

FINAL

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION &
DOWNTOWN TIF ADVISORY BOARD
JOINT MEETING
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27, 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, David Newlove, Dan Nash, Chip Brown [4:23pm]

EDC MEMBERS ABSENT: Johanna Cicotte, Councilor Doug Whittlesey, Tracy Hutchins (Upper Valley Business Alliance)

TIF MEMBERS PRESENT: Victoria Smith, George Sykes

TIF MEMBERS ABSENT: Barry Schuster (Chair), Peter Owens

STAFF PRESENT: Planning and Development Director David Brooks

1. CALL TO ORDER:

- The April 27, 2022 Economic Development Commission meeting was called to order at 4:03 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. March 16, 2022 & March 23, 2022

Victoria Smith noted a comment on the minutes of March 16, 2022. Page 1, Line 12 – to make it clear that Ms. Riley’s comments were in regard to the green space and access to the river, not the potential redevelopment of the lower parking lots.

Motion by Dan Nash to approve the minutes of March 16, 2022, and March 23, 2022 as amended.

Second by Andy Key.

**** The Vote on the MOTION was approved (6-0).***

Chair Dunn thanked everyone involved with the write up regarding the potential economic growth of green spaces. He also noted that Tracey Hutchins is attending the Upper Valley MedTech pitch with businesses and investors from around the region and Quebec. There are three scheduled business retention roundtables: June 21st 5:30pm-7:30pm, July 19th 11:30am-1:30pm, and August 10th 7:30am-9:30am. Once locations have been determined, RSVPs will be accepted for these events.

3. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Discussion: Redevelopment of the lower parking lots

The group reviewed the draft Request for Interest (RFI). Proposed edits from Clifton Below were reviewed by the group. One of the suggested edits was to include extra areas, such as Lot 92-17 and others, to the RFI. David Brooks explained that his intent was not to leave areas out, but that the map was drawn somewhat freehand. As currently drawn, it appears that the retaining wall would need to remain on the site, but per the suggested edits, there would be greater leeway to remove it. The edits from Mr. Below also noted that there is a small portion of the lot that exists in the Senior Center property. This is an issue that will likely want to be cleaned up cooperatively with the Senior Center and the State.

David Brooks explained that much of the document is based on an example from White Plains, New York. There are similar concepts in that document that were used to generate this draft. He highlighted a portion of the document, *“This project represents a significant development opportunity for the City. It also presents a unique opportunity to enhance the rediscovery and restoration of the Mascoma River frontage through downtown and to provide critical*

pedestrian and bicyclist connections between the Northern Rail Trail and the Mascoma River Greenway and downtown tunnel area, while also providing for economic development opportunities in the downtown core. All development concepts must be consistent with the Key Concepts and planning principles developed through significant public input during the Downtown Vision Plan process including Reconnection to the Mascoma River, Placemaking, Pedestrian/Bicycle Connectivity, and Economic Development.”

Victoria Smith stated that there was consensus regarding development and access of the riverfront. She would like to see more emphasis in the introduction regarding enhancement and restoration of the Mascoma Riverfront and adjacent green space. Chair Dunn stated that this language would be better in the RFP phase. This non-descript language is being proposed in hopes of enticing professionals to give the group different options to analyze.

Kevin Purcell noted that he does not want the priority of open space to be a byproduct of the project but would prefer there to be an emphasis on recreation and access to the river.

Chip Brown entered the meeting at 4:23pm.

Dan Nash stated that he believes there should potentially be a limiting factor on this project. He is concerned about preserving the entire parking lot area and giving up all opportunity to develop. He does not want the City to give up all of its prime developable land.

Chip Brown stated that the recreation component would be a huge economic driver and focal point for the City.

Chair Dunn explained that the goal is to get companies to give the groups creative options for the area. This can either be a park that will an expense to the City, or a park with a development opportunity to make it revenue neutral, or something else.

George Sykes stated that he likes the document as presented because it is broad and should encourage free-thinking about the project. He believes the project should consider both the land along the river's edge and the river itself as a resource as well. He would like the document to look at it from a wider perspective.

Councilor Liot Hill stated that she agreed with adding language about creating a true amenity for the City along the riverfront. This could also be a performing arts venue in the future, so it would be good to tie the language in with the City's interest in arts & culture amenities. David Brooks stated that this could echo back to the 2016 Visioning Study, which highlighted the idea of an art walk downtown.

Councilor Liot Hill stated that she would like to revisit the idea of considering development for a portion of the lots after responses from this RFI are elicited.

Victoria Smith stated that the study previously mentioned showed a lot of support for using and developing the riverfront, and the return on the investment that all communities that have done so have seen. The groups need to think about this project, not just in terms of recreation benefits, but as an economic engine.

David Brooks stated that he will have a final draft document for the groups to review at their next meeting.

Chair Dunn stated that he took a field trip to the riverfront in West Lebanon. He suggested to the City Council that the opportunity to examine riverfront areas in the City should be done holistically. There may be an opportunity for the City to consider a lease option on the DOT land for sale in West Lebanon. The City could then gain site control and be able to have similar conversations as this for that space.

Victoria Smith asked about the time period for this RFI. David Brooks stated that the time period for similar projects has been 75-90 days to respond.

B. Public Comment – *none at this time.*

3. OTHER BUSINESS:

A. Benefit of enhancing riverfront access and amenities

Victoria Smith stated that this report had an almost overwhelming amount of information included. It appears that New Hampshire is a bit behind the times, as other states have been doing this and creating revenue from it for a while.

There are some towns in New Hampshire that are a bit ahead, such as Franklin, and continue to put money into these projects.

Kevin Purcell stated that these types of projects are big economic drivers in South Carolina, Arkansas, West Virginia, etc. The returns on investment mentioned are shocking. There have been tremendous benefits to local businesses in these communities.

Councilor Liot Hill stated that a hallmark of Lebanon seems to be redevelopment. The City is becoming an arts community. Redevelopment of the river area could be the next chapter of economic activity for the City.

4. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

5. NEXT MEETING DATE: May 25, 2022

6. OTHER BUSINESS

7. ADJOURNMENT.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:46 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude