

**Downtown TIF Advisory Committee
153 Farmington Falls Road
June 3, 2015 6:00 p.m.**

Minutes

TIF Committee members present were Richard Davis, Alison Hagerstrom, Byron Davis, Ron Gelinias, Cindi Ferguson, Kevin Madore, Paul Mills, and Cindy Gelinias.

Joshua Bell, John Moore, Mary Lello, Gary Edwards, Mike Mansir, and Tom Saviello were unable to attend.

Mrs. Hagerstrom brought the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

ITEM 1: To Approve the Minutes of the May 6, 2015 Meeting

Mr. Gelinias made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 6, 2015 meeting.

Mr. Madore seconded the motion.

VOTE: 7 – Affirmative 6 – Absent

Motion carried.

ITEM 2: To Hear an Update on the Opportunity to Create Parking in the Downtown

Mr. R. Davis said the Town is moving forward with the option to purchase the Murphy property. He said the seller has signed the option to purchase agreement and the Selectmen will sign it and authorize a check for \$2,000 at their June 9th meeting. Mr. R. Davis said he has drafted the warrant for the Special Town Meeting being held at 7:00 p.m. on June 23rd at the Community Center, and it includes the article to purchase the property.

Mr. B. Davis suggested we present a clear and concise explanation of the Downtown TIF at the meeting.

Mr. R. Davis said the Town receives money from the State in the form of Municipal Revenue Sharing which is based on our valuation. He said the increased valuation within the TIF District is sheltered, and not added to the Towns' total valuation, which increases the amount we receive in revenue sharing. Mr. R. Davis said the lowered valuation also lowers the Town's County Tax commitment and the school budget contribution, which this year is 33.97% of the \$32,000,000 budget. He said the captured funds are dedicated for use within the TIF District to improve the vitality of the community, and this benefits everyone.

Mr. Mills said the TIF promotes clustering of goods and services and saves the Town

money by concentrating infrastructure.

Discussion followed regarding relocating the Town administration departments to the Church Street Commons building.

Ms. Ferguson said page 6 of the May 6th minutes included incorrect statements to the effect that money was being sent to the State, and this should be amended. [Mr. B. Davis said the money the town has to give to the State is an expense and we are reducing that expense.]

Mr. R. Davis said we can correct that now by stating that the Town's TIF valuation is sheltered and therefore doesn't result in a reduction of Municipal Revenue Sharing or an increase in the Town's share of the county tax and school assessment.

Mr. Mills said we should also have handouts explaining the current deficient conditions of the Murphy building with associated renovation and life safety costs that would need to be made to make it sustainable. He said it should include the 15% student vacancy rate at UMF, and how approximately 13 new apartments were created in the downtown area within the last few years which helps offset removing the property from the tax rolls.

Mr. R. Davis said the Code Enforcement officer has inspected the property on occasion and Chief Bell stated it was a disaster after the Fire Department responded to a fire in an upstairs kitchen a few years ago. He said the purchase is on the Selectmen's June 9th agenda as a Public Hearing, and we should be prepared to answer questions and address concerns, and he welcomed members to attend the meeting to support the project.

Mr. Mills said the Committee must have some obligation to dedicate the TIF funds to improvements within the district and not just let it languish in a bank.

Mr. R. Davis said a good example is the 15 year Franklin Printing TIF with approximately \$150,000 in funds that would have been unavailable to use on a future project if it hadn't been renewed. He said the Downtown TIF is for 30 years.

Mr. Mills encouraged members to attend the Public Hearing to support the purchase and also the Special Town Meeting to vote.

ITEM 3: To Review any Quotes Received for Parks Electrical Installations

Mr. R. Davis said he hasn't received any quotes, and he will follow-up with the two contractors that expressed an interest in the project.

ITEM 4: To Consider Recommending an Amendment to the TIF Program to Require an Annual Minimum Tax Increment Capture

Mrs. Hagerstrom said we have included this item on the agenda so it isn't forgotten, but we don't have the full committee present to discuss it and make a recommendation to the Selectmen.

Mr. R. Davis said the Selectmen would need some direction from the Committee before the taxes are committed in mid-August for the coming year. He said the current TIF funds will cover the purchase of the property, but there aren't enough funds to complete the parking lot costs for demolition, disposal, paving, landscaping, and purchasing historical markers this year. Mr. R. Davis said the voters will decide whether to purchase the property but the Selectmen have the authority to decide how the reserve account funds, including the Downtown TIF, are expended.

Mrs. Hagerstrom said at the next meeting in July we should allow time to discuss the minimum capture so we can make a recommendation to the Selectmen. She encouraged more members to attend this meeting and vote.

Mr. Mills said it is important that our recommendation for the minimum percentage captured doesn't become the maximum for the future.

Mrs. Hagerstrom said she will research if there are restrictions on making changes each year to the percentage captured. She thought that the percentage cannot be increased once it has been established.

Mr. R. Davis said it was his understanding that the Selectmen have the discretion to establish the percentage of value captured each year.

ITEM 5: To Establish a Regular Date and Time for Committee Meetings

After discussion, the Committee decided to establish regular meetings on the second Wednesday of each month, whenever possible.

ITEM 6: To Discuss Other Business

Mrs. Hagerstrom said she has been given permission to use the banner design from the city of Lynchburg, Virginia. She said she has given Jennifer Hutchinson the design and size specifications, and once these have been reviewed by the subcommittee members, the banners will be brought before the full committee. She said the banners will be vinyl that might be printed by Franklin Printing, and they will have three design variations:

- Key words – Experience, Explore, and Enjoy
- Depict historic icons for the different districts – Farmington Grange for West Farmington, Train for Front Street, and Town Seal for Main and Broadway

Mr. Madore asked if anyone had checked into the Slum and Blight award for West Farmington.

Mr. R. Davis said not yet, but the Selectmen have agreed to pursue it and they know that it is a lot of work and will take at least a year to put it together.

Mr. B. Davis said he had heard an idea about conducting a business planning contest to encourage up-and-coming entrepreneurs. He suggested offering the winner a 0% loan from the Revolving Loan Fund or some other prize or incentive. Mr. B. Davis said this would help them find their niche and reach the customers, and there are some wonderful locations in the downtown with good opportunities available.

Mrs. Hagerstrom said a developer of a building in Livermore Falls did a similar contest, where he offered the successful applicant free rent for a specific time along with business counseling and bank services. She said it is a process that takes time to do it right, which includes marketing the project and evaluating the plans, in order to choose the right tenant with a solid business plan.

Discussion followed regarding available retail space in downtown, Kelly Dexter's purchase of the Granary, and credit enhancements.

Mr. Gelinas asked, regarding the letter from the abutter requesting some of the Murphy property be sold to them for parking, if it will be decided before the Town Meeting.

Mr. R. Davis said, no there isn't any mention of that on the warrant. He said we can't talk about selling land to an abutter when we don't own it. Mr. R. Davis said if there is a sale, we would have it appraised, make sure it doesn't affect the parking plan, and then it would go before the voters at a Town Meeting for approval.

Mr. Mills said it was good that Mr. R. Davis spoke with the abutters and the Historical Society about the proposed purchase.

Mr. Mills made a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Madore seconded the motion.

VOTE: 7 – Affirmative

Motion carried.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 8 at 6:00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cindy Gelinas, Planning Assistant.