

Town of Farmington  
Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, September 11, 2018

**Committee Members Present:**

Angela Hardin, Chairman  
Denise Roy-Palmer, Vice Chairman  
Sharron McKenney, Secretary  
Martin Laferte, Planning Board Rep.  
Elise Haig

**Committee Members Absent:**

Ann Titus, Selectmen's Rep., excused  
Randy Orvis, excused

**Others Present:**

Dan DeSantis, Town Planner

**1). Call to Order:**

Chairman Hardin called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

**2). Pledge of Allegiance:**

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3). Public Comment:** None

**4). Review of Minutes:** Tabled until next month.

**5). Discussion with the Town Planner:**

**A). Update of TAP Grant Application:** Mr. DeSantis said they originally planned to apply for a \$1 million 80%/20% matching grant to fund downtown infrastructure improvements but they found that there are 23 communities competing for \$3.5 million in available grant funds. He said he met with Strafford Regional Planning Commission Transportation Planner Colin Lentz to scale down the Town's request for funds to \$440,000 which brings the Town's portion of the grant to approx. \$88,000 he said.

He said that the number one concern is to slow down traffic in the downtown area so they are proposing to install 3 islands- one on Central Street and 2 on Main Street which would create a mid-street refuge for pedestrians crossing the street.

The proposal also includes 3 bump outs- one on School Street as part of the Tiger Paw Trail, one on Main Street by the Cumberland Farms store and one in front of the old fire house lot which would also become the new home of the Coast bus stop.

The project will include some sidewalk improvements, lighting, landscaping and an archway at the end of the Main Street Bridge as the entrance to the Village Center he said.

**B). Steering Committee Forum-** Mr. DeSantis said that a forum will be held on Oct. 10 from 6 to 8:30 p.m. at the Public Safety Building to discuss proposed concepts for the old firehouse lot.

Mrs. Hardin asked viewers interested in attending to RSVP to [arthur.capello@yandex.com](mailto:arthur.capello@yandex.com).

Mr. DeSantis pointed out the 3 concepts displayed on the easels behind the members. He said all 3 of them depict retail possibilities along the front of the lot at the edge of Main Street.

One of the concepts includes 15 Townhouse style dwellings at 950 sq. ft. each. The second proposal shows 8 duplex style homes which are approx. 1,600 sq. ft. in size with a central open space between the buildings. The Main Street entrance to lot would be eliminated and the access would be moved to Garfield Street he said.

He said the third concept would have ten 750 sq. ft. cottage style houses behind the retail uses and would overlook a central green space with parking in the rear of the lot.

Mr. DeSantis said at this point it is unknown how the housing units will be owned and that will be part of the discussion at the forum. He stressed that these displays are just concepts and that they hoped to start focusing on what the community wants at the forum.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer asked if the commercial buildings shown will be 2 stories with apartment units on the second floor.

Mr. DeSantis said that is correct.

Mrs. Hardin asked the members to support the concepts as a starting point, to talk about the project and hand out flyers when they are with friends and out in the community.

**C). Economic Revitalization Zone-** Mrs. Hardin asked what it would entail to expand the ERZ.

Mr. DeSantis said he will have to review the state regulations and prepare an application with the support of the Board of Selectmen. He said they should have a discussion about how far the current zone should be expanded.

Mr. Laferte said that the proposed expansion would need to be reviewed by the Planning Board and then forwarded to the Selectmen for their approval.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said the ERZ expansion would not need Town Meeting approval because it is not a zoning ordinance issue.

Mr. DeSantis said he has talked with the Town Administrator about expanding the current TIF District all the way down Main Street but has not had a chance to look into the process.

Mr. Laferte said it took 2 years of "hard sell" to get voters to approve the current TIF District.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said she was informed that the ERZ program is sun-setting next year. She said there has been talk for some time to increase the \$825,000 yearly allocation and they are hoping that a new program will be developed so communities can keep and expand their ERZ's. She said she would keep Mr. DeSantis informed of any updates to the program.

**D). Business Expansion-** Mr. DeSantis told the committee that the site plan review for MBG Enterprises is going before the Planning Board on Sept. 18. The owner is expanding the business and moving to their new location in the Sarah Greenfield Business Park he said.

#### **6). Planning Board Report:**

Mr. Laferte said the Planning Board did not meet during the week of Labor Day and the previous meeting was held on August 21 which was a Public Hearing session.

He said the agenda included a conceptual discussion with Packy Campbell about his plan to reconfigure the storage buildings at the Taylor Rental site on Route 11. Mr. Campbell will return to the board next week for his amended site plan review he said.

He said the Planning Board gave site plan approval to the owner of Joy's HVAC located on Route 11 at the Farmington/Rochester town line. He said Mr. Joy had been renting the property and then decided to purchase it and needed site plan approval so the bank would authorize the purchase.

Mr. Laferte said the agenda also included a continued hearing for Janet and Joseph Gray who were seeking site plan approval to operate a commercial organic farm at their property on Brown Road. He said the several of the abutters and neighbors attended the hearing and there was quite a bit of discussion regarding the current condition and future maintenance of Brown Road. Following the lengthy discussion the board approved their application he said.

Mrs. Hardin asked if the Gray's will be selling produce to individuals on site or only to commercial buyers.

Mr. Laferte said they will be selling right at the farm.

Ms. Haig asked how many acres the Gray's planned to develop for the farm.

Mr. Laferte said he did not remember how many acres are involved in developing the farm.

He said their next meeting is scheduled for Tues., Sept. 18 which is also a Public Hearing session but he did not know what was on the agenda as it has not come out yet.

