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MEETING MINUTES

September 19, 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
Maribel Cruz, Treasurer
Laura O’Kane, Member

OTHERS PRESENT: Elisha Erb, Attorney, Erb & Southcotte
Matthew Houghton, Weston & Sampson
Christopher McCrackin, Weston & Sampson
Ken Dupont, DPW, City of Fitchburg
Rich Darshe, IVJ Group
Greg Moran, IVJ Group
Pedro Soto, Mass Development
Derek Craig, Director, Fitchburg’s Creative Cities
Tamar Russell-Brown, Chair, Fitchburg Cultural Council
Liz Murphy, Executive Director, Community Development & Planning, City of Fitchburg
Mary Jo Bohart, Economic Development Director, City of Fitchburg
Meagen Donoghue, Executive Director, FRA
Sarah Stebulis, Business Administrator, FRA

1. MEETING CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Caron called meeting to order at 7:36 a.m.

2. CHECK PRESENTATION TO LIBRARY OWL CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

The Board of Directors presented a \$50,000 donation to the Fitchburg Public Library’s Owl Capital Campaign and a photo was taken to commemorate the gift.

3. READING AND APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FROM AUGUST 15, 2023, AND VOTE TO APPROVE AND RELEASE EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING MINUTES FROM AUGUST 15, 2023.

Ms. O’Kane motioned to accept the regular meeting minutes from August 15, 2023 and enter them into the FRA’s minute’s book. Seconded by Mr. Roy. The motion carried by 4-0 vote.

Ms. O’Kane motioned to accept the executive session meeting minutes from August 15, 2023 and enter them into the FRA’s minute’s book. Seconded by Mr. Roy. The motion carried by 4-0 vote.

Vote to release Executive Session Minutes will take place at October 17, 2023 meeting.

4. BUDGET AND FINANCE

A. Summary Report

Ms. Stebulis stated all bills were on normal course and that some items which are outside of our regular monthly expenses were for building maintenance and repairs. She offered the Board an updated Profit and Loss report which she felt gave a more comprehensive look at the finances for the current and previous year.

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

5. GENERAL BUSINESS

A. Sewer Separation Discussion

1. Matthew Houghton and Christopher McCrakin from Weston & Sampson and Ken Dupont, City of Fitchburg DPW to present

Mr. Houghton presented the Board with a proposal to separate the sewer on the property of Putnam Place in two locations in order to increase stormwater load capacity. The project would be funded by MassDEP. All existing drainage on our property would be tied into the new drainage system, and the city would have a sitewide easement in which they are responsible for all future maintenance of the system. They would also restore all pavement and parking lot striping that was disrupted during the project. Mr. Caron asked about backflow and Mr. Houghton said they could put in backflow preventers to protect our building. He also said that all work timelines would be coordinated with the FRA and our tenants, and that construction would likely be in 2025. The Board stated they would like Mr. Hasche to speak to DRS about this before the FRA is able to be fully committed.

Matthew Houghton, Christopher McCrakin, and Ken Dupont left the meeting at 8:01 a.m.

B. Iver Johnson Development Request

1. Developers Rich Darshe and Greg Moran to present
Mr. Darshe gave an overview of the IVJ Group’s 2018 purchase of the Iver Johnson

buildings and their plans to restore and convert it to market rate housing. They are working with the National Parks Service and the Massachusetts Historical Commission to take advantage of tax credits on the project, but still have a funding gap that they are looking to close before they can move forward on the project. They are respectfully requesting the Board consider using a portion of Senator Cronin's FRA earmarked funds to bridge this gap.

Rich Darshe and Greg Moran left the meeting at 8:46 a.m.

C. Creative Cities

1. Pedro Soto, Mass Development & Derek Craig, Director of Fitchburg's Program to present
Mr. Soto made a presentation to the Board about the Creative Cities program and their goal of building creative infrastructure within existing cities through partnerships with arts and cultural institutions. They are in the early stages of trying to identify areas of mutual collaboration with the FRA and other city entities. They are specifically looking to activate underused public space that is owned by the FRA.

Pedro Soto and Derek Craig left the meeting at 8:46 a.m.

D. Sculpture Park

1. Tamar Russell-Brown to present
Ms. Russell-Brown approached the Board as the Chair of the Fitchburg Cultural Commission and asked if the FRA would consider housing a temporary sculpture installation on our Johnsonia lot. If so, it would be a collaborative effort with the city, DPW and the New England Sculpture Association, who would be the lead on the project. The typical exhibit time is 2 years. The Board liked this idea. Ms. Donoghue stated that she can work with Ms. Russell-Brown on a Memorandum of Understanding to present to the Board to vote on at the October meeting.

Liz Murphy left the meeting at 8:57 a.m.

Tamar Russell-Brown left the meeting at 9:01 a.m.

E. Putnam Place

1. Switch Gear Funding
The RFQ is at the Attorney's office for review and almost ready to post for the Owner's Project Manager.
2. Roof Repairs
With the increase of rain this season, we are having more issues with our drain system in the building. We have secured a quote to repair the storm water roof drains for \$139,000. Over years, drains have been combined and are failing from age, which is why replacement is needed. The pipes under the building have also been checked and are clear, which means the building roof drains are the problem.
3. Parking Lot Striping

Mack Striping has estimated \$9,385 to seal crack and re-line the entire parking lot. This needs to be done in order to protect the parking lot for a few more years before replacement is inevitable, as well as update designated parking areas for tenants.

4. **Sprinkler Repairs**

There is an ongoing list of repairs that have not been addressed for over a year, totaling \$17,000. We should be able to phase out the repairs based on importance.

Ms. O’Kane motioned to approve repair of the sensor of sprinkler control panel, entirety of roof drain repair, and entirety of parking lot striping and seal crack repair. Seconded by Ms. Cruz. Motion carried by 4-0 vote.

F. Design Grant Program

1. 356 Main Street – Juan Reinoso-Luna – Tacos Don Juan

Ms. O’Kane motioned to approve the design grant for \$2,000 to Tacos Don Juan. Seconded by Ms. Cruz. Motion carried by 4-0 vote.

Mary Jo Bohart left the meeting at 9:08 a.m.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

A. Business Administrator’s Update

Ms. Stebulis stated the FRA’S QuickBooks software has been updated to the 2023 version. She has been working collaboratively with staff to update and verify Putnam Place CAM and Square Footages. The latest newsletter was released on September 1st and can be found on our website and social media. She also worked to set up online banking access to all our accounts, which we did not previously have. She briefly discussed with the Board options through Enterprise Bank to have great FDIC coverage through specific accounts they offer. She will get an interest rate comparison to provide the Board at the next meeting.

B. Facility Manager Update

Mr. Hasche reported brush removal has been completed behind DRS. There has been an uptick in trespassing on the property and damaged fence areas. Ms. Donoghue is working with the police and community liaison to mitigate this issue, the first step being to install no trespassing signs throughout the property. Mr. Hasche has reached out to multiple pest control companies and secured a quote of \$3,643 for an initial pest control setup which includes interior and exterior bait stations. Thereafter the monthly service fee will be \$1,285. The Board suggested a few other contractors to reach out to for quotes. He stated that there have been minor repairs to the fire panel. Unitil is planning a power shutdown for 6-8 hours to upgrade systems and will coordinate with the FRA and our tenants for an agreeable time.

C. Executive Director’s Update

Ms. Donoghue gave a brief update.

7. PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Ms. Murphy and Ms. Bohart did not have any updates of note to share.

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. M.G.L. c. 30A, §21 allows for any discussion of the lease of real property that may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body.

Ms. O’Kane motioned to enter the executive session Board meeting at 9:38 a.m. Seconded by Ms. Cruz. The motion carried 4-0.

Jay Roy left the meeting at 9:42 a.m.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. O’Kane motioned to adjourn the Regular Board meeting at 10:12 a.m. Seconded by Ms. Cruz. Motion carried 3-0.

NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: October 17, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah U. Stebulis
Business Administrator