



FITCHBURG REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
renewing • revitalizing • rebuilding

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# MEETING MINUTES

June 26, 2024

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  
Mirabel Cruz, Treasurer (arrived at 7:35 a.m.)  
Laura O’Kane, Member  
Laura Bayless, Member (arrived at 7:35 a.m.)

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Jeff Aveni, Attorney  
Frances Akhtar, abutter to 66 North Street  
Javed Akhtar, abutter to 66 North Street  
Hayley Palazola, GFI (arrived at 7:40 a.m.)  
Robert Bird, LSP, GFI (arrived at 7:40 a.m.)  
Bob LaRochelle, GFI (arrived at 7:40 a.m.)  
Meagen Donoghue, Executive Director, FRA  
Sarah Stebulis, Business Administrator, FRA

## 1. MEETING CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Caron called meeting to order at 7:33 a.m.

## 2. READING AND APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FROM MAY 15, 2024

Ms. O’Kane motioned to accept the regular meeting minutes from May 15, 2024 and enter them into the FRA’s minute book. Seconded by Mr. Roy. The motion carried by 3-0 vote.

## READING AND APPROVAL OF EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING MINUTES FROM MAY 15, 2024

Mr. Roy motioned to accept the executive meeting minutes from May 15, 2024 and enter them into the FRA's minute book. Seconded by Ms. O'Kane. The motion carried by 3-0 vote.

### **RELEASE OF EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING MINUTES FROM MAY 15, 2024**

Mr. Roy motioned to release the executive meeting minutes from May 15, 2024. Seconded by Ms. O'Kane. The motion held by 0-3 vote.

### **3. BUDGET AND FINANCE**

#### **A. Summary Report**

Ms. Stebulis stated all bills were on normal course. There is an additional bill to add to the vote - Erb & Southcotte for \$2757.17 for the legal work to purchase 866 Main Street.

Ms. O'Kane motioned to approve the payment of the attached list of bills, with Erb & Southcotte addition. Seconded by Mr. Roy. Motion carried by 5-0 vote.

### **4. GENERAL BUSINESS**

#### **A. 0 Airport Road Update**

1. Hayley Palazola to present

Ms. Palazola updated the Board that in the past month GFI has continued to do testing of soil on the site to determine the actual area of the site that is contaminated and where the limit of these areas is. The street sweepings and debris appear to be clean materials. They are checking for PFAs in the groundwater because of the strict standards of the site being classified as an aquifer. So far 3 of the 6 tested well sites do have PFAs. The DEP agrees that the site should be reclassified with new standards, and they are working on this. GFI continues to believe that the contamination issues are a solvable problem, and the site is buildable. The plan to move forward with the purchase, and will be coming to the Board with a proposed amendment to the agreement to purchase the land. Ms. Donoghue asked for clarification on if they only want to purchase the reduced area of land that is not contaminated, and they confirmed that was true. They said the area with the paper waste would make the project not financially feasible for them, as it would be a roughly \$30 million dollar cleanup. Mr. Bird also added that the FRA has access to Brownfields funds to clean up the contamination that private companies do not. Mr. Caron asked if the FRA can have copies of the environmental reports and maps, and Mr. Bird confirmed that they would be shared with the FRA. Ms. Palazola hopes to be back at the July meeting with a formal amended proposal to purchase.

*Hayley Palazola, Robert Bird, and Bob LaRochelle left the meeting at 7:59 a.m.*

2. Update on Tango's Requirements

There was a brief discussion that we are coming up on the deadline and finishing up the invasive species report. The hope is that work will begin in July.

#### **B. 66 North Street**

1. Frances and Javed Akhtar to present

Frances and Javed Akhtar, owners of Crown Fried Chicken on North Street, addressed the board with their interest in purchasing the lot at 66 North Street. They would like

to add 3 apartments to the upper floor of the restaurant, but in order to do so, they need additional parking for residential use. Board members were all favorable to selling to the Akhtar's and agreed that the use is in line with our mission for the district. Ms. Donoghue explained the appraisal process and that we would have to sell the property at fair market value based on the appraisal.

Mr. Roy motioned to approve securing an appraisal for 66 North Street. Seconded by Ms. O'Kane. Motion carried by 5-0 vote.

### **C. City of Fitchburg Graffiti Agreement**

#### **1. Discussion and vote**

The City of Fitchburg is now able to clean up graffiti and is looking for signed waivers to allow the city to clean properties, or otherwise the owners will be required to do the cleaning on their own. Ms. O'Kane asked if this would damage our building, who is doing the work and if are they insured. Ms. Donoghue stated that it could damage our brick as we already have areas that need re-pointing. Mr. Caron asked where there is graffiti on our building, and Ms. Donoghue stated on Building 3 and on the Putnam Street side of the DRS. Mr. Caron asked if this could be discussed with Mr. Hasche before we sign the waiver.

Ms. O'Kane motioned to approve signing the graffiti waiver, conditional to discussing with Mr. Hasche first for building safety. Seconded by Dr. Bayless. Motion carried by 5-0 vote.

### **D. Phone Poles behind Putnam Place Property**

#### **1. Discussion and vote**

Fitchburg Fiber would like to use the telephone poles on our property to further their infrastructure. First, we need to determine if they are active and owned by the FRA. If they are, Fitchburg Fiber is interested in purchasing them from us. Both Mr. Caron and Ms. O'Kane said that they would be okay with leasing the poles to them, but we should retain ownership. Attorney Erb will look further into ownership in the next month, and we will return with more information.

### **E. Administrative Reports**

#### **1. Business Administrator's Update**

Ms. Stebulis stated that in working with the auditors, it has been suggested we put in place a new procedure for the approved list of bills, by having the list initialed and dated at the meeting so as to add another layer of documentation. Ms. Stebulis has been informed by the auditors that the FRA will need to be compliant with new federal standards for governmental agencies, GASB 87 and GASB 96. She is working with two companies to get more information and quotes on the software cost.

#### **2. Facility Manager Update**

Mr. Hasche included a list of his notes in the meeting materials. He will be reissuing the switchgear RFP. He also recently had to add oil to the switch gears. DRS paid the \$2,000 for the oil, and the FRA will pay the \$6,000 to add the oil to the system. This process will be done during the power shut off.

### **3. Executive Director's Update**

Ms. Donoghue stated that she applied for 3 large grants for the demolition of the Power Plant, for a Conference Center feasibility study and for creating a Conference Center in Building 3. Tracy Sladen has been marketing the vacant spaces and already has had some showings. MART has paid their loan to us off in its entirety 2 years ahead of schedule. The recent Food Truck Festival was a success again, even with the rain. Senator Cronin and Representative Kushmerek have committed to continuing to fight for earmarks from the state to go to the FRA and to benefit housing in our district. They successfully secured another \$750,000 for 2024 for the FRA.

### **5. PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

No representative from Planning & Community Development was able to attend.

### **6. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

*Ms. O'Kane motioned to adjourn the Regular Board meeting and not return and enter into Executive Session at 8:53 a.m. Seconded by Dr. Bayless. Motion carried 5-0.*

### **7. ADJOURMENT**

*Mr. Roy motioned to adjourn the Executive Session meeting at 9:38 a.m. Seconded by Mr. Caron. Motion carried 5-0.*

**NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: July 17, 2024**

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah U. Stebulis  
Business Administrator