



FITCHBURG REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
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MEETING MINUTES

September 20, 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 7:54 a.m.)
Laura Bayless, PhD, Member
Laura O’Kane, Member

OTHERS PRESENT: Stephen I. DiNatale, Mayor, City of Fitchburg
Tom Skwierawski, Planning Executive Director, City of Fitchburg
Mary Jo Bohart, Economic Development Director, City of Fitchburg
(arrived at 7:38 a.m.)
Patrick Mahoney, Guardian Energy Management
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 7:36 a.m.

2. READING AND APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES FROM AUGUST 23, 31 & SEPTEMBER 14, 2022

Board members discussed needing to abstain from voting on meeting minutes for which they weren’t present.

Mr. Roy motioned to accept the regular meeting minutes from August 23, 2022 and enter them into the FRA’s minute’s book. Seconded by Dr. Bayless. Ms. O’Kane abstained. The motion carried by 3-0 vote.

Ms. O’Kane motioned to accept the regular meeting minutes from August 31, 2022 and enter them into the FRA’s minute’s book. Seconded by Mr. Roy. Dr. Bayless abstained. The motion carried by 3-0 vote.

Dr. Bayless motioned to accept the regular meeting minutes from September 14, 2022 and enter them into the FRA's minute's book. Seconded by Mr. Roy. Ms. O'Kane abstained. The motion carried by 3-0 vote.

3. BUDGET AND FINANCE

(1) Summary Report

Ms. Stebulis stated all bills were on normal course. Mr. Caron asked if Ms. Stebulis could look into taking advanced QuickBooks classes to fully utilize the power of the system. Ms. Stebulis said she would look into that and also try to run a budget vs. actual update for 2022 for the next Board Meeting.

Ms. O'Kane motioned to approve the payment of the attached list of bills. Seconded by Dr. Bayless. Motion carried by 4-0 vote.

4. GENERAL BUSINESS

A. Car Charging Station Installation Plan

(1) Patrick Mahoney of Guardian Energy Management

Mr. Mahoney introduced himself and began his presentation regarding the potential installation on electric vehicle charging stations at Putnam Place. He stated that his recommendation would be for 2-dual charging stations, as well as a pad for the transformer. The location of this could also be beneficial as it will allow for electricity to the area where the FRA has envisioned food trucks being able to set up. The charging stations would be visible from the street and are proposed to be level 2 stations from Power Options, each a 20-30 amp medium speed charging station, not quick charge stations. Out of pocket cost for this would be approximately \$84,000 to the FRA after the application of available grant funding. Mr. Mahoney stated that few private locations offer quick charge, and they are mostly seen on the interstates and are significantly more expensive. Ms. Bohart asked how long the level 2 station takes to charge. Mr. Mahoney stated that most people use it to top off energy, not fill from empty, and zero to full is approximately 4 hours. Ms. Bohart stated that urban districts such as ours are unique as some electric car owners don't have the means of a driveway or garage in which to charge their car. Mr. Mahoney stated that high speed (level 3) units are DC units and would need a new electrical service from the level 2 units that use AC. Mr. Mahoney stated that people parking their car at chargers for long periods of time is often a concern, and that there are ways to put a time limit on parking or charge extra after a certain time to reduce site camping.

Mr. Caron stated that he's spoken to many electric car owners and the unanimous consensus is that a fast-charging station is always more desirable. Mr. Skwierawski stated that most municipalities are installing level 2 at this time. Mr. Mahoney stated that Mass DEP will need additional justification to award grant money for level 3 charging stations. Mr. Caron asked how long the process will take from start to finish, and Mr. Mahoney said the timeliest part is securing grant funds, which could take 2-3 months, but installation is 7-10 days. Dr. Bayless asked if there were any supply chain issues with parts, and Mr. Mahoney stated that once contracted, they put a hold on materials, so they are reserved.

Mr. Roy arrived at the meeting at 7:54 a.m.

The Board agreed to continue discussing this at the next meeting and get additional information about level 3 charging stations to compare. *Mr. Mahoney left the meeting at 7:56 a.m.*

B. Putnam Place

(1) Temporary Library Space

a. Continued discussion of

Mayor DiNatale said they have an issue with their budget only being \$400,000 and still needing the entire space available at Putnam Place. Ms. O’Kane asked what they desired number is. Mayor DiNatale said \$5 per square foot or less. Mr. Caron pointed out for comparison that the city is asking \$5-8 for per square foot in their RFP’s for subpar, unfinished space. Mayor DiNatale requests the Board to assist the City in staying within budget on this project and asked why the FRA is interested in the property at 491 Main Street as part of this deal. Mr. Skwierawski stated that 491 Main Street is valued near its assessment at \$375,000 and is only worth swapping if it works make equal value in a rent reduction. Mr. Caron stated that there is no way that property is valued at that in the condition it is in and with the repair work needed to bring it back to life. Ms. O’Kane asked how much finished verses storage space is needed, and they said 14,000 sq. ft. finished and 12,000 sq. ft. storage is needed. Mr. Skwierawski stated that even at \$3 a square foot with CAM and utilities, the city will be over budget. Ms. Donoghue stated that the space previously rented by City Hall in 2016 was at \$9 sq foot which included CAM charges, but not utilities. Ms. O’Kane asked if build out costs are separate from the \$400,000 and the confirmed they were separate. She stated that we need to know what our breakeven number is. Mr. Skwierawski stated that he felt \$7 per square foot is fair for the blended space. Ms. Donoghue stated that she is disappointed that the FRA is not being seen as a tool for the redevelopment of 491 Main Street. She stated that if it is not part of the deal at this time, that she hopes the discussion can continue about the FRA redeveloping this difficult building.

