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MEETING MINUTES

December 21, 2021
Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority Office
166 Boulder Drive, Suite 104 East, Fitchburg, Massachusetts

Meeting held in person and via Zoom

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Richard Lapidus, PhD, President, Fitchburg State University
Mary Jo Bohart, Economic Development Director, City of Fitchburg
Jackie Cullen, River Styx
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 7:33 a.m.

2. READING AND APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 16, 2021, MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Roy motioned to accept the meeting minutes from November 16, 2021 and enter them into the FRA’s minute’s book. Seconded by Mr. Bujold. The motion carried by 5-0 vote.

3. BUDGET AND FINANCE

(1) Summary Report

Ms. Donoghue stated all bills were on normal course. She introduced the new Business Administrator, Ms. Sarah Stebulis, who began on November 17, 2021.

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

4. GENERAL BUSINESS

A. FSU Economic Impact Study

(1) President Lapidus presented Fitchburg State's Economic Impact Study of downtown, for which they partnered with the Donahue Institute at UMass. The study particularly focuses on the population of FSU and the benefit of redeveloping the area of the Theater District to act as a catalyst for further investment and improvements downtown. It is the hope that investment in downtown will incentivize private investment, draw new audiences from Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire, create part-time job opportunities for FSU students, and most importantly, bolster small businesses and local tourism. The Board requested further detailed metrics on the age, residence status and actual number of students in order to convey this information to local investors. The redevelopment of the Theater is estimated to hold 1,400 seats, serve 55,000 patrons a year, create 43 jobs and gross \$5.3 million per year. It is also estimated that theater patrons will, on average, spend \$30.25 locally when they come for programming. Potential parking spaces will also be created as part of this plan, they will look into getting exact numbers for the Board.

B. River Styx Request

(1) Ms. Cullen from River Styx approached the Board and asked if they are willing to provide rent and loan deferment for a period of 4-6 months as they transition to their new distribution model. She stated they will continue to pay the loan interest during this period, if approved. Ms. Stebulis submitted to the Board the list of current outstanding invoices that River Styx has due to FRA totaling \$17,850.46. Ms. Cullen said she thought everything was up to date and would need to consult Mr. Cullen about that status. The Board discussed having a special meeting for this request once more information was gathered about the status of outstanding invoices and more information on what they are requesting as far as deferments.

C. Main Street Housing Grant Request

(1) The owner of 409 Main Street requests the renewal of the 20K Housing Grant Reimbursement, as the grant term ends in January. This is the 3rd time requesting a renewal. The Board asked Ms. Bohart if anything has been permitted in the last 6 months, which she said she would look into. The FRA requested to tour the property to see what progress has been made. Ms. Donoghue said she will try to coordinate this with the owner. The Board discussed that from now on all grant requests must have a building permit in hand. The Board also discussed the option that he could re-apply for the grant with our new grant guidelines in place. It was decided to discuss this further when the Board meets to discuss River Styx.

D. URP Discussion

(1) Ms. Donoghue provided the board with information and a list of property owners for each Board member to contact ahead of the January 5, 2022 public meeting.

E. Funding Request

- (1) Ms. Donoghue informed the Board that the Friends of Abolitionist Park are in their 3rd and final phase and seeking funding for which engraved bricks or pavers will be provided as recognition to donors.

Dr. Bayless motioned to approve the donation of \$1,000 to the Friends of Abolitionist Park, for the purchase of one paver indicating the FRA's donation, and the rest in bricks dedicated to specific Fitchburg Abolitionists. Seconded by Mr. Roy. Motion carried by 5-0 vote.

F. Putnam Place

- (1) Facilities Update- Mr. Amico discussed that the electric motors for the heating loop are being rebuilt, rather than replaced, at a cost of \$1500 each. This is half the price of replacing, and they can be done one at a time if desired. He informed the board that the new LED lighting has been installed in all common areas, which will lower our electricity used in those areas as we make steps to go greener. Mr. Amico updated the Board that the rain drain and roof work has been going on this past month and a total of 179 small holes were fixed. Two more drains need to be replaced at DRS, but we are currently needing to get a bigger man lift, which is in process.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Ms. Donoghue indicated she has written a letter of intent to purchase 808 Main Street, The Sentinel Building for \$325,000, per the 2020 plan. Mr. Erb is currently reviewing the paperwork.

Ms. Donoghue suggested that the Board move the Annual Meeting to February 15, 2022, which will allow Ms. Stebulis to get up-to-date on FRA financial matters and be able to produce a more accurate proposed 2022 budget.

Ms. Donoghue informed the Board that Ms. Stebulis will head up a quarterly FRA newsletter in 2022, which will be distributed through our website and Facebook page, as well as through email. Ms. Donoghue suggested using Constant Contact, or a similar service, through which do this. It was suggested that the FRA also create a dedicated LinkedIn account through which to share this, as well as target property owners in our district by adding their email addresses to our list.

The Board asked if Ms. Donoghue could look into any funding available for the FRA to create an Egress and Elevator Grant Program in the first quarter.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Caron motioned to adjourn the regularly scheduled Board meeting and adjourn at 9:32 am. Seconded by Mr. Bujold. The motion carried 5-0.

NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: January 18, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah U. Stebulis
Business Administrator