

CITY OF  
DOVER

## COCHECHO WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE - MINUTES

Meeting Type:	Regular Meeting & Public Hearing
Meeting Location:	Council Chambers - 288 Central Avenue, Dover, NH 03820
Meeting Date:	Wednesday, November 9, 2006
Meeting Time:	7:00 PM

**Present:** Jack Mettee, Earle Goodwin, Frank Torr, Norm Fracassa, Steve Brewer, Brian Gottlob, Arte Corte, Dave Bamford, Joyce El Kouarti, Wendy Scribner

**Absent:** Dean Trefethen, Jim Schulte, Pete Hamblett

**Others:** Jack Buckley, Steve Stancel, Scott Myers, Beth Thompson, Barry Abramson

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm

### 1. Introduction

Jack Mettee welcomed everyone to the Public Hearing.

### 2. Comments by Chairman

Jack Mettee gave an overview of the history of the efforts to redevelop the waterfront. He discussed the various efforts over the years that have occurred with the same mission.

The various studies and plans were mentioned and the fact that they all discussed providing pedestrian and vehicular access to the downtown from the riverfront site. These studies made it clear that redevelopment of the riverfront site would not be isolated development but would have to be integrated to the rest of the downtown.

The current committee and its history was discussed. It was explained that the CWDAC was a committee originally organized by the City Council. In 2004 it was transferred to the Dover Housing Authority. Over the years, the committee has done a tremendous amount of research. They has brought in a variety of experts from many fields, they revised the Charrette, and issued and Request for Qualifications (EFQ) and subsequently issued a Request for Proposals (RFP). It was based on this process that the committee made its selection of Dickinson Development of Quincy, Massachusetts as the preferred developer.

The existing market studies, both those done for the City and by the developer itself, show that this property will be best used as a mixed-use development with offices, retail, residential, and open space.

The current Dickinson proposal is, by and large, consistent with the Charrette. There is still a lot of tweaking that needs to occur before there is a final plan that would be accepted.

Jack Mettee made it clear that this is to occur without any cost to the City other than what has already been done or is committed. The developer is proposing to pay the City an acquisition fee and fund public improvements. The City can expect to receive approximately \$1 million in revenue annually from the build out of this project.

### 3. Presentation of Waterfront Concept by Dickinson Development Corporation

Mark Dickinson introduced himself and his team. Ed Shaw is the head of construction and engineering for Dickinson. Gary Gardner is a principal with Shesky Architects, the designer



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of the project. They currently have 5,000 multi-family units under construction or in permitting.

Mark Dickinson explained that he has been in business since 1980 and has developed more than three million square feet in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Florida.

The original proposal was discussed with Mr. Dickinson explaining areas that did not fit in with Dover's Charrette or vision. That original plan had the feel of a gated community and there was not enough open space provided. The team took this observation and impressions to heart and has since submitted a revised plan that he hopes is more responsive to, more accessible, more inviting and more user friendly.

Prior to this meeting, he and his team met with the Open Space subcommittee of the CWDAC to design the open space. It should ultimately extend the streetscape of downtown Dover.

Mr. Dickinson went over the proposed plan and showed where the proposed uses would be sited. He showed the center boulevard between the residential units that would have a 40' strip of open space down the middle of the road. He explained that the various buildings on the site would have different building styles and types. There are 184 residential units proposed.

#### **4. Comments by City Consultant, Barry Abramson, Abrams & Associates, Inc.**

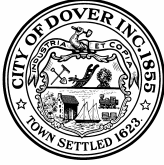
Barry Abramson, consultant for the CWDAC, was introduced. He discussed his credentials, explaining that he has been involved in many similar projects across the country. He will review the various elements of a project to see if it is meeting a community's objectives and is the project based in reality. There is a need to reach a balance on these issues.

He explained that the Charrette ideas need to be tested in the market. This is a competitive process. Dickinson is willing and able to do a mixed-use project. This is a company that does commercial projects. They have presented a proposal that has the most commercial space that will be marketable for this site.

Mr. Abramson feels that there is an optimum balance. The proposal shows an anchor restaurant with parking creating a vibrant node of commercial use. Dickinson is doing what the market will support. He did stress that this proposal can certainly be tweaked. He encouraged Dickinson to talk to local retailers.

