



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

MEETING MINUTES

January 18, 2022

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

Meeting held via Zoom

MEMBERS PRESENT: Charles Caron, Chair
Jay Roy, Vice Chair
Laura Bayless, PhD, Treasurer
Laura O’Kane, Member
Chris Bujold, Member

OTHERS PRESENT: Shon Ranford, Worcester Regional Food Hub
Rick Boscardin, 808 Main Street, Sentinel Building
Sharon Smith, Work Inc.
Tracy Sladen, Work Inc.
Paula Collins, Work Inc.
Paul Lemieux, Work Inc.
Matt Fournier, 409 Main Street
Mary Jo Bohart, Economic Development Director, City of Fitchburg
Meagen Donoghue, Executive Director, FRA
Tony Amico, Facilities Manager, FRA
Sarah Stebulis, Business Administrator, FRA

1. MEETING CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Caron called meeting to order at 7:31 a.m.

2. READING AND APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 21, 2021, MEETING MINUTES

Ms. O’Kane motioned to accept the meeting minutes from December 21, 2021 and enter them into the FRA’s minute’s book. Seconded by Mr. Roy. The motion carried by 5-0 vote.

3. BUDGET AND FINANCE

(1) Summary Report

Ms. Donoghue stated all bills were on normal course. She noted the large payment to the City of Fitchburg that constitutes our quarterly PILOT rates for the first two quarters of 2022.

Ms. Bayless motioned to approve the payment of the attached list of bills. Seconded by Mr. Roy. Motion carried by 5-0 vote.

4. GENERAL BUSINESS

A. Worcester Food Hub

- (1) Mr. Ranford from the Worcester Regional Food Hub introduced himself and his organization and wanted to create a dialog with the FRA to let the Board know of his intentions in Fitchburg. His current space is used as a shared kitchen to support local small businesses and encourage small culinary start-ups in the Worcester region. He is hoping to open a space locally, possibly known as The Fitchburg Public Market, which will run similarly, and he hopes to partner with local Fitchburg organizations such as the FRA, Fitchburg Public Schools, Fitchburg Art Museum and Fitchburg Families First to do outreach and work collaboratively. At this point, he is not asking for any support but wanted to use this meeting as an introduction and let the Board know of his intentions as a partner in Fitchburg.

B. Potential Lease Opportunity

- (1) Ms. Collins from Fitchburg's branch of Work Inc. presented her interest in leasing space in Putnam Place. Work Inc. is an organization headquartered in Boston, with various satellite offices throughout the state. They assist individuals with disabilities or addiction issues to learn life skills and foster career development. They work in conjunction with the Department of Developmental Services and Mass. Rehab to be a local hub for community-based services. They are currently located on Main Street, but their building is in disrepair, and they are interested in Putnam Place due to its safe location, ample parking, central location, proximity to public transit, and that it meets their general philosophy of being in the community. Work Inc. stated that they are a financially stable organization, multi-funded through State agencies, who has a responsive management team who is familiar with doing buildouts and can sign a long-term lease.

Work Inc. is interested in a 5-year lease, with the option to extend. They would like to update flooring and paint, want possible wall configurations, utilize FRA owned cubicles, and add a wall at the back of the space. They are interested in the unit closest to River Styx, previously occupied by the City Hall. They would like to move into the space as soon as possible.

The Board asked Mr. Amico to verify if the HVAC system in the space can be sectioned out and set up properly, as it was previously one large space. The Board told them that if we do the build out, we will have to do a bid process as a public agency, and the cost would be amortized as a loan and built into the lease to be paid back.

Ms. Bohart expressed concern at the loss of their organization downtown, and she asked if they could specify why they were interested in leaving Main Street. Ms. Collins candidly expressed that their small, predominantly female staff of seven, does not feel safe walking downtown, especially at night. She stated that the area where they are currently located is isolated, as other businesses have left, which has added to their worry of safety. The building they are currently in is also very old with many maintenance issues, where heat and air conditioning are not fully functional and there are also hot water issues.

Ms. O’Kane asked if they were allowed to be located next to a brewery, given the population they serve. Work Inc. confirmed that they are able to be located anywhere that fits their mission and this space does qualify.

C. Continued Discussion RE: 409 Main Street Housing Grant Extension

- (1) Matt Fournier, the owner of 409 Main Street requests the renewal of the Main Street Housing Grant, as the grant term ends in January 21, 2022. Mr. Fournier updated the Board on the plans and timeline for this project. He stated that a new roof has been installed, store front for the first floor is on order and exterior upper floor windows will also be replaced. He stated that the first floor will be a restaurant build out, and unfortunately the tenant he had secured has since decided not to open due to covid, so he is looking for a new restaurant tenant. The second and third floors will be residential with 2 - two-bedroom units on each floor. They are currently framed out with rough utilities done (80% of plumbing and 80% of sprinklers completed). Mr. Caron asked how much longer until the project’s completion, to which Mr. Fournier said that he aimed to be completed by the end of the year. Ms. O’Kane asked when he expected the bottom level to be leasable, which he said by Fall at the latest.

D. Continued Discussion River Styx

- (1) Mr. Cullen asked the Board for a rent and loan extension for a few months, as River Styx is working on expansion of distribution from 30 accounts to 150 accounts, as well as working on verifying orders to larger retailers. Mr. Bujold asked if there has been an increase in distribution revenue over the last year. Mr. Cullen stated that they had near zero distribution during their expansion, no revenue in November, and an estimated \$50,000 for December. Mr. Bujold asked what terms these sales were on, and Mr. Cullen stated Net 30. Mr. Bujold asked when their break-even date was. Mr. Cullen stated that he did not know and would have to get back to us with that, but he expected distribution to be \$50,000-\$100,00 per month going forward.

E. Facilities Update

- (1) Mr. Amico stated that during the sprinkler company’s inspection, they encouraged the FRA to do a service that sends a camera down the pipes to locate clogs and check status of the system. The Board asked if the sprinkler company was just trying to make more money, as none had heard of this as a requirement with insurance. The Board asked Mr. Amico to verify with our insurance if this is necessary.

Mr. Amico updated the Board that 3 of the 5 leaking drains in DRS have been repaired. The remaining drains will need a man lift to access, and we could either hire that out now to repair, or wait until DRS gets their manlift, for which the timeframe is unknown.

Ms. O’Kane motioned to approve the repair of the remaining DRS drains immediately. Seconded by Dr. Bayless. Motion carried by 4-0 vote.

Mr. Amico informed that Board that we have a new security company, JR Securities, out of Leominster who is doing the work at the same price as our previous company, but with better service and reports.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Ms. Donoghue informed that Board that she received notification that we are officially out of the running for the bid for Mount Wachusett Community College. She also said a Letter of Intent for Building 3 is being drafted and once we have that, we will use that as the template on which to draw up the lease for the property.

The Board returned to the River Styx discussion of rent/loan extension. Ms. O’Kane expressed that she felt that before they ask for extensions, that all of their bill should be current and paid up to date, which were currently outstanding in the sum of \$17,192.46. Mr. Bujold stated that a break-even analysis should be an expectation on our part and the fact that they didn’t know that should be a red flag to us. Ms. O’Kane stated that in her business, if a tenant asks for relief, they are expected to give documentation of sales and access to their books to verify the need. Mr. Bujold agreed that they need to first get current with outstanding bills and prove a pattern of that before we offer more relief.

Ms. O’Kane motioned to approve River Styx’s request of an extension of rent and loan payments for a period of 3 months. Seconded by Dr. Bayless. Motion failed by 0-4 vote.

Mr. Caron motioned to adjourn the regularly scheduled Board meeting and enter into Executive Session at 9:18 am. Seconded by Ms. O’Kane. The motion carried 4-0.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Caron motioned to adjourn the executive session Board meeting and adjourn at 9:41 am. Seconded by Ms. O’Kane. The motion carried 4-0.

NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: February 15, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah U. Stebulis
Business Administrator