



FITCHBURG REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
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MEETING MINUTES

May 17, 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
Jay Roy, Vice Chair (arrived at 7:58 a.m.)
Chris Bujold, Treasurer
Laura Bayless, PhD, Member
Laura O’Kane, Member

OTHERS PRESENT: Owen Grant, Mad River Solar
Thomas de Neufville, Mad River Solar
John Barrett, Attorney for Mad River Solar
Bill Krikorian (arrived at 7:44 a.m.)
Elmer Melendez
Mary Jo Bohart, Economic Development Director, City of Fitchburg
(arrived at 7:47 a.m.)
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 7:37 a.m.

2. READING AND APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FROM APRIL 19 & MAY 3, 2022.

Mr. Caron 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.

3. BUDGET AND FINANCE

(1) Summary Report

Ms. Donoghue stated all bills were on normal course.

Mr. Caron motioned to approve the payment of the attached list of bills. Seconded by Dr. Bayless. Motion carried by 4-0 vote.

4. GENERAL BUSINESS *(items taken out of order from posted agenda)*

A. Solar Power Contract

(1) Mad River Solar/Duke Energy

Ms. O’Kane recused herself from any discussion or vote regarding this company.

Representatives from Mad River Solar joined the meeting and presented the Board with their plan to build a solar array on Ashburnham Street in Fitchburg. They are trying to develop this array under MA SMART program, for which they need a public entites participation. They are inquiring if the FRA would partner with them for a power purchase agreement. As such, the FRA would be a customer who purchases generated power, for which we would get a 10% discount on our energy bills. Mr. Caron asked of the 10% savings is guaranteed and if it is net. Mr. Grant confirmed that it was guaranteed and net. Mr. Bujold asked if the 10% is a maximum, minimum or annual average. Mr. Grant confirmed that it is a consistent 10%. Mr. Caron asked what they are asking from the FRA as a commitment. Mr. Barrett said it would be a 20-year contract and for the life of that we would get the 10% discount. Mr. Amico stated he didn’t know if we were eligible for this as we already have a locked in, discounted rate on our energy from Unitil. Mr. Caron stated that we would first need to look into our current agreement with Unitil and discuss this further. Dr. Bayless stated that it would be good for us to move toward more renewable energy sources, but she is not sure of this was the way. Mr. Caron agreed and felt like a 10% discount is on the low side. Mr. Bujold asked if the FRA could do this ourselves with putting solar panels on our roof. Ms. Donoghue stated that she is interested in learning more about have solar panels in our parking lot, as that seems to be popular right now and could also offer shade to tenants in the lot. She asked Mr. Amico if he could inquire with the City about what their commitment is with their solar agreement and if they are satisfied with the partnership.

Thomas de Neufville, Owen Grant and John Barrett left the meeting at 8:00 a.m.

B. 520 Main Street

(1) Bill Krikorian to present

Mr. Krikorian came to ask the Board what the status was of the Johnsonia lot at 520 Main Street and if we would be going out to RFP for it. He expressed interest in purchasing the property. His plan would be new construction with first floor commercial, and to use the maximum number of units allowed by zoning for residential units on the upper floors. He asked if there was availability of parking in the adjacent parking garage, to which Ms. Donoghue confirmed that there is an easement to use the parking garage for that lot, but she would need to get back to him on the exact number of parking spots allotted. Mr. Krikorian stated he is looking for what criteara the Board has and the purchase price we are asking for the lot. Mr. Caron asked what the status was of Mr. Krikorian’s other development projects downtown. Mr. Krikorian gave an update on his properties statuses and the aggressive national marketing campaign that he has started for them. He stated that cost of materials and transportation and labor shortage and cost has made it difficult to develop and sell properties the last few years.

Mr. Roy asked what the breakdown of market rate and affordable low cost housing he would estimate for that building. Mr. Krikorian stated he would do 75% affordable/25% market

housing and that he felt a full market rate site was not possible with the city's demographics. The Board disagreed and cited a successful full market rate building that is completely occupied. Ms. Bohart mentioned that the tax credits for making it affordable housing help make the project worthwhile. Ms. O'Kane mentioned that there may also be MBTA communities transportation credits available. Ms. Bohart gave some more information on the status of those programs and potential credits. Mr. Krikorian stated that if we agree to move forward, we need to start by agreeing on a purchase price. Mr. Bujold asked him what was his perception of the value of the property. Mr. Krikorian stated that he would offer the FRA \$250,000 as long as there is a parking agreement with the garage in place, for the lot. He estimated approximately 40-50 residential units as well as first floor commercial, which he said would be necessary financially to make the project financially work. Mr. Roy stated that a 5-6 story building would be the maximum because the proposed building would need to blend into the character of downtown, especially since this is a prominent site. Mr. Roy asked who would know about use and vacancy of that parking lot. Ms. Bohart said the City Treasurer is also the Parking Clerk and that would be where to start. Ms. Bohart asked how many stories the Johnsonia was, and Ms. Donoghue stated that it was 5 stories. The Board asked for Mr. Krikorian to provide a draft from an architect of what he would plant to do, as well as a cash flow analysis, before moving forward.

Mr. Krikorian left the meeting at 8:32 a.m.

Mr. Melendez also attended the meeting and expressed interest in purchasing the lot at 520 Main Street, and would like the opportunity to submit a proposal. He stated that he continues to be committed to building and investing in Main Street and keeping investment in Fitchburg. M

Fitchburg. Mr. Bujold asked if he was interested in that particular lot or any lot on Main Street, and Mr. Melendez stated that specific lot. Mr. Caron reiterated that we are looking for a comparable building to the Johnsonia on that lot.

C. Food Truck RFP

- (1) Review and vote to approve

D. Solar Power Contract

- (1) Mad River Solar/Duke Energy

Mr. 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.

E. 1 Wood Place

(1) Update

F. 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.

G. 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.

H. Funding Request

- (1) Chamber Annual Meeting & Expo
- (2) Arc of Opportunity Annual Charity Auction

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: June 21, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah U. Stebulis
Business Administrator