#### **7). TIF District Advisory Board Report:**

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said the board is now meeting once per quarter and that they met last week. She said they discussed the income that has been received from the district thus far and now that the 3 remaining lots in the Sarah Greenfield Business Park have been sold there will be more money coming into the TIF account. The next meeting will be held in December she said.

#### **8). Arnett Development Group Presentation:**

Stuart Arnett, principle of ADG, said his firm is working on 2 contracts with the Town. The first contract involves conducting a site analysis of the old firehouse property funded by a grant provided by the NH Housing Finance Authority run through PLAN NH which is a non-profit advocacy group that focuses on the "built environment". He said the MTAG grant is designed to help communities review their land use and zoning regulations to see if they can be updated correctly to encourage more creative, adaptable housing options.

Mr. Arnett said the second contract with the Town is to assist with the update to Master Plan and is required by state statute. He said the new implementable plan will be scaled down in size by removing issues that have nothing to do with planning for land and building uses and will include more pictures, graphics and bullet points.

Mr. Arnett said the downtown revitalization plan will require some zoning changes which must go before Town Meeting in March and the proposed language must be provided to Selectmen no later than December. He said he didn't think there would be a lot changes as the zoning ordinance is pretty flexible and would involve using some Form Based Codes.

He said the Master Plan does not need voter approval as it is adopted by the Planning Board.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer asked if the new Master Plan will have an economic development chapter.

Mr. Arnett said that it will include that chapter.

He then gave the following slide presentation to the committee:

Site Identification- a map showing the location of the old fire house site. Mr. Arnett said this presentation will also be part of a marketing proposal at some point.

Downtown Location- a map showing civic amenities within a 5 minute walk of the project site

Project Parcel- the lot is actually 3 parcels –U06-022, U06-023 and U06-025.

Regional Transportation- map of existing municipal parking lot, park & ride with 49 spaces and the existing Coast bus stop

General Assessment of the Site- relatively flat, existing storm drains, wet area in rear of lot due a drainage problem, access to Garfield Street and the right-of-way to a private property

Easements- two easements entering from Main Street and a verbal access to private property

Photos- of the swampy area at the rear of the lot and the verbal private property access

Initial Thoughts- traffic and parking issues: sight lines are north and south, need for 2 accesses instead of just one, potential shared parking sites close by; Farmington as a destination: off the beaten path for thru traffic, significant traffic in the area with disposable income, set a theme or brand, who is the developer-public, private or both, get a larger site and get control, photo of White River Junction, Vt. as an example

Site Access/Egress- aerial photo of the site showing entrances from Main Street and the exit out to Garfield Street and sight lines, proposals include moving the Main Street entrance further south along Main Street or closing it and using Garfield Street at the only access/egress.

Photos of sight lines looking south and north along Main Street

Aerial Photo of potential shared parking sites downtown at the bank, post office, telephone co.

Pathway Connections- recreational trails and amenities are close by but disjointed, a path system is easy to envision for hikers and bicyclists, some existing natural paths

Designated Downtown Walking Loop- aerial photo of existing and proposed walkways that loops around the site and branches out to local amenities, proposed walkway on the levee may not be allowed, existing new paths need to be added, future additional amenities such as rest rooms and baby changing area, picnic tables, directional signs

Mrs. Hardin then explained that each of the concept boards depicts a low, middle or high intensity impact for the old firehouse site which was described by Mr. DeSantis earlier in the meeting.

Mr. Arnett said all three concepts have retail uses at the front of the lot and access/egress to the site through Garfield Street. He said if the Town owned the green house property the entrance to that lot could be extended into the old firehouse lot.

Mr. Laferte said he was concerned about the intersection of Garfield Street and Main Street because the curve in the road obstructs the sight line. He said there is good chance the some of the homes would be populated with older people and that he was really concerned about the

issue but did not know what could be done about it.

Mr. Arnett said Mr. Laferte raised a good a point and that he would look into the sight distance on that corner. He said the concept boards were meant to show residents that there is whole range of things that can be done at that site.

Mrs. Hardin said she enjoyed listening to people's comments on the concepts at Hay Day and was looking forward to getting more feedback at the forum in October.

Mr. Arnett said they have found that pictures of the types of housing are very helpful in explaining to residents what they are seeing. He said he hoped this would give the sense that there is a diversity of housing options available that are complimentary to a revitalized downtown. If the zoning was modified to have a zero setback on the front street for a form based use that would be similar to the placement of the existing storefronts he said.

He said they are not showing suggestions from interview respondents for a dollar/grocery store or a big park space. One of the original concepts had retail uses in the front of the lot with nothing but green space and parking behind it. The concept was rejected because it was thought that it will become a public safety issue he said.

Mrs. Hardin added that parks also don't generate tax revenue.

**Edgerly Park** -Ms. Haig said that the park is underutilized and could be included as part of the trail system. She said the park is situated at the "v" in Bay Road and there is a historic well, a canon, a Civil War statute and picnic tables there.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer suggested the fence around the park may be part of the reason it is under used because people may think it is private property.

Mr. Arnett said it would be easy to put up some of the site's history as a point of interest and create an interactive walking tour. He said a partner in this project, the UNH Cooperative Extension, is very big into the economic impacts of a trail system. Continuing to include the trail system as part of the discussion is important particularly when thinking about financing he said.

Mrs. Hardin thanked Mr. Arnett for making the presentation to the committee.

#### **9). Old Business:**

**ATV Club** – tabled due to Mr. Orvis' absence from the meeting.

**10). Next Meeting:** Tuesday, October 9, 2018 at 6 p.m.

#### **11). Adjournment:**

**Motion:** (Laferte, second Roy-Palmer)) to adjourn the meeting passed 5-0 at 7:15 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon, Recording Secretary

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Angela Hardin, Chairman