

Adams faces deadline, decision on renewal

(By Robert E. Lamb)

This is the first of five articles about Project Pleasant Park, the town's second urban renewal project which will come before the town meeting for action on Dec. 1.

DEC. 1 WILL BE "D" Day for Adams urban renewal.

One D is for deadline; another is for decision.

This year was the scheduled deadline for completion of five separate phases for urban renewal in town, according to what has since been described as the ambitious 1959 Master plan. In reality, it may be only the beginning as the town's 10.2-acre Project Progress was technically a "trial" phase of urban renewal.

However ironic that Master Plan prediction may have turned out, there's little irony in the deadline facing the Adams Redevelopment Authority and town meeting members in two weeks.

The town meeting decision on whether to proceed with the 47.2-acre second phase of downtown urban renewal will be made about one week short of the deadline and end of the maximum 18-month planning period permitted by the Federal Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD).

A STUDY of urban renewal in Adams during the 1960s reveals a persistent undercurrent of effort by many town officials to implement a central district phase. That goal, suggested by Technical Planning Associates of New Haven, Conn., in the 1959 Master Plan, appeared particularly attractive to many who urged a rebuilding plan for the town after the disastrous economic setback following closing of the textile mills in 1957.

The first Master Plan urged acceptance of the urban renewal program and said that going ahead with the center and Renfrew redevelopment

projects "will be a monumental step forward." It described the center project as the "largest and most important" and "calls for the clearance of a large area of mixed substandard housing and business."

But not until two years later, in March 1961, was any official action taken. At that time the Planning Board requested Selectmen to appoint a committee for investigation of urban renewal in Adams. In August, former Selectman A. Edward Godek proposed downtown renewal as the fourth of nine points in a broad program for redevelopment including such areas as schools, industry, sewerage and water, recreation and tourism. Mr. Godek, the former chairman of the Finance Committee, also predicted downtown urban renewal would be a "shot in the arm for Adams economy" and hoped it would be "a well-designed network of streets plus new buildings and more eye-pleasing and utilitarian store facades."

A federal official from the former Area Redevelopment Administration, visiting Adams in October, also recommended urban renewal, and a study committee was authorized at a special town meeting in the same month.

In late November, the Chamber of Commerce voted to cooperate with the Planning Board in promoting urban renewal and on Dec. 6, 1961, Atty. Walter J. Donovan, former town moderator, appointed the nine-man study committee.

IN MARCH 1962 town meeting members approved "without any questions" three articles declaring the local need for urban renewal, authorizing a redevelopment authority and appropriating \$2,000 for preliminary planning funds.

The now historical development of a "trial" tract of urban renewal was first

suggested in July of 1962 by the new authority's treasurer, Fredrick N. Boisvert. He said the town might "buy" the idea of a smaller chunk of urban renewal at first in order to get used to the idea which could be totally scrapped if put forth on a large scale.

The initial urban renewal study, including the entire central district phase, was completed in September but the authority adopted Mr. Boisvert's suggestion and voted in October to seek survey and planning funds for a seven-acre tract, one of three projected phases in the large business district bounded by Center, Park, Hoosac and Summer Streets.

With Planning Board endorsement of urban renewal as the town's "number one priority," the town meeting in March, 1963, authorized the seeking of a federal advance to finance the in-depth study of the center of town. That grant application was approved two days before Christmas in 1963.

Plans for "Project Progress" were announced on May 1, 1964, accepted by town meeting in September and approved in Washington in July, 1965.

AFTER MONTHS of discussion, the authority voted to amend the Project Progress urban renewal plan in April, 1965, by adding the former Collins block, facing Commercial Street, because it not only obstructed the view of the renewed area but also would add to the land value.

Properties purchased in the spring of 1967 fell to the wrecker's ball in the summer and fall and included such historical but aged buildings as the Remillard, Weston, Richmond and Vrel blocks, the Adams House and the Greylock Hotel. The Collins block was razed a year later due to the delay in adding it to the project.

Project Pleasant Park was born officially on June 14, 1967, in the midst of



PROJECT PLEASANT PARK — Dotted line shows general boundaries of Project Pleasant Park, Adams' proposed second urban renewal project which is bounded by Hoosac River (top dotted line), Hoosac Street, Columbia Street and rear of buildings on American Legion side of Park Street, bottom right. No. 4 mill is at left, Notre Dame Church is at bottom left of photo and St. Thomas Church at bottom center. Sixty-eight of project's 126 buildings will be cleared. (Transcript Photo-Trabold)

demolition for Project Progress. The authority voted to seek survey and planning funds of \$242,248 for study of a smaller central district phase which excluded the Summer and Winter Streets area for two reasons. First, it was decided, 250 families would need replacement quarters with housing already limited and, second, costs for the larger project would be about double.

After a two-year waiting period, the ARA received approval of its planning application in June, 1969, and on June 8 of this year its general planner, John Brown of John Brown Associates, Boston, revealed what was emphasized as a "preliminary" plan for the central downtown district.

