

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

January 9, 2020

MINUTES

Present: James Kelly, Jeanne Dietsch, Bill Kennedy, Laura Gingras, Jamie Conley, Corinne Chronopoulos, and Karen Hatcher

Also Present: Peter Throop and Laura Norton, Office of Community Development

Chair Kelly called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and introduced the Members and Staff.

Minutes:

A motion was made/seconded (Dietsch/Kelly) to approve the Minutes of December 10, 2019 as written with all in favor.

Employer's Forum:

Mr. Throop gave a brief review for Mr. Galus as he was not able to be present.

WPTIF Advisory Board Reports and Votes:

Again, Mr. Throop stepped in for Mr. Galus noting the West Peterborough TIF Advisory Group and met Monday and reported good conversations on several issues. Mr. Throop briefly reviewed the two major projects slated for West Peterborough which the committee decided not to vote on, pending additional detail from Mr. Bartlett. These projects included the Union Street Sidewalk extension, which will require relocation of a sewer line (cost estimate of \$310,000) and a stormwater drainage project on Overseers Row which will include replacement of several water lines and sewer lines (cost estimate of \$410,000). Mr. Throop stated that the Advisory Group did vote to expend \$10,000 of WPTIF funds for Staff Support (an annual ask) with all in favor.

A motion was made/seconded (Conley/Gingras) to approve the WPTIF's recommendation to expend \$10,000 in TIF funds for Staff Support with all in favor.

GDTIF Advisory Board Reports and Votes:

Mr. Kennedy as Chair of the Greater downtown TIF Advisory Committee introduced three proposed projects, only one of which the Committee voted on.

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations: Mr. Kennedy reviewed the GDTIF's recommendation to fund the installation of (four) Electric Vehicle Recharging Stations for an amount not to exceed \$35,000. It was noted the GDTIF recommendation was passed on a 3 to 2 vote in favor on January 6th. The Members briefly discussed the charging stations and whether or not they should be *fee* or *no-fee*-based. Ms. Hatcher advocated for additional research "for a greater picture of the options" as well as continued discussion at public hearings. She also suggested other ways (cost models) of financially supporting the project be researched, "but in concept I think we can all agree on the benefits with its town and regional considerations" she said. Ms. Dietsch agreed adding "the primary thing is marketing and brand and the fact we have this capability."

Mr. Throop reminded the Members “what you have here is a recommendation for an allocation of funds not to exceed \$35,000 for the installation of charging stations in the public lot. The recommendation did not specify favoring a fee or no-fee based system. If the project is approved for inclusion in the budget, requests for proposals will be issued and that is the time that the cost of Fee or No Fee options can be evaluated. Ultimately the Board of Selectmen will make the final decision. This is a motion that will enable the project (EV Stations) to proceed for consideration in the budget.

A motion was made/seconded (Kennedy/Dietsch) to move the GDTIF recommendation to install four Electric Vehicle Charging Stations in the Riverwalk Parking lot for an amount not to exceed \$35,000 to the Board of Selectmen with all in favor.

Lower Main Street Improvements – Project Scope and Cost Estimates : Mr. Throop noted Mr. Bartlett had been called away but is working with engineers to determine a budget for consideration by the TIF advisory Board in early February. The goal is to bring the proposal back to the EDA at its February meeting.

Wayfinding Signage Project: Mr. Kennedy noted a brief discussion about this project at the GDTIF meeting. He went on to say Town Administrator Rodney Bartlett has agreed to contact marketing and branding company that specializes in signage and wayfinding called **Engage** to assist with establishing a project plan for consideration by the GDTIF in early February with the goal of bringing this to the EDA in February.

Drum Contract Extension Update:

It was noted a motion to continue the Drum contract through April had been voted on in their last meeting. Chair Kelly noted he and new Member Megan Suoko would continue to work on keeping the site updated and being the best it could be.

“It seems like everyone is pretty pleased with it right now, but we’ll be working on the metrics of what works and what does not” he said. Ms. Hatcher asked who managed the (Peterborough Works) EDA website with Mr. Throop noting it had been the Assistant Planner. Ms. Hatcher noted she no longer had access to the page for updates on things such as the Welcome Committee’s Meet & Greet events. A brief discussion about the update of the Peterborough site, the EDA website and the related links followed.

Organization Interviews:

Mr. Kennedy gave a brief review that included the identification of 130 businesses in the generalized Downtown area. He noted that between gathering interview materials, identifying business owners, holidays and personal commitments he had conducted interviews with four merchants and one financial agency.

He consolidated his material into common themes consisting of *the good*, *the bad* and *the ugly*.

Mr. Kennedy noted *the good* themes included business location; Downtown events (seasonal, night markets etc.) and being seen/referred to as “quaint” and “artsy.”

The bad themes included the notion that Depot Square commanded a dominance in the Downtown for shopping and visitors rarely ventured much further than its borders; little or no

events during the winter months and local merchant staffing difficulties (especially with such a low unemployment level nationwide).

Finally, *the ugly* themes included parking lot woes in the public parking lot downtown (the lot by the Theater) which is seen as an eyesore by many; poor signage deterring foot traffic; competitive versus collaborative attitudes of merchants; and lower Main Street improvements that have been identified and need improvement.

Chair Kelly asked, “have there been any other interviews other than the ones done by Bill?” adding “I know Jerry (Galus) has been working with larger businesses.” Ms. Hatcher interjected “with 130 businesses we are going to need more data.” Mr. Kennedy replied, “I would welcome any help.”

EDA Membership Approvals:

A motion was made/seconded (Kennedy/Dietsch) to recommend Andy Peterson for Membership to the EDA with all in favor.

A motion was made/seconded (Kennedy/Gingras) to recommend Megan Suoko for Membership to the EDA with all in favor.

Ms. Suoko was not present by Mr. Peterson spoke at length about *Commercial Vacancy Information* and properties and statistical focus on the use of existing assets to structure a vital community using examples such as the IDG and SDE buildings. He spoke about real estate and mixed-use opportunities for properties like the Granite Block. He noted business models like SoClean’s “that has worked here and where a lack of employees has *not* been a problem.” A question was raised about where are the SoClean workers living? Mr. Throop indicated that he was told that some of the new employees had been former employees of business that had left Peterborough or closed, and while these employees still lived in town, they were commuting to jobs out of town. “Apparently they were all to happy to have a new opportunity here in Peterborough” he said.

Affordable Housing:

In light of the time, Chair Kelly suggested moving the “Affordable Housing Pros and Cons” discussion at the next meeting. Ms. Hatcher announced the next Community Task Force on Housing meeting was scheduled for January 25th at the Community Center and that all were invited to attend.

Other Business: None

Next Meeting: Friday, February 14, 2020 at 8:30 a.m.

The Meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton

Administrative Assistant