



Town of Carlisle

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MINUTES

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Minutes

June 6, 2005

Discussion of Benfield Parcel A Task Force recommendation for Town Meeting scheduled for June 8, 2005

Louise Hara called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Clark Room at Town Hall. Board members **David Freedman, Kent Gonzales, Ray Bahr, Michael Epstein** and **Peter Stuart** were present, Board member Rich Boulé was absent. PA George Mansfield and Planning Assistant Helen Boos were also absent. Freedman moved and Bahr seconded that Hara be designated provisional chair for the purpose of this meeting. The motion carried 6-0. Freedman agreed to take notes and prepare minutes.

Discussion of Benfield Parcel A Task Force recommendation for Town Meeting scheduled for June 8, 2005

John Ballantine, Allen Deary, Ray Kubacki, Alan Lehotsky and **Phyllis Zinicola** of the Benfield Parcel A Task Force were present. Ballantine presented Plan B showing two drawings, one showing the areas proposed in Plan B to be designated for housing and for the playing field in the upper portion of the parcel, the other showing potential layouts for the roadway, parking, 26 units of housing, and a playing field within the designated areas.

Ballantine explained that the Task Force had voted in favor of this plan, Plan B as opposed to Plan A because they felt that among other reasons, there were problems with siting the playing field along the road as it would have to be in Plan A. Freedman questioned the statement that the field in front would require 5-6 feet of fill to get the field level above wetlands. Deary stated that it was more a matter of cut and fill to level the field than to raise the overall field level.

There was considerable discussion about the Native American claims on the site. There was no definitive answer to PB questions about the likelihood that the claims would succeed in derailing the project. There was general agreement that it was hoped that a compromise could be reached to allow the siting of housing and the field within the proposed designated areas. It was agreed that regardless of whether Plan B was selected at Town Meeting or the default Plan A took effect, housing could theoretically be sited on the ledge near the top edge of the parcel. Bahr suggested that this made the Native American claims relatively irrelevant to the PB vote on Plan B vs. Plan A.

Deary pointed out that Plan B would allow for the field to go in the front by the road if for some reason the back field location didn't work out. In essence, Plan A could be seen as the default plan even if Plan B were approved, except that it would require a change in the deed to do anything other than a field within the area designated in the upper playing field. Such a deed change might be difficult, though the Task Force had not yet gotten a clear legal opinion as to what would be involved in such a deed change.

Freedman questioned whether safety and wetland issues affecting the size of the front field were as problematic in Plan A as had been stated. Deary explained that though he personally believed that the Cons Comm issues with the wetlands could be resolved allowing for a large enough field, he still believed the field in the back à la Plan B was safer, less likely to cause pick up & drop-off and resident coming & going traffic issues than the front field.

There was some discussion of whether Plan A or Plan B allowed more flexibility in case the town decided at some future date that it wanted to site more than 26 units on the Parcel. Ballantine explained that their task was to define areas for one athletic field and 26 units of housing.

Maureen Tarca of the Recreation Commission arrived at 8pm. **Ellen Huber** arrived at 8:10pm.

Tarca raised questions about the designation of the front field in the wording of the motion for Plan B. She suggested that it might be available for practice play, but not organized games. Kubacki explained that the Task Force still had to resolve this issue. He stated that neighbors wanted assurances that there would be no structures built in the front field, that it could remain open for casual play in the meadow only, but there would be nothing built like a tennis court or a skating rink. Deary said that the Recreation Commission had not yet discussed this issue and he did not expect that they would prior to Town Meeting this Wednesday. Deary and Tarca left the meeting.

Epstein suggested it would be useful to frame the argument clearly after all the discussion. He asked if Ballantine could state once more the advantages of Plan B and if Zinicola, who had voted for Plan A, could articulate what she felt were the advantages of Plan A.

Ballantine enumerated the advantages of Plan B: greater safety, less neighborhood impact, less wetland issues, flexibility on field location, integrated design, and flexibility of housing location in case the center of the parcel became unavailable. Zinicola, who had represented the Planning Board on the Task Force, listed the following in favor of Plan A: greater degree of flexibility with regard to housing needs and decisions in the future, probability of a smaller field which would have less impact on the site and was acceptable to the Rec Com, and overall flexibility if currently unknown problems arise during future planning and development on the site.

Deary returned to the meeting.

Freedman summarized his support for Plan B, stating that in essence he agreed with Ballantine that maintaining positive forward motion was critical. As chair of the Affordable Housing Plan Task Force, he said he was aware of how difficult any progress on housing would be. He said that defeat of Plan B, despite the Plan A fallback, might be perceived as a step backward. He also said that, though Plan A provided more potential area for housing, he felt the approximately 3-acre area where housing was shown on Plan B was sufficient for denser development if the town decided at some point to go that route.

Huber expressed concern that any mention at Town Meeting on Wednesday of denser housing than the 26 units agreed to by Town Meeting last year would help defeat the plan. Freedman agreed and said he did not intend to propose denser development at Town Meeting on Wednesday. He said this was a discussion for another day, once the town was grappling with the implementation of the Affordable Housing Plan. He felt this was fair, given that he was supporting Plan B even though it provided less area for housing than Plan A.

Stuart, in summarizing his support for Plan A, referred to concerns that abutters had expressed to him with regard to the field placement in the back in Plan B. He said his support was based on the much greater flexibility Plan A provided with regard to housing, the much smaller environmental impact of roadways and parking, and that it would probably result in a smaller field that was better for the neighborhood and the site. He felt that the town's huge investment in this land required a plan that allowed for the best use of the land now and in the future.

Hara thanked the Task Force for all their hard work over the past year, dealing with complex issues of critical importance to the town. She said the PB would state its support of Plan B at Town Meeting on Wednesday.

Freedman moved that **the Planning Board support Plan B, as indicated on the plan of land before it by Stamski & McNary, dated May 24, 2005.** Bahr seconded the motion. The motion passed 5 to 1.

At 9:15 p.m., the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

David Freedman