

Minutes

SACRED HEART REUSE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, April 2, 2008

The Sacred Heart Reuse Committee ("SHRC") held its third meeting on April 2, 2008 at 7:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Members present were: Stephen Carter, John Davis, Rita Fontes, Ed Keenan, Alan Wachman and Irene McCarthy.

The Committee approved the March 19, 2008 meeting Minutes.

Town Manager Benjamin Puritz and Selectman Richard Powell provided the Committee with insight regarding, among other things (1) the anticipated SHRC review process; (2) potential community needs; (3) prior inquiries regarding the site; and (4) site restrictions.

- **Process** – Mr. Powell and Mr. Puritz recommended the SHRC reach out to the community as much as possible. April at the Engineering Dep't can provide us with a list of abutters within a certain radius of the site (e.g., 500') for future mailings, and the Board of Selectmen can fund the mailings from the BOS budget. One or more community meetings (employing, perhaps, a charrette collaborative planning process) may be instrumental. Several town agencies/committees have expressed an interest in meeting with the SHRC, including the Sharon Housing Authority and the Library Board of Trustees. The SHRC should also solicit private input from local groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Community. Possible funding sources for future studies include the Community Preservation Committee and the Open Space Recreation and Planning Committee. A listserv site of initiatives may reveal models or examples of other successful public/private partnerships. The SHRC intends to conduct a site visit.
- **Community Needs** – Mr. Powell and Mr. Puritz identified several community "needs," but encouraged the SHRC to conduct its own investigation and come to its own conclusions. The Selectmen have no pre-conceived notions; the SHRC should pursue whatever ideas the Committee considers worth pursuing. Still, recreational facilities are always in need within the Town. Possibilities include a fitness/tennis center, wellness/physical therapy center, swimming pool, athletic field(s), field house (which could also be used as a site for large public meetings) or gymnasium. (The future need for athletic fields may depend somewhat on the capping of the landfill.) Along those lines, youth sports groups are sometimes capable of raising monies to help fund, maintain or operate athletic facilities. Another potential need includes housing, particularly diversified housing opportunities for the elderly, including small-to-moderate units. Also, the library and Town Hall are undersized and

outdated. Finally, the Police and Fire Departments may be in need of a combined modern public safety facility sometime in the future. Grants may be available if the planned facility (whatever it should be) is “green” – i.e., environmentally-friendly. Funding for additional housing is more likely to be available than funding for a recreational facility.

- **Prior Inquiries** – The Board of Selectmen received a “soft” inquiry from B’nai B’rith regarding potential use of the site as a school, but nothing formal. The Charms Collaborative (a regional educational collaborative in Stoughton) also showed interest in the site at one time. In the 1980s, the Town explored two proposed uses for the site, one involving the construction of 21 luxury age-limited condominiums. The condo proposal required a two-thirds vote of Town Meeting. But after a groundwater assessment conducted by Haley & Aldrich raised the specter of potential harm to Lake Massapog, the proposal got “only” 64% of the Town Meeting vote and, accordingly, failed to pass. Three years ago, the Town received a bid of \$250,000 to demolish the remaining structure. Capital funds, however, cannot be used to pay for the demolition.
- **Restrictions** – Parcel N is restricted to recreational uses, consistent with the grant monies used to purchase it. Mr. Powell and Mr. Puritz recommended the SHRC contact Town Counsel to confirm the details.

Prior to our next meeting, Ed Keenan will contact Michael Baskin, Stephen Carter will contact Eli Hauser, John Davis will contact Town Counsel, and Irene McCarthy will contact April at the Engineering Dep’t.

The SHRC adjourned at approximately 9:10 p.m.