

Coolidge School Working Group
Meeting Minutes, 4 pm Wednesday, Feb. 6, 2019
Finance Meeting Room, Town Hall, Maynard, MA

Committee Members Present:

Linde Ghere - chair

Vicki Brown Stevens

Donna Dodson

Sarah Donnelly

I. Minutes - Minutes from both the January 9 and January 24, 2019, meetings were approved.

II. Opening Comments

Feb. 5, 2019, Board of Selectmen Presentation – We all complimented Linde on her power point presentation to the Board of Selectmen (BOS). We noted that BOS members received Linde’s outline of our progress well and seemed satisfied in our direction. Linde said she thinks the BOS feels the same as we do – it doesn’t appear the town can keep Coolidge for any wished-for town use such as a community center or senior center. Donna noted that the Coolidge did not make the cut for a possible community center in the 2012 Maynard Community Life Committee report. We agreed that the BOS appreciates that the Coolidge is moving forward.

RFP – Linde said we will later formally ask the BOS to extend our charter so we may write an RFP. She said she will be meeting with Town Administrator Greg Johnson about our process.

Affordable Housing Trust – Donna said she talked to Rick Lefferts on the Trust board about whether the Trust should handle Coolidge. He felt there is no reason to alter course since Coolidge is on track and doing well moving forward with our group.

Green Meadow School – But, now that Green Meadow has closed a wing and may be facing new construction, could the Coolidge building somehow fill a need there? Vicki wondered. Maybe the Coolidge could be used for the preschool? Although school officials have nixed this idea previously, some of us thought it should be considered again before the Coolidge is out of town hands.

III. Zoning Information Meeting – Linde reported on her meeting earlier on Feb. 6 with Maynard Town Planner Bill Nemser, Building Commissioner Rick Asmann and Conservation Agent/Assistant Town Planner Kaitlyn Young. They talked about the following methods for facilitating future multi-family housing or educational uses of the Coolidge building. The ideas that Bill, Rick and Kaitlyn shared are listed in order by their preference. We shared our reasoning/ thoughts about each idea. Those CSWG thoughts are listed in italics below each idea.

- 1) Rather than creating an ANR lot, deed the entire playground area over to the new owner of the Coolidge building. The dimensional requirements will then be met. The town would require the owner to provide an easement in perpetuity so that the town still has use of the park land.

Reasons Bill, Rick and Kaitlyn prefer this option: No town vote required, easements have been successfully used with town residents and businesses to allow for the bike path, and avoids the perception of spot zoning.

Reasons CSWG does not prefer this option: Town residents deserve the option with highest degree of transparent communication. Because park land is in such short supply in this highly dense part of town, residents have no desire to give away park land. Therefore, an easement in perpetuity has a low likelihood of passing at town meeting. We fear future legal messiness with easements in perpetuity. Still need to go to town meeting for approval of sale of town land and they will ask about this.

- 2) The town approaches the Planning Board and asks for approval of ANR lot, then goes to ZBA with a variance request on the dimensional requirements.

Reasons cited in favor of this: Variance does not require town vote, avoids the perception of spot zoning

Reasons CSWG does not prefer this option: Town residents deserve the option with highest transparent communication, still need to go to town meeting for the ANR lot approval anyway, high bar for ZBA approval and the variance may or may not get approved.

- 3) Create an ANR lot. Request zoning change to the dimensional requirements and the use requirements needed to both preserve the historical building under new ownership AND leave the entire park (including the sledding hill, hill slide, basketball court, playground, and butterfly garden) under town ownership. Residents vote on this at town meeting.

Reasons CSWG is in favor of this option: Transparent communication with town voters – avoids perception of making changes behind the scenes; in the overall best historical, recreational, and cultural/social interests of the town

Reasons Bill, Rick and Kaitlyn don't prefer this option: May be perceived by AG as spot zoning, abutters may complain, residents may vote it down at town meeting, How will this rezoning impact other buildings that are located in General Residential districts? (i.e. How to avoid unintended consequences or loopholes?)

Other ideas brainstormed:

- Do not make zoning changes now. Instead, include in the RFP that the sale is contingent upon the town obtaining the needed zoning changes.
- Create an ANR lot, sell to a new owner, and have the new owner apply for zoning variances.

A joint meeting with Bill, Rick and Kaitlyn was then suggested for 2/13/19 at 11 am at Town Hall. Linde will post the meeting publicly so that the public can attend and also since the CSWG will have a quorum.

IV. Public Meeting Plans – Linde suggested up to three public meetings, all at different times of the day and week, may be in order to get out the word and receive input from the community. She said she will look into when the Roosevelt Room is free at the library.

V. Next Meeting – Feb. 27, 2019, 4 p.m. Town Hall.

VI. Adjournment – At about 5:35

Respectfully, submitted,
Vicki Brown Stevens