

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

July 19, 2011

MINUTES

EDA and GDTIF Members Present: Hope Taylor, Rick Monahon, Craig Hicks, Susan Phillips-Hungerford and Willard Williams.

Also Present: Carol Ogilvie, Director and Laura Norton, Administrative Assistant, Office of Community Development; and Rodney Bartlett, Director of Public Works.

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 a.m. by EDA Chairman Hicks. He noted the first item on the agenda was a review of the Conceptual Parking Plans (schematics prepared by Hoyle Tanner Associates, Inc. (HTA) and presented by DPW Director Rodney Bartlett). He also noted there was not an EDA quorum “so nothing can get voted on but we can have a general discussion.”

Mr. Bartlett began by noting that at the last meeting the EDA and GDTIF members had approved an expenditure of \$5500.00 for a conceptual design relative to the parking space layout and aisle configuration in the area of Depot, School and Wall Streets. He went on to note that the photocopier was out of paper and anyone that would like hardcopies of the slides could get them after the meeting. Mr. Bartlett began with “we are here to have a conversation on parking alternatives” adding “we have four options to review, as well as a graphic of the existing conditions.” Mr. Bartlett reiterated “these are schematics; nothing has been physically laid out yet.”

The first graphic showed a map of the total existing parking spaces (public and private lots) in the Municipal Lot (total of 69 spaces). He then moved on to the second graphic noting “this is Option 1” adding “we tried to lay out both the public and private areas to gain spaces but as we tried to organize the lots we *lost* a couple of spaces for a total of 67 spaces.” Mr. Bartlett went on to note “as it is the lots do not provide the flexibility we need in trying to re-organize what we have.” He noted this option provided two-way traffic (24-foot lanes) for access in and out of both Depot and School Streets and parking spaces that were 9 by 18 feet in size.

Mr. Bartlett noted that “Option 2 is a schematic of combining the public and private lots and leaving Wall Street where it is.” He noted “we generate some additional spaces but lose all the green space behind the Theater.” He noted the option provided two-way traffic (24-foot lanes) for access in and out of both Depot and School Streets and parking spaces of 9 by 18 feet in size. Mr. Bartlett noted the total proposed parking spaces from this schematic was 75 parking spaces.

Option 3 combined the public and private lots and utilizes Wall Street. Mr. Bartlett reviewed the third option noting “this also incorporates the 2-way, 24-foot lanes and creates a total of 76 spaces.”

“Option 4” noted Mr. Bartlett “combines the public and private lot, utilizes Wall Street and eliminates the 2-way traffic pattern replacing it with a one-way circulation.” He added “and the traffic aisles get narrower.” (20-foot lanes) Mr. Bartlett also noted “now there is pavement *everywhere* there is space. This option precludes *any* ability to generate green space or pedestrian walkways.” He told the members and audience “the total proposed parking spaces from this option is 85 spaces.”

Mr. Bartlett then again reiterated “these are only schematics; there is still a fair amount of conceptual engineering that would be needed to make sure the plans will work.” He also noted “and we would need to develop a formal agreement with private land owners.”

Ms. Taylor asked about removing the wall by Wall Street and using angles versus parallel parking with a brief discussion following. Mr. Bartlett noted “any changes to Depot Street are applicable to any of the options.”

Mr. Fernald noted that on the existing conditions graphic “14 Grove shows five spaces” and added that they “typically park 12 cars back there with one in the alley-way.” Mr. Bartlett briefly reviewed the differences that may occur in the quality and quantity of parking spaces between a municipal lot and one privately owned and organized by the owners.

A discussion about the gain and loss of potential parking spaces in options 1 through 4 followed with Chair Hicks noting “in the end it is kind of a break even situation.” Mr. Bartlett agreed when Chair Hicks added “Option 4 is the only one that really gained a hunk of spaces.” Also with regards to Option 4 Chair Hicks noted “we will need to negotiate with the land owners to see what the net gain of what will be the starkest part of downtown forever will be.” Another member interjected “it will be a sea of asphalt” with Chair Hicks replying “and that is why I keep going back, it is kind of like reconfiguring the deck chairs on the Titanic.”

Mr. Bartlett noted that the HTA group had done what had been asked of them. Ms. Phillips-Hungerford noted she did not think that in the end there was a significant increase in parking for the money that would have to be spent. “It is not enough” she said. Mr. Williams interjected “I don’t think so either, unless something really simple can be done.” He added that “something simple” would start with conversations between the land owners on Grove Street. Chair Hicks noted “the net gain is not what we think it is.”

Chair Hicks then led a brief discussion about the other privately owned in-town spaces that may accommodate parking (45 Main Street, the upper parking area of the Guernsey Building were both mentioned). Mr. Bartlett noted the SEA Study in 2001 had looked at parking options with conceptualls” and noted he would get that information out to the members. “We do not have a lot of options for parking” he said. A brief discussion about the amount of asphalt, redundant circulation, the money involved in creating a limited amount of parking spaces and the potential for a parking structure followed.

The members also discussed the public parking located on Summer Street behind the Fire Station. "It is never full" said Ms. Taylor. Chair Hicks noted that the long term objective was to try to reconfigure the lot as it is currently secluded and poorly lit. The members discussed the potential plans for the municipal lot, the estimated cost of \$60,000.00, and the demise of the project in the budget process. The members also briefly discussed the (privately-owned) large, green area located off of Phoenix Lane "It is like ignoring the elephant in the room" said Chair Hicks. They also briefly discussed the possibility of satellite parking with shuttle service to town, "but parking in other (downtown) locations is our charge" said Chair Hicks.

Mr. Williams noted "\$60,000.00 sounds like a lot but given the other options is it small" adding "if people would actually use those 24 (municipal lot) spaces that is huge."

Chair Hicks asked about the balance in the Downtown TIP with Ms. Ogilvie replying "about \$70,000.00" A discussion about the process of taking requests through the CIP, the Town Meeting process and the responsibilities of the Board of Selectmen followed with Chair Hicks noting "this is not anything but a funding issue." The members discussed using Greater Downtown TIF dollars to do the necessary repairs to the municipal lot with excitement until they realized the location of the lot falls outside of the TIF District.

Mr. Fernald suggested the public be polled as to why they don't park at the Fire Station. He noted "the crunch time for parking is summer when it is light outside so I don't think light is the issue." A member interjected "they probably don't want to walk from down there." Chair Hicks interjected "they will tell you they did not know it was there or because it is the furthest it is their last choice. Those would be the answers." Another member noted "well, if we spend the money and have a very nice area that no one parks at we gain nothing." Chair Hicks agreed noting "it would be a waste of \$60,000.00 if there is another area available." Some members agreed that over time the lot would get busier and Ms. Taylor noted merchants should encourage their employees to use the lot. Jim Therriault, a business owner in the downtown noted that for clarity sake, the merchants have been unfairly categorized as parking space hogs. He noted "it is often not the merchants that are sucking up the parking spaces" adding "many of the spaces are filled by the tenants of Depot Square" he said. He named several offices and organizations located in spaces above the businesses in Depot Square. Chair Hicks agreed and noted "we should be saying *tenants* not merchants."

The members once again discussed the benefits of improving the municipal lot with Mr. Williams noting "parking is an issue year round if the lot is safe and lit and we can get people to start to park there it will become habit." Ms. Phillips-Hungerford jokingly interjected "you need a coffee shop down there."

Chair Hicks noted the conversation was a great segue way into the next item on the agenda, a discussion about the extension of the TIF Plan.

Mr. Bartlett noted the TIF District line ends at Main Street. Ms. Ogilvie added "we want to look at the time line but talk about the boundaries as well." The members reviewed the boundary of the district and how it follows the river to the Village Commercial District, includes the two Plazas, and ends at the Salera sand pit. Ms. Ogilvie noted the total of all three district may

comprise 10% of the land mass and 16% of the total assessment value “but we under on both.” She noted currently the Downtown district was at 5% land mass and 8% total assessed value. “I am slightly surprised it doesn’t include anything on the north side of Main Street” said Mr. Monahan. The members discussed the district limits and the potential for new development in the hashed out areas of the map. The members came to the conclusion that “in essence we are wasting a lot of hash marks in the West Peterborough area, specifically the Nubanusit Neighborhood and Farm (a total of 113 acres with the farm developed on over 6 acres) and the Healthcare District (a lot that consists of approximately 75 acres, unused with no revenue potential at this time). The members discussed the potential to “take away” some of the acreage in those districts and reshape the Downtown TIF boundaries to capture the north side of Main Street and other key areas (like the Police Station).

Chair Hicks noted the West Peterborough TIF is a renewable asset that was due to expire in April 2012 and suggested a discussion on merging the three TIFs and using the money as the town sees fits was appropriate. “Who would object to that good idea?” asked Ms. Phillips-Hungerford.

A brief discussion about a potential merger and the process of doing it correctly and legally followed. The members also discussed the concern of the taxpayers in town making up the difference in the tax revenue. Ms. Ogilvie noted “Pam (Brenner, Town Administrator) has shown the difference on the tax rate overall (to make up for the revenue set aside) is pennies actually.” Chair Hicks noted “and the entire dollar is going to the assets of Peterborough, otherwise two-thirds of it is going out of town (to the School District and County). We are paying anyway; this is a no-brainer.” He went on to note “developing new boundaries will be our investment in the future. If we can invest in ourselves as a town others will invest in us as well.” Mr. Williams suggested the three TIF Districts meet and discuss the opportunity at hand. Chair Hicks reiterated that “the current plan is to pay the bond and shut it (the West Peterborough TIF) down. I think for the betterment of the the Downtown we keep it going.” He added “remember the West Peterborough TIF has a window and that window is shutting down.” The members agreed a joint meeting between the districts to discuss the extension of time and change of boundaries was in order. Chair Hicks added “take the three current districts and rewrite them into one plan with one expiration date” adding “and use our main corridors as the planning tools for the good of the long term infrastructure needs of the town.” He then recapped that the private land owners needed to be contacted, a map with appropriate overlays to determine the potential new boundary of the Downtown District be provided, and that the three TIF groups participate in the exercise.

Mr. Bartlett suggested the map be created and reviewed by the members first “then invite the other districts.” Chair Hicks agreed noting “yes, let’s have a game plan first.” Mr. Williams felt strongly the three districts should meet and look at the options and the connections together. Mr. Williams suggested that the other districts may not want to part with their money. Chair Hicks reiterated “yes but their plan is done and the TIF is headed for the corn field once the bond is done.”

A very brief discussion about the current boundary of the Downtown TIF District and suggestions for reconfiguration of the boundaries followed.

Other Business:

Vice-Chairman Taylor noted she would like to remain on the committee but step down from her position as Vice-Chair. Chair Hicks noted an election of officers was due but because there was not an EDA quorum it would be put on the agenda for the August meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant