

**Downtown TIF Advisory Committee
153 Farmington Falls Road
November 9, 2016 6:00 p.m.**

Minutes

TIF Committee members present were Richard Davis, Alison Hagerstrom, Ron Gelinias, John Moore, Byron Davis, Joshua Bell, Paul Mills, and Cindy Gelinias. Mike Mansir, Cindi Ferguson, Kevin Madore, and Gary Edwards were unable to attend.

Mrs. Hagerstrom called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

ITEM 1: To Approve the Minutes of the September 21, 2016 Meeting

Mr. Gelinias made a motion to approve the minutes of September 21, 2016.
Mr. Bell seconded the motion.

VOTE: 6– Affirmative 4 – Absent
Motion carried.

ITEM 2: To Review the Status of the Engineering for the West Farmington Parking Development Project

Mr. R. Davis said the Selectmen approved the Dirigo Engineering bid of \$2,500 at their last meeting. He said he met with members of the Village Improvement Society (VIS), Brent Smith, Martha Bessey, Bernice Hoisington, and Sharon Barker, to show them a draft of the layout and get their feedback. Mr. R. Davis said they approved of the plan, and requested improvements to the little island on Bridge Street and relocate the flagpole to the park. He said constructing an additional sidewalk across from the VIS Park on Oakes Street to connect Madore's Market to the Rail Trail, and defining the crosswalk at the intersection, would both improve pedestrian safety. Mr. R. Davis said he would contact Dirigo Engineering to see if these changes would require amending the quote. He said these improvements would provide a safer place to park and create a village atmosphere.

Mr. Bell asked if MDOT would install a flashing light at the intersection.

Mr. R. Davis said MDOT requires a warrant to install a flasher, and there haven't been enough critical incidents at that intersection. He said they have supplied 4-way indicator plates for the stop signs.

Mr. Bell suggested contacting the American Legion to help pay for a new flag pole. He asked if there was any historic significance to the VIS Park.

Mr. Mills said the railroad conveyed it to the Town in mid-1980s, and then in 1990 the VIS recovered it and made improvements.

Mr. R. Davis said the flagpole was in front of the original post office. He said the VIS members asked if the flag pole could be lighted.

Mrs. Hagerstrom said there must be a way because the tree was lighted at Christmas.

Mr. Bell asked about the time frame.

Mr. R. Davis said the preliminary survey and cost estimate should be completed soon.

ITEM 3: To Review the Current Balance in the Downtown TIF Reserve Account

Mr. R. Davis stated the TIF account balance is currently in the red by \$74,226 after the parking lot project. He said we will receive \$125,000 at the end of the year, leaving a balance of \$50,774. Mr. R. Davis said this doesn't include engineering costs for the VIS parking. He stated the Selectmen approved \$4,000 for engineering the Church Street restroom. Mr. R. Davis said it sounds like a lot, but he was told that it involves the same amount of work as a building five times its size. He said we discussed electrical or radiant floor heat, along with lighting, water, sewer, and heating for hot water.

Mr. Moore said \$4,000 to engineer a bathroom is too much, along with the cost for year-round maintenance and utilities.

Mr. Bell said it would be used through Chester Greenwood Day.

Mr. B. Davis suggested installing a temporary building to determine how much it would be used. He said spending \$4,000 on a project that may not be built would be a waste of money.

Mr. Mills asked if the plans would be transportable as far as site design for a different location.

Mr. R. Davis said we have discussed constructing a public bathroom for years and other sites have been considered and rejected for one reason or another, and this became the favored location because of the access to utilities. He said Dirigo would provide estimated construction cost, and it would be designed for durability.

Mr. Moore said there is interest in this project, but at what cost. He said negative comments were posted on the Daily Bulldog when it was proposed a few years ago, and this is a twelve-month operation that will be a significant drain on the TIF account. Mr. Moore said there are bathrooms at the Snack Shack, and fortunately there hasn't been any vandalism.

Mrs. Hagerstrom said the lack of a public restroom was an issue that was documented in the downtown survey conducted several years ago. She said store owners won't allow people to use their restrooms, so they drive to McDonald's and then leave town.

Mr. Gelinis said he thought it could be built without hiring an engineer if we had the criteria and put it out to bid.

Mr. B. Davis estimated it should cost approximately \$15,000 to build, but he would like more public input.

Mr. R. Davis said he doesn't have the expertise to design it, and he thought it was worth hiring someone to design it right the first time.

Discussion followed regarding maintenance and utility costs, operating hours and seasons, accessibility, and dimensions.

Mr. R. Davis said it is up to everyone to decide if they want to do the bathroom project, and the West Farmington parking project would use all the TIF funds.

Mr. B. Davis said the TIF balance would be approximately \$44,493 after all the bills are paid, which isn't a whole lot to complete a project.

Mr. Bell asked about using the reserve account balance from the Public Works sidewalk account.

Mr. R. Davis said a good portion of the sidewalk account has been committed for the new sidewalk going in along the Farmington Falls Road and down through Hippach Field. He said we would have to appropriate more from another account.

ITEM 4: To Discuss new Ideas for Projects

Mr. Mills said the Front Street parking lot should be expanded to utilize the spaces. He said there are currently 21-23 spaces.

Mr. Moore said there are six private spaces for Thai Smile.

Discussion followed regarding the Front Street parking lot.

Mr. Moore asked what the time frame was for the security cameras.

Mr. R. Davis said we need to talk with Ms. Maiuri.

Mr. B. Davis said he is still exploring the Tri County building project. He said Franklin Savings Bank has been very helpful, and they are looking at a program through the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston. Mr. B. Davis said it is possible to do a conventional loan along with historic preservation tax credits. He said additional parking is needed for this project, and by purchasing land from the University Credit Union (UCU), some of the spaces could be open to the public and therefore eligible for TIF and credit enhancement funds. Mr. B. Davis said there would be 18 apartments and it would work out to approximately \$145,000 per unit.

Mr. R. Davis said he just received the new draft approval letter from DECD amending the TIF to include that property, and he added, he has some questions. He said the credit enhancement agreement would require Town Meeting approval.

Mr. Moore said developing the property with 18 apartments within walking distance to downtown would have a significant positive economic impact for the town.

Mr. B. Davis said John Egan at CEI has been very helpful, and he has talked with Efficiency

Maine about solar panels. He said the challenge is knowing feasibility before moving forward because he will have invested a lot into the project, and since the TIF is a piece of this, he needs to know if the project isn't eligible. Mr. B. Davis said the project is very thin and must be sustainable. He said the driveway into the Brick Inn would need to be widened but there is enough room for 10-15 public parking spaces with green space separating the UCU.

Mrs. Hagerstrom said there are housing TIF's that should be explored.

Mr. R. Davis said he is very grateful that we have such an amazing town.

Mr. B. Davis stated the Fairgrounds are under-utilized.

Mr. Mills said the fairgrounds and lot across the street is tax exempt and the organizers are getting older and don't have any incentive to develop and keep it up.

Discussion followed regarding various successful events held in prior years.

Mr. Bell asked about the property in that area with the cascades.

Mr. R. Davis said Patty Cormier, Peter Tracy and members of the Conservation Commission have been working with Mark Fournier, who owns about 40 acres in back of the Cascade Leisure Park, and he wants to donate some of the land with the falls to the town. He said the project is on hold. Mr. R. Davis said it may not qualify for TIF funds but there are other federal grants and other conservation funds.

Mr. B. Davis said a recreational bond just passed. He said the members of Bonney Woods Corporation are expanding the Powder House Hills Park (Flint Woods and Village Woods) to include the Willow Springs land, and they are working with the land Dave Horn owns abutting these properties to expand the trail system for recreational use. Mr. B. Davis said the Center for Community GIS has mapped the trails within town on the east side of the Sandy River and printed it on 11x17 paper, and it could be done for the west side of the river.

ITEM 5: To Discuss Other Business

Mr. R. Davis said Tom Saviello has resigned from the Committee.

Mr. Bell said he has reached out to members about attendance, and he hasn't received a response.

Mr. Mills cautioned that too large a membership may not have a quorum for voting.

Mrs. Gelinias said she will send out a Doodle Poll for the next meeting in January.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cindy Gelinias, Planning Assistant.