



FRA CONNECTOR

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GIVING THANKS: TO OUR LOCAL POLITICAL DELEGATION

by Meagen Donoghue

Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday. Sure, it is filled with family, delicious food you only have once a year, a football game against the biggest rivals, and maybe a tryptophane induced nap once everyone has left. It is also a time to reflect on what you are thankful for.

This year, the FRA is thankful for having a great relationship with our local political delegation, State Senator John Cronin, and State Representative Michael Kushmerek. They undoubtedly understand the importance of the FRA's mission and what the organization does throughout its Urban Renewal District and beyond. For the past two years, the duo has been able to secure earmarks of \$750,000 in the State Budget for the FRA. The monies have been allocated to help bridge the financing for the NewView Communities Artist Housing Project (formally the BF Brown School) and the two projects at 298 Main Street and 347-355 Main Street.



This year, we are so thankful again to receive another earmark of \$750,000 from the Senator and Representative. While still in discussion as to where to allocate the funds, the local delegation knows that it will be spent wisely.

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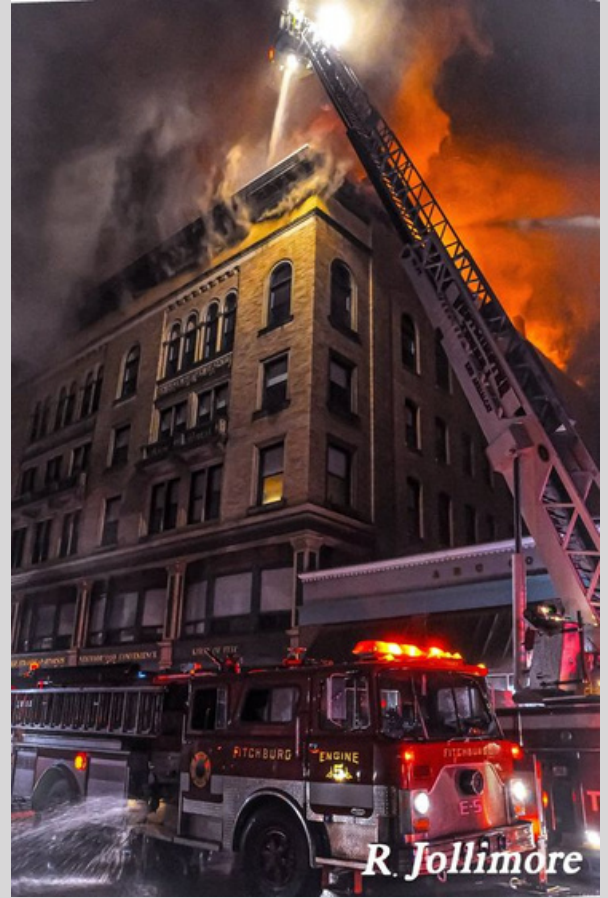
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GIVING LIFE TO THE FORMER JOHNSONIA LOT

by Meagen Donoghue

In 2011, the former grand hotel turned condominiums known as the Johnsonia at 520 Main Street experienced a catastrophic fire destroying the units of several residents. Since then, the lot has served as a downtown activity space for Civic Days and Trick or Treat on Main Street. Fitchburg State University always has their cheerful holiday signs, and you may have recently seen construction equipment for the recent roadwork over the summer.

After eleven years, the FRA was able to purchase the lot in 2022. Since then, it took time to determine the next move, but this summer, the Board of Directors voted to issue a general Request for Proposals (RFP) for the redevelopment of the lot. In August, the RFP was issued and will close in mid-December. A few weeks later, after an extensive review of all the submissions followed by interviews, and a vote from the Board of Directors, a decision will be made.



Historic photo of the Johnsonia Hotel



520 Main Street lot ready for redevelopment

As we all wait in anticipation of what may be submitted, what do you envision at 520 Main Street? For more information regarding the RFP, please visit fitchburgredevelopment.com and click on the ribbon at the top of the home page.

A COMMUNITY EFFORT

by Meagen Donoghue

In October 2023, Monica McNamara, owner of the Boulder Café and Meagen Donoghue, the FRA's executive director, met to discuss the idea of expanding the outdoor area of the Boulder Café into the adjacent parking lot. McNamara envisioned opening the fence to allow for food trucks and more space for her patrons.

After a great meeting, Donoghue later met with the Board for a deeper discussion. The outcome was the Board voted to move forward with the FRA's process to purchase. Months later on June 24, 2024, the FRA purchased the property.

Knowing how integral the lot is to the surrounding businesses and residents; a Community Brainstorming Session was held at the Boulder Café in October. The session was attended by eight people who produced an impressive list of ideas, including a pedestrian mall, a vendor market with sheds acting as the stores, food truck hub, and beer garden. The group agreed that these and the other ideas were long-term goals and in the interim, the FRA needs to make the lot safe for use. After which the lot may be used as much needed parking for the area until funding and resources can be obtained to follow through on one or a mixture of brainstormed ideas.



If you would like to learn more about the brainstorming process that took part in October, please contact executive director Meagen Donoghue at director@fitchburgreddevelopment.com to get a rundown of FRA ownership of 866 Main Street, and the brainstorm.



For Lease!

Finding quality office or raw space with ample parking, walking distance from the Intermodal/MBTA Station, and the University as well as eateries and municipal offices is difficult to find downtown. Office space at 166 Boulder Drive is the unicorn with all these amenities and is here for you! Whether you or you know of someone who is looking for commercial space to rent, the FRA has assorted opportunities to set up shop. For more information, please contact FRA real estate representative Tracy Sladen from Aberman and Associates, Inc., at tracy.realtor@verizon.net.



The FRA at Trick or Treat on Main Street



FRA executive director Meagen Donoghue, dressed as an avocado, and her son Robby, a Boy Scout for Halloween and in real life, handed out candy at Trick or Treat on Main Street on October 26.

Let's stay in touch...

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