier with the end result; collective view of committee and professionals could not have been better. Need to understand collective voice and not just individual voice. The pool is being designed to work for whole town. She hopes voters see the value in this project.
- Resident 7: In general, likes the pool design, but bothered by 2 bath houses; makes sense to combine into one on the west side - save money, less impact, at a distance from neighbors. Needs UPBC to justify their decision not to do this.
 - Adam Dash: Wetlands buffer is on the West side; it has been recommended that new construction in that area be no bigger than what is there now. Trying to do no harm, not cause environmental issues, not impact Wellington Brook or watershed. This is not a decision the UPBC entered into lightly.
 - Tom Scarlata: Met with Conservation agent. Existing bathhouse, existing paving, existing pool are within wetlands setback. Encouraged to keep new construction as close to existing size as possible; if not, will require other amenities, which cost money.
- Resident 8:
 1. How is pool membership determined – family or individual?
 2. Why is 648 swimmers become design criteria? Numbers could work differently.
 3. Why is UPBC not advocating for the project?
 4. Town project – can get variances from town. Scare tactic to say pool won't open.
 5. Unfair to present only option.
 - Membership is per family, not per individual

- Adam Dash: The proposed pool is smaller than the existing; the design criteria referenced by the Resident is a code requirement used to determine plumbing fixtures
- Tom Scarlata: Plumbing and health code fixture requirements based on bather load of pool; bather load determined by water surface square footage, does not represent actual numbers of swimmers
- Adam Dash: The UPBC and team has verified; size of water surface dictates number of fixtures
- Anne Paulsen: We have not made a mistake; speaker is leaving impression UPBC made a mistake.
- Adam Dash: Committee not allowed to advocate for project. The team has checked the numbers, they are not wrong. It is not a "scare tactic" to suggest that the pool might not be able to open if a new pool project is not moving forward; Town Board of Health said they would shut it down.
- Resident 9:
 1. Observation that there is far-reaching support for this project; it is a true Community project. Has reached all areas of town, there is a tremendous amount of support
 2. Appreciates the process this Committee has allowed the Community to be a part of. Appreciate that a true Community pool is being designed. The design piece is always part of debate.
 3. Appreciate trying to get something done in this Town in a timely manner. Everyone has a vote, everyone has the same opportunity.
- Resident 10/neighbor across street from proposed East bath house (husband): Resident 10 handed out a sheet with calculations he figured out to public hearing participants. Believes the required square footage of the proposed new bath houses on both east and west sides can fit into existing bath house footprint. This would reduce tax payer money, save views, make Cottage Street residents happy, have a chance of voters approving.
 - Adam Dash: It is not just the square footage/size of the bath house, it is how you use it; requirements will not fit in existing footprint. This project is going through the typical Town process – the Community was not given choices on design of Wellington School or the Fire House to vote on. The UPBC is not trying to sell anything; this is an informational session; Committee members are taxpayers as well, and have thought about cost with every design decision that has been made.
- Resident 11: Thanked the UPBC for the time and effort put into this project. Thinks it is a great design. Wants safe pool for her family to use. Appreciates attention to restrooms - accessible from outside, family changing, separate. Now is the time to moving forward, before was the time for public input.
- Resident 12:
 1. Commended the Committee, thinks they have done a wonderful job. He helped with the Joey Park project, and noted that Ellen Schreiber was a great part of that project. What is reflected in design is appropriate.
 2. There are constraints – code, site, community feedback. The design he sees is in response to feedback from people who attended meetings, filled in surveys, made comments; there was absolutely an effort to solicit feedback. The design is not based on Committee's personal preferences. Cost was a consideration. Everyone would acknowledge preference for a \$4.5M project, but appropriate decision has been made to move forward with \$5.2M project;

mandate is not to build cheapest pool, he is not interested in cheapest pool. Difference to the taxpayer of average single family home is \$42 to \$48.

- Resident 13:
 1. If don't build pool, does the Town have to give land back?
 2. What is the useful life of a new pool?
 3. Thinks pool is appropriately financed; CPA funds designed for projects just like this. Good way to finance it. His estimate – Belmont in \$1.5B on its operation, this is reasonable in that context
 - Peter Castanino: No, the land is deeded to the Town.
 - Anne Paulsen: If pool project is not approved on 4/1/14, Town would probably try to get a waiver for the 2014 season. Understanding last season was for a 1-year variance and would have to ask again. UPBC has been working on the assumption that if a new pool project was in process, the likelihood to get a variance for another year would be good. But not sure what will happen if there is no project in process. If cannot use pool, cannot leave it as attractive nuisance. Then would need to dismantle/demolish it and would be a cost to Town budget.
 - Tom Scarlata: With proper maintenance, the life of a pool should be 50 years if not more.
- Resident 14: Really happy to see the pool design and get information. Thanked Committee for the time they put in, appreciates that they took advice from all of the community. Zero entry great for children; Cottage Street bath house is a good solution for the flow of pool operations.

10. Adam Dash noted the time as 9:30 p.m., which is when the UPBC said we would finish. He urged residents to vote, whether for or against the project.

Next Meeting Date:

- Thursday, April 3, 2014 @ 7:30 p.m.: UPBC meeting

Upcoming Milestones:

- March 26, 2014: Warrant Committee votes on approval of CPA funds
- Tuesday, April 1, 2014: Town Election Day / Debt Exclusion Vote
- April 2014 (date TBD): Traffic Advisory Committee Meeting Monday, May 5, 2014: Town Meeting

Attachments:

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