

FINAL

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION &
DOWNTOWN TIF ADVISORY BOARD
JOINT MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2022 – 4:00PM
City Hall – Council Chambers
51 North Park Street, Lebanon**

MINUTES

EDC MEMBERS PRESENT: William Dunn (Chair), Andrew Key, Councilor Karen Liot Hill (Vice Chair), Kevin Purcell [4:32 PM] (remote), David Newlove, Tracy Hutchins (Upper Valley Business Alliance, remote), Chip Brown

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dan Nash, Johanna Cicotte, Councilor Doug Whittlesey

TIF MEMBERS PRESENT: Barry Schuster (Chair), Victoria Smith

STAFF PRESENT: Planning and Development Director David Brooks

1. CALL TO ORDER:

- The March 16, 2022 Economic Development Commission meeting was called to order at 4:20 PM
- There was no quorum present for the Downtown TIF Advisory Board, so it did not formally call a meeting to order.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. February 16, 2022 & February 23, 2022

*Motion by Councilor Liot Hill to approve the minutes of February 16, 2022, and February 23, 2022 as written.
Second by David Newlove.*

** The Vote on the MOTION was approved (5-0).*

3. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Discussion: Redevelopment of the lower parking lots
Chair Dunn explained that he invited Sarah Riley, Chair of the Conservation Commission, and Colin Smith, Chair of the Pedestrian & Bicyclist Advisory Committee, to the meeting to give their thoughts on this item.

Sarah Riley gave her opinion regarding the access to and green space around the river. She stated that she is strongly in favor of having public natural spaces in the Downtown. This aligns with the Conservation Commission's mission. She noted that the Master Plan states in Chapter 3 that the river is a unique and underutilized resource in Lebanon. She would like for this area to be embraced and nurtured, and that this may repay the Town via economic benefits. She recommended members of the committees look into the UNH Nature Economy publications. She believes this project could allow for an amazing opportunity for a riparian/aquatic resource right behind City Hall. She would like to see a natural park area with native vegetation which could be a refuge from the City, while still steps away from the Downtown area. She would also like to see a ped/bike crossing bridge over the river, if possible. This would allow people to have safer, easier access to the Downtown area using multimodal travel.

There was a discussion about how creating a green space through this project could help with the City's heat island effect. These heat pockets give off higher surface temperatures than the surrounding areas, and trees/green space can help to alleviate this.

Kevin Purcell entered the meeting remotely at 4:32 PM. He was unable to attend the meeting due to travel times.

Councilor Liot Hill asked if the project should not seek an exemption from the Shoreland Protection Act, to allow for more flexibility in the timing of the process. Sarah Riley noted that she believes DES will be a resource to help the City achieve a sustainable goal for the property. There are plenty of examples of compatible recreational uses along shorelines. Ms. Riley suggested that the committees use the State's guidance to discover how to create the best

recreational/ecological experience in this area. This shoreland area does have some invasives in it, allowing for this project to give an opportunity for ecological restoration.

Colin Smith stated that he has not yet spoken to the Pedestrian & Bicyclist Advisory Committee yet on this item, but as an individual he likes the concept being put forth. This is an interesting project from a ped/bike perspective, as it could help to connect the Mascoma River Greenway to the Northern Rail Trail at Spencer Street. There is the opportunity to make many multimodal improvements. He did note that some cyclists using the Rail Trail are quite fast-moving, and there should be consideration given to potential usage conflicts in this area.

Bob Moses stated that he is glad there is consensus regarding creating an open park and recreation space on the lower parking lot level and working to connect the Rail Trail and tunnel. He asked if this project needs to jump into an RFI. Chair Dunn explained that an RFI is an earlier step in the process than an RFP. The consensus seems to be that a consultant is needed to show the groups a number of potential ideas to choose from.

Chair Schuster suggested that the group members come up with bullet lists of the values that they would like to see reflected in either lot area.

David Newlove stated that he likes the idea of creating a nature walk area on the riverfront where kids can explore the natural environment.

Councilor Liot Hill agreed that she likes the idea of getting people right down onto the waterfront. She noted that it might be important to designate the roadway from the ped/bike corridor and articulate higher speed traffic areas from those of the nature walk. There is a concern regarding creating safety for all users of the area.

Andy Key stated that he likes the idea of the project maintaining the amount of parking needed for the downtown, while also allowing for more green space. He would like for there to be an opportunity to explore the upper parking lot area for business use, possibly to offset some of the costs associated with the project. A green area to connect to the baseball field area would be nice. He asked if the Taylor Street area can be looked at differently.

Councilor Liot Hill stated that she would like to have Dan Nash present his idea for an additional deck of parking behind the Citizen's Bank building. This could help with creating additional parking for that which might be removed as part of this project.

It was noted that Mr. Brooks will put together a potential draft for an RFI proposal for the committees to review at their next meeting.

Clifton Below explained that the retaining wall on site could be removed, so that the area is no longer divided into upper and lower parking lots. He reviewed a proposal that reconfigures Court Street and extends it to create a traffic calming effect. Taylor Street could also be extended. The area behind City Hall could be used as a redevelopment opportunity with the possibility for parking below grade. He noted that the Shoreline Protection Act is used to protect existing natural shorelines. It is worth seeking this to decide what can be done by the City in that space. There are some property ownership issues in this area, such as land owned by the Senior Center.

C. Public Comment – *this was previously addressed.*

4. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

5. NEXT MEETING DATE: March 23, 2022 – EDC only; April 27, 2022 – EDC & TIF

6. OTHER BUSINESS

7. ADJOURNMENT.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude