

**Downtown TIF Advisory Committee
153 Farmington Falls Road
April 9, 2015 4:30 p.m.**

Workshop Minutes

TIF Committee members present were Richard Davis, Drew Hufnagel, Mike Mansir, Ron Gelinias, Joshua Bell, and Cindy Gelinias. Also present was Code Enforcement Officer/Planner, Steve Kaiser.

John Moore, Byron Davis, Gary Edwards, Alison Hagerstrom, Mary Lello, Cindi Ferguson, Kevin Madore, and Tom Saviello were unable to attend.

The meeting was brought to order at 4:48 p.m.

To Review the Quotes for Engineering Services for the Proposed Downtown TIF Projects

Mr. Kaiser said the proposals submitted were from good firms that are all capable of the work we want to do here, which is basic engineering to realign some streets, drainage, and install sidewalks and curbing. He said they all had a good grasp of the project, and he was contacted by two of the firms who sent representatives to inspect the project area. Mr. Kaiser gave an overview of the proposals and his summary. He said we could save money by doing our own inspections under construction services. Mr. Kaiser said there is a lot that goes into the design, and Front Street is heavily traveled and needs some design to realign the street in the low area. He said the West Farmington area has interesting possibilities, and the Town Farm Road should be rebuilt at some point because it is another heavily traveled road.

Mr. Hufnagel asked about using a design/build contractor for work on Front Street, as an example.

Mr. Kaiser suggested limiting the scope of work, bite off smaller pieces of the project, and negotiate the cost of the proposal. He said, as an example, if you spoke with Kevin Vining or Steve Hunt at E.L. Vining, they would want to have good engineering and design plans for the road reconstruction to establish the center line and elevation. Mr. Kaiser said it may look like a simple project but it takes good engineering to pull it off.

Mr. R. Davis suggested it would be good to engineer the master plan design, and then we can do sections of the project as we can afford. He said if we do the engineering in pieces it could prove more costly over time.

Mr. Bell asked how long the engineering plans would be good for.

Mr. Kaiser said the engineering plans will last for a while unless you made changes to the plans, and the only changes would be the project construction cost and type of materials.

Discussion followed regarding the rating chart and proposal costs.

Mr. Hufnagel said the proposals didn't reflect "apples to apples", and he asked if this was

because the RFP wasn't as precise as it needed to be.

Mr. Kaiser said the engineering proposals don't generally reflect "apples to apples" which is part of their strategy because they don't want you to easily compare firms, and they like to put their design brand on projects. He said this is an excellent response from very good firms.

Mr. Hufnagel asked why you wouldn't go with the lowest bidder.

Mr. Kaiser said you have to take into consideration experience and reputation.

Discussion followed regarding the past reconstruction design on Pleasant and Front Streets.

Mr. Mansir asked what our budget was in the TIF account.

Mr. R. Davis said we currently have \$100,000. He said the Selectmen decide how much to capture each year, and if they stay on this track, we will have approximately another \$100,000 after the next commitment in August. Mr. R. Davis said there is enough in the account to cover the engineering, and if the committee makes a recommendation, the Selectmen can authorize us to hire an engineering firm.

Mr. Bell said the Selectmen had voted to put the engineering out for bid.

Mr. Mansir asked if this area is the best place to put the TIF money and what would the yield of return be for the projected dollars.

Mr. R. Davis suggested we build from what we currently have, and we know that Front Street needs improvements. He said it has seen a lot of commercial growth which will help to enhance the current businesses and encourage others to locate there. Mr. Davis said it is a busy road that has a significant traffic count.

Mr. Hufnagel said when they were developing the TIF plan with John Holden, the common theme and priority is public safety on any project. He said his reasoning for beginning with Front Street is we already have something in place. Mr. Hufnagel said it's not just UMF traffic; its pedestrians walking to Giffords – McDonalds – Hippach Field – West Farmington, and we are making it safer and completing the corridor.

Mr. R. Davis said it's about making connections, and we are working on a MDOT sidewalk project connecting the corner of Maple Avenue down Farmington Falls Road through Hippach Field, which helps tie everything together. He estimated it would cost \$300,000 - \$400,000 to complete Front Street and it may take 2-3 years.

Mr. Bell said the Grange is very busy in the winter, and by doing the parking in West Farmington as a smaller project to get things rolling, we would see a return. He said he wasn't sure which would be the better way to go first - tackling a major project or doing smaller projects.

Discussion followed regarding making the area attractive for a hotel to be built in Farmington.

Mr. Kaiser said once you have selected a consultant, they will give you a different perspective

and help you decide which area or project to start with first. He said we could benefit by fixing all of these areas and more because Farmington is a service center, but we will have to pick and choose.

Mr. Hufnagel said it took two years of discussions to come up with a punch list of priority projects. He said the TIF was designed to help blighted areas of the town, which is West Farmington. Mr. Hufnagel said if you start with Front Street the project naturally flows to West Farmington.

Mr. R. Davis said we would have to follow the new ADA requirements when constructing the sidewalks.

Mr. Gelinas said lower Front Street has a big problem with flooding, and suggested contacting UMF to ask for help with the cost of the project.

Mr. Hufnagel said we should have a meeting with committee members to discuss the proposals.

Mr. R. Davis suggested we poll the members for a date.

There being no further business, the workshop meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cindy Gelinas.