PUBLIC OPINION was invited and has been received by the authority during the past five-month period. It was apparently instrumental in eliminating two key features of the plan, both involving relocation of public facilities.

Appointing themselves a special study committee, Selectmen advised against relocating municipal offices in the American Legion Home which would have been purchased and renovated by the town, while the present Town Hall might have been resold by the redevelopment authority. The other public facility, the Adams Fire District headquarters on Columbia Street, also proposed for demolition, will also remain under the newly-revised plan.

Chairman Donald R. Sommer of the ARA suggested in June that modifications might be made to other parts of the plan and a major alteration has occurred in the area of new housing. Primarily due to the change concerning the fire district headquarters, new housing on the tract presently bounded by East Maple, Depot and Columbia Streets has been reduced from 32 to 42 units and will be solely of town house or garden apartments type. In addition, the originally proposed 16 housing units for construction on Gavin Avenue have been eliminated and a much larger park area, with a possible playing field, will be built in their place.

Additional housing, to compensate for losses in those two parcels, will be built on a Spring Street parcel. The Spring Street housing will now include 60 units of high-rise elderly residences and 50 units of town house or garden apartments.

ANOTHER CHANGE in a key feature, State atty. general argues obscenity case

WASHINGTON (AP)—Massachusetts Atty. Gen. Robert H. Quinn, who attended a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Association of Attorneys General in Baltimore Monday, was to appear before the U.S. Supreme Court today to argue an obscenity case.

The case arises from a jurisdictional conflict between state and federal courts. Under the Massachusetts obscenity law, the film "I am Curious (Yellow)" was declared obscene in state Superior Court last November.

A restraining order was issued subsequently in U.S. District Court, barring the state from prosecuting theater owners and managers who show the film while their appeal is pending in state courts.

The Federal court further stated that the Massachusetts obscenity law was "probably unconstitutional." Prior to its decision to hear the case, however, the Supreme Court postponed the effect of the federal ruling. Quinn contends in his argument that the federal court should have allowed state courts to decide whether the Massachusetts law is unconstitutional.

although not a physical alteration, is the approach of planners to the proposed shopping mall on Park Street (to be discussed in depth in tomorrow's installment). Mr. Brown has recently emphasized that funds will be sought for heating and air-conditioning the publicly-owned mall arcades but that those features, and even the privately developed commercial structures themselves, may alter through the "highly flexible" nature of the enterprise.

Other basic parts of the proposed urban renewal plan include:

—Elimination of East Maple and Spring Streets with much of that land to serve as residential parking areas.

—Elimination of the western half of School Street which will be a dead-end way.

—The taking of the triangle now bounded by the railroad tracks, Pleasant Street and the Hoosac River on which a parking lot and elderly drop-in center are proposed.

—Relocation of the northern half of Pleasant Street (now Depot Street) in a straight line with the southern half and reconstruction as a 60-foot wide way, including right-of-way.

—Construction of two small park areas on the east side of Park Street where the former Stein block and present Miss Adams Diner and commercial buildings south of the so-called

"Mausert block" are located. —Taking and clearance of the former number three Berkshire mill.

—Clearance and reconstruction of all structures on both sides of Spring Street between Dean and Pleasant Streets with the exception of the Mohawk Hotel, to be rehabilitated, and the Dean Street apartment complex being renovated privately.

—Providing for 210 new parking spaces for downtown business along the west side of the railroad tracks at the rear of the proposed shopping mall and along the new Pleasant Street between the present East Maple and School Streets.

According to the present plan, a total of 68 buildings of the project's 126 structures will be taken for clearance. Of that number, according to Mr. Brown, 40 are sub-standard, 15 have deficiencies and 13 are described as "sound." In the June, 1967, preliminary application by Candeb, Fleissig Associates, Newark, N.J., a total of 98 structures was proposed for demolition.

In the plan for consideration by town meeting, a total of 58 families of two or more and 32 individuals (includes 12 roomers) as well as 32 businesses will be relocated. In the preliminary application of 3½ years ago, there were 95 households, 10 individuals and 50 nonresidential establishments proposed for relocation.

In Berkshire County Acquisition of cars, major appliances rises

(Special to the Transcript) NEW YORK — Judging from the number of big-ticket household accessories that Berkshire County families have been acquiring during the last few years, living standards are on the rise locally.

Their purchases of dishwashers, air conditioners, stereophonic equipment, cars and other high-priced equipment have been climbing steadily since 1969. It is directly attributable to the income gains chalked up in the period by most local families.

The extent to which ownership of automobiles and household appliances has increased is based upon a special sample survey by the Department of Commerce and data from other sources.

Their figures show that there is a direct relationship between a family's earning capacity and the amount of expensive durables that it amasses over the years.

In Berkshire County, on the strength of these findings, no less than 26.1 per cent of the local families are the owners of two or more cars at the present time. This compares with 17.2 per cent in 1960. In the Northeastern States as a whole,

25.2 per cent have more than one car. There has been a marked increase, also, in the number of families with television sets. This has been due, to a large extent, to the growth of color TV.

