

Downtown TIF Advisory Committee
153 Farmington Falls Road
July 13, 2016 6:00 p.m.

Minutes

TIF Committee members present were Richard Davis, Ron Gelinias, Paul Mills, Kevin Madore, Byron Davis, Cindi Ferguson, Joshua Bell, John Moore, and Cindy Gelinias. Mike Mansir, Alison Hagerstrom, Tom Saviello, and Gary Edwards were unable to attend. Also present were Deputy Police Chief Shane Cote, Tiffany Maiuri, and Jennifer Bjorn.

Mr. B. Davis called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ITEM 1: To Approve the Minutes of the May 11, 2016 Meeting

The minutes were reviewed and placed on file.

ITEM 2: To Consider Entering into a Cooperative Effort with UMF to Install Security Cameras using a high speed Internet Connection in the Downtown area and West Farmington

Ms. Maiuri stated she is the Crisis Management Team Liaison Officer for the University of Maine at Farmington (UMF), and she distributed a handout. She said UMF has a 10 year-old antiquated security system, and the cameras are either not working or have very limited imagery. Ms. Maiuri said UMF will be installing a new system with infrared coverage throughout the campus because the new technology has come a long way in improving the image quality, infrared capability, and affordability. She said UMF submitted an application and was awarded funding through Homeland Security to help purchase new security equipment that must be expended by December 31, 2017.

Ms. Maiuri said Deputy Chief Shane Cote contacted her regarding the Downtown TIF Advisory Committee's interest in installing security cameras in the Downtown and West Farmington areas, and he asked if UMF would be interested in a partnership. She said the UMF staff and Deputy Chief Cote met to discuss the possibility and practicality of entering into a partnership for the security system project, and later, she and Deputy Chief Cote walked the Farmington TIF District to map out potential locations for approximately 32 cameras. Ms. Maiuri stated the following points – UMF has the high-speed internet; it could host the physical base system; it has 32 terabytes of video storage; and it can assign user access for each video camera for up to 64 channels; but she added, UMF wouldn't monitor the cameras.

Deputy Chief Cote said UMF will be installing a new system and is looking for a commitment of interest in funding the cameras for the downtown. He said we would put out an RFP and contract with a company that does this for a living to evaluate the best placement for the cameras, and how to get the Internet installed in West Farmington.

Mr. Moore stated the Committee can only make recommendations to the Selectmen.

Ms. Maiuri said she is asking if the TIF Advisory Committee is interested in partnering with UMF to proceed to the planning stage where UMF would bring in its network people from the UM system to look at UMF's sites and possible sites for downtown. She said the network people would submit a formal proposal to the Committee with contracts. Ms. Maiuri said UMF would sign a memorandum with the Franklin County Emergency Management Agency permitting access to the video camera footage in the event there was an actual large-scale emergency so it could coordinate support and provide situational awareness to first responders.

Mr. R. Davis asked why the handout included the amount UMF will receive from Homeland Security (\$12,214) in the total cost from the Town/TIF funds.

Ms. Maiuri said the grant would be used to fund the estimated cost to install the base, cameras, and storage.

Mr. R. Davis said he felt the Committee should show a need based on statistics in order to use the TIF funds.

Deputy Chief Cote said the downtown has increased foot traffic and criminal mischief during the fall and spring, and cameras would help the police.

Ms. Ferguson stated publicizing the installation of cameras could help deter criminal activity.

Mr. Gelinis asked Mr. Moore if downtown Skowhegan saw a decrease in crime once they installed cameras.

Mr. Moore said, yes. He said Farmington has seen an increase in the amount of bars in the last year, and installing cameras would help keep crime down.

Mr. Bell asked what the visual range of the cameras was.

Ms. Maiuri said they have a range of 30-50 meters in infrared.

Discussion followed regarding the number of cameras and locations.

Deputy Chief Cote explained the Homeland Security funds are divided up among the counties, of which Franklin received \$46,000, which was dispersed to the various agencies that applied for funds. He said the Farmington Police Department applied for and received grant funds to replace a mobile data terminal. Deputy Chief Cote said the grant cycle has ended for this year, and we could apply again next year for the camera system.

Mr. Bell asked what the balance was in the Downtown TIF account and if we would have any funding for the camera system after November.

Mr. R. Davis said we are currently "in the hole" so to speak right now because of the Church Street parking lot project, and if the Selectmen fund the same amount as last year, we would have approximately a balance of \$50,000 in the account after the November taxes are collected.

Ms. Maiuri said UMF is looking to do the project next year, and if the Town agrees to a partnership, the Town could begin by installing a base for \$15,000 with two to five cameras and then phase in additional cameras over time.

Ms. Bjorn asked if the owners of the buildings have been consulted regarding permission to mount cameras on their buildings.

Deputy Chief Cote said, not yet. He stated we may have to set a few poles if we can't get permission from the building owners, and he volunteered to walk around town to discuss camera locations. Deputy Chief Cote said the cameras won't read license plate numbers or facial recognition.

Discussion followed regarding cost benefits, leveraging private and TIF money, camera surveillance and site locations, and respecting the Downtown's historic character.

Mr. Mills made a motion to authorize participation in the UMF planning process for a video surveillance system that covers both the UMF campus and the Downtown as referenced in the UMF Crisis Management Team memorandum dated July 13, 2016.

Mr. Moore seconded the motion.

Mr. R. Davis asked Mr. Moore if there was any controversy with the Skowhegan public when they installed the camera system.

Mr. Moore said, no.

Ms. Ferguson asked when UMF would need a financial commitment.

Ms. Maiuri said by the spring of 2017.

VOTE: 8 – Affirmative

ITEM 3: To Hear an Update on the Ingalls School Community Project

Mr. B. Davis said the Ingalls School negotiations with Tri County are at an impasse because he recently learned they would need a minimum of \$600,000 to release the mortgage. He said he researched the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) Tax Credit Program, and he consulted with Sutherland Conservations & Consulting who inspected the property, and they confirmed the building would qualify for the program. Mr. B. Davis said some of the renovations that Tri County did are grandfathered. He said he estimated the tax credit would be \$0.85 on the dollar and it would create \$900,000 in tax credits which is considered equity not debt. Mr. B. Davis said the first cost variable would be paying someone up front to spec out the construction cost, which he estimated to be \$2.6 million. He said the second variable is the amount of rent he could charge is \$1,000 per month, but he would lose \$12,000 per year, and therefore the project is not viable. Mr. B. Davis said it qualifies for low income housing funds, but some of the drawbacks are that it wouldn't add to the economy of the town and he couldn't choose the tenants, and he won't do that again.

Discussion followed regarding attracting a hotel developer, contacting Diane Jackson at the Governor's office, and contacting Kevin Bunker.

ITEM 4: To Hear an Update on the Church Street Parking Lot Project

Mr. R. Davis said the Selectmen awarded the bid to Jordan Excavation from Kingfield at \$149,245 for the entire project, which should be completed by the end of September. He said the building is down and will be trucked away in the next few days. Mr. R. Davis said he will schedule a meeting with the Parking Committee to discuss the regulations for the parking lot.

Mr. R. Davis said the current balance in the TIF account is \$98,265 and there will be some additional costs associated with engineering and oversight. He said we need to capture at least \$50,000 to cover these costs, and he thought the Selectmen would award the same amount as last year, which will leave us with a balance of approximately \$50,000. Mr. R. Davis said he anticipated the Town's mil rate to stay the same or decrease slightly with the current RSU and Town budget representing a wash and the County staying steady. He said we will have some additional capture from the McDonald's and Tire Warehouse renovations, and the Assessor, John O'Donnell, will have the numbers ready next month.

Mr. Moore asked what the number of parking spaces and final cost were.

Mr. R. Davis said the project cost will be approximately \$245,000 with 28 spaces estimated at \$8,750 per parking space, and he stated he sold almost \$6,000 of items that went into the TIF account. He said he thought it would be a good site for public rest rooms which has connections to the water and sewer, and he added, Mr. Kaiser is researching package units that are easy to maintain. Mr. R. Davis said it would be good to make it more connected to businesses on Broadway by using the alley, but Renys is still concerned about liability.

Discussion followed regarding the alley, signage, constructing a roof, lighting, and cameras.

Mr. Gelinas asked about the parking lot abutters purchasing some of the land.

Mr. R. Davis said the abutters would like to purchase 10 feet, and their biggest concern was the drainage, which we will address. He said the plans include constructing a stockade fence along that end of the parking lot to shield the abutters from the headlights.

ITEM 5: To Discuss Future T.I.F. Projects

Mr. R. Davis said Mrs. Hagerstrom had asked that the list be included with the agenda and the updated version was emailed to the members.

Mrs. Gelinas said she provided an earlier version that is incomplete, and she apologized for the confusion.

Mr. Bell said at our previous meeting we did a site walk-over of West Farmington to discuss a possible parking lot or parking spaces at the VIS Park. He said he would like to see a

parking lot installed within the park for six-eight parking spaces that would be accessed by pulling into the park from Bridge Street where the telephone pole is and along the back of the fence. Mr. Bell said it could be designed like the one in Bjorn Park. He suggested we contact the Department of Conservation, who owns the right-of-way, to find out the dimensions and get further information.

Mr. Madore said the post office doesn't allow the public to use their parking lot to access the VIS Park or businesses. He said people could use Madore's Market parking, but they would have to cross the very busy intersection. Mr. Madore stated parking is needed to access the park, and it would give the business owner's incentive to improve their buildings.

Mr. R. Davis suggested moving the sidewalk over into the park to create parking spaces because he wasn't in favor of building a parking lot within the park and reducing the green space.

Mr. Mills said he saw a deed dated approximately 1982 regarding the right-of-way but he didn't remember seeing any deed restrictions.

Mr. Moore stated the Downtown TIF was drawn to include West Farmington, and we want those members to participate, so it would be good to do a project there to show our good faith.

Mr. B. Davis agreed that additional parking would help the distressed businesses.

Mr. Mills recommended they categorize the projects by "A, B, C, D" with "A" being at the top.

The Committee prioritized the following:

A:

- Downtown/West Farmington – public bathrooms
- Downtown/West Farmington – security cameras
- Front Street – road, sidewalk, and lighting improvements
- West Farmington – parking, road, sidewalk, lighting, and traffic light improvements

B:

- Downtown – improving "Reny's Way"

C:

- Downtown/West Farmington - banners

D:

- Downtown – constructing a hotel
- Downtown/West Farmington – Sandy River Bridge

The Committee agreed the remaining items should be deleted from the list.

Mr. Moore said a minimum capture to fund the thirty-year TIF is setting up the business people coming after us with a tool to improve the town.

Mr. Mills cautioned that the Selectmen could decide that the minimum percent captured could then become the maximum.

Mr. Bell suggested we email the Committee members the date for the Selectmen's meeting when they set the mil rate. He suggested we could apply for a grant to leverage additional funds to install the security cameras.

Mr. B. Davis suggested we focus on the "A" projects and research the West Farmington parking lot project to determine if it is feasible.

Mr. R. Davis reminded everyone that some of these projects require on-going maintenance and we will have to establish if it will be paid for from the Town budget or TIF funds.

ITEM 5: To Discuss Other Business

Mrs. Gelinis said she will send out a Doodle Poll for the next meeting in September.

The meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cindy Gelinis, Planning Assistant.