Mr. Skwierawski stated that the library must move out of their current space by October because the heating system is not functioning. He stated that they can talk to the library about \$7 a square foot, but he doesn’t want 491 Main Street being used as a pawn in the deal since the City wants the most out of this property. Mr. Caron stated that the FRA is always working in the best interests of advancing Fitchburg, which is why we are interested in redeveloping that building. Mayor DiNatale thanked the FRA for all they have done and asked if we can continue to help. He stated that he is meeting with the library tomorrow and will know more precisely their needs after that.

Mayor DiNatale and Mr. Skwierawski left at 8:22 a.m.

(2) River Styx

a. Discuss Mechanics Lien regarding FRA Lease

Ms. Donoghue stated that she has not received much communication from them lately. She did send the letter of notice regarding the lean threat via registered mail. Mr. Caron asked if a lien was in fact put on the property. Ms. Donoghue stated that she believes there is and, in her letter, she has asked for a time line and plan of action for River Styx to remedy the issue. Mr. Roy asked if we know the amount that River Styx has defaulted on, and Ms. Donoghue stated that we do not know. Ms. Donoghue stated that she will check with the Registry to see if a lien was registered. Mr. Caron also added that they have been taking up space in the loading dock and Building 3 to store items without permission. Ms. O’Kane

stated that we should write a letter requesting they vacate their items from the common spaces.

C. Urban Renewal Plan

(1) MEPA Process

Ms. Donoghue stated that the final process in approving our new Urban Renewal Plan is MEPA Approval and it has come to light that BCS Group had dropped the ball on timing and applying for that, although this was a part of their original scope of work. Since then, the pricing and requirements have changed and BCS Group is requesting additional money to complete the application process. Ms. O’Kane asked for clarification that BCS Group dropped the ball and are now requesting an additional \$10,000, and Ms. Donoghue confirmed. Dr. Bayless asked what the MEPA process consists of and if it’s something we can do ourselves or find a different contractor who can do it for us. Ms. O’Kane asked how far into the process they are and if this was in our contract.

(2) 1 Wood Place

Ms. Donoghue continued the discussion stating that 1 Wood Place had been approved to be included through an amendment into our URP, contingent on MEPA approval. Ms. Donoghue stated that the cost was originally included in the scope of work. Mr. Caron stated that they need to eat the cost if they dropped the ball and new requirements must be met. Ms. O’Kane agreed that they are obliged to fulfill their contract. Dr. Bayless stated that she is in favor of telling them it’s their responsibility, as well as looking into other options to file the paperwork separate from BCS Group. Ms. Donoghue stated that the owner of 1 Wood Place is still interested in selling directly to us for the time being.

D. FRA Grant for Critical Improvements

(1) Review and Approve

Ms. Donoghue presented the application to the Board for the new grant program. She added that there has already been interest. Dr. Bayless asked if this was moving too fast for applicants to be done by the end of the year. Ms. Donoghue stated that since this is a reimbursement, work can already have been completed and if it’s completed by December 31st, it will qualify. Ms. O’Kane asked if including ADA upgrades can be included in the wording.

Mr. Caron motioned to approve the FRA Grant for Critical Improvements with addition of ADA Upgrades in the application. Seconded by Ms. O’Kane. Motion carried by 4-0 vote.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

A. Facilities Update

Mr. Amico stated that Unitil is doing a cable switchover in the upcoming weeks and has worked with all tenants to ensure the timeframe works for all. A discussion about CAD plans of Putnam Place led Ms. O’Kane to suggest getting our building scanned to have exact footprint plans and square footages. Mr. Amico stated the unfinished space in Suite 103 currently has no electricity or lighting. Ms. O’Kane stated that any rentable space needs lighting, and it should be LED. The Board agreed that Mr. Amico should have the same new LED lights installed throughout the building, including in the old City Hall space, to create uniformity. Mr. Caron asked if the landscapers could clean the area behind the building and if Mr. Amico can have the fence repaired there.

Ms. O’Kane left the meeting at 9:19 a.m.

B. Business Administrator’s Update

Ms. Stebulis stated that staff has collectively been working to streamline and verify square footage and proposed CAM charges for the available space in Putnam Place. She stated that the latest newsletter is on track to release in conjunction with our new grant programs.

C. Executive Director’s Update

Ms. Donoghue continued with a brief description on ongoing projects that she is working on.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Roy motioned to adjourn the Regular Board meeting at 9:44 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Caron. The motion carried 3-0.

NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: October 18, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah U. Stebulis
Business Administrator