

FINAL

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2022 – 4:00PM
City Hall – Council Chambers
51 North Park Street, Lebanon**

MINUTES

EDC MEMBERS PRESENT: William Dunn (Chair), Dan Nash, Andrew Key, Kevin Purcell, David Newlove

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tracy Hutchins (Upper Valley Business Alliance) Chip Brown, Johanna Cicotte, Councilor Karen Liot Hill (Vice Chair), Councilor Doug Whittlesey,

STAFF PRESENT: Planning and Development Director David Brooks

1. CALL TO ORDER:

- The March 23, 2022 Economic Development Commission meeting was called to order at 4:05 PM

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: None

3. NEW BUSINESS:

Chair Dunn noted that there was an article in the Valley News regarding the new art school which received conditional approval to move into Downtown Lebanon. He then welcomed Chet Clem to speak on items regarding West Lebanon.

A. Presentation: Economic Development in West Leb

1. Action Plan: <https://www.westleb.org/actionplan>
2. Vision Deck: <https://www.riverparkwestlebanon.com/vision>
3. River Park: <https://www.riverparkwestlebanon.com/>

Chet Clem spoke in his role as a developer for Lyme Properties and also in his role as Vice Chair of the West Lebanon Revitalization Advisory Committee. He noted that March is the 12-year anniversary of the River Park zoning change. Not many new ideas have been introduced into the action plan for this area, although many studies have been completed. There is frustration that this area is worthy of being addressed but continues not to be. He reviewed some examples of revitalization projects, such as Mill City Park at Franklin. There could be a phased implementation for projects in West Lebanon to be sustainable both economically and financially. One project already undertaken put the River Park property to use as publicly accessible open space and trails. This land was passed to a NH not-for-profit in 2020 to hold in perpetuity. In January 2021, the efforts were made to reinvigorate the 2007 vision for River Park. Efforts are being made to align downtown West Lebanon with the rest of the City. He would like to see current landowners treated the same as new developers. He would like to see proactive discussions on how the River Park project could succeed.

Chair Dunn stated that he can see the frustration and the vision regarding this topic. He asked to chat with Mr. Clem offline regarding the history of the vision.

David Newlove asked what would be placed in the River Park development, if not biotech uses. Mr. Clem explained that he has tried to broaden the scope to medtech and innovation economy businesses. Housing has now been moved up in the phasing process. Mr. Clem noted that he has extended water and sewer to the site. He is trying to align the area to market needs. Mr. Newlove asked if single-family starter homes are economically viable. Mr. Clem stated that he cannot sell a net zero home with the necessary infrastructure in this market for a profit under current zoning. He is an advocate for missing middle housing and the City should potentially consider zoning changes in order to allow this to occur more easily. There does not seem to be a way to create all of the single-family houses the market says it needs while supporting the necessary infrastructure and services. There needs to be a path to create down-sizable housing choices that could also be desired by young professionals, which seems to be unavailable in most of the Upper Valley region.

Andy Key asked what the largest hurdle from the City is on this project. Mr. Clem explained that the amount of upfront carry on this project is a concern for him. He is approved and has his entitlements.

Kevin Purcell exited the meeting.

City Manager Shaun Mulholland noted that there was interest in marketing the West Lebanon site by the City, and this was pursued with NH Business and Economic Affairs. He asked if there is anything else that Mr. Clem needs from the City in regard to this project, as the City has tried to push this project forward from its end and does not owe Mr. Clem anything at this point. Mr. Clem stated that there might be a few items to discuss in terms of Tax Increment Financing. Mr. Clem noted that he owes the City an updated proposal.

B. Discussion: Reinitiate Business Listening Tours – *not discussed at this time.*

C. Public Comment

Becky Foster explained that for the past 15 years the citizens of West Lebanon have met and voted to get the River Park moving, as they believe it will create the funding needed for the City to move forward with the Downtown improvements. The citizens were promised high value income coming into that area, not low-income housing.

4. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

5. NEXT MEETING DATE: April 27, 2022

6. OTHER BUSINESS

7. ADJOURNMENT.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude