

**Symmes Advisory Committee Public Use Working Group
Meeting Minutes, 4 September 2001, 7 PM - 9 PM, Jefferson Cutter House**

Attending: Harris Band, Greg Blass, Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Charlie Foskett (SAC Chair), Steve Frigand, Ellen Kushner, Ann LeRoy, Suzi Lubar, Linda Privitera (Vice Chair), Brian Rehrig (Chair), Myra Schwartz, Sue Sheffler, Denis Sullivan

Not Attending: Jim Marzilli

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 PM.

Introductions & Overview of Agenda

All those attending introduced themselves and Brian Rehrig presented the Agenda.

Review of Acquisition Effort & Formation of Symmes Advisory Committee

Brian Rehrig gave an overview of the recent developments leading up to the formation of the Symmes Advisory Committee (SAC) Working Groups. Background information included the announcement in January of Lahey Health South's intention to sell the property, the Debt Exclusion referendum in March, the creation of the SAC in June and the ongoing status of negotiations between the Town and Lahey to purchase the property.

Brian explained that the purpose of the SAC was twofold. The initial purpose is to create a credible plan for presentation to Town Meeting (probably in November) when a purchase and sales agreement has been reached. The second purpose is to guide the process of developing the plan if the purchase is approved.

Participants' Interests and Priorities

All those attending voiced their reasons for wanting to be a member of the Working Group and shared their ideas about what is important to them about the Symmes project.

The concerns voiced were as follows:

- balancing serving the Town's unmet needs with preserving the site's open space
- preserving open space while creating an affordable, sustainable development
- setting the right tone for future development in the Town
- concern over the self-supporting criterion for public use of property
- interest in the quality of life potential of the project
- giving teens, and adults, a place to hang out
- concern that current medical use cannot be self-supporting

The project ideas shared were as follows:

- community center with a pool and public gardens
- all-ages community medical center using a model from Williamsburg VA
- performing arts center
- athletic complex with public and commercial components

The Process: Public Input and the Role of the Working Group

Brian Rehrig presented the charge of the four subject-matter Working Groups (Commercial Use, Medical Use, Public Use & Residential Use), explaining that the goal is to involve as many people as possible and provide the Town with the best possible range of choices for the site. The Public Use Working Group, Brian explained, will also be expected to subsume open space uses and will be most challenged to make self-supporting proposals for the site.

Possible Resource and Funding Needs for Working Group

Brian conferred that the SAC will be expected to provide a process, rather than a product, to Town Meeting in November, but that credible financial modeling, schedules and exit strategies will be necessary. Each Working Group will be responsible for determining what would be required for them to fulfill their obligation and communicating this to the SAC (hiring consultants, engineers, facilitators, holding design

charrettes, etc.).

An open discussion of the process ensued with the following points being made:
a Facilitator could help the Working Group organize events and members
a nondiscriminatory survey could be conducted throughout Arlington
survey vehicles could be the Arlington Advocate, Town Day or a mailing
Vision 2020's survey may provide a great deal of information
someone with grant experience may be able to find alternative funding
there may be some residual funds held by the Symmes Corporation
statements of principle could provide a framework for the Working Group's work
presentation to Town Meeting could be a distillation of the Group's core values
attention to the property could inflate the purchase price
public events, such as charrettes, could wait until after the purchase
a facilitator run one-day public charrette should be planned
the project should be viewed in a regional, not simply Arlington, way
built public projects in surrounding communities could provide concrete examples
public uses can be supported by user fees and public/private lease arrangements

decisions should be made by determining the Town's unmet needs
the process should not be a popularity contest
complication and politics should be avoided in the process
quality of life for all ages should be considered
Robbins Farm & Water Tower are great view-intensive public use precedents
the community memory of being cared for should be preserved
the site can be thought of as a spiritual refuge
an emotive argument can be more persuasive than a financial argument
we should all guard against unreasonable expectations for the project
the Committee needs to build both awareness and excitement

There was agreement that the Working Group should begin constructing a list of statements of principle.
Harris Band volunteered to provide an e-mail clearinghouse for ideas on statements of principle for the Working Group.

Next Meeting

The next meeting was tentatively set for Monday 17 September 2001 at the Jefferson Cutter House at 7:30 PM, with an alternative date of Tuesday 18 September.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Handouts:

4 September Meeting Agenda
Arlington Board of Selectmen Official Policy Statement Symmes Property Debt Exclusion
Topographic Site Plan and Satellite Site Photo

Symmes Advisory Committee Update to Selectmen, 27 August 2001
Comments to the Symmes Advisory Committee by:
Vision 2020
Open Space Committee
Chamber of Commerce
Affordable Housing Task Force
Capital Planning Committee
Assisted Living Task Force
Process & Possibilities: Bringing New Value To Arlington (draft)
2001 Survey by Vision 2020