

MINUTES of the ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
January 19, 2022 @ 4:30 p.m.

Committee Members present: Councilor Martin Dumont, Chairman
Councilor Donald Austin, Vice Chairman
Councilor Richard R. Michaud

Committee Members excused: Councilor Matt Gerding

Staff Members present: City Manager Bob Belmore
Finance Director/Deputy City Manager Scott Smith
Director of Planning and Comm Dev Michelle Mears
Economic Development Manager Robin Comstock
City Clerk Jonathan Slaven

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dumont at 4:30 p.m.

APPROVE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 7, 2021

Councilor Austin made a motion to accept the September 7, 2021 minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Councilor Michaud and passed 3-0.

REVIEW DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS FOR THE FORMER BRETONS CLEANERS, 1 WINTER STREET PROPERTY

Manager Belmore explained the City has received two proposals for the Former Bretons Cleaners property. He briefly discussed the general nature of both proposals; one being a conceptual, multi-unit design, the other a franchise restaurant. He indicated the franchise restaurant is willing to purchase the property for \$200,000, accept care of the monitoring wells, and rectify any issue with the sewer line that runs through the property. The proposal for a conceptual multi-unit design would like to acquire the property for free, but apparently does not want to handle the monitoring wells.

A brief discussion on whether the property is classified for form-based codes or not took place and it seems it could be interpreted different ways. Councilor Michaud stated he looked over both proposals and is hesitant to have a large chain in the downtown area. He said, although the restaurant design is nice, we need more housing. Councilor Austin said he was not thrilled with the conceptual design or having a multi-story building in such a limited space. He said it would take a lot of work to make that concept come to fruition, which could take a lot longer than anticipated.

Councilor Michaud said he likes the multi-use design, but realizes the design ultimately constructed could be drastically different than the proposal. He also mentioned potential issues with the retaining wall and nearby railroad tracks.

Manager Belmore added that the restaurant proposal organization has the finances to move quickly and handle some of the issues the City currently cares for. He added that the concept design proposal comes from a very forthcoming and motivated person, but financing is an unknown.

Councilor Dumont stated the City has other similar restaurants in the area and the City has an obligation to not impede upon the existing business owners. He stated his preference at this time is to have both organizations come in and meet with the Committee and give us an opportunity to discuss their proposals with them.

Councilor Austin made a motion to have both groups come in for a brief presentation and question and answer session with the Committee. The motion was seconded by Councilor Michaud and passed 3-0.

VARIOUS UPDATES

A. Former Police Station Project

Manager Belmore stated two bids for the cleanup project were received, but only 1 was on time. The on-time bid was over budget. Credere, the City's consultant engineer on this project is amending the bid specifications and rebidding, and we will go back to the State and look for additional funding.

B. NH DOT Rte. 108 Corridor Improvements

Manager Belmore explained that City Engineer Amber Hall has been in contact with the State and SRPC regarding delays to the project due to Covid. He stated the project budget nearly doubled in the draft ten-year plan and that Amber has reached out to MacFarland Johnson to discuss next steps and timeline.

C. CMAQ Grant Update – Traffic Lights

Manager Belmore stated final plans and specifications are in for final review, but a timeline is unknown. He added this is a lengthy process only compounded by the lack of personnel reviewing these projects for the entire State.

D. Wal-Mart Storage Containers

Manager Belmore said an inspection of the Walmart containers was performed and a violation sent for storage containers blocking parking. They have 30 days to remove.

E. Other Development Matters

Manager Belmore mentioned that a meeting for the utilization of the former National Guard building will be taking place soon. He also informed the Committee that the owner of the new sports dome has requested an extension from the Planning Board regarding their conditions of approval for a CO. Manager Belmore stated talks are still ongoing between Chinburg and Aclara.

ADJOURN

Councilor Michaud made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilor Austin and passed 3-0. Meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan Slaven, City Clerk