Approximately 96 per cent of the households in the local area now have television sets, as compared with 90.8 per cent in 1960.

Similarly, more homes are equipped with washing machines than was the case then. Ownership in Berkshire County's regional area is placed at 68.3 per cent.

This relates only to outright ownership. Actually, the proportion of families that have washing machines available to them is greater than that because many rental units are equipped with them.

The survey, which presents data on a national and regional basis, also shows an increase in the proportion of families with clothes dryers, hi-fi sets and freezer units. Home ownership has also been on the rise.

All of it has been made possible by incomes that have gone up sufficiently, after absorbing the increase in living costs, to provide these extras.

Acquire Suffolk Downs Bill filed to permit off-track betting

BOSTON (AP)—A bill which would create a state Racing Authority, authorize it to purchase Suffolk Downs race track and empower it to conduct an off-track parimutuel betting system in Massachusetts was filed Monday by state Reps. William Q. MacLean, D-Fairhaven and Michael J. Lombardi, D-Cambridge.

The proposed authority would consist of three members appointed by the governor. The chairman would receive an annual salary of \$20,000. The other two members would receive \$15,000 each.

Off-track betting, as a source of state revenue, has been under consideration in Massachusetts for the last several months.

Last week, members of legislature's Joint Committee on Government Regulations traveled to New York City to study the off-track betting system there. The system goes into effect in New York in January.

Other measures filed for the next session of the legislature include separate bills by Sens. Francis X. McCann, D-Cambridge, and Samuel Harmon, D-Boston, which would abolish pre-primary conventions held by

political parties.

McCann also sponsored a bill which would subject non-profit organizations engaged in research projects subsidized by the federal government to the Employment Security Law. He filed another bill which would ban the filling of Blair Pond in Cambridge and Belmont.

A bill authorizing the state Department of Public Welfare to construct and maintain a 1,000 bed hospital for chronically ill children in the North Shore area was filed by Sen. Charles V. Hagan, D-Lynn.

Sen. James A. Kelly, D-Oxford, filed a measure which would prohibit water skiing within 75 feet of a swimmer.

A measure which would require automobiles sold in the state after 1974 to have bumpers capable of preventing damage in collisions up to 10 miles per hour was filed by Sen. Kevin B. Harrington, D-Salem.

Harmon, who already had filed several bills dealing with the elderly, filed several more, including one that would provide tuition free consumer education courses for persons over 65.

He filed other bills calling on the state to take over all costs of public education.

Cushing raised millions but left little in will

BOSTON (AP) — Richard Cardinal Cushing raised millions for charities for new hospitals and churches during his 28 years as archbishop of Boston.

But he always said he never had any money of his own and that he wouldn't have any to leave.

His will was filed Monday and it bore out his prediction.

"So far as my own person is concerned, I have no insurance, bank deposits, investments or other holdings whatsoever; I entered the service of God poor and without property, I have always aspired to leave it equally unencumbered," he said in his will.

The property of the archdiocese held in his name automatically goes to his successor.

"Such few books, vestments or other appurtenances of office as may be found among my effects were chiefly gifts to me," the will said. "I have always considered them as being mine only for temporary use and I give and bequeath them to the Propagation of the Faith of Boston Inc., for distribution among poor priests and prelates in the mission field."

The Cardinal died Nov. 2. There are no figures available on how many millions of dollars he raised over the years for the good works to which he devoted himself.

Area lawyers to be honored

Three veteran members of the bar will be honored for 50 years of service by the Berkshire Bar Assn. at a dinner meeting Thursday evening at 6.30 o'clock at the Lenox House in Lenox.

They are Atty. John L. Burns of North Adams, Atty. William J. Nolan of Williamstown and Atty. Samuel E. Bloomberg of Pittsfield.

Superior Court Judge Edward J. Desaulnier who is presiding at the current Superior Court sitting in Pittsfield, will be the speaker.

BCAC will meet in Pittsfield

The Berkshire Community Action Council will meet at 7.30 tonight in its offices at 54 Wexdell Ave., Pittsfield, to discuss proposals for restructuring anti-poverty efforts in the county. The proposals were advanced to federal officials in Boston a week ago.

Catholic school leader denies aid promotion

FALL RIVER, Mass. (AP) — The assistant superintendent of Fall River Catholic schools Monday night denied saying Sunday that \$100,000 was spent by the church in an effort to obtain passage of legislation providing state aid to Catholic schools.

Sister Mary Urban said a report in Monday's Providence Journal was "a complete misinterpretation" of her statements during and after a public meeting on a plan to regionalize parochial schools in the city.

The subject of the \$100,000 was introduced at the meeting by Stanley Karnasiewicz, president of the Blessed Sacrament School Board, who quoted Sister Mary Urban as having remarked at another meeting at St. Jean-Baptist parish that the Fall River Diocese had spent that sum to prepare and promote the legislation.

The assistant superintendent asserted Monday night that what she actually said at St. Jean-Baptist was that \$60,000 had been raised in a collection last Easter Sunday to be distributed in support of Fall River parochial schools.

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