Mr. Abramson also feels that their proposal is financially strong. Between what they have offered to pay for the land, the improvements they will make to the land, and the environmental remediation they will undertake, Dickinson is proposing to spend \$5 million which comes out to \$300,000 per acre. There is no fat to squeeze out of it... In the end, this is a strong proposal.

He is being conservative on the tax benefits, stating that Dover could receive more than \$1 million annually in tax revenue. Dickinson has a strong up front commitment to the project. Based on conservative phasing, Dover could receive \$10 million in the first 10 years and \$24 million over a 20 year period.



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Mr. Abramson further discussed that this development will encourage development in other areas of the town and generate additional tax revenue that hasn't been quantified. Much of this development will be infill development in the downtown.

The development will attract new people that will support the other downtown businesses. Mr. Abramson feels the proposal is a reasonable balance. He sees this as a good project by responsible developer who has been responsive to the community.

### 5. Public Comment & Questions

The floor was opened to the public for comments and questions.

Wes Tator, Dover resident and commercial real estate broker, thought the presentations was impressive. He appreciates the work of the committee. He encouraged the process to keep going as he feels it is headed in the right direction.

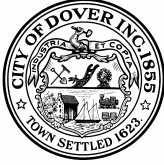
Suzanne Medbury asked Mr. Abramson if this project is feasible and is it achievable in Dover now or in the next five years. Is the \$265 per square foot development cost achievable? Mr. Abramson responded that he feels this price is in a reasonable range.

Bob Hassold from Portsmouth said this looks like an interesting project. He wondered if this would be a small village that would support the retail. He hopes this goes through.

Tony McManus appreciated that the developer responded to our concerns. He didn't appreciate that it doesn't fully utilize the waterfront. He also doesn't like the parking along the river. He spoke about Portland, Maine, and felt the CWDAC should talk to them. He doesn't think there is enough retail. If there isn't more retail it will end up being a condo project. He felt that the committee should talk to other towns with successful waterfront projects and find out why they are successful.

John Leggett asked about the cost of maintenance for this project. He also wondered if the market study was available. He is concerned with the 184 residential units and what effect that would have on the rest of the community. Barry Abramson responded that Dickinson has proposed paying the City \$2 million and up to \$500,000 for environmental remediation. The rest would be in kind expenses. He added that the cost-benefit analysis is not explicitly done in present value analysis. He stressed that the important point is what on the City side of the ledger. The preliminary analysis is that it would cost between \$20,000 and \$25,000 to maintain the property.

Steven Viel, Chairman of the Greater Dover Chamber of Commerce, asked where the hotel or marina is that are shown on the Charrette. Mark Dickinson responded that a better site for a hotel would be the Allis property on the other side of the river along Washington Street. He also said that his proposal shows boat slips by the bend in the river and these would be public slips. He is not proposing a marina although there is still the possibility that one could occur on the part of the project he is not planning on developing.



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Carly Stephenson expressed concern that the development would lead to gentrification which would drive people out of Dover. Mr. Abramson responded that any time you do something like this there is concern on the effect. This project would not displace any existing residential units. It will add to the vibrancy of Dover. This is the same thing that will happen when the Children's Museum comes to Dover.

Parks Christenbury said he is disappointed in this proposal. It doesn't resemble the Charrette. It is basically residential. He feels we need to bring this back to developers from Dover. He doesn't see any benefit for the people of Dover.

Karen Weston suggested that the \$500,000 set aside to clean up the environmental issues will turn out to become something comparable to the Tolend Road cleanup. If the developer's costs exceed that \$500,000 what will happen? She also didn't like that only canoes and kayaks would be able to use the docks. Mark Dickinson clarified that there are transient slips and there is still the possibility of a marina further up the site. Ed Shaw mentioned that they have hired GZA, the same firm the City used to do their environmental assessment, and that is where the \$500,000 figure is coming from. He also said that they will still do their due diligence to make sure they know this number is valid.

Ed Bleiler said that this is Dover's second superfund site and that there are hides leaching from the site. He brought up several issues. The first is the smell that's down there. Secondly, who is paying to remove the hides? Third, the City is building a bridge to nowhere. Mark Dickinson responded that they have a baseline of knowledge about the site from the GZA report and that they will be spending money doing their due diligence to learn more about the site. The information he has learned thus far does not indicate the site is as bad as Mr. Bleiler has said. Mr. Dickinson then said that the City would have to eliminate the odor no matter what happens on the site.

Councilor Catherine Cheney wants the committee to look outside the box. This proposal is just one option. It is not an original concept. Everyone needs to take a breath and get more quotes from developers. She knows that the citizens of Dover don't want this particular development and she feels we would be giving away something that's belongs to us.

Art Erickson asked numerous questions: what is legal status of the property is, who maintains it if the developer fails? Who would be responsible for marina? Who would own a parking garage? What is the e coli count of the river? He feels there is a decline in commerce along Central Avenue. He wanted to know if this will become a walking city and will there be sidewalks on the new bridge. He doesn't think the 120' park along the river is wide enough for fields. What will happen in the park at night? Does the park slope down to the river? He feels it is wiser to settle for a green park and a marina. Jack Mettee discussed the amount of open space currently available in our downtown including Henry Law Park, Maglaras Park, and the NH Fish and Game land beyond that.

Glenn Grasso feels that Dover should put another bridge across the Cochecho over to Cochecho Street. He mentioned Portsmouth and Newburyport, Massachusetts. Regarding the issue about e coli he said that anytime you add boats, you add to the e coli in the river.



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He discussed the gentrification issue. He doesn't think this plan is perfect but it is far better than what is there now.

John Scruton said we need a park without condos. He would like to make this an automobile free zone and a working waterfront.

Another speaker said that it takes money to maintain parks. Dover needs to put up buildings to get some revenue to pay for the park maintenance.

Kirt Shuman said that while this plan is not exactly what the Charrette showed, it is reasonable financially. He said a committee has been formed to work with the developer to craft this site as best as it can be. He has confidence in the people on this committee. This will be a huge benefit to the City. He also mentioned that there have been more than 200 newspaper articles in 2005 and 2006 in Foster's Daily Democrat about the waterfront.

Councilor David Scott asked if the developer would require any bonds. The answer was that they did not. He then asked if the bank financing this project would be at risk because of the environmentalists of the site. He felt that this is a flawed process as there was only one bidder. There is inadequate benefit analysis. He feels this needs to slow down.

Rick Heberd said the people of Dover should decide if this should move forward.

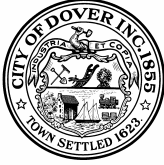
Thom Hindle said there is not much retail in Dover and not much on the waterfront. We need to bring retail and tourists. We need to keep people in Dover. This project is an opportunity to make Dover unique and put us on the map. People won't come to Dover to play in our park. He would like to see the buildings moved closer to the river. Look at the total picture. Rely on the Chamber, Main Street, and the Economic Development Department. He wants to make this a truly unique project. He is challenging the team to create something unique.

Cathy Forbes is concerned with the volume of residential that is cutting off the retail. What is the balance? We would not be harming ourselves by making this a park.

Joyce El Kouarti, CWDAC, shares many of the concerns expressed. She feels the developer has been very responsive and she wants to finish the process. She invites anyone who is interested to join the various committees that are working on this project.

Sharon Reynolds is concerned about gentrification as well. There should be a wide array of housing costs and ages. She wants to help. She said that anyone who has concerns should participate.

Ray Bardwell said he wants more informational meetings to get feedback from the community. He wants to see the buildings right up along the river. He wants to see a lot of little shops to draw people to the site. He said we need to move forward and let the people be part of the choice.



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Mary Heberd said that the statement that this is not costing the City any more money than has been committed is misleading. No matter what you do it costs money. She wants this put on the ballot.

Al Lobdell wanted to know who would make the final approval on the project. He likes the park theme.

Aaron Wensley has heard many different ideas. He feels that the idea of putting this on the ballot if the worst idea in the world. Only a few people know what is going on and the rest of them really don't care.

Kevin McEneaney said he has heard a lot of misinformation. He would like to thank the committee. They have done a tremendous amount of work. He would also like to thank the Dickinson team who has also spent a tremendous amount of time and money so far. He said this is a market driven process. He talked about what it costs to maintain a park and that there is a tremendous amount of open space in the downtown. He wants to make this a unique place. Retail is a tough sell but the residential component will support it.

Jack Mettee thanked everyone for attending and speaking. He encouraged people to participate by working on the various subcommittees. He said there is clearly a wide variety of ideas about what to do with the parcel. He didn't want anyone to forget the fact that the members of the CWDAC are citizens of Dover and they were given the charge to come up

### **6. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm.