

Medway Redevelopment Authority
Wednesday, April 22, 2015
Medway Senior Center
76 Oakland Street
Medway, MA 02053

Members	Andy Rodenhiser	Ray Himmel	Michael Griffin	Doug Downing	Paul Yorkis
Attendance	X	X	X	X	Remote Participation

ALSO PRESENT:

Stephanie Mercandetti, Director, Community & Economic Development
 Amy Sutherland, Recording Secretary
 Carol Wolfe, MA Department of Housing & Community Development
 Member Paul Yorkis is participating remotely.

March 18, 2015:

On a motion made by Doug Downing and seconded by Ray Himmel, the Redevelopment Authority voted unanimously to approve the minutes from March 18, 2015. (Mike Griffin abstained)

Community Revitalization Coordinator, Carol Wolfe:

The Redevelopment Authority was informed that Stephanie Mercandetti, Andy Rodenhiser, Mike Griffin and Carol Wolfe did a site visit of the bottle cap lot area.

Carol Wolfe presented the members with a document entitled “What is Urban Renewal M.G.L. Chapter 121 B”. She began her presentation by explaining that the Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) administers the urban renewal program. This includes assisting municipalities to establish and strengthen urban renewal entities along with providing technical assistance to prepare and implement the urban renewal plans.

The Redevelopment wanted Carol at their meeting to address some of their questions. Some of these Include: Does the redevelopment authority have separate counsel from the town and at what point was counsel retained? Does the redevelopment authority have liability insurance, and when was it secured? Does the redevelopment authority have funding and from what sources and how is it handled? What are the biggest obstacles when developing an Urban Renewal Plan?

Stephanie Mercandetti provided the authority with a document which contained responses from various towns regarding how they have utilized counsel, and liability issues around urban renewal plans. This document will be updated as more information from various towns is gathered.

Carol advised the authority that the best way to get these answers is contacting a variety of communities.

Stephanie has reached out to the following communities: Southbridge, Stoughton, Ashland, Plymouth, Webster and Hatfield. The responses gathered varied from each town.

Carol responded that areas such as Worcester, Palmer and Greenfield have revenue sources. Some authorities have their own staff, and legal counsel. Towns such as Carver, Fitchburg and Springfield have their own legal counsel. She further emphasized that the agenda for the URP should be parallel with the town. As elected parties, you should represent the community, but you are an independent body. The town of South Hadley just allocated \$90,000 for redevelopment. Carol explained that any revenue to the town would come with sales of the parcels.

The authority expressed concern about endorsing contracts along with receiving property that we have no claim to. Carol explained that with the urban renewal plan, it is easy to clear title. This would need to be done. DHCD reviews the land acquisition price under the urban renewal plan.

The authority is concerned about being sued individually. Carol will ask her counsel if individuals can be sued individually. She did explain that authorities have been taken to court. The City of Attleboro was taken to court and they lost, and the authority owed money. The City of Worcester was also taken to court for land acquisition. The URP will identify the parcels to be acquired.

The authority also wanted to know if they can put language in the URP that the town agrees to back the RDA with full faith liability. Carol will speak with her legal counsel about this.

The URP is appraisal of property and it should not come as a surprise to the Town. The plan should list a total value and include appraisals. There needs to be two independent appraisals. It was suggested to do an estimate of a cost of the property in a less costly manner.

Carol recommended speaking with the Town of Springfield. They have 32 Urban Renewal Plans. The URP went through many different revisions. These plans had a 40 years duration. Today, if you have an URP, there is a 20 year duration.

The MRA wanted to know what happens if town meeting does not fund a settlement. Carol responded that this needs to be addressed prior to town meeting.

The MRA wants to meet with the Town Administrator to discuss some of the procedural items.

Member Yorkis wanted to know if there is any liability in terms of accepting property which has been gifted to the board. Carol does not know why there would be any liability if the land was gifted. The statute notes that you can take land as a gift. The title needs to be clean and needs to be held in escrow and there needs to be a formal taking. Carol suggested that if the members have any further questions, they can email her.

The MRA wants to know if they have authority to sign contracts. Carol responded that this is different in all towns. Whoever oversees the contract has the authority to sign it. There IS sometimes added language in a memorandum of understanding.

The language of the URP plan needs to be as specific as possible. There is also a requirement to have citizen input group. Stephanie will find out which towns use insurance companies to inquire about the cost. There also may need to be a discussion with the finance committee about the funding mechanism for this. The MRA would like to have this information relatively early in the process. They do not want to do anything prematurely.

The discussion next moved to steering committees. Carol explained that the purpose of the steering committee is to help direct the development. The people need to buy into the URP 100%. She recommended that the City of Fitchburg be consulted in regards to how they use their steering committee and how they utilize this committee.

Carol further explained that there is an internal review process of the application for the URP. Once the MRA chooses the consultant and the Urban Renewal Plan is drafted and submitted, there are several colleagues from her agency which can tell right away if it is a well written URP. The town can work with the staff on drafts closely and there is a partnership created over time. There is an instruction manual for the submittal which needs to be followed in the order as requested. If the plans are really written well, the turn-around does not take long. It could be 24 hours if well written. The administration has 60 days act on the submitted URP. Plans can be amended through the process if there are conflicts. The administration is not anti-development, it should be smart development. There is money available for funding resources. Inviting various state leaders is always important when implementing the URP.

A question was asked if there are any impacts as a result of governor's executive order regarding regulations. Carol is not aware of any federal statute which would effect this. The regulations

were streamlined. Stephanie is familiar with the programs and has worked to utilize the tools. The URP is the scheduling. The appropriation from town meeting is \$80,000. Carol recommended that references be checked of the consultants who apply to do the URP.

Request for Proposal:

The authority is in receipt of the final Review of Draft Request for Proposals. There have been no comments or proposed revisions since the last meeting. The document was reviewed by the town accountant and based on her comments, we have everything needed to post it in the goods and services central registry.

Carol recommended that the boundaries need to be reviewed and confirmed. There should be another scenario if something changes, in a minor or major modification. The plan can reference that there is an alternative and if it people want to opt out and there is a change to plan, this would be a minor change but the plan should be the full area. The Board of Selectmen and Planning Board would need to vote to change this. The URP is a catalyst for developers. When there is a disposition of property, there must be a land disposition agreement and we need to make sure the appropriate language. There is grant money to help build the infrastructure. A question was asked if we can use grant money to buy capacity. This needs to be researched.

Steering Committee:

Member Himmel indicated that there is no update regarding the steering committee. The list of 30 people has been narrowed down to 19. The kick off meeting will be led by consultant and facilitated by member Himmel.

Future Meeting Date: **Wednesday, June 3, 2015 at 7:00 pm**

Adjourn:

On a motion made by Mike Griffin and seconded by Ray Himmel, the Medway Redevelopment Authority adjourned their meeting at 9:00 pm.
