

GREATER DOWNTOWN TIF ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES

January 28, 2022

Present: Bill Kennedy, Peter Robinson, Cy Gregg, Paul LaRoche, Gary Fischer and Jeff Brown

Also Present: Danica Melone and Laura Norton, Office of Building and Planning

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 a.m.

Minutes: A motion was made/seconded (Kennedy/LaRoche) to approve the minutes of November 16, 2021 as written with all in favor.

Appointment of New Member:

Paul LaRoche was appointed a new member and offered to chair the Advisory Board

A motion was made/seconded (Gregg/Brown) to elect Mr. LaRoche Chairman of the Greater Downtown Advisory Board with all in favor.

No longer the interim Chairman Mr. Gregg noted he would stay on the Board as a member.

Funding Requests for 2022-2023 and Update on Mast Complete Streets (MAST) Grant:

Grant: Ms. Melone began with a brief review of the Monadnock Alliance for Sustainable Transportation (MAST) Complete Streets Implementation Grant of \$30,000 that had been received. Ms. Melone cited several opportunities they would be taking advantage of and reiterated that it would all begin with the Downtown visioning beginning in the Spring of 2022.

Funding Requests: Ms. Melone reviewed the funding requests for the Greater Downtown TIF which included \$10,000 for Staff support; \$20,000 for Downtown visioning work (which was originally approved by the voters in 2019 but not spent); \$4,525 for the visioning work (rental fees, advertising, event materials etc.) and \$9,560 as part of a larger project with the Department of Public Works for a tree inventory and maintenance program specific to the Greater Downtown TIF District.

With regards to the visioning work Ms. Melone reviewed TIF goals such as infrastructure projects, the Grove Street Bridge, intersection alignment and repaving on Lower Main Street.

A motion was made/seconded (Robinson/Fischer) to approve the funds for the Downtown *visioning work* with all in favor.

Moving on the request for *staff support* the members asked for clarification with Ms. Melone citing management of major projects and public educational events as well as scheduling and managing meetings, taking minutes, meeting with other involved staff such as Finance and The Department of Public Works (and) creating plans from those interactions. “These things all pull staff from planning duties” she said. She went on to say there was a similar request from the other (two) TIF Districts in town adding “this year you have had more meetings scheduled and significant outreach events coming up, we could charge an offset fee for work put into maintaining the TIF so that we have a bit of revenue coming in.”

A brief discussion about how the TIF District works (financial percentages that would normally be allocated to the county, the state and school district staying in the TIF District); additional grants, TIF versus Town responsibility for maintenance and outstanding projects and what to expect and the potential for expendable trusts with TIF funds at its sunset in 2035.

Citing the TIF Plan, Ms. Melone reviewed the purpose of the district (to encourage revitalization, re-investment and new investment within those portions of Town that are either used for commercial activity and/or are zoned for commercial development) and the objectives (to fund improvements to roads, intersections, sidewalks, sewer, water, drainage, lighting, signage, utility poles and lines, landscaping or other associated improvements that will create economic vitality, and ensure the continued economic vitality of those areas that are already so developed) in the Greater Downtown area “The need for its Advisory Board and Staff is critical to the management of its proper process” said Ms. Melone.

Mr. Gregg noted his concern over an expenditure that he believed was already accounted for in Staff wages. He noted the money not going to the county, state and school equated to money to be spent in the district “but it is still taxpayer money, regardless of how you look at it, it is still taking money out of the taxpayer’s pocket.” Mr. Gregg spoke briefly about his concern for a conflict of interest and an explanation of how the TIF works and is overseen followed.

Unswayed, Mr. Gregg reiterated his concern that “either way, spending the TIF money (\$10,000) or not you would essentially have the same staff support.”

“It is almost like we are being held hostage here” interjected Mr. Robinson adding “I don’t mean that in a personal sense, just as a different point of view.” Another brief discussion on the responsible use of TIF monies and the responsibility of the taxpayers to live up to the TIF’s mission followed. When Mr. Gregg asked about the amount of money in the TIF Fund Ms. Melone replied \$428,000 was the most recent balance.” When Mr. Brown asked, “do we have a project that would be affected by the lack of the requested \$10,000?” Ms. Melone briefly reviewed improvement to the Lower Main Street area (Centertown) as well as the Riverwalk, municipal parking lot and crosswalks and sidewalks. She went on to say, “and we would like to revise the plan to put more focus on the plazas as well.” She concluded by noting the outreach to businesses and residents in the TIF to capture “what they want to see in the Downtown” was also important. Mr. Gregg interjected “I am not arguing about improvements in the Downtown, I have a business in the Downtown.” Town Administrator Nicole MacStay was present to assist with any questions about the District and noted “we would be having the same conversation with the taxpayers if you did not have this pool of money, that is what makes it a great economic tool, it benefits these types of projects and that is what the goal has always been. You get the projects identified and then get them done.” Mr. Gregg noted it was just his perspective that all the projects in the district should not be funded by the TIF. Mr. Robinson added “and it is not the money, it is a conceptual issue.” Mr. Gregg concluded “well it doesn’t really matter, if we vote no, the Selectboard will just override us.” Ms. MacStay replied “they may choose to do that.”

A motion was made/seconded (XX/XX) to approve the funding request of \$10,000 for Staff support for the Office of Planning & Building with Mr. Brown, Mr. Fischer and Mr. LaRoche in favor and Mr. Gregg and Mr. Robinson opposed.

Ms. Melone concluded with a brief update on the MAST Complete Streets Grant and suggested since they were only meeting quarterly they may want to meet more often.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton, Office of Building & Planning