

**Downtown TIF Advisory Committee
153 Farmington Falls Road
July 8, 2015 6:00 p.m.**

Minutes

TIF Committee members present were Richard Davis, Alison Hagerstrom, Byron Davis, Ron Gelinas, Tom Saviello, Joshua Bell, Paul Mills, Kevin Madore, and Cindy Gelinas.

John Moore, Gary Edwards, Cindi Ferguson, and Mike Mansir were unable to attend.

Mrs. Hagerstrom called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ITEM 1: To Approve the Minutes of the June 3, 2015 Meeting

Mr. Gelinas made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 3, 2015 meeting.

Mr. Bell seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5 – Affirmative 6 – Absent 1 – Abstain

Motion carried.

ITEM 2: To Hear an Update on the Church Street Parking Lot Project

Mr. R. Davis said the project is on the July 13th Planning Board agenda for preliminary approval to make sure it is in compliance with the Zoning Ordinance. He stated we have until July 15th to exercise the purchase option, and the closing will be scheduled within 60 days. Mr. R. Davis said he will be talking with the Selectmen to see how they want to proceed, but he would expect they would want to get quotes for demolition and salvage, along with quotes on engineering design for the drainage, parking layout, granite curbing, and landscaping. He said the construction phase probably won't take place until next year. Mr. R. Davis confirmed the Downtown TIF account currently has a balance of \$99,000 which was at 59% capture, and if the Selectmen agree to the same percentage this year, we should be capturing at least that amount again after the taxes have been committed in August. He said if the Selectmen decided to capture 100% this year the amount would be approximately \$167,000, and he added, the 100% capture would then make it eligible to transfer over \$110,000 from the Franklin Printing TIF to the Downtown TIF.

Mrs. Hagerstrom said engineering drainage will be important because of concerns raised by an abutter.

Mr. B. Davis asked about the drainage on Cony Street, and if including the street with the parking lot was still being considered.

Mr. R. Davis said there are several options to improve the drainage on Cony Street, but we aren't considering Cony Street as part of the parking lot. He said the abutters were not in favor of closing that section of the street, and they researched the deed that states it is a

public way. Mr. R. Davis said their letter stated they wanted to purchase a 35' x 80' piece of the property for parking. He said we might be able to work something out with them, but we will need to know how it will affect the parking scheme, how much to charge, and the voters have to approve selling a piece to them at Town Meeting.

Mrs. Hagerstrom said constructing a privacy barrier may help with the amount of land we would deed over to them.

Mr. B. Davis suggested installing signage directing people to the parking lot and shopping, and he asked about the ownership of the alleys to access Broadway.

Mr. R. Davis said the Town Attorney, Frank Underkuffler, said the alleyway has a private easement but it has the same status as a public easement.

Mr. Mills said there is a bridle path statute, but it doesn't require the Town to maintain the alley.

Mr. R. Davis said all of the deeds for the abutters of the alley refer to "blocks" (Music Hall Block etc.) and blocks are bounded by a street. He said the alley is being discussed at the July 14th Selectmen's meeting. Mr. R. Davis said Mr. Underkuffler suggested sending a letter to the abutters informing them of the status of the alley and ask them to memorialize this at a Town Meeting vote. He said, if it is a public easement and stipulated for pedestrian traffic only, they are exempt from "slip and fall" the same way as the Town sidewalks. He said Renys has posted warning signs and installed ice breaks on their roof, and they would be responsible for the liability of falling ice from the building.

Discussion followed regarding estimated closing costs for the parking lot.

Mr. Bell asked if there had been any other purchases using the Downton TIF fund, and Mr. R. Davis said, no.

ITEM 3: To Review Quotes for Parks Electrical Installations

Mr. R. Davis said he contacted both electrical companies and IEC was the only one to submit a quote.

Mr. Madore suggested this project should be tabled until the cost of the parking lot has been established and completed, and he would rather look into more parking in West Farmington.

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 make a recommendation to the Selectmen.

Mr. B. Davis suggested we use it as a savings or "set aside" account to build on for something else in the future.

Mrs. Hagerstrom said most TIF's have an assigned value and this one doesn't have one. She said someone stated at a previous meeting that it would be unfortunate if the minimum amount became the maximum.

Mr. Saviello suggested putting a "sunset" on the Downtown TIF to force this Committee to make some decisions.

Mr. R. Davis said we need flexibility to take advantage of opportunities like the parking lot. He said the TIF matures in 30 years and the funds remain in the reserve account.

Mr. B. Davis stated this is an advisory committee and it is our role to advise the Selectmen of possible projects, and what capture amount would be needed to complete a project.

Mr. Mills said Mr. Moore was looking for an amendment that would be imbedded into this policy that neither this committee nor the Selectmen could change. He said Mr. Moore was concerned there was a risk that the Downtown TIF could be unfunded as it was written, and any reserve funds could be used for lowering the tax rate or other issues. He said the language would be easy to include in the policy.

Discussion followed regarding the percentage going to the county and RSU9, calculating and explaining the capture amount, growing the fund for future projects, and making project recommendations to the Selectmen.

Mr. R. Davis said "That's where it gets complicated, and I don't know if I can answer that. I think what we had captured for valuation was, and you may remember because I shared it with the Board at the last meeting, but I think John (O'Donnell) came up with approximately \$11 million that was captured and the only reason it was so high is because the Assessor Mark Caldwell was allowed to capture the revaluation. The \$11 million isn't counted in our State valuation, which is I think \$480 million, so that has an effect on our revenue sharing if the State deems to give us any revenue sharing.... So off the top of my head to figure that out you would need to do that on a percentage basis so \$11 million is what percentage of \$480 million and you apply that to the \$370,000 we get from the State and it is a small percentage."

Mr. Saviello said "As an example – If your total budget is \$1 million and 52% goes to the schools and 3% goes to the County. So of this \$11 million, 52% belongs to the TIF because that would have gone to the schools, and 3% would have gone to the County the rest of it can be used for property tax abatement. This may be an over-simplification but to me it's a very simple way. If I have \$11 million extra of valuation and 55% is going to go pay the schools part and it might go up a bit or down but it will be pretty close without getting into a complicated formula. Then say Josh, you have a percentage 50% of that \$1 million is \$500,000 you could use back in the TIF and you could turn around and do a minimum. You could use the percentage for justification showing this amount would have gone to the school and this amount would have gone to the County. That will go into the TIF account and the rest will be up to the Selectmen. They can give you more if you have a project or they can turn around and use that for abatement."

ITEM 5: To Discuss a Slum and Blight Designation for West Farmington

Mr. R. Davis said Mrs. Gelinias has been taking photos and mapping the area. He said the 2015 CDBG Downtown Revitalization fund for the entire State was \$400,000.

Mr. B. Davis said if we applied for the CDBG funds we would need a plan, and he asked if there was a parking plan for the VIS Park area.

Mr. R. Davis said we should hire traffic engineers to see if we could get enough spaces, and to address safety concerns with the high volume of traffic at that intersection.

Discussion followed regarding encouraging new businesses, other parking areas, sidewalks, and lighting.

Mr. Saviello recommended talking with Town Manager, Rhonda Irish, about Wilton's application.

Mr. Gelinias asked if we need to include an engineering plan with the CDBG application.

Mr. R. Davis said we would have to estimate the cost of engineering in the application.

Mrs. Gelinias said she started with the West Farmington TIF district map as an initial area because she understood the TIF funds would be used as a match for the CDBG Downtown Revitalization funds. She suggested the committee discuss this further to put together a long-term plan for the area. Mrs. Gelinias said the Slum and Blight designation is good for approximately five years and requires a Town Meeting vote, and the designation would be a requirement to qualify for the CDBG application in January 2016.

Discussion followed regarding the designation, CDBG application, planning the project, and scheduling the submittals.

Mr. Saviello suggested voting on the Slum and Blight at a Special Town Meeting because most voters attending the meeting would be within the designated area and have all the information, whereas most people attending the Annual Town Meeting might not be as well informed and could make it more confusing.

Mr. R. Davis said we would try to avoid that by conducting a neighborhood meeting before the required Public Hearing, and he thought that a big decision with a long-term impact should be decided at the Annual Town Meeting.

The Committee decided to go forward with the Slum and Blight designation for the 2016 March Annual Town Meeting vote, and wait to apply for the CDBG funds in 2017 when there is a more defined plan for the area with sufficient matching funds in the TIF account, and the parking lot has been completed.

ITEM 6: To Hear an Update on Banners

Mrs. Hagerstrom said she met with Jen Hutchinson on June 29th to work on the banners.

She said the Banner Committee will review the proofs before they are brought before the full committee. Mrs. Hagerstrom said she will get the cost estimates for them to be constructed of vinyl and Franklin Printing is able to do the printing.

Mrs. Gelinias asked if we could use the Franklin Printing TIF for the banners.

Mr. R. Davis said he would check.

ITEM 7: To Discuss Other Business

Mr. B. Davis said we won't have any money to work with for a while and he asked what we are going to do at the meetings.

Mrs. Hagerstrom said it is good to be proactive instead of reactive by brainstorming on projects, and we could meet every other month instead of every month.

Discussion followed regarding the capture amount, parking lot timetable and parking restrictions, UMF plans and enrollment, improving the downtown to attract students and visitors, and how best to distribute positive announcements about the town.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 9th at 6:00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cindy Gelinias, Planning Assistant.