



FITCHBURG REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
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166 Boulder Drive, Suite 104 | Fitchburg, MA 01420
978.345.9602 | www.fitchburgredevelopment.com

MEETING MINUTES

October 15, 2020

Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority Office
166 Boulder Drive, Suite 104 East, Fitchburg, Massachusetts

This meeting was conducted over Zoom.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jay Roy, Vice President
Charles Caron, Treasurer
Bud Leonhardt, Member
Laura Bayless, PhD, Member

OTHERS PRESENT: Heather Gould, BSC Group
Jef Fasser, BSC Group
Jay Bry, Vice President of Finance, Fitchburg State University
Tom Skwierawski, Executive Director
Meagen Donoghue, Executive Director, FRA

ABSENT: Tom Donnelly, Chairman

1. MEETING CALL TO ORDER

Treasurer Charles Caron called meeting to order 7:32 a.m.

2. GENERAL BUSINESS

A. Continued discussion of 2040 Urban Renewal Plan

BSC Group consultant Heather Gould asked Mr. Bry what Fitchburg State University's (FSU) investment was in the downtown community. Mr. Bry answered with identifying properties owned by the University within the entire Urban Renewal District, followed by future interests within the downtown.

Ms. Gould asked of what properties were worth identifying in the 2040 Plan from the University's perspective. Mr. Bry noted the Upper Common area, including the former Sentinel Building, City Hall, and moving east, the former Santander Building.

Ms. Gould asked if there are any opportunities to expand housing and other aspects of student life. Mr. Bry indicated there is not from the University's perspective. Mr. Fasser asked what students are looking for outside of campus life as far private/commercial investment. Mr. Bry noted areas to hang out including restaurants, bars, and places like Strong Style Coffee. Dr. Bayless added students are also looking for salons/barbers, laundry facilities, and affordable entertainment besides bars, like Curious Escape Rooms. Mr. Bry said that they hope to get to a point where Main Street is safe and inviting.

Mr. Skierwarski noted that walkability earned the highest score in the Economic Development Strategic Plan, so the need to connect the dots between places like FSU, the Rail Trail and the Intermodal Transportation Center will be important. Dr. Bayless added the University is urging students to visit the University's Community Health Connections office in the Market Basket Plaza, but students have a negative perception of walking there.

Ms. Donoghue asked if there was a push to keep students in the area after graduation like in other communities. Mr. Bry said there has not be in the past but could.

Mr. Roy asked if there were any incentives to have faculty and staff reside in the city. Mr. Bry said there was in the mid-2000s, but there no longer was. Ms. Donoghue indicated that it this topic was within one of the 2020 Plan's objectives.

Mr. Roy asked if the police could be contacted to garner their thoughts on the downtown for the Plan. Mr. Skierwarski indicated he would reach out.

Mr. Bry left the meeting at 8:08am.

The conversation turned to focus on the north of Main Street area as well as the need for improved lighting and safety.

Mr. Fasser asked about the Artist Community. Mr. Skierwarski spoke of the community goal to become a regional center for arts and culture which

will include artist housing at the former BF Brown School, and the Theatre Block.

Ms. Gould outlined next steps to included collecting the notes and compiling into a preliminary report, meeting with the Community Advisory Committee and meeting once again with the Board.

NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: October 20, 2020

Respectfully submitted,

Meagen P. Donoghue
Executive Director