FINAL

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION & DOWNTOWN TIF ADVISORY BOARD JOINT MEETING WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 2023 – 4:00PM Kilton Library Community Room – or remote via Zoom MINUTES

EDC MEMBERS PRESENT: William Dunn (Chair), Councilor Karen Liot Hill (Vice Chair), Dan Nash, Andrew Key, David Newlove

EDC MEMBERS ABSENT: Kevin Purcell, Councilor Doug Whittlesey, Chip Brown, Tracy Hutchins (Upper Valley Business Alliance)

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

TIF MEMBERS ABSENT: George Sykes, Peter Owens

STAFF PRESENT: Deputy City Manager David Brooks

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1. CALL TO ORDER:

- The March 22, 2023 Downtown TIF Advisory Board meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM. The Economic Development Commission meeting was also called to order.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. February 22, 2023

Motion by Mr. Nash to approve the minutes of February 22, 2023, as presented.
Second by Chair Schuster.

**** The Vote on the MOTION was approved by the EDC (5-0), and the TIF (3-0).***

3. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Review and Discussion of Responses to Downtown Redevelopment Request for Expressions of Interest (RFI)

Chair Dunn stated that he would like members to review the proposals for a general discussion regarding certain elements within the proposals that could then be parsed out for future proposals. He asked the Commission and Board members to consider if there are missing ingredients in the proposals as well.

Chair Dunn asked for discussion regarding cross river connectivity within the project. Ms. Haidari stated that this could be useful around the Hanover Street area, but it would have to be marked and kept open. This concept could be explored further. Ms. Smith stated that she believes this is an excellent idea that will bring more people from across the river over to the Downtown side. Chair Schuster stated that he supports this idea and believes that there may be multiple connection areas. Kids walk to the schools down Hanover Street and easier, safer connections for them would be helpful. Chair Dunn noted that a gateway to cross could spur economic growth at the entry point. Councilor Liot Hill Stated that she supports this idea. Mr. Nash suggested that points be given to future proposals that support this idea, as a public/private partnership. Mr. Key stated that the area near the Senior Center may best support this on one side of the river. It seems to fit more upriver than at the location of this parking lot project. Mr. Newlove stated that he supports the bridge idea.

Chair Dunn asked for discussion regarding open space amount and requirements. Ms. Haidari stated that additional open space, as opposed to additional buildings, will do more to promote an active Downtown Lebanon. Also, there is not clear access from Colburn Park down to the area behind the buildings. Chair Dunn stated that he was visualizing this as an uninterrupted connection from the trail to the bike path. He noted that, through this process, Court Street could be completely regraded. Ms. Smith stated that these proposals seemed to show that Taylor Street could be truncated and tied into Flynn Street. This would also allow for a safer open space area. She suggested approximately 50' of open space leading over to the river. Chair Schuster stated that he supports green space and that this does not necessarily curtail business in this area. Ms. Smith agreed that she believes open space would bring people in and start an economic engine. Councilor Liot Hill stated that indirect versus direct economic development should be discussed in terms of open space. There could be a discussion regarding how much of this could pay for itself. Chair Dunn stated that he believes the EDC would like to spur economic development in that location and consider what this may look like. Councilor Liot Hill stated that she believes the buildings should be clustered in the upper lot and the green space should be an extension of the river. Mr. Nash asked about how this project interacts with the Spencer Street project. He stated that he believes the maximum buffer should be 50' to the river. It is important to preserve the existing parking and any additional projects should need to add onto this. Mr. Key stated that he likes the idea of a path being able to connect to many of the existing areas around. A good ratio of building to open space would be 50/50. Mr. Newlove stated that he heard a desire for green space along the river during the public forum. He also heard a potential interest in more retail and less emphasis on housing.

Chair Dunn stated that some of the other concepts he wanted to discuss were materials/look and feel; business mix/uses; max height and footprint; and what type of housing, if any; timing; road reconfiguration; and parking.

Ms. Haidari stated that she would like to discuss how the area is currently used, so that none of those uses are lost through this project.

David Brooks reviewed previously completed parking utilization studies. At the highest usage in the lower parking lot, a study found 67% of spaces occupied, leaving approximately 77 spaces available. He stated that he believes there is documentation that there is sufficient parking for the existing uses. Parking can be a liability, not an asset.

Councilor Liot Hill noted that reaching 100% parking in an area will require moving toward paid parking. Parking seems to be being brought up as an obstacle, but there is no data showing a parking issue in Downtown. The lower lot is not being used nearly to capacity. This means that there are 202 parking spaces currently that are, on average, being used one third of the time. A 1:1 parking ratio is likely not needed. The City can likely give up between 50-80 of its existing parking spaces, based on the studies completed.

With respect to the 20 Spencer Street redevelopment, Mr. Brooks explained that the Braverman Company has walked away from its agreement with the City regarding Spencer Street. The Company offered assistance in other ways but can no longer seek a project on this property. This project was for approximately 95 units, with 45-50 workforce units, if possible. He and the City Manager have meetings scheduled with the Lebanon Housing Authority and Twin Pines Housing to discuss other potential projects for the site. Mr. Brooks stated that he and the City Manager would like to push toward 100% workforce housing, even if a smaller project is proposed.

Councilor Liot Hill noted that this property is located in the TIF District, and she believes it would be helpful for the EDC and TIF groups to discuss this further.

Chair Dunn stated that the Board and Committee could consider advocating for applicants when a business may be expanding.

B. Review Final Report of Upper Valley Business Retention and Engagement Program

This will be discussed at a later date.

C. Review and Discussion of Master Plan Update Process for Chapter 6: Economic Development

Mr. Brooks stated that the Planning and Development Department and the City Manager's Office are proposing to work with the EDC, in particular, to focus on updating the Economic Development chapter of the Master Plan.

Motion by Chair Schuster to adjourn the Downtown TIF Advisory Board meeting at 4:48pm.
Second by Ms. Haidari.
**** The Vote on the MOTION was approved (3-0).***

Mr. Brooks asked that the EDC start by looking at the Vision and Purpose statement in the chapter to determine if it is still reflective of the direction that the City should be moving in, in terms of economic development. If it is, then the EDC can review the actions and strategies outlined in the chapter to identify what has already been achieved or what may need to be completed.

Mr. Nash stated that he read through the chapter and believes the topics are worth advancing into the future. He stated that, for projects which look to reuse properties that are non-conforming, property owners should be able to expand these non-conforming uses within reason, and the current language seems to make this very difficult.

Councilor Liot Hill stated that the existing language was set in place prior to the housing crisis that exists. She stated that she believes the City's ability to attract and retain businesses is being impacted by a lack of housing. Housing and daycare are major issues at play. Updating the Vision and Purpose statement may be needed in order to reflect current conditions. If the City continues to encourage non-residential, economic development, without addressing the housing issue, this will only make the housing crisis worse. Mixed use integration may also need to be more formally addressed in the chapter.

Mr. Brooks noted that Chapter 7 of the Master Plan deals specifically with Housing.

Mr. Newlove stated that there is a concern that the City needs to diversify by attracting not only workforce housing, but other types that can help with economic growth. Mr. Brooks agreed that he believes there needs to be more of every type of housing in the City.

Chair Dunn requested that EDC members review the bullet points of the Economic Development chapter and specify any additions of deletions at the next meeting.

4. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:
None.

5. NEXT MEETING DATE: April 26, 2023

6. OTHER BUSINESS
None at this time.

7. ADJOURNMENT.
The EDC meeting was adjourned at 5:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude