

**JOINT MEETING OF  
THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
AND  
THE GREATER DOWNTOWN TAX INCREMENT FINANCE DISTRICT  
ADVISORY BOARD  
November 29, 2011**

**MINUTES**

**EDA and GDTIF Members Present:** Hope Taylor, Susan Phillips-Hungerford, Cy Gregg, Jeff Crocker, Jack Burnett, Peter Robinson, Craig Hicks and Rick Monahon.

**Also Present:** Carol Ogilvie, Director and Laura Norton, Administrative Assistant, Office of Community Development.

Chair Hicks called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. He began with the first item on the agenda.

Reflections of the Downtown TIF Public Hearing: Ms. Ogilvie began with “I think we can agree it was a little more challenging than we anticipated” noting the push back they received from Summer Street and others. She went on to say “a lot of it had to do with the fire station lot more than anything else” adding “but there were a lot of questions about TIFs in general.”

Preparing for Upcoming Public Hearing: Review of Draft of Revised GDTIF Plan and Review Responses to Questions and FAQ’s.

Ms. Ogilvie reported she has since met with the town administrator and they will prepare a joint presentation for the next public hearing. “We will do a TIF 101 type of thing, much like we did in 2004. Pam will show how it works with dollars and cents and the TIF impact on tax rates.” Chair Hicks interjected “there is still a lot of confusion on how a TIF works and the difference between voting at town meeting to pay for something and using the TIF to pay for something.” He noted that spreadsheets used by Ms. Brenner in prior meetings had been helpful and encouraged using them once again. The members also discussed creating a fictitious Greater Downtown TIF spreadsheets, one with TIF funds and one without.

Mr. Robinson noted his concern that the TIF should be presented as a way to help the town grow “instead of money we are looking to spend” adding “people are worried about the money being spent.” He went to note “instead of spending we may want to advocate *setting the money aside for the future* versus *these are the places we want to spend money.*” Chair Hicks replied “I like it, we have these things in front of us and the vehicle is the TIF.” Ms. Ogilvie added “to Peter’s point we can focus on the fact that this is a financial tool, not the planning device.” She also mentioned “there are projects identified from other planning exercises, they did not just fall from the sky. This is a way to help finance them that has not been emphasized.” Ms. Ogilvie concluded by noting “we captured questions at the public hearing that we will work into the presentation at the next meeting.”

Include Entire Fire Station Lot:

Chair Hicks stated “a lot of the push back was from one Summer Street resident saying he represented other residents and that is fine. To be honest with you keeping the entire fire station land in the proposal is not worth the argument, I am open to discussion but I say take it out.”

(Chair Hicks refers to the reduction of the originally proposed extension of the Greater Downtown TIF to include town buildings including the Fire Station. A large part of the Fire Station lot extends north down Summer Street abutting the backyards of several Summer Street residents. This section was referred to as “*the box*” by the members). One resident argued the boundary should not be extended along that residential property lines and that it be reduced to be shy of the first backyard on the west side of Summer Street after the Fire Station.

The members briefly discussed the large lot with notably steep slopes and natural buffering from the parcels it abuts. “What does the Board want to do?” asked Chair Hicks. Mr. Monahon reminded the members “the district does not have to coincide with the property lines.” Mr. Crocker interjected “so the question on the table is where to draw the line for the TIF.” Mr. Robinson reminded the members the intent of the TIF was to include as much town-owned property as possible. A brief discussion about the changes in grade on the hill behind the station as well access to the area followed. Chair Hicks noted “the net effect of taking the piece out is not going to change anything; it will change nothing in their back yards.”

Mr. Crocker suggested using a political versus policy point of view in removing the parcel from the district. It was noted “the resident seemed to be okay with the proposal if the box went away.” Ms. Ogilvie noted “and the sense from the Board of Selectmen was that they would not support the box being in the district if it caused residential unrest.”

Mr. Robinson suggested that the members consider including the Divine Mercy Catholic Church in the district. Chair Hicks replied “that is a pretty good idea” with another member interjecting “there is a consensus that it (the property) will be available sometime in the future.”

After a bit more discussion the members agreed one by one to reduce the Fire Station lot size by cutting off “*the box*.” The members discussed the value of talking to abutters before any action was taken “it is amazing the problems you can head off by doing that” said Mr. Crocker. Mr. Monahon added “I am OK with cutting it off but in the long run it is an asset to the town and I don’t think the town ought to feel it is held hostage by Summer Street never to use it.” He went on to note “it is a design idea without a design” in that “this is what we want to do but we have not studied it yet. We have a long way to go so let’s take it out.”

Mr. Burnett noted he thought their mission was “to maximize the options not minimize them but by the same token if we were generating revenues outside the box it would be remote that what is raised would be spent in it.” Mr. Monahon reminded Mr. Burnett “you really do not generate money from town-owned property.” Mr. Crocker suggested they fight the battle when they have a plan. “Go talk to the people, build the consensus and put it back in then” he said. Ms. Taylor agreed adding “go to the people first.” Mr. Crocker added “the best developers deal with who the neighbors are and how they are to be dealt with before they come into town.” Mr. Gregg noted he was happy with “drawing that line” and mentioned the potential of using the backland for parking was “probably one of the worst solutions of all proposed.” He also noted he liked the

idea of including the Catholic Church property. Mr. Monahon noted a few of the problems that would come along with the purchase of the church property. He mentioned desecralization of the church and the cemetery would be a process. "The Catholic Church has a problem there."

"So should we include it or not?" asked Chair Hicks. Mr. Crocker answered "the answer is *yes* we can" and asked "but do we do it now because it is a great idea without fully vetted plans and having done the spade work to properly prepare it and vet it?" adding "we could hurt a good idea by being premature."

Chair Hicks agreed noting "you are right. We would have the same problem. We just made decision not to alienate a neighborhood; we probably should not try to alienate another one."

#### Base Value Used - 1998 or 2011:

Ms. Ogilvie noted "simply put, both is the answer." A brief discussion followed with Ms. Ogilvie concluding "it would be easier to use one value but we have to stay with both, there is no way around it, otherwise there will be no revenues from those existing parcels."

#### Other Comprehensive Planning Done:

One member asked "is this in response to Maude's questions about other planning?" (Referring to Ms. Salinger's questions posed at the first Public Hearing).

Ms. Phillips-Hungerford mentioned the Master Plan with Chair Hicks interjecting "nobody uses it. I found that out at the ZBA." Mr. Monahon replied "the Planning Board uses it" and went on to explain that the Planning Board is in charge of the Master Plan. He noted the creation of the Master Plan Steering Committee and their subcommittees that write the chapters to be used by the other boards.

#### The 66/33 Split of the Tax Dollar:

Ms. Ogilvie noted "it is important to make sense on how to present this so others can understand it." A brief discussion of the 66 cent (to the county and school district) and 33 cent (to the town) appropriation worked. Chair Hicks noted the town administrator had a spreadsheet on West Peterborough "that shows how it saves money to use the TIF." Ms. Phillips-Hungerford interjected "it is very complicated, very complex. I think we should back off on the fine details of it." Chair Hicks disagreed adding "looking at Pam's spreadsheet, it is very clear." Mr. Crocker asked if a pie chart visual (two charts side by side one using general fund monies the other TIF monies) would be useful. Ms. Ogilvie replied "I was thinking of going there" but went on to note "we need real numbers. Right now we have about \$96,000 proposed to be spent with the parking lot and the sidewalks identified as projects."

Chair Hicks asked about the potential of other projects in the downtown (with the Granite Block renovation being one of them). Mr. Robinson suggested the members consider pulling out the numbers all together and using the West Peterborough example as what a TIF *can do*. Mr. Crocker agreed noting "keep it completely generic." Chair Hicks interjected "but we have to have something in our plan. We have to know how to present an accurate plan to be legitimate." Chair Hicks went on to note "you have to be realistic; we are not creating a thing just to create it." Ms. Taylor interjected "explain it first" with Mr. Robinson noting "it is a hard concept; you have to get it" adding "we have to get people to buy into the concept and then make the plan."

Ms. Phillips-Hungerford expressed concern over uneducated voters noting “we have to make it black and white and very crisp” adding “just say outright it is time for renewal so vote thumbs up or thumbs down.” Chair Hicks reiterated “we need a legitimate plan to be accepted.”

The members went on to briefly discuss a graphic that listed potential Downtown TIF projects involving the Granite Block, Centertown, both the Monadnock and Peterborough Plazas and a vacant real estate parcel at the intersection of US Routes 101 and 202. Chair Hicks noted “it is not all fiction to think *something* is going to occur in the next decade.” Ms. Ogilvie added “and just because a project is in the plan it is not a requirement that it be done.” Mr. Monahan once again mentioned parking and sidewalk improvements and Mr. Robinson again stated his case about listing the values of the properties discussed noting “it goes back to this is simply a tool.” Mr. Burnett noted “and the bottom line is you can pay for something three times faster. That is the bottom line.”

#### How the Tax Increments are Computed:

It was noted the TIF plan designates that a portion of the captured assessed value is dedicated to the retirement of the bond or directly to the improvement of the district. It was also noted any portion of the captured revenue that is not used in this way must be returned to the tax lists.

#### What Happens When Property Values Change:

It was noted that is the property values change in a TIF District “it changes the available funds available, up or down.”

#### What is the Process for Approving Projects:

The members reviewed the procedure that begins with a Public Hearing to act on a plan or project. Chair Hicks noted “there are a lot of steps along the way before the town makes a decision, a lot of arguing from point A to point B.”

In conclusion Ms. Ogilvie asked the members if they would like to see the TIF District presentation prior to the Public Hearing as a review exercise. Chair Hicks replied he thought it would be a good idea “to make sure we understand it all.” Mr. Monahan agreed noting “I would not mind that.” “It couldn’t hurt” concluded Chair Hicks.

Mr. Burnett commented on the administration of a TIF District “is the administrator a member of the EDA?” he asked. Ms. Ogilvie replied that a warrant article named the Director of Community Development the Administrator (and a warrant article in 2004 than included the EDA). It was also noted the Board of Selectmen had determined an EDA member would serve as Chairman of the TIF District Advisory Board and that the Vice Chairmen would be a member of the Planning Board.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton  
Administrative Assistant