

**JOINT MEETING OF
THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
AND
THE GREATER DOWNTOWN TAX INCREMENT FINANCE DISTRICT
ADVISORY BOARD**

February 16, 2010

MINUTES

EDA and GDTIF Members Present: Peter Robinson, Craig Hicks, Jack Burnett, Hope Taylor, Rick Monahon, Willard Williams, Susan Philips-Hungerford, and Cy Gregg.

Also Present: Carol Ogilvie, Director and Laura Norton, Administrative Assistant, Office of Community Development; Rodney Bartlett, Director of Public Works; Fash Farashahi, GIS Specialist and representatives from Hoyle, Tanner & Associates (HTA), the new engineering consultants for the Bridge Project.

From the Public and Business Community:

Chubb Whitten, Laura and Steve Mahoney, Ken Christian, Kathleen Allen, Richard Estes, Duffy Monahon, Norman Makechnie, Andrew Dunbar, Nancy Adams, Michael Morse, Gordon Kemp, Bob Hanson and Pamela Gleeson, and other not identified.

The EDA and GDTIF joint meeting was called to order by the EDA Chairman Craig Hicks at 7:35 a.m. He noted there were three requests for the use of TIF funds and he asked Rodney Bartlett to speak to the first request.

Downtown Parking:

Mr. Bartlett noted an ongoing discussion about additional parking in the downtown. He noted the municipal lot by the movie theater and reviewed a consideration of constructing a parking garage in that location. He said the construction would cost approximately one and a half million millions dollars, would be a two story structure and would create an additional 30 to 40 parking space in the heart of the downtown. He explained the application process and implications of a CDBG Grant. He also noted Hoyle Tanner & Associates could create a proposal and do the basics of a conceptual design and cost estimate for the structure for \$7500.00. He added “this would give us the number of parking spaces as well as new jobs created.” He noted the grant was based on the number of new jobs that would be realized “they go hand in hand” he said adding “it works out to \$20,000.00 per new job created, with a maximum of \$500,000.00.” Mr. Bartlett told the audience “we have the potential of creating 25 new jobs, none of them part-time or temporary and all of them with some level of benefits.” Mr. Hicks interjected “so we are going to pay 1.5 million dollars for another level of parking.”

A brief discussion about the size and the boundaries of the municipal lot followed. Mr. Hicks asked about going up higher than one level with Mr. Bartlett explaining “2 stories and a roof is a 3 story building in height, if you go any higher the building may dominate the entire downtown and I am not sure that is what you want to do.”

Mr. Willard asked for clarification on the creation of jobs asking “would these be construction jobs?” Mr. Bartlett replied they would not be construction jobs but new and permanent jobs in area of the parking garage. Mr. Williams then asked how new jobs would be generated. “That is my question” he said.

Mr. Bartlett noted the increase in permanent jobs by making more of what we currently have using the example of the Granite Block. He explained (as an example) that it may be able to house more office and retail if more parking is available. He added “when you talk to any new business (office, retail or commercial) the customer and employee parking is one of the first things they want to know about.”

Mr. Dunbar questioned how building a parking garage could create new jobs adding “I question that when I look at the two plazas in town with plenty of parking but empty store fronts.” He went on to ask why we would want to bring more vehicles into the downtown “where it doesn’t need it” He noted the current aesthetic charm of the downtown and asked “what are the ramifications of that?” Mr. Bartlett replied “some of those questions are bigger than a parking garage” and went on to explain more about the eligibility of receiving the grant. He concluded by noting “lets get the parking garage costs first to see if any of this is viable.” A very brief discussion about satellite parking and shuttle buss services followed.

Mr. Christian mentioned the current municipal parking lot “that no one uses now” and asked about extending the garage to the Rhymes property noting “I am sure DES would love to see it disappear.” Mr. Dunbar interjected “it is a business; we would not want to take away your business to help the cause.” Mr. Christian replied “it can be relocated.” Mr. Bartlett interjected that the town was not in the position to acquire private property. Ms. Philips-Hungerford suggested some potential “carrot and stick” incentives that may be used. The group then briefly discussed the potential of a structure behind the old Peterborough Savings Bank building on Main Street and an area behind the former Byte Building.

Mr. Hicks asked if the original \$7500.00 should be increased to research other suggested locations, including private property. Mr. Robinson interjected “it sounds like you are assuming all parking garages are ugly.” Mr. Monahan described a parking structure in Hanover, New Hampshire that “has an almost innocuous presence in visual impact.”

Ms. Taylor asked about the status of the Granite Block and noted the fact that two businesses (Renaissance Room and Precious Cargo) located in the downtown were going out of business. When Chair Hicks noted he would entertain a motion for expenditure of \$7500.00 for HTA to prepare a conceptual design and cost estimate for the proposed parking facility Mr. Williams was hesitant and asked “what will we see for \$7500.00? What is \$7500.00 going to bring?” A brief review of a cost analysis and conceptual plan that would be created by HTA followed. Mr. Bartlett noted “there will be no design work, but there would be a rendering or conceptual view

and a cost estimate and it will give us a clear indication of the viability of a parking garage there.” When asked if the proposed \$7500.00 should be increased to investigate some of the other areas mentioned, Mr. Bartlett stated he did not feel that was necessary. Mr. Morse suggested adding retail to the parking garage and locating it in Depot Square. “That seems the most logical place for it” he said.

A motion was made/seconded (Robinson/Williams) to take more time to discuss the expenditure with all in favor.

Downtown WiFi:

Fash Farashahi reviewed the equipment necessary to support a WiFi service in the downtown. He noted he was requesting approximately \$3000.00 in Greater Downtown TIF funds for the purchase of equipment needed to support this service in the downtown. He reported the WiFi located at 12 Pine had been discontinued “because maintenance was due and the hardware was at its end of life.” He went on to note he hoped to centralize the downtown service through the Town House. Chair Hicks asked about the efficiency of the Internet with Mr. Farashahi noting it was good and that the system was “throttled” so that no one person can take up the entire bandwidth by (for example) watching a movie. Mr. Farashahi reported approximately 100 people a month take advantage of the wireless services offered by the town.

“What is the consensus of the group?” asked Chair Hicks. The members agreed the service was a good marketing tool and an economic plus. Mr. Williams noted “it is a nice amenity to offer people; I see it used a lot.” A motion was made/seconded (Robinson/Williams) to release the funds necessary to support the WiFi service in the downtown with all in favor.

Remote Sign for the Downtown:

Cy Gregg gave a brief review of how he was working on a remote sign, located on the property of the Ocean Bank at the intersection of Routes 101 and 202 “to make people realize there is a downtown.” A graphic of the potential sign configurations was distributed with Mr. Gregg noting “it meets all the sign regulation requirements, a sign permit has been completed and we are scheduled for Minor Site Plan review in March.” He added “we may come to the Downtown TIF to do some financing that would be under \$10,000.00; *that is where we are going.*”

Ms. Philips-Hungerford noted the current downtown sign located on the opposite side of the street from the proposed location and asked if it should be removed due to “visual clutter.” The members briefly discussed it and agreed it did not need to be removed.

The GDTIF portion of the meeting closed at 8:15 a.m.

Main Street Bridge/Retaining Wall Project:

Mr. Bartlett continued the meeting by noting “you will receive a lot of information this morning” and introduced Chris Mulleavey, Project Principal from Hoyle Tanner & Associates. Mr. Mulleavey distributed a handout and proceeded with the Main Street Bridge design concepts discussion. Mr. Mulleavey noted that since the last meeting the test results of the bridge concrete revealed problems, that rehabilitation of the bridge was not possible and a replacement was necessary. He noted the Bridge had been posted for a 15 Ton weight limit.

Mr. Mulleavey spoke briefly about the importance of the historic properties of the bridge, the unique visual character of the area, the concerns for pedestrian safety, the link to the downtown and traffic management and accommodation. He introduced Matt Low, Project Engineer to review specifics. Mr. Low began with the introduction of several design concepts noting “these alternatives will meet the intent but they are not the same as what is out there today.” He went on to review several bridge concept alternatives. Alternative #1 was a concrete rigid frame that would duplicate the existing bridge. Bridge Alternative #2 had two parts (A&B) and consisted of pre-stressed concrete butted box beams with a precast concrete. Bridge Alternative #3 also had parts A&B, and consisted of steel beams and concrete deck with a precast concrete fascia. He reviewed a bridge aesthetics evaluation for each alternative as well as explaining the differences and pros and cons of a 77 foot span versus a 100 foot span bridge.

Mr. Low noted that Alternative 2B was the least expensive option adding “the concrete panels can be made to look like stone” and that the mapping and replacement of the stone currently on the bridge would be very expensive. He reviewed a very detailed matrix of the alternatives and concluded by noting the construction would “take up to two seasons.” When asked to clarify the definition of “season” Mr. Low replied “usually a construction season in New Hampshire is April through November, pretty close to a year.” A member of the audience asked “who is responsible for the aesthetics?” with Mr. Low replying “everyone in the room.” Mr. Low then introduced Todd Clark, Traffic Management Specialist to speak about the roadway concepts.

Mr. Clark began with a review of the existing conditions which led to the presentation of the two configurations studied. The first roadway concept “realigns the roadway (US Route 202) and widens the shoulders south of the intersection.” He noted this concept would create better traffic movement, widen the sidewalk and crosswalk and more importantly increase pedestrian safety by separating them from the vehicles. Mr. Clark pointed out that this concept provided little or no intersection traffic capacity improvement.

The second roadway concept proposed an oval at the intersection that would in essence do everything the first concept did “but would also improve the intersection capacity.” Almost immediately many members of the audience asked about the size of the oval. It was noted the proposed oval would be larger than the round-about located at the entrance to the Shaw’s Supermarket on US Route 101. Mr. Clark also pointed out an opportunity to make the oval a gateway to the downtown. He reiterated the potential for increased capacity noting “the intersection currently accommodates 14,000 vehicles per day with a projected increase of 1% per year. The oval can improve the intersection capacity; there is no future growth option with the first concept.” A brief discussion about the different costs for the different options followed with Ms. Mahoney noting “you have 5 options and 2 traffic management concepts” she then asked “can they all be used in harmony with each other?” Ms. Mahoney also asked if the location next to the existing bridge (Sunapee Bank parking area) was the only possible location for a temporary bridge. Mr. Clark noted that the potential combination of concepts and alternate locations for the bridge were very good questions, he addressed both in confirming a mix of concepts was possible and that other locations for a temporary bridge (most notably by the Monadnock Tennis Club) had been evaluated as options.

Mr. Clark briefly reviewed streetscapes and amenities such as viewpoints, railings, planters, benches and lighting. A general review of the two temporary traffic control alternatives (temporary bridge and phased construction – Phase 1 and Phase 2) followed with discussion about another matrix of traffic control options.

Mr. Mulleavey concluded the slide show by reviewing a “what’s next?” slide that included selections of a bridge span and type, roadway concept, traffic control concept and bridge width, and landscaping and retaining wall concepts. He noted once selected these concepts can be refined at upcoming meetings. Mr. Hicks reiterated the adaptability of a traffic oval at the intersection to increase vehicular capacity in the years to come. Mr. Mulleavey noted he would secure some photographs of bridges with stone facades that will be posted on the website and available for review at the next meeting. It was noted the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, March 16th at 8:00 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant