

Downtown TIF Advisory Committee
153 Farmington Falls Road
November 10, 2014
Minutes

TIF Committee members present were Richard Davis, Byron Davis, Gary Edwards, Cindi Ferguson, Ron, Gelinas, Alison Hagerstrom, Drew Hufnagel, Mary Lello, John Moore, Tom Saviello, and Joshua Bell. Kevin Madore and Mike Mansir were unable to attend.

Others present were Planning Assistant, Cindy Gelinas; Selectman, Stephan Bunker; Assessor, Mark Caldwell; and members of the press included Ann Bryant of the Lewiston Sun, Bobbie Hanstein of the Daily Bulldog, Kaitlin Schroeder of the Morning Sentinel, and Barry Matulaitis of the Franklin Journal.

Mr. R. Davis thanked everyone for taking the time to volunteer for the committee, and whose task it is to discuss possible projects that could be developed using the Downtown Municipal Tax Increment Financing District and Downtown Omnibus Development Program (TIF) funds. He said the Town would provide the Committee with information, and its recommendations would then be presented to the Board of Selectmen who have control over this fund. Mr. R. Davis said he would conduct the meeting today, and he suggested the committee elect a chairman for future meetings and he would then serve as an advisor. He said everyone received the contact list for committee members, information excerpts from the TIF plan, and the map showing the TIF areas. Mr. R. Davis said the captured assessed value for April 2014 was approximately \$100,000. He stated the cost estimates for projects listed in the excerpts were a requirement of the submission process to the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) for approval of the TIF district plan, and once specific projects were identified, the Town would go out to bid. He said information on the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Downtown Revitalization (DR) program was included, and the TIF funds could be used to leverage the additional \$400,000 DR funds towards concrete sidewalks, granite curbing, and lighting improvements. Mr. R. Davis said we could use any portion of the TIF or it could be used as debt service for a longer-term project such as the proposed Sandy River Bridge which has been mentioned over the years. He said a Walkable Community Audit was conducted a few years ago which included examples such as extending the sidewalks down Front Street as suggested projects. Mr. R. Davis said the Comprehensive Plan also addresses the whole town. He said there's a world of possibilities, a lot of needs, a lot of potential for improving our community, and the TIF funds are available to help spur economic development and business climate.

Discussion followed regarding the TIF map, contacting other communities, DECD, and John Holden to determine what would be the most effective project to succeed in encouraging economic development.

Mr. Moore said he hoped the Committee would be an advocate for the community, and he explained the TIF is a 30 year plan and each year the amount captured can change. He suggested the Selectmen could vote that a minimum percentage, such as 5%, be used for the TIF to make sure projects can move forward, and the town could potentially vote to float a debt service bond.

Mr. Caldwell said the amount of new revenue captured was \$169,000, and 59% of that was eligible to go into the TIF account which totaled \$100,000. He stated that assessed values will grow as time goes on and market values improve.

Mr. B. Davis asked if we could use the TIF for a private property owner such as the Granary to redevelop the area.

Mr. Moore stated this TIF is for an area instead of for a business like the Franklin Printing TIF. He said in Skowhegan they used the TIF and CDBG funds to redo the parking lot, improve sewer and water, and purchase security cameras downtown that were hardwired into the police department that business owners

could also logon and view.

Mr. R. Davis explained the purpose of the Franklin Printing TIF was to purchase machinery to expand and retain jobs.

Mr. Bell said he thought this committee would get ideas from the downtown business owners, and we didn't have to spend the money right now which could be saved towards a future bond.

Mr. Hufnagel said he recently attended an Active Communities conference where he learned that additional funds had become available for projects. He said four communities submitted an application to split those funds, and Farmington planned to put their share of the money towards the bike trail project at Titcomb Mountain. Mr. Hufnagel said Farmington was denied the funds because there wasn't an established healthy active program with signage, safe sidewalks, and a bike or walking trail connecting the downtown with Titcomb Mountain. He said the TIF will open up doors to other funding sources.

Mr. B. Davis stated he thought the town's list of top industries would be tourism which should include lodging, meals, and recreational amenities. He said Farmington has a lot of assets, but it is lacking a hotel in the downtown area which could be tied into the shopping, restaurant, recreation, and cultural experience. He suggested UMF could offer classes in the hospitality industry and students could intern at the hotel.

Mr. R. Davis said the Plan was written with more of a focus on improving the infrastructure and walkable community.

Mr. Saviello said constructing sidewalks down Front Street would help take advantage of our existing amenities such as the Sandy River or the historic aspect of Front Street.

Mr. R. Davis said Front Street has become a major thoroughfare with a traffic count of 7,000 per day. He said the engineering for the street improvements would include installing traffic calming devices that help slow down traffic allowing them to see the businesses.

Discussion followed regarding traffic patterns, bike lanes, signage, Center Bridge, and the proposed bridge.

Mr. Saviello said we could use TIF funds to update the cost analysis for the proposed bridge.

Mr. Bell asked who owns the decorative lights.

Mr. R. Davis said the town owns the poles and CMP owns the light fixtures and is responsible for the repairs.

Mr. Bell suggested buying our own decorative light fixtures and removing the lights off of the poles and therefore save money in the long run.

Mr. Edwards said safety is a big concern in West Farmington because of the high volume of traffic and he sees tractor trailer trucks running through the stop sign at the intersection. He suggested installing a traffic light at the intersection. He said there is a lack of parking available for businesses, and he suggested turning some of the area around the VIS Park into parking spaces.

Discussion followed regarding installing additional parking and a traffic light in West Farmington.

Mr. Saviello said he thought we could begin implementation on the main points discussed today:

1. (Map Ref #7) Engineering a parking plan for West Farmington
2. (Map Ref #5) Engineering plan and applying for CDBG funds to complete Front Street

3. Updating the cost analysis for the proposed bridge
He said having a plan in place would make us more viable for other grants in the future.

Mr. Moore suggested holding back a certain amount of the TIF to invest in future long-term projects such as parking. He said we would be capturing the increase in property values, but if they decreased you wouldn't get anything.

Discussion followed regarding parking, lighting, sidewalks, and facades.

Mrs. Gelinis said the CDBG Letter of Intent for the Downtown Revitalization is due January 30th, and if we are invited into the program, the Application is due April 17th. She said DECD would require a signed letter of commitment for the 25% matching funds from the TIF account, along with further documents. Mrs. Gelinis said late August would be the earliest we could sign the contract with DECD to receive the grant funds. She said the request for proposals for engineering would be done in late fall with construction beginning in the spring of 2016.

Mr. Caldwell suggested the engineering should begin at Front Street and go all the way through to West Farmington this year with the TIF funds.

Discussion followed regarding the CDBG submission and deadlines and the scope of work from Front Street to West Farmington.

Mr. Moore said the Rail Trail is an asset and up in Carrabassett they have provided very simple bathrooms for their trails.

Mr. R. Davis stated the ongoing maintenance costs for the bathrooms would have to be included with the cost of the project. He said he would find out who to contact at the Department of Conservation for further information on the Rail Trail. Mr. R. Davis said for the next Selectmen's meeting on November 18th he would include on the agenda discussing the following:

1. Ask the Selectmen to approve submitting a letter of intent to DECD for the CDBG funds using matching funds from the current debt and TIF account which will have additional funds available as of April 1, 2015.
2. Do a request for proposal for engineering from Front Street through to West Farmington using the same style of amenities to tie the two together.
3. Get an update on the cost analysis for the new bridge.

Discussion followed regarding lighting and signage for bikes.

Mr. Hufnagel volunteered to be chairman for the committee.

Mr. B. Davis said a significant amount of the TIF money came from the new Brookside Village investment, and we need to look for the "next big thing" to help build the fund, like developing the Granary.

Mr. R. Davis said the Town has a Revolving Loan Fund which offers 0% financing for façade improvements.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 7, 2015 at 4:30 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:46 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cindy Gelinis.