



FITCHBURG REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
renewing • revitalizing • rebuilding

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

MEETING MINUTES

January 17, 2023

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, Treasurer
Laura O’Kane, Member
Maribel Cruz, Member

OTHERS PRESENT: Michael Esposito
Scott Churchill
Nicholas Vasquez
Liz Murphy, Director of Housing and Development, City of Fitchburg
Mary Jo Bohart, Economic Development Director, City of Fitchburg
(arrived at 8:42 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 7:40 a.m.

2. READING AND APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 20, 2022

Mr. Roy motioned to accept the regular meeting minutes from December 20, 2022 and enter them into the FRA’s minute’s book. Seconded by Ms. O’Kane. Dr. Bayless and Ms. Cruz abstained. The motion carried by 3-0 vote.

3. BUDGET AND FINANCE

A. Summary Report

Ms. Stebulis stated all bills were on normal course. She stated that there was one addition to the list of bills to pay, which is a payment for Attorneys Erb & Southcotte for services rendered in the total of \$6,375.00.

Ms. O’Kane motioned to approve the payment of the attached list of bills with the addition of Erb & Southcotte for \$6,375.00. Seconded by Mr. Roy. Dr. Bayless and Ms. Cruz abstained. Motion carried by 3-0 vote.

4. GENERAL BUSINESS

A. Request to Lease Suite 102

1. Michael Esposito and team will present

Mr. Esposito and his team introduced themselves as Pure Synergies Companies, a plant science laboratory specializing in horticulture technologies. He stated that his desire to be at Putnam Place comes from working with his father here, as well as the movement of agricultural companies in and around Fitchburg. They feel that Suite 102 is ideal for their needs and would require minimal changes. They will do all the build-out and already have contractors lined up and ready to go. Venting would be similar to what NEON currently does. They would propose a 3-year lease period to begin. Their goal is serve a broad range of horticultural clients and create jobs for local residents and internships for Fitchburg State students. Mr. Roy asked what the product is that they produce. Mr. Esposito stated that it’s not a fertilizer, but similar to a vitamin that stimulates plant growth. Mr. Roy asked if they are working with anyone in Fitchburg now, and Mr. Esposito said not yet. Mr. Caron asked who they are working with currently, and Mr. Esposito stated they are currently testing the product and have no large contracts yet. Ms. Cruz asked how many employees they have, and Mr. Esposito said 4, with the goal to increase job opportunities. Mr. Caron asked how much of the space would need to be reconfigured. Mr. Esposito stated about half, and they plan to sublease the front half of space to a community artist who is currently operating a pottery studio in Boston and wants to move it out west. Ms. O’Kane asked how much space they need, and Mr. Esposito stated less than 1,000 sq ft. Ms. Donoghue asked if they would push out the sublessees if they needed more space, and they confirmed that they would expand into that space as their needs change.

Michael Esposito, Scott Churchill, Nicholas Vasquez left the meeting at 8:00 a.m.

Ms. Donoghue stated that we do allow for subleases in our standard lease agreements. Ms. O’Kane added that it is usually a similar use those and you want to make sure the lease structure is set up so they don’t make money off the sublessee. Both Mr. Caron and Ms. O’Kane said particular attention to detail must be given to drafting the lease to prevent problems with this. Mr. Caron said that he would like to see a layout of what they envision for the space, including the subleased space. Ms. Donoghue said that she would ask them for more information to discuss at the next meeting, as well as offering them the chance to apply for our Design Grant.

Mr. Roy asked why we have tenant reserved parking spaces, as typically those should be for the building’s customers. The Board agreed with this point and wanted to discuss this further, especially as our building’s vacant units are filled.

B. Putnam Place

1. Continued discussion on EV Charging Stations

Ms. Donoghue has not been able to get in touch with Jay Bry at Fitchburg State to answer the Board’s questions. The Board continued their discussion of EV Charging Stations, and

all members were in favor of fast charging. They felt starting with 2 lines and adding the capability to expand to add 4 additional lines is where they should begin.

Mr. Roy motioned to approve the start of pricing out fast charging EV stations with two units to start, and infrastructure run to expand by an additional 4 (allowing for 6 total stations ultimately) Seconded by Ms. O’Kane. Ms. Cruz Abstained. Motion carried by 4-0 vote.

2. River Styx

Ms. Donoghue stated that as of January 5th a complaint has been filed by Stack & Co, and River Styx is now getting a lien bond.

Dr. Bayless left the meeting at 8:21 a.m.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

A. Facilities Update

Mr. Amico stated that ADA door by the Registry of Deeds has been repaired.

Mr. Amico said that the glycol is scheduled to be delivered on January 20th. He said that DRS is still working on the concrete floor reinforcement. Mr. Caron asked if we could get a better warning system from Burnell Controls when there is an emergency, other than just email. Mr. Amico said he would look into it.

Ms. O’Kane asked for an update on the switch gears. Mr. Amico stated that DRS has purchased another gear that will be here soon. Mr. Amico stated that he is still writing the RFP for a project manager.

B. Business Administrator’s Update

Ms. Stebulis stated that the fiscal year ended strong, and she is working to gather figures for the 2023 Annual Budget and CAM budget to present at the Annual Meeting. All current tenants' leases have been scanned/digitized on our One Drive so all staff has access to them. We have switched website hosting and updating from Sitka Creations to Fitchburg Fiber for cost effectiveness. In the coming months, Fitchburg Fiber will assist in training staff on WordPress so we can take more control over managing our own updates and further reduce costs. Mr. Roy asked if he could do the training with us once scheduled and Ms. Stebulis stated that she would include him in the future scheduling of it. Ms. Stebulis is working on sending 1099’s this year in-house, which is something our payroll company did for us last year. She is also working with tenants to ensure we have up-to-date certificates of liability converge on file. Mr. Caron, Ms. Donoghue and Ms. Stebulis have a meeting with Worker’s Credit Union on January 17th to close the savings account and move it to Enterprise Bank.

C. Executive Director’s Update

Ms. Donoghue stated that all documents have now been recorded for the Airport Road property. GFI will be buying the property in March and moving forward. It will be one large building, the majority of which will be in Fitchburg, encompassing 2-3 distributors and has also been designed to break out into smaller units if needed.

Ms. Donoghue stated that MEPA will review our application and come back to us with any issues or corrections. There were 3 pages of requirements of parties that needed to be notified, and necessary newspaper notices, all of which have been done.

The Board discussed canceling the regularly scheduled February 21st meeting as Ms. Donoghue will be on vacation. The Board agreed to cancel and hold the Annual Meeting on March 1, 2023 at 7:30 a.m.

She stated that she will be holding employee reviews the week of January 23, and asks the Board to hold an executive meeting to review the Executive Director, as well as go over other staff reviews. The Board agreed to meet January 25th at 7:30 a.m. for executive session.

6. PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Liz Murphy updated the Board as to pertinent news from the city's Planning and Economic Development Department. She told the Board that the Woolworth's building is not going to be occupied by the Seventh Day Adventist. The city has accepted a proposal for the wastewater facility; it will be a bioscience company who is creating fertilizer. The Vacant Property Ordinance has been passed by City Council for both residential and commercial properties. It will set a gradual increase in recording fees each year and ultimately lead to a lien on the property if not paid. RFP's for many city properties are due January 19th, she asked Ms. Donoghue if she would like to sit on the review committee for this, which she confirmed she would. Ms. Murphy stated that the old Courthouse is being given to the city, so it won't be given back to the state. She stated that Shon Rainford of the Fitchburg Public Market has applied for CBDG funding to open the food hub in Fitchburg at Matt Fornier's building at 35 Main Street. She stated that the city received a \$25,000 professional services grant to study the market of downtown visitorship and day to day use in the city. The outcome will be a thorough data analysis report of the service market of downtown Fitchburg.

Ms. Donoghue added that the Food Truck Festival will be May 20th and is jointly hosted by the FRA, InTown Fitchburg, City of Fitchburg and Woo Trucks.

Mr. Roy asked if the city provides any assistance for local businesses to create a website. He suggested a grant from the city or FRA to fill this need. Ms. Murphy said that she would mention this to InTown Fitchburg today, as it seems in line with their mission. The possibility of a partnership with Fitchburg State's website and technology program could also be discussed. Ms. Murphy said this is also part of the Downtown Coordinator's position's goal.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Roy motioned to adjourn the Regular Board meeting at 9:37 a.m. Seconded by Ms. O'Kane. The motion carried 4-0.

NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: March 1, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah U. Stebulis
Business Administrator