

**FINAL**

**WEST LEBANON REVITALIZATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
KILTON LIBRARY CONFERENCE ROOM OR  
Remote Via Virtual Platform  
LebanonNH.gov/Live  
December 16, 2024  
5:30 PM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councilor Chris Simon, Laurel Stavis, Dan Nash, Andrew Faunce, Emmett Frank, Kim Chewning [5:44pm], Erik Endrulat, Jim Winny [5:48pm]

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** James Mashal

**STAFF PRESENT:** Nate Reichert (Director of Planning & Development); Mayor Tim McNamara

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**1. CALL TO ORDER – The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM.**

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**A. November 18, 2024**

*Mr. Faunce MOVED to approve the meeting minutes of November 18, 2024, as amended.  
SECONDED by Ms. Stavis.*

**AMENDMENTS:**

**To include Emmett Frank as a member present at the meeting.**

*\* The Vote on the MOTION was approved (5-0-1, with Chair Simon abstaining).*

**3. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Review and Discuss: Strategic Plan, Master Plan and West Lebanon studies**

- Strategic Plan Website Page
- Chapter 12 of the Master Plan
- Action Plan for West Lebanon
- Link to Strategic Plan 2024-2027
- Link to West Lebanon Village Charrette Report

Mayor McNamara explained that a Superior Court decision at the end of November extended River Park's Planning Board and building permit approvals through the end of October of next year. The current zoning for the site includes Industrial Light in the back and a small sliver of CBD in the front. The building in the CBD section of the site is slated to be a three story building that was originally presented as having commercial on the first floor and office on the second and third floors. The decision by the Court mentions testimony by the developer that there will

potentially be a life science tenant for the second and third floors of the building. The developer subsequently reached out and stated that there is a life sciences tenant interested in the top two floors of the building and requested the ability to move forward with this tenant. In reviewing the Zoning Ordinance, there is no specific designation for Life Sciences, but there is a general designation for something called Research Laboratory allowed in the Industrial Light Zoning District, which is only yards away from this building in the CBD. Apparently, the proposed tenant is not sufficient to warrant the construction of a large building in the Industrial Light portion of the property. The site is currently a blight on the area, and he would like to see it begin to revitalize downtown West Lebanon. Also, the City is desperately in need of additional property tax revenue. Thus, he has placed an item on the Council agenda for January 8th, which would initiate a process to add the designation of Research Laboratory to the Central Business District.

Chair Simon stated that he supports this proposal.

*Ms. Chewning entered the meeting at 5:44pm.*

Mr. Faunce asked about involving other stakeholders in this process. Mayor McNamara stated that the meetings this will be discussed in will be open to the public.

Ms. Stavis asked if there will be a timetable that applies to the use as defined by the Court. Mayor McNamara stated that the building permit approvals are valid through the end of October. Once under construction, this will be vested. Mr. Reichert noted that Staff will be working to clarify this item with the Court tomorrow. The court order seems to read that the building permit will be extended for up to six months starting on November 25th, allowing them until May 25th to recommence construction. The court order also overturned the Planning Board's recent decision to not extend the overall site plan approval, so the applicant will have until October 2025 to complete the phase one development improvements. The intention is to not spend additional legal fees on this item and to place the responsibility back on the developer.

*Mr. Winny entered the meeting at 5:48pm.*

Ms. Chewning stated that she believes this project is vital to the revitalization of West Lebanon. It is also clear that the relationship between the City and these developers is such that nothing gets done. She asked what the City Council will do to make sure that this step makes a difference and to hold City staff accountable. Mayor McNamara stated that Staff does not work for the Council; Staff works for the City Manager. He is trying to facilitate the next step in this process. Ms. Chewning stated that there is one person the Council can hold responsible in this process and there needs to be transparency as to how much these lawsuits have cost the City and what the loss of tax revenue has been. The fact that this process has been in play for 15 years and has not moved forward is crushing.

Ms. Stavis stated that she believes there were plenty of opportunities for the developer to come forward with a clearly articulated plan that people could understand and then execute the plan. She asked what the developer will have to do to prove to the City that the building is actually going to move forward and if there are safeguards in place at the City level to make sure that the developer does not come forward again and request more changes. Mayor McNamara stated that he does not have those answers. His intention is to put the ball back in the developer's court with a relatively simple change. He is trying to remove a potential barrier and see what happens.

Mr. Nash stated that he believes the proposal is a reasonable one. He supports the proposed change to allow for certain reasonable uses. This developer has invested a lot in the community through other projects.

***Mr. Nash MOVED that the West Lebanon Revitalization Advisory Committee support the proposal to add Research Laboratory as a permitted use in the Central Business District. SECONDED by Mr. Endrulat.***

***\* The Vote on the MOTION was approved (7-0-1, with Mr. Faunce abstaining).***

Mr. Reichert spoke up for City Staff, and expressed discontent at those who state that the Staff does not know what they are speaking of during application processes. Those who believe it is all the City Staff's fault do not see the whole picture. The Planning Department has been trying to make this item work for years and has bent over backwards on multiple occasions, only to have the developer use the same decision to attack Staff. Staff would love to see the River Park project happen but asks that the applicant come forward with a complete application and a spirit of cooperation. He asked for respect for the Staff, regardless of the outcome of the process.

Ms. Chewning apologized for her previous words. She has brought many ideas to the table for how this project could move forward over the years and all of them have been shot down. Her suggestion for holding people accountable and having the City Council or someone oversee it is partly to keep the project moving forward. This project has not moved forward and has Staff, the developer, and the public beating their heads against the wall without knowing what is truly occurring on either side.

The Committee discussed the list of proposed ideas for West Lebanon, including the Food Truck Task Force and a zoning change to allow for a food truck use in West Lebanon.

Ms. Stavis stated that West Lebanon is in a state of crisis. The City should be bending rules to allow uses on Main Street in Downtown West Lebanon that bring people in good and wholesome ways, including appealing to the food truck community.

Ms. Chewning asked for an update on the Main Street parcel. Mayor McNamara stated that there was virtually no response to the RFP. He would like to give the process a few more months before considering placing the parcel back on the market.

Chair Simon asked the Committee members to consider how to get businesses in West Lebanon to attend these meetings and be otherwise involved.

#### **4. OTHER BUSINESS**

None at this time.

#### **5. ADJOURNMENT:**

***Mr. Nash MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 6:45pm. SECONDED by Ms. Stavis.***

***\* The Vote on the MOTION was approved (8-0-0).***

Respectfully submitted,  
Kristan Patenaude  
Recording Secretary