



FITCHBURG REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
renewing • revitalizing • rebuilding

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

MEETING MINUTES

April 19, 2022

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

Meeting held in person and via Zoom

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Mary Jo Bohart, Economic Development Director, City of Fitchburg
(arrived at 7:36 am)
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 REGULAR AND EXECUTIVE MEETING MINUTES FROM MARCH 15, 2022.

Dr. Bayless motioned to accept the regular meeting minutes from March 15, 2022 and enter them into the FRA’s minute’s book. Seconded by Mr. Bujold. The motion carried by 4-0 vote.

Ms. O’Kane motioned to accept the executive meeting minutes from March 15, 2022 and enter them into the FRA’s minute’s book. Seconded by Mr. Caron. The motion carried by 3-0 vote (Dr. Bayless abstaining.)

Ms. O’Kane motioned to release the minutes from the regular and executive session meeting from March 15, 2022 . Seconded by Mr. Caron. The motion carried by 3-0 vote (Dr. Bayless abstaining).

3. BUDGET AND FINANCE

(1) Summary Report

Ms. Donoghue stated all bills were on normal course.

Ms. O’Kane motioned to approve the payment of the attached list of bills. Seconded by Mr. Bujold. Motion carried by 4-0 vote.

4. GENERAL BUSINESS

A. Vote on Library Parking Lot

Ms. Donoghue stated the Board had previously voted to approve gifting ownership of the library parking lot to the Fitchburg Public Library. Unfortunately, it was never recorded in the Land Deeds office and the previous vote has expired. It is requested to take another vote to give the Library Parking lot to the Fitchburg Public Library, which can then be recorded with the Land Deeds office at the expense of the library.

Ms. O’Kane motioned to approve gifting of the Library Parking Lot to the Fitchburg Public Library. Seconded by Dr. Bayless. Motion carried by 4-0 vote.

B. Putnam Place

(1) River Styx Parking Lot

Ms. Donoghue told the Board that the use of outdoor dining premises has been extended to April 1, 2023. Ms. Bohart included that although that is true, it is still the right of the landlord to allow or not allow that use. Ms. Donoghue stated that River Styx would like to continue with their currently parking lot lease which is active through September 2022, and they want to negotiate terms of new lease after that one expires. Mr. Caron stated that at the last meeting the Board voted on the terms and it is up to River Styx if they would like to accept them or not, and if not, they can discontinue use of that area. Ms. O’Kane stated that it is imperative that they become current with their outstanding invoices. Mr. Bujold suggested giving them a deadline on which to decide if they accept the terms we laid out. Mr. Caron agreed and said our terms were very reasonable given that Leominster is charging \$2,500 and Boston’s North End \$7,500 for seasonal use. The Board agreed that it would be beneficial to decide in September when we know better what our parking lot and tenant needs will be at that time. The Board all agreed that they will not engage in any further negotiations until River Styx is current on their bills for at least 3 consecutive months. Ms. O’Kane added, if they are unable to pay their bills, they need to show the Board financials to prove their need for extensions.

The Board inquired about the food truck parked at River Styx. Ms. Donoghue stated that the Cullen’s are letting the owners of Shake N’ Dog park there as their resident food truck, although they have not asked the FRA or run any plans by us. We are unsure if they are trying to get into a subletting agreement with the truck, but that will definitely affect the leases they are currently on. Ms. Bohart informed the Board that all food truck must have a base of operations with a commercial kitchen for cleaning and waste removal. She was told by the food truck owner that he didn’t know where base of operations would be, but aims to be open at River Styx three days a week. Ms. O’Kane and Mr. Caron both stated that the food truck should only be on site when it is open for operations, and it cannot be stored in our parking lot. Ms. O’Kane stated that the lease should first be reviewed to look at what the subletting language is and move forward based on that. Ms. Donoghue stated that she would contact the food truck owner, and Ms. Bohart said she would share with her the food truck application that she had on file.

(2) Potential Lease for Fitchburg Public Schools Facilities Department

Fitchburg Public Schools is interested leasing the former Planning Space and raw space for a workshop (Suites 102 & 103) for their Facilities Department. They need a new home fairly quickly and have said that they will handle their own electrical buildout. They are requesting a rent schedule to move forward. They are also requesting 4 parking spaces in front of their units, and are working with the City for permission to park their other vehicles in the Putnam Street Parking Garage. Mr. Caron stated if they will be using saws and it could cause noise issues for other tenants, we should add sound remediation to the lease. The Board agreed on \$11 per sq. foot for Suite 102 and \$6 per sq. foot for Suite 103 for a 5-year lease, or minimally a 3-year lease with the option to renew.

(3) Potential Lease for Work Inc.

Ms. Donoghue stated that she continues to work with Work Inc. on finding a space that will work for them at Putnam Place. She suggested to them that they rent the current FRA space (Suite 104), and we relocate temporarily until we find a new redevelopment project or another space locally. A discussion ensued about potential buildings FRA could relocate to including Rollstone Bank, 491 Main Street, and the Theater Block. Mr. Caron said the cost to rent Suite 104 would be \$11 per sq. foot, but we would need to find out where we are going first. Ms. Donoghue said their lease ends in August, but they have the option to go to month to month thereafter, if it takes the FRA extra time to find a place to move to.

(4) Potential Lease for the Fitchburg Public Market

Ms. Donoghue stated that Shon Rainford has shown interest in the entire space previously occupied by Fitchburg City Hall, including the raw space in Suite 105/106 for the Fitchburg Public Market. He needs rental cost information to bring to his Board to create a case for leasing the space. Ms. Donoghue stated that she plans to write grants to bring him to Fitchburg, regardless of if he occupies Putnam Place, as his business would be important for the city. Ms. Bohart added that 35 Main Street was originally supposed to be a shared workspace and they had been talking to Mr. Rainford originally about occupying that building. Ms. O’Kane asked if the kitchen had been built out yet and if he had any written agreements for that space, and Ms. Bohart confirmed that he did not have a contract and the kitchen has not been built out, but 4 hoods have been installed. Ms. Donoghue reiterated that this is ultimately the decision of Mr. Rainford and his Board, and that any issues that Matt Fournier has with Mr. Rainford not occupying 35 Main, is an issue solely between them. Ms. Donoghue stated that Fitchburg could use a food truck commissary and that 35 Main might be a great location for that and that she shared that with Mr. Fournier. Ms. Bohart stated that we should be careful in moving forward because we can’t be in competition as a public sector agency offering lower rent than private owners. Ms. O’Kane stated that we are not undercutting our rents and all rents at Putnam Place are consistent among tenants and we are committed to that as we lease vacant spaces. Mr. Caron asked if the city is going to support the Fitchburg Public Market coming to Putnam Place. Ms. Bohart suggested the FRA reach out directly and she is concerned the optics might not look great since Mr. Fournier is 75% completed on the property. Ms. O’Kane stated that it all also depends on 35 Main even suits Mr. Rainford’s needs and if it doesn’t, the FRA is committed to working with him to get him to Fitchburg, no matter the location.

Ms. Donoghue stated that if they come to Putnam Place, the build-out will be substantial and expected to cost approximately 6 million dollars, which we are hopeful grant money can assist with. Mr. Rainford has an aggressive timeline and hopes to be in a space and operational in Fitchburg by Fall 2023. Mr. Caron and Ms. O’Kane asked if they have any ideas on how they will use the space. Ms. Donoghue stated that it is unknown at this point,

but they have had an architectural team come to see it and they are working on it currently. The Board had a discussion about rent schedules for finished and unfinished space at Putnam Place, and agreed that spaces should be consistent in their rent schedule for all perspective tenants. Ms. Donoghue suggested offering one (1) year rent free for their buildout, and depending on their secured grant funding, perhaps the Board can come back to discuss filling or funding any gaps. The total space they are looking to lease is approximately 14,301 square feet.

Mr. Caron motioned to approve the lease of finished space at the cost of \$11 per square foot, and unfinished space at the cost of \$6 per square foot to Fitchburg Public Market, for a 10-year term with option to review and one (1) year rent free for build-out. Seconded by Mr. Bujold. Motion carried by 4-0 vote.

C. Main Street Housing Program

- (1) Vote to approve allocation of \$25,000 to the 805 Main Street Realty Trust for completed work of five (5) residential units at 805 Main Street.

Ms. O'Kane motioned to approve the allocation of \$25,000 to 805 Main Street Realty Trust for completed work of five (5) residential units. Seconded by Dr. Bayless. Motion carried by 4-0 vote.

D. Fitchburg State University

- (1) Discuss and possibly vote to fund a portion of the Theater Block project
Ms. Donoghue stated that the Black Box Theater has a 3-million-dollar project gap and Jay Bry has inquired if the FRA would like to partner with Fitchburg State University to fund the gap. Ms. Bohart stated that the gap is due to handicapped accessibility. Ms. Donoghue stated that we can also apply for grants on their behalf. The Board discussed it and committed to being a partner with FSU, but would like a timeline and more information. Ms. Donoghue said she would do a Memorandum of Understanding that we are committed to partnering with them in some capacity.
- (2) Discussion on Theater Block Storefronts
Ms. Donoghue has been creatively thinking of where the FRA's headquarters will move if Suite 104 is rented by Work Inc. She reached out and asked if the FRA could occupy one of the store fronts in the Theater Block, in exchange for managing the remaining four (4) storefronts. It is also possible that the FRA and Reimagine North Main can share an office space in this location. Mr. Caron asked what the timeline was on the storefronts. Ms. Bohart said she believed within the next year. Ms. Donoghue stated it would be temporary, because the plan is for those storefronts to be turned into the Theater lobby in 5 years.

E. Facilities Update

Mr. Amico stated that landscapers for this year have been chosen after he received multiple quotes. He also has been working to get quotes on repairing the roof leaks, with roll roofing quotes coming back between \$120,000-\$160,000. Mr. Amico said walking on the roof with the contractors was eye opening and the roof is approximately 20 years old and nearing the end of its life. The entire roof will need to be re-done in the near future. Mr. Caron asked if Mr. Amico could get quotes to have the entire roof recoated and fix the leaking spots, and suggested getting it recoated as soon as possible, since a full replacement

will probably be in the range of \$500,000. Mr. Caron said that if we could have the whole roof recoated, it would last another 20 years and has a similar life as the original rubber roof. Dr. Bayless agreed that this should be prioritized. Ms. O’Kane noted that roofing supplied are about 20 weeks out from order at this time, so we should schedule as soon as possible.

Mr. Amico said that he recently had a Fire Alarm inspection at DRS and realized that most of the Board has never seen their extensive operation. He asked DRS if they could offer the Board a tour if there was interest, especially with all the improvements and investment they have made in their space. The Board agreed they would love to see it, and Ms. Bohart said she would be interested in that as well. Mr. Caron asked if Mr. Amico could schedule it for Friday, April 22, 2022 at 9 a.m.

F. Business Administrator’s Update

Ms. Stebulis gave an update to the Board on what she has been working on this past month, in addition to her regular bookkeeping duties. She has gone through the process on Google to verify the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority’s account, which gives us access to change and alter pertinent information about our business when people search our name. She has also created a Mailchimp account to begin collecting email addresses for local marketing and sharing of our upcoming newsletters. Ms. Stebulis is also heading up the creation of our first FRA Quarterly Newsletter.

G. Funding Request

(1) Civic Days

Ms. Donoghue informed that Board that Civic Days will be live again in 2022 after taking time off due to the Covid Pandemic. They are currently seeking donations, and in the past, the FRA has donated \$5,000.

Mr. Caron motioned to approve the donation of \$5,000 to Civic Days. Seconded by Ms. O’Kane. Motion carried by 4-0 vote.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Ms. Donoghue said that the Urban Renewal Plan has been completed and that she will be scheduling a separate, dedicated meeting for the Board to approve it. Dr. Bayless asked if any of the properties that were suggested at the City Council meeting had been added. Ms. Donoghue stated that Mr. Skwierawski suggested more additions and the FRA reached our limit financially of what we could have the consultants add. She did say that we are able to add properties down the line if we would like to do an amendment to the plan.

Ms. Donoghue has been invited to join Senator Cronin with Senate President Spilka, to do a walking tour of downtown Fitchburg, which is an exciting honor.

Mr. Bujold mentioned that the Circle Street bridge project plan has not been approved yet, but once done, the Board should discuss this. Mr. Caron stated that he thinks the FRA should do something with this area once our Urban Renewal Plan has been approved. Mr. Bujold said he would get the property owners contact information to Ms. Donoghue.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. O’Kane motioned to adjourn the Regular Board meeting at 9:25 am. Seconded by Dr. Bayless. The motion carried 4-0.

NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: May 17, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah U. Stebulis
Business Administrator