

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

April 21, 2009

Intermezzo Restaurant

MINUTES

EDA and GDTIF Members Present: GDTIF Chairman Cyrus Gregg, Peter Robinson, Willard Williams, EDA Chairman Craig Hicks, Ken Simonetta, Hope Taylor, Jack Burnett, Jeff Crocker, and Susan Philip-Hungerford

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

Louis Berger Group: Brian Clogston and Tim Higginson.

The EDA and GDTIF joint meeting on the Main Street Bridge and retaining wall reconstruction project discussion was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by EDA Chairman Hicks. Rodney Bartlett gave a brief update of what had transpired since the first meeting in February. He noted the organization of four Task Groups (Aesthetics, Traffic, Events and Communication) and reviewed the purpose of the meetings was to gather the input and concerns of the public and the merchants involved in the project. He also noted that **no** decisions relative to the construction/rehabilitation, construction phases, detours or “any of those types of things” had been made.

Mr. Clogston then presented a Power Point on *Contact Sensitive Solutions*. The presentation reviewed the emphasis of a design fitting its setting with a collaborative interdisciplinary approach. He spoke of coming into a project without a plan and then creating a plan that takes the input, concerns, suggestions and vision of the stakeholders into consideration. He explained how Cognitive Sensitive Solutions emphasizes the interconnectivity of cultural resources, recreation, health and safety, education, housing, wages, and social networking, and develops the project in harmony with all of these things. He noted the group would actually participate in a Place Audit as an assessment tool and go out and identify issues with the bridge, sidewalks, river frontage, retaining wall, businesses establishments and the Library. Mr. Clogston reviewed the audit form and possible audit locations (consisting of three circled areas or sections) with the audience as Mr. Bartlett made it very clear that **no** decision had been made as to whether or not to close the Main Street Bridge.

**Place Audit sections:

1. The intersection of Main, Concord and Pine Streets extending North on Concord Street to the Sage Keyes House and South on Pine Street approximately 1000 feet in each direction.
2. The bridge extending west on Main Street to Summer Street
3. The intersection of Main and Grove Streets, extending South on Grove to School Street.

A merchant asked about the earliest time frame for the beginning of construction with Mr. Bartlett replying “2010 at the earliest given the planning and permitting process” adding “that is my best guess.” Several other questions about the time frame followed. Mr. Clogston noted that it was still unclear if the bridge would need to be renovated or completely replaced. He added the concrete testing necessary to make that determination would be complete by May. Mr. Bartlett took a moment to thank the audience for coming to the meeting. “It is nice to see this crowd here today, it is important to get as much input as possible while going through this design process.”

Laura Mahoney asked if the Place Audit would include Depot Square with Mr. Bartlett replying that it would not, that the three sites selected for the audit were in the direct construction impact zone of the project. He added the area was one of concern certainly, but there would not be a separate audit section for Depot Square. A gentleman in the audience asked if other sites would be monitored for impact, referring specifically to traffic and detours with Mr. Bartlett replying “detours and other impacts on the Downtown will be reviewed and monitored before and during construction.”

Mose Olenik asked for greater clarification as to why Depot Square was not being considered a section of the Place Audit with Mr. Bartlett further clarifying the three impact sites identified. He noted the Depot Square was an area of concern as was Veteran’s Way and Summer Street. Mr. Hicks interjected “this is for design purposes, not effect.” Ms. Phillips-Hungerford suggested considering all view impacts and including both sides of the river by widening the audit space parameters. Mr. Bartlett noted her suggestion was a point well taken and a brief discussion about the significant aesthetic impacts and the possibility of adding another location followed.

It was announced the Place Audit would be conducted Tuesday, May 19th with Mr. Bartlett noting “other than pouring rain we will not postpone this exercise.”

Michael Morse asked about potential funds for “other perks” in the target area including things like a pedestrian walkway or a bike path and a brief discussion followed. It was noted the Main Street Bridge and the retaining wall projects must be done together, with the State funding the retaining wall project. He added the Bridge project was an 80/20 (State/Town) percent split for funding. Mr. Bartlett noted tangential projects of interest (as suggested by Mr. Moore) would most likely involve local funds.

A second discussion about the time frame followed with Mr. Bartlett noting it was not yet known if the bridge would need rehabilitation or a complete replacement telling the audience “those types of things we do not have the answer to yet.” A brief discussion about the Governor’s 10-year plan followed with Mr. Bartlett qualifying how items end up on that particular list.

The owner of “Jane’s in Stitches” noted he did not worry about the beautification plan but was concerned about the potential of closing the bridge and what that would do to the Downtown. He explained that keeping his small parking area free for his customers “is basically a full time job” as the off street private lots are constantly violated. “This is a huge concern” he said. Mr. Bartlett responded by acknowledging the design team was on the same page, adding “this is why this is such a lengthy process” referring to the numerous concerns associated with the project. “This is a huge task” he said. A gentleman in the audience interjected “please remember Old Street Road.” Another gentleman asked “why 2010?” with Mr. Bartlett explaining the opportunity to receive stimulus program funds for shovel ready projects. This same person asked about delaying the project for a few years with Mr. Bartlett then explaining that if the allocated funds are not used in a timely fashion “they go back to the State and are re-allocated.” A brief discussion about the red-flag status of the bridge (red-flag status was defined as the structure showing accelerated deterioration since the last inspection by NH DOT) and discussion of potential scenarios regarding the time frame and delaying the project followed. Mr. Bartlett noted he would rather *plan* the process now versus *react* to a problem later.

Ira Conrad of the Peterborough Shoe Store noted the timing of the project (last Quarter) made him cringe; “we need Christmas” he said. It was noted that the testing of the concrete to determine if the project would be a rehabilitation or a complete replacement would take place in the next month or so adding “this will be key in the process.” Mr. Hicks noted the bridge may be partially disassembled in the last quarter without any impact or closing of the bridge at all, adding “and then we hit the ground running in the spring.” A brief discussion about the ramifications of the bridge being closed completely for a year to complete the project versus a year and a half with a partially functional bridge followed with Mr. Hicks asking “what do you feel as retailers? One and a half or one and get it over with?”

Ms. Mahoney interjected that in the Minutes of March 17th, while discussing the construction season, Mr. Hicks had reported the general feedback of local merchants was “let’s shut it (the bridge) down and get it done in one season.” At this point Mr. Robinson asked for a show of hands from the merchants who wanted the bridge closed down completely to accelerate the construction process with no response from the audience. Nancy Adams noted “we are just out of the gate on this” and that “it may be premature to take a consensus on anything, we do not have all the facts.” She added “we might be a month early in raising hands today.”

Brian Vaillancourt introduced himself and spoke about Old Street Road potentially being used as a detour during construction of the Main Street Bridge Project. He noted he wanted to go on the record as saying “the residents of Old Street Road are opposed to that very idea.” He noted a traffic study done by the town two years ago “and the only outcome to that was a stop sign on the road.” Mr. Vaillancourt went on to reiterate the joint meetings are to identify issue and concerns of stakeholders “and these residents are very important stakeholders.” He went on to say “our primary concern is safety, nothing more, nothing less.” Mr. Bartlett replied that Mr. Vaillancourt’s concerns would be recognized when considering Old Street Road as a potential detour route just as they will be when considering Summer, Granite and Concord Streets, adding “people will find alternative route around the construction. No matter what we do with regulations or signs, there will be an impact on your street.” Mr. Vaillancourt then suggested Old Street Road become a site analysis site. Mr. Bartlett replied that the detour routes were not

included in the assessment site as they were not specific to site construction. He went on to note “traffic management and detours will have their own discussion.” Ms. Monahon interjected “the Heritage Commission would like to be a stakeholder” and spoke briefly about the role the Heritage Commission could have in the process. A brief discussion about the best days (or nights) and times to meet followed.

Ms. Mahoney noted the minutes of March 17th stated she was late because she did not know where the meeting was being held. She went on to note that that was not the case and that the meeting should have been better publicized. Another member of the audience agreed with her saying a communication plan was needed. Mr. Hicks noted the development of the Communications Task Committee, and that Pamela Gleeson would give a brief report of their progress.

The discussion turned back to the timing and the possible delay of the bridge project as well as a good time to do the Place Audit. Mr. Bartlett concluded the discussion by noting “it is a long process to go through, is it ever going to be a good time to do the project? I doubt it.” He reiterated the Bridge was red listed, but still carried legal (not overweight) loads.

A brief discussion about the economic times and the devastation of the December ice storm followed with one merchant noting “it is not wonderful out there.” Another noted it will be difficult, stating “we cannot afford to lose a day or a week, we still have to pay our rent, we want to know how you get from one place to the other.” Mr. Bartlett replied by noting “this is why we are going through this process, including you in the planning process from the initial concept to the final design.” He went to say “sooner or later the bridge and wall will fail.” He also noted, “by going through this process now, we will have a plan in place to proceed. To sit and do nothing would be irresponsible on everyone’s part.” He added “we need to have this”

A very brief discussion about relief through local means followed, and the meeting concluded with a discussion of the best way to communicate information in the future. Ms. Gleeson gave a brief report on the discussions held to date by the Task Force Communication Group, including manual posting, newspaper posting, electronic means (e-mails, Face Book, Twitter) and phone trees. The town web site, newsletter and project blog were also mentioned.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, May 19, 2009 at 8:00 a.m. at the Town House

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant