

NY Forward – Capital Region - Cambridge

Subject	MEETING SUMMARY LPC Meeting #4	Date	Tuesday, September 26, 2023
Place	Village Offices, 56 N Park St	Time	5:30-7:30pm
In Attendance	<u>Local Planning Committee</u> Carman Bogle, Mayor, Co-Chair Linda MacFarlane, Co-Chair Christina Becker Chris Crucetti Sue Preece Kathleen Quinn <i>Renee Bouplon (absent)</i> Alane Ball Chinian James Sweeney <i>Laura Oswald (absent)</i> Connie Brooks Chris Callahan	<u>State Team</u> Matthew Smith, NY DOS <u>Consultant Team</u> Ian Nicholson, Buro Happold Laura Lourenco, EDR <u>Public</u> Sarah Ashton Donna Wyanbrandt	

Meeting Summary:

Please see "CB_LPC Meeting 4_Slides_record" for the presentation shared during the meeting, which parallels the discussion summarized below.

Action items are called out in **bold-italic highlight**.

Opening Remarks

Mayor Bogle delivers brief opening remarks.

The public website (www.CambridgeNYF.com) and email address for comments and questions (CambridgeNYF@gmail.com) is shared.

The Agenda for the meeting is reviewed briefly.

Code of Conduct

Code of Conduct preamble is reviewed. Recusals on file are noted and LPC is invited to submit any further necessary recusal forms.

Updates: Planning Process & Engagement Activities

Review of what's been done so far, and what is on the horizon. (see slides)

Overview provided of Ice Cream Social local outreach activity held on 9/16 and the second Public Workshop held on 9/19, both of which focused on the submitted projects.

- Review of agenda, format, and participants.
- Overview of comments revealed particular public interest in the old firehouse, old school, owl kill stream naturalization, and the library expansion. Conversely, there were 4 projects that received only 3 responses.

Submitted Projects

Review of agreed downtown vision and the evaluation criteria table that includes local goals, program goals, and effectiveness criteria.

Overview of projects provided, with summary analysis as well as tabular presentation of evaluation results.

Discussion of each project in turn, which included LPC evaluation results by criteria as well as LPC comments, public comments, and summary of updates provided by Sponsor.

A. Old Firehouse

- a. Question about whether a community/commercial kitchen is needed both here AND at the food co-op – general agreement that co-op is better suited to manage institutionally – also concern about whether County would allow kitchen here without septic upgrades, which is on non-Village land.
- b. Observation that this property had been intended to go for auction – benefit of this would be putting it back on the tax rolls – Village has appraisal done which came in around \$250k, but concerned about who would pay that much for an unusual building with known structural issues.
 - i. Suggestion to use this NYF project as a means to rehab the building into serviceable shape, use it as a community facility – at least for the time period required by the State contract – and then a future auction has much higher likelihood of success with a functional building, should that course of action still be desired.

B. Owlkill Trail

- a. No comments.

C. Varak Park

- a. Parking improvements at \$40k seem high.
- b. The 2 naturalization options have different costs – but choosing the right option is dependent on a multi-party scientific process – have to do what's right for the creek. Sponsor firmly states that naturalizing the creek is the priority of this project, and is happy to dial back other scope as needed – although the electrical outlets are number 2, very needed.

D. Lumberyard

- a. Discussion about the proposed parking lot:
 - i. Suggestion to look at parking holistically across downtown area – could this area be better used?
 - ii. Some members like having multiple, small, distributed parking areas and don't mind what's shown in the proposal.
 - iii. Observation that the adjacent businesses will all appreciate the parking, for customers and employees.

- iv. Observation that parking along Pearl St in Project (C) would be considered on-street, and not viable during winter months.
- E. Community Kitchen at the Co-Op
 - a. New designs increase the floor area to 600 s.f.
 - b. Would not reduce existing parking, except maybe 1 spot.
 - c. Observed that the co-op is one of the only businesses open regular consistent hours downtown – increasing their prepared food offerings would address an acute need.
 - d. Discussion about budget, which is in flux:
 - i. Septic may be able to be pulled out of the project – existing was investigated and tentatively declared adequate.
 - ii. Heat pump scope may also be reduced with new design, which allows 1 heat pump to remain in place.
- F. Library Building Additions
 - a. Committee very supportive of both phases of the project.
 - b. Proposal to separate the 2 phases into 2 distinct, to increase the chances that at least 1 scores well with the State and gets funded – all agree – Sponsor confirms that 2 phases are totally independent of one another and can be executed in any order.
 - c. Sponsor also willing to bring down grant request to help spread dollars around.
- G. Gazebo
 - a. It is pointed out that the grant request is quite small, even though LPC evaluation results are highly favorable. Therefore suggested that Sponsor be fully informed of administrative burden accepting NYF grant money directly, and give them the option of whether to proceed.
 - b. Believed that Sponsor will be able to find a way to fund this regardless.
- H. Memorial Drive Green Space
 - a. Observed again that this project is not currently feasible for a number of reasons, most notably lack of site control.
 - b. Observed that this project received some of the most intense interest from the public engagement events, and that the overall concept is broadly supported.
 - c. Agreed to include this project in the SIP as a project warranting further study, but not recommended for funding.
- I. Varak Building Rehabilitation
 - a. Overall grant request is too high, too large a portion of total available – also would like to see more match.
 - b. Would like to confirm from Sponsor that the proposed improvements will lead to a more active tenant base – many tenants currently use upper floor space as storage, which could be better utilized as offices, makerspaces, or artist studios/galleries.
- J. Rice Mansion Rehabilitation
 - a. Committee appreciates sustainability improvements of moving this structure from coal (!) to geothermal, but must balance this against primary grant objective of economic development and consider the large line item that the new system adds to the budget. *[Sponsor later confirmed that building is heated with oil, not coal.]*
 - b. Discussion of the house museum idea and whether that will draw appreciable new tourism – committee is uncertain but hopeful.
 - c. Idea proposed to move the historical society into the Rice Mansion as part of the project
 - i. Observed that the historical society's current facility is a modestly sized Victorian house nearby, not big enough for some of the gatherings that they hold.
 - ii. Observed that converting the Rice Mansion to a house museum would permanently remove the biggest property in the Village from the tax rolls.
 - iii. If the use of the building was diversified/densified with the historical society, that would promote more activity on Main St while also releasing their current facility back into the private housing market, mitigating the tax impacts.

- d. Property has challenges with marketability, uses, hard to sell, running out of options:
 - i. it burns [oil], regulatory barriers to B & B in house – no centralized wastewater system - Pivot to diversified uses might be necessary to save the property
 - ii. Some improvements would have a long-term benefit for the property – e.g. geothermal has long-term benefit, but maybe too much / inappropriate as NYF expense? Other sources of green money coming out
 - iii. Façade improvements would be helpful – esp if doing 18 Main
- e. iconic property, important to our history Prime central location, underused.
- f. Does this have a large enough impact?
 - i. Some questions because has been a private property/residence in recent years, what would be the public / economic impact?
 - ii. Need more clarity on proposal, maybe help them focus their ask?
 - iii. Would be a house museum on JB Rice be successful? Could increase visitation, not the easiest thing to do...
- K. Hubbard Hall Flex Office
 - a. Project noted as ineligible and withdrawn.
- L. Hubbard Hall Public Artwork
 - a. Some confusion over whether artists have already been chosen – not clear.
- M. Hubbard Hall Yellow Brick Road
 - a. Discussion of all 3 Hubbard Hall proposals and whether any of them warrant moving the NYF boundary (this property is currently outside the boundary) – committee confirmed that boundary will remain as-is and these projects deemed ineligible.
 - i. Sensitivity about the volume of public funding previously received by the Sponsor.
 - ii. Confidence that Sponsor will be able to pursue the proposed improvements via other means.
- N. Re-build 18 W Main St
 - a. Excitement that this building will be returned to productive use, and that it will add to the housing stock and tax base.
 - b. Question if budget is realistic, it seems low – but observed that the Sponsor is himself a contractor, so numbers should be accurate. State/consultant team will verify in course of project development.

Project Evaluation

Project summaries presented that lay out all the projects in tabular format with “traffic light” scoring against each criteria category: local goals, program goals, and project effectiveness. Projects are organized into “tiers,” with those projects receiving 2 or more green lights in Tier 1, those projects receiving 2 or more red lights in Tier 3, and others in Tier 2.

Committee discusses which projects can be dropped from consideration. All agree to drop Hubbard Hall projects and the old school project.

Committee agrees to continue developing all the remaining projects. See comments by project above.

Discussed whether to include a Small Projects Fund – Committee agrees that this is not necessary in Cambridge, limited need demonstrated through the Open Call.

Consultant team will organize further outreach and coordination with sponsors to further develop the projects for a final vote at the 5th meeting.

Public Comment

NYF is about spreading the wealth (should see if sponsors can reduce some asks to fund more).

Will the State help NYF project sponsors leverage additional complementary funds like ReStore NY?

END OF SUMMARY