

GREATER DOWNTOWN TIF ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES

October 25, 2023

Present: Bill Kennedy, Gary Fischer, Andrew Dunbar, Cy Gregg, Heather Vaillancourt and Ivy Vann

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

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by Ms. Melone.

Election of Officers:

A motion was made/seconded (Gregg/Fischer) to elected Andrew Dunbar as Chairman with all in favor.

A motion was made/seconded (Gregg/Dunbar) to elect Gary Fischer as Vice Chairman with all in favor.

Minutes:

A motion was made/seconded (Gregg/Fischer) to approve the Minutes of June 13, 2023 with all in favor.

FY 2025 Budget Requests:

\$80,000 (unspent from last year) for the finalization of landscaping and a small nature scape play structure at the Riverwalk Parking Lot; \$490,000 for the restoration of the Grove Street Bridge and \$4,080 for a 1-year service contract for portable toilets in the Downtown.

Mr. Gregg asked for confirmation that the Committee would have the opportunity to discuss these items specifically when the time came (they will).

MS. Melone noted the current balance of the TIF fund (before the tax rate has been set and collected) is \$407,361 with an anticipation of it being in excess of \$700,000 by the end of the fiscal year.

A general discussion about the requests followed with the members in agreement with \$14,080 for staff support and the portable toilets, with further discussion of the plans for the Riverwalk Parking Lot (when the landscape designer has completed her plan). Moving on to the restoration of the Grove Street Bridge, the members had an in-depth conversation about the use of TIF funds for this project. "I do not see why the TIF is responsible for the bridge, it is a town responsibility and not a function of the TIF plan. I am 100% opposed to it," said Mr. Gregg. "I agree" interjected Ms. Vann adding "if it were for replacement of the flower boxes on the bridge that is one thing, but this would deplete all the TIF funds." Mr. Fischer also agreed, noting all the work was structural in nature.

The members then discussed the issue of portable toilets in the Downtown. Ms. Melone note the initial reaction was not to support them as businesses are required by law to allow the public to use their restrooms. "This also, is not a TIF function" she said. Mr. Dunbar relayed that in speaking with several business owners, problems have been encountered, forcing them to keep their restrooms locked. Ms. Vann noted "we need public restrooms, but portable toilets are not the answer." A brief discussion about seasonality of the portable utilities, costs associated with use of business restrooms (utility use, supplies, staff maintenance and sanitation issues) followed.

"Well, I'm for them (right now)" said Ms. Vann adding "but it is *not* a permanent solution." When Mr. Fischer asked what a permanent solution could be, Ms. Vann suggested they research it, get behind an idea and make a recommendation to investigate it. "There is no reason this town cannot provide public toilets" she said. Mr. Gregg suggested the notion of an alternative location (such as the Riverwalk Parking Lot) for greater visibility and convenience. Mr. Kennedy interjected a permanent facility would most likely be over a million dollars and agreed, "It is ugly as sin but a necessity." Ms. Vann noted the problem was not unique to Peterborough. "It is a huge problem across the country noting "when segregation problems back in the early 1900s were being addressed and the action of providing for services for *everyone* became a decision to provide services for *no one*." She concluded by noting "if you look OK and ask nicely, you're probably allowed to use a restroom but there are others who don't have that option and you should not have to beg to use a toilet." Ms. Melone noted she would address the issue with Mr. MacLean to investigate further. Mr. Fischer concluded "there are all kinds of issues, but the concept is valid" adding "you also have to balance the mix of having them look good and maintain prison hardware in their design."

Ms. Melone summarized the decisions on the budget requests and asked for a motion to expend \$10,000 for staff support and \$4,080 for the portable toilet contract (a total of \$14,080) for the 2025 fiscal year.

A motion was made/seconded (Vann/Kennedy) to approve e \$14,080 of Greater Downtown TIF funds for the two items cited with all in favor.

*Point of clarification - a member asked about the South Peterborough TIF and their support of the bridge work scheduled for that area with Ms. Melone noting "that type of support is part of their plan." Ms. Vann added "right from the start the bridge and culvert work was a part of that plan, which is *not* a part of the Downtown TIF plan and to do any of the structural work mentioned it must be a part of the plan."

Updates on Projects:

Lower Main Street/Grove Street Paving:

Mr. Kennedy noted that road improvement work slated for Grove Street has been held up waiting for the restoration of the bridge to be done. Ms. Vaillancourt asked if the paving would be conducted during the day or at night with Ms. Melone replying, "it's hard to say right now, there is no definitive answer yet, but we do know the visioning plans will be built into that project."

Wayfinding Sign Kiosk:

Ms. Melone noted the original intent for wayfinding to have every merchant, restaurant and vendor identified was not realistic. She projected a graphic that depicted icons locations for shopping, restaurants and services. A general discussion followed with a suggestion for additional public parking signs in the Downtown to help refrain visitors from parking in front of shopping or eating establishments only to wander around and return hours later. It was noted that the Downtown area has a 3-hour parking limitation and was without cost (no parking meters), which Ms. Vann confirmed “was the right price” per a study (Shoup Test) she’d done in 2018. “Believe me, we are appropriately priced at free” she said. Mr. Fischer suggested using some imagination in finding spaces in the Downtown that cars won’t fit into and converting them to motorcycle parking, freeing up actual (car) parking spaces. Ms. Vann also noted the need for additional bike racks and asked about the white jersey barriers at Centertown. The members noted bollards wud be more attractive “or even fiberglass planters with gravel in them” said Ms. Vann. Ms. Vaillancourt cited a plan they had presented to the owner for the outdoor seating area (and funded with TIF monies) had been vetoed by the owners (but) they may be open to a re-opening of that discussion and what the expectations may be.

Back to the shopping, restaurant and services icons, the discussion went from eliminating the “services” icon and sticking with shopping and restaurants icons to creating a better services icon to incorporating the shopping and services icon. Mr. Kennedy asked about the use of QR Codes for handheld devices on the signage with a brief discussion about the costs involved and a monitoring program to prevent or fix broken links.

In conclusion Mr. Fischer asked about a plan of action for the upcoming rebuild of the North Peterborough bridge at US Routes 101 and 136. It was noted that it was premature for a plan at this time (and) the bridge was work at US Route 101 and 202 was wrapping and due to be completed by Thanksgiving.

Riverwalk Parking Lot Work:

Ms. Melone reiterated the landscaping design was being completed and that the area would be maintained by town staff and not the Parks Committee. Mr. Kennedy reiterated his dislike of the location of the trash receptacle on the site.

The meeting adjourned at 8:47 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Office of Planning & Building