

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

August 16, 2011

MINUTES

EDA and GDTIF Members Present: Hope Taylor, Willard Williams, Craig Hicks, Susan Phillips-Hungerford, Jack Burnett, Cy Gregg, Jeffrey Crocker and Rick Monahon.

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 7:30 a.m. by EDA Chairman Hicks. The Chairman noted “last time we were asking what we want to do with this (meaning the Fire Station parking lot).” He noted the discovery that the public parking area by the Fire Station was outside the Greater Downtown TIF District and that “it would still be a good idea to include it.”

Chair Hicks asked about the expiration of the TIF District with Ms. Ogilvie replying “it will expire April 1, 2012.” Chair Hicks asked “the TIF will expire unless it is extended at town meeting right?” A brief discussion about town meeting being changed from March to May and the implications of that involving the extension of the TIF District followed. Chair Hicks noted the fact that the TIF would expire before the next town meeting. “That is the Catch 22” he said adding “you need the town meeting to extend it.” Ms. Ogilvie noted that Town Attorney was looking into it.

Chair Hicks then asked about the potential to merge the TIF Districts. Ms. Ogilvie replied that upon review of the request Town Attorney John Ratigan had concurred with Attorney Chris Boldt that “it was inadvisable to merge the TIF Districts.” Chair Hicks asked “so what do we want to do on that? An extension of the TIF?” The members briefly discussed a forecast of improvements (which would include the parking lot at the Fire Station) and extending the Downtown TIF borders. They reviewed a graphic that outlined the District noting the border to the North “goes to about the center of the Library (road, not building) and includes the retention wall to the south. Mr. Burnett noted they would be capturing land but not taxable income as the properties are town-owned adding “we will not capture tax money but we will be able to spend TIF money on it.” Ms. Phillips-Hungerford asked for clarification with Chair Hicks reiterating that many of the town buildings included in the District boundaries are not on the tax roll “so there would be no tax increment *out* of them but we would be able to spend TIF monies *on* them.” He cited the example of not being able to (currently) do anything using TID funds to the parking lot by the Fire Station because “it falls outside the boundaries.” He added “those properties would be on the receiving side of the equation not the adding to it side.”

Chair Hicks then asked the members to consider a time frame asking Ms. Ogilvie “what is allowed?” Ms. Ogilvie replied that the statutes don’t specify, but it would typically be consistent with the amount of time needed to raise money or pay off a bond.

The members reviewed the graphic of the District with Chair Hicks pointing out the large piece of town-owned land behind the Fire Station and remarking “we should put as much of the town-owned property in as possible, just in case.” He went on to note “if we use it or not, we might as well put the acreage in.” Looking at Ms. Ogilvie he asked “we are way under on acreage right?” with Ms. Ogilvie replying “yes.” The members continued to review the graphic of the TIF District. Chair Hicks suggested incorporating the Fire Station and the land abutting it. “We own it” he said. “That makes sense” interjected Ms. Taylor. A brief discussion about the current location and the eventual need for a new Fire Station followed with Chair Hicks noting “it is a good location; if the Fire Department stays where it is, it is a good place to invest in.”

Mr. Williams noted he felt TIF Districts were to fund projects not otherwise done by the general fund. He questioned the use of TIF Funds for Town responsibilities. He noted “Fire or Library improvements are really a general fund thing” and asked “why spend TIF monies on them?” Mr. Willard noted the TIF monies were meant to (for example) improve sidewalks or do things that increase the value within that area. He went on to say “the whole idea of expanding is a mistake; we need to focus on the District.” Mr. Willard noted his concern about pushback from the townspeople noting “we need to remain focused on what its purpose is.” Ms. Taylor noted “we got there because of the thought of improving the parking at the Fire Station” with Mr. Willard replying “those repairs should come from the general fund not TIF funds.” Chair Hicks replied “I can agree to disagree with you; I am just trying to figure this out.” The Chair then asked about the cost of the Main Street Bridge with Mr. Bartlett replying “when it is all said and done, four million dollars, maybe a bit more.” “Town money” interjected Chair Hicks. It was noted TIF Funds had been spent on the Wilder Bridge and the town’s 20% contribution for the Union Street Bridge in West Peterborough had been saved from TIF Funds “so why not Downtown?” asked Chair Hicks. Mr. Willard reiterated his position that TIF Funds should be focused on the infrastructure of the area they were created for.

A general discussion about the roles of the EDA and the GDTIF and how they could identify projects and work together to determine what might or might not be a TIF funded project followed. One member noted “we should discuss it; you never know what might come out of those discussions.”

Mr. Gregg noted that the Main Street Bridge could become a TIF project if it is involved with (for example) the establishment of a pedestrian bridge or walkway across the river. Ms. Phillips-Hungerford added “or adding street furniture or planters.” Chair Hicks noted “the biggest problem is the bridge” with Mr. Gregg replying “the problem is not how to fund it but what it (the reconstruction) will do to the downtown businesses.” Chair Hicks agreed adding “general fund or TIF, we are all spending the money.” He then added “Pam (Brenner, Town Administrator) has proved using the TIF allows us to get things done faster.” Mr. Gregg concluded by noting “expand the TIF boundaries and have the TIF Board say where the money is spent.”

The members went on to review potential amended boundaries of the Greater Downtown TIF. They agreed the line should be expanded north on Main Street to capture the commercial interests on that side of the street (including Centertown and Jane's In Stitches). After additional discussion they included the Fire Station (west side) and a small sliver of town-owned land on the east side of Summer Street as well as west up Main Street to include the two bank buildings and the town-owned land that abut those properties to the north. With regards to the Summer Street inclusion one member noted "we could be talking 20 or 25 years for things to develop there." Mr. Willard interjected "Peter Robinson from Roy's Market has always said the only place for expansion of the Downtown would be up Summer Street."

The members discussed how far up Main Street they thought the District should go weighing the pros and cons of the different areas of where to draw the boundary line. They decided to draw the line at the Main Street entrance to River Street with Chair Hicks noting "just whack it off across from there."

The members then discussed the inclusion of Grove Street with Mr. Williams reiterating "we should not include Grove Street, we should keep it (the TIF) focused on what it should be." Another member added "there is a lot of residential on Grove Street." The members further discussed the issue and ultimately decided to move up from the river and include Putnam Park and Ava Marie's on the west side of Grove Street and the GAR Hall on the east side.

The members once again discussed the idea that they would increase the boundaries of the District with one member noting "why not add it and have the discussion in the future as to what is TIF worthy and what is not." Mr. Willard interjected "I agree but will the public agree?" A brief discussion about the use of General Fund and TIF monies followed.

Mr. Burnett gave a brief review of the improvements in West Peterborough using their TIF monies. He mentioned the value of have the TIF District in place in time to capture the development from the Nubi River Neighborhood, the Union Street Mill and Legacy Lane, adding "we should capture these now for the future."

The members then followed the Greater Downtown TIF boundary to the south and discussed the old Gulf Station (referred to as a longtime eyesore) as well as the Monadnock and Peterborough Plazas and the Basket Factory. It was noted Mr. Salera's sand pit was also included within the District.

"OK what about a time frame?" asked Chair Hicks, adding "15? 20 years? Somebody pick a number." Mr. Willard asked how difficult it was to renew a TIF with Ms. Ogilvie explaining the process of how the request would go to Town Meeting. A brief discussion led to the agreement of 15 years and an agreement of "what is in and what is out."

A brief discussion of the Monadnock Community Healthcare TIF District boundaries followed. It was noted the Hospital has purchased additional parcels and that the Route 202 and 136 intersection was included in the District with one member noting "they thought that might need help when the TIF was created." Another member clarified that the Hospitals' purchase of the Amy Miller parcel made it a part of the Healthcare District "but it is not in the TIF." Chair Hicks

reiterated “I am in favor of grabbing anything for TIF and then argue about what can happen” adding “we are crazy not put anything we can into the TIF.”

The TIF discussion concluded with a review of the total land/value percentages allowed in TIF districts. Ms. Ogilvie noted the allowable of 5% of the land and 8% of the assessed value for each individual district, and 10% and 16%, respectively, for multiple districts. She noted that a couple of years ago the town was at 1.9% of land and 8.8% of assessed value for all three TIF districts. Chair Hicks replied “so we are currently OK.” The members also briefly discussed the potential north and east of the current boundaries and a privately held parcel across the street from the hospital entrance.

Other Business:

Ms. Taylor noted she had spent several weeks researching and learning about “having local money.” She referenced a book titled “Local Money” and described the creation of local currencies “all over England.” She noted a similar program in the Berkshires and said she planned to visit the area and talk to the merchants and retailers about the program. She noted the potential to create “long term stability to local businesses to keep them in place and help sustain each other” adding “the Monadnock Region is a logical region.” Several questions about the specifics of a local money program followed with Ms. Taylor noting she would continue her research and be back with more information. Mr. Gregg noted a similar but smaller scale program used in Depot Square using “Depot Dollars” adding “it is much like a gift card to be used at any store in Depot Square.”

Mr. Gregg concluded the meeting by noting he had run into Planning Board Chairman Leandra MacDonald and had promised her to let the EDA members know the Planning Board was actively recruiting and specifically looking for someone to fulfill the term of a full time member who recently resigned. “This would be a short term thing” he said adding “I believe there is six months left on the term.” He advised that if anyone was interested to please contact Leandra or Ms. Ogilvie.

Ms. Ogilvie reminded the members that she would be scheduling another meeting in the next couple of weeks and that Ms. Taylor would be on the agenda for the regularly scheduled September meeting,

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant