

Worcester Redevelopment Authority

Michael P. Angelini
Chair

Peter Dunn
Chief Executive Officer



WORCESTER REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Thursday, September 14, 2023

9:00 A.M.

City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber

Worcester, MA 01608

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Present:

Worcester Redevelopment Authority Board

Michael Angelini, Chair
David Minasian, Vice Chair
Sherri Pitcher
Richard Burke

Staff

Peter Dunn, Chief Executive Officer
Michael Traynor, City Solicitor
Alexis Delgado, WRA Finance Manager
Julie Lynch, Director of Facilities
Paul Morano, Office of Economic Development
Greg Ormsby, Office of Economic Development
Rachel Pressey, Office of Economic Development
Victoria Porteiro-Cejas, Office of Economic Development
Jane Bresnahan, Office of Economic Development

Pursuant to a notice given (attached), a meeting of the Worcester Redevelopment Authority was held at 9:00 A.M. on Thursday, September 14, 2023

1. Call to Order

Mr. Dunn called the meeting to order at 9:03 A.M.

2. Roll Call

Mr. Dunn called the roll – Ms. Pitcher, Mr. Minasian, Mr. Burke, and Chair Angelini.

3. Approval of Minutes: August 10, 2023

Mr. Minasian made a motion to approve the minutes of August 10, 2023.

Mr. Burke seconded the motion.

The minutes were approved 4-0 on a roll call.

New Business

1. Update from MBTA relative to the Center Platform Project at Union Station

Mr. Dunn introduced Chris Sullivan, MBTA Project Manager along with other representatives for the project. Mr. Sullivan provided a presentation of the project.

Mr. Angelini asked if the image of the tower was glass or other transparent material. Mr. Sullivan confirmed it is glass. The MBTA does that for security reasons with visibility in all areas of the station.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the project schedule and mentioned delay due to the pandemic along with global supply chain issues. Anticipated completion is Spring 2024, but not too far off. Mr. Angelini what was the original completion date. Mr. Sullivan advised December 31, 2023, now March 21, 2024.

Mr. Sullivan described the pending change order. Mr. Angelini asked about the WRA approval process for the change order. Mr. Sullivan advised WRA already approved this work. Mr. Dunn recounted back in the summer of 2022 there was a proposal related to some of the work that helps the WRA with waterproofing and other work. There was an amendment to our original agreement with the MBTA on that. The WRA's total contribution is about \$3.9 Million Dollars, much of which came from FTA with the 80% 20% split. The WRA 20% match comes through the fiscal year capital budget, and this is carrying out the intent of what was approved last summer. Mr. Angelini appreciated the clarification. Mr. Minasian further asked about how the potential change order becomes a change order. Mr. Sullivan advised there was an MOU for how to handle this and the MBTA will basically manage this whole portion of the work. If there are any major cost discrepancies, the MBTA would notify the WRA, and it would come back for approval. He mentioned everything is looking good right now and doesn't anticipate the need for an additional approval. Mr. Dunn added that the WRA is not a party to the contract with Judlau, there is an MOU with the MBTA on the funding side and they will handle their contractor and for whatever reason there is unexpected costs related to that and affects the MOU it will be brought back to the Board.

Mr. Burke asked if this project increases the capacity of Union Station and the tracks to have more commuter rail service. Mr. Sullivan confirmed. Mr. Sullivan further described the crossover process at the tracks and the need to potentially utilize a small portion of the DPW&P properties to facilitate a temporary construction easement and a small area for a permanent easement. Mr. Dunn interjected, to be clear for the Board members, the DPW&P properties are under the control the City not the WRA so MBTA will be working directly with the City.

Chair Angelini expressed an observation about the project with an amusing sense of irony, Mr. Burke asked the question whether the purpose of this project is to improve commuter rail service to Worcester, you answered correctly, and that has been the understanding, but ironically just the day before yesterday the MBTA through Keolis announced that Worcester's service is being restricted, the two nonstops going to Boston in the morning, coming from Boston in the afternoon are now being terminated and that train will stop at every stop. It is amazingly ironic the state is spending all this money and Worcester is spending its energy and money on this project to improve commuter rail service, when at the same time the project is nearing completion, the MBTA on the other hand is eliminating efficient train service. This will have a huge impact. Anyone going to work in Boston and coming from Boston uses that morning and evening train service. How can the MBTA possibly think it is efficient or effective to spend all of this money and time in the interest of improving commuter rail service and announce the day before yesterday that it is reducing commuter rail service and the efficacy of it to and from Boston. This Board deserves an explanation of it. The Board has invested huge amounts of money as the state has to provide fast, efficient, effective train service between the two largest cities in New England. It is disgusting.

Ms. Pitcher added there has been a lot of new development that has been triggered because of accessibility to the train station and the city has been promoting all of the express trains making it a very accessible option for people living in Central Massachusetts to get to Boston. The state has been asking for more housing to be developed adjacent to the train stations and Worcester as a community has been encouraged to do so. Mr. Angelini concurred that third parties have been encouraged to make huge investments in Worcester in this vicinity with the promise of transit.

Mr. Sullivan advised he was not aware and agreed that does seem like a step in a different direction. Mr. Sullivan will pass this onto railroad operations and Keolis. Chair Angelini asked about Keolis' discretion, since the announcement was made by Keolis on behalf of the MBTA. Who has the discretion to adjust train service? Mr. Sullivan acknowledged the good question, and not sure if they have the experience present to answer but from his experience it happens a couple of different ways. It can happen as a regular schedule change, often seasonally; it can happen for emergency, recent operation issues, rolling stock, conditions shortage of equipment, but they do not have the insight on this particular issue.

Chair Angelini advised the Board will keep this matter on the agenda for the next meeting and would like to hear from the MBTA from whomever is in charge of this. This is a step back and the community has been stepping ahead, and will not take it lying down. This will be on the agenda and appreciate the update.

Mr. Burke expressed appreciation for what was just articulated, glad to keep it on the agenda, and perhaps Keolis could join them at the next meeting. Chair Angelini agreed. Mr. Sullivan acknowledged the request.

2. Authorize Execution of Amendment No. 3 to the Design Services Agreement with Nault Architects, Inc. for Union Station

Mr. Dunn advised this amendment is for the design services agreement with Nault Architects for miscellaneous improvements at Union Station totaling \$127,550.00. There are four elements to the amendment, the highest cost item being the fire alarm sprinkler

system. Mr. Dunn turned it over to Ms. Lynch to speak to the request and update with Nault on a number of different fronts at the facility. Ms. Lynch confirmed the fire system upgrades is the most important and on a critical path for a number of reasons. Ms. Lynch described the status of the fire system and need for upgrade.

Ms. Lynch continued by describing the other elements of the Nault proposal and work requested by the Public Facilities team.

Chair Angelini advised for Item 4, looking to have a status report on Union Station with improvements and repairs, a subject that has been ongoing on every agenda. Ms. Lynch confirmed.

Mr. Minasian offered the following vote:

Voted, that the Worcester Redevelopment Authority hereby authorizes its chair or vice-chair to execute Amendment Number 3 to the Design Services Agreement with Nault Architects, Inc. in the amount of \$127,550.00 relative to miscellaneous capital improvements at Union Station.

Mr. Burke seconded the motion.

The item was approved on a 4-0 roll call.

3. Financial Update Report

a. Report on Prior Month's Executed Contracts and Payments

b. Report on Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan Expenditures

Mr. Dunn advised toward the end of the packet is a summary of miscellaneous improvements to Union Station, which will be described. As a reminder, one of the most important sources of funding for the WRA is the FTA funds, the "state of good repair" allocations. The report shows different activity both on the design and construction side. This financial report will be a helpful reference point for the discussion.

Total expenditures from August 8, 2023 to September 13, 2023, totals \$398,712.00. A lot of that includes operating costs for Union Station, monthly expenses related the carrying costs of the Denholm Building, which has been driven down substantially with the help of Project Manager Mr. Ormsby.

Mr. Minasian asked about the first-floor bathroom item. He recalled this was from one or two years ago, about \$489,000.00 including two change orders, and the status. Mr. Dunn advised the finance report related to FTA state of good repairs includes the final column, where this project is listed as 100% complete. Mr. Minasian wanted to make sure the same project. Ms. Delgado added that the form Mr. Minasian is referring to is a list of contracts that are existing throughout the length of these projects, which does need to be updated to closeout the contracts that have ended. Mr. Dunn clarified the summary sheets he was referring to are actually behind that list of executed contracts and payments. The last two sheets outline a in terms of the 80% contribution of FTA and 20% WRA match along with percentage complete, and if there is a balance on a project that is done, there would be a savings.

Chair Angelini offered to Ms. Lynch a background of the concerns or the interest, which led to the request for an overall summary report. As Board members, the overview of the

sense of needs at Union Station is unclear. At every meeting there seems to be some services or projects - for first floor bathrooms, bird netting, stucco, roof repair, architectural fees, which would seem unlimited. Looking to gather a good sense of where this ends, what is out there, how far away is the light at the end of this tunnel. A current state of the end of this repair of Union Station, which is a subject that takes up much time at these meetings. Mr. Dunn appropriately points out the accounting, which is the last few pages - what is the state of all that, when will it be done, when will it be just maintenance and repair items as opposed to capital items, what is your prognosis on that and any other comments you want to add would be very helpful.

Ms. Lynch provided a presentation, overview, and description of the items contained in the list of miscellaneous improvements and state of good repair projects.

With respect to water infiltration at the Union Station parking garage, Chair Angelini, asked if staff has explored whether the construction was properly performed. Ms. Lynch advised all garages have water and salt roaming around since they are open to the elements. The garage is in good shape, constructed well, and expressed her opinion that fundamentally there is a funding issue for our public garages. Public Facilities is working with Off Street Parking to make improvements with their garages' preventative maintenance issue. Chair Angelini asked to confirm the garage was properly constructed and these are problems that have arisen despite proper construction. Ms. Lynch confirmed and advised the issues are more of a preventative maintenance problem.

Mr. Burke asked further about the funding issue and where the funds come from to maintain the parking garage. Ms. Lynch expressed her understanding that the Off Street Parking Board the city receives funding from parking in the garages, and Department of Transportation and Mobility have recently raised the rates to gain funding to support improvements along with a system in the city for on street parking. Mr. Dunn clarified the ownership is under our Off-Street Parking Board and the Department of Transportation and Mobility in the case of Union Station Garage. The parking at Union Station is outside of the WRA's financial picture, but the garages are not a profitable enterprise. Another challenge in addition to revenues covering operating expenses, is that capital improvements at garages is often debt for the city and need manage the overall balance sheet in the city in terms of new schools adding pretty significant overall debt loads to our balance sheet. The city tries to do what it can each year. The city also has debt obligations related to the reconstruction of the Pearl-Elm Garage and tries to keep up the needs with all of the garages holistically across the city system. Ms. Lynch continued her presentation for the Board.

Chair Angelini inquired about when the lights were installed. Ms. Lynch advised it was part of the major renovation twenty plus years ago. Chair Angelini asked how much bike use there is at Union Station at the present time. Ms. Lynch shared that it seems some do and there are some bike lockers on the left plaza, but bike use is something staff are encouraging. Mr. Dunn advised Jon Weaver from MBI has been working on this topic and looking to be more successful getting companies' employees to their incubators. He has shared some examples of employees at those member companies taking the commuter rail, reverse commute living around Cambridge. Currently they take their bike on the train, but that might not be due to lack of storage if they bike around their house and bring back home. Mr. Weaver has been working with DOT as well, along with the new administrator at the WRTA to benefit some of the connections that need to happen if people are coming here on commuter rail. What does that last mile look like and how

does the WRTA play an important role in that as well. Ms. Lynch continued the review of the slide presentation.

Chair Angelini asked when all of this work is expected to be completed or substantially completed. Ms. Lynch advised that will vary. The 961 restaurant looks to open by the end of the fall / early winter, café in the rotunda likely completed in March, waiting on Massachusetts Historic approval, the same with Police shower room, those two projects should align and be complete by March 2024. Miscellaneous repairs, other than the canopy, which is under Historical review, will have varying degrees of completion with a lot of small projects, lead times vary for materials vary from this fall to next spring. Renovation project Phase 1 can certainly move forward with the generator a long lead time (30-34 weeks), LED project six to eight months, bike covers hoping for spring, bus waiting area floor two months. Chair Angelini suggested it sounds like most of these projects will be substantially completed if not fully completed within the year. Ms. Lynch confirmed yes.

Chair Angelini asked if thereafter no other capital improvements that are predicted, will it just be regular repair and maintenance. Ms. Lynch replied that is fair to say. Phase 2 of the miscellaneous repairs may need additional funding for masonry repair, driveway and roof, which could push into next fall and would not have those completed, cost dependent.

Mr. Minasian inquired about the square footage of Union Station. He continued that the original renovation was done twenty plus years ago and appreciated the presentation. He asked to get a sense of the MEP situation, what is the overall mechanical, electrical and plumbing in Union Station and needs over the next ten to fifteen years. Ms. Lynch advised the plumbing is in good shape, the switch gear has had an issue. They are getting an infrared scanner to get a better idea of any issues there. The square footage is 103,000. DPF is rolling out computer management software named Brightly to assess the buildings and have programmed preventive maintenance into the software and start to schedule the work, so things do not fall through the cracks.

Ms. Lynch advised one of things the city is trying to do mitigate the people experiencing homelessness, mental health issues, drug addiction that visit the station often is to get a day center through the City Manager. Chair Angelini asked for more information about what is being planned at the Station with respect to the homelessness situation. Ms. Lynch advised it is being managed as best as possible but is a problem when people do not feel safe. The Police have been wonderfully supportive, and understand that it is not just this building, the main Library experiences the same issue as well as other areas of the city. Looking for the City Manager to consider a Day Center that can offer services and support. Chair Angelini what is being planned at Union Station about that if anything. Mr. Dunn interjected that the idea of a day center is not to be sited at Union Station, it would benefit Union Station and folks would have somewhere to go during the day. Now, they go to buildings open to the public. Chair Angelini, thank you Mr. Dunn.

Mr. Minasian asked to circle back, sounds like plumbing is good. As far as some of the mechanical systems looking a fire alarm upgrade addressing code issues, other than that is it in pretty good shape. Ms. Lynch advised yes there will be full occupancy which is nice and the other thing striving to do is to meet the city's 2030-2045 gas emissions goals. Part of that is electrification and will certainly have an impact when our equipment meets end of useful life. HVAC design a little in flux trying to get a better design, better refrigerants to move in that direction and for the next cycle. Mr. Minasian asked if the

timeframe is five to ten years looking for efficiency upgrades. Ms. Lynch, yes. Mr. Minasian asked in addition to the stucco and roof being addressed, are there major exterior issues? The building has a lot of leaks it seems. Ms. Lynch advised the current waterproofing change order to the Judlau contract will mitigate that. The west plaza canopy is an historic structure that remains in disrepair and needs to be repaired. One of the columns penetrates the west plaza. The waterproofing around those will be taken care of by the MBTA project and will be in good shape once that is completed. Mr. Minasian asked if there has been a structural analysis, any major concerns within Union Station in terms of structural. Ms. Lynch advised the entire exterior wall along Harding Street behind the bus terminal needs repointing, cleaning and have to work with Genesee Wyoming to see if they can make improvements to their underside of the deck of their track. The only other concern is the terrazzo floor in the Grand Hall has some cracks due to a long run along the beams below it. Does not appear to be structural but should be looked at. Chair Angelini appreciated Ms. Lynch's presentation.

5. Status Reports

- a. Union Station**
- b. Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan**
- c. The Cove**

Mr. Dunn advised staff are still waiting on the executed lease amendment from Luciano's. A little disappointing at this point will follow-up again express the urgency that it needs to be signed expeditiously. Working with the Menkiti Group on the Land Disposition Agreement, making progress and getting that executed. Due to the agenda today, the owner of the Midtown Mall was not invited and know Ms. Pitcher was interested in that building. All of the equipment has been delivered to the Worcester Common Fitness on the second floor looks quite nice progress on opening. Owner did file a building permit for the building next to the Midtown Mall to the left 12 Front Street for a few dozen residential units. Permit was held in the workflow of the building permit review to make sure there is compliance with inclusionary zoning and owner is evaluating his options for compliance right now.

The Cove – REIPP no change to the MWBE report since last month still tracking 18% of the construction value of the MWBE on the workforce report no change in terms of the subcontractors the same list of subcontractors last month. There was an increase of workforce hours for people of color, holding pretty flat on the other categories for Worcester residents, and still no female participation. Staff continue to chat with them on getting that improved and subcontractors within thirty miles.

Chair Angelini suggested before adjourning to return to the subject of the MBTA. Does not know where WRA authority ends, but it does seem that this subject of rail service - of course connected with the huge investment made in Union Station - the community needs to be informed about needs to react to it, it affects a lot of things going on here. Mr. Dunn was encouraged to raise this with the administration. Mr. Dunn will do so and support for it. Chair Angelini doesn't know who should take the lead but seems the Legislature should be involved - a broad political response - it goes to the heart of what we are trying to accomplish and really a smack in the face given the concerns Ms. Pitcher expressed with the development going on in Worcester and reliance on the train service. Mr. Dunn agreed with Chair Angelini and appreciated the comments this morning and evident in their reaction from them that they didn't know. Had the same question in terms of what kind of latitude discretion does Keolis have and seems like Keolis maybe made a decision without MBTA signing off about that. About a month ago, the EDCC Economic

Development Coordinating Council had the Secretary of Transportation here with a number of members of her team, DOT, Registry of Motor Vehicles as well MBTA. Nothing was not shared with us at that meeting about any negative changes to the Heart to Hub. Obviously since then, the Secretary of Transportation has announced her departure from that role. Mr. Dunn will follow-up with the folks that were there last month and a request them return with whomever to speak with the WRA, particularly with the WRA investment on the Station side and the WRA can definitely play a lead role in that conversation. Mr. Burke fully agreed with what Mr. Dunn is saying about taking an interest in this and raising the concern. The gentlemen from the MBTA said that Keolis takes its direction from the MBTA, and worth probing that to find out who is the decision maker on this and then pursuing them. Mr. Minasian shared the concerns very strongly. As a resident of Worcester, he will reach out to his state representative and state senator to make sure that they are aware of this. The state created a new housing position in Governor's Healy administration and is really focused on housing near transit. This is heading in the opposite direction. Worcester is clearly growing and as stated at this meeting all the housing coming in here and having that transportation to Boston makes sense. Chair Angelini confirmed this will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Dunn called the roll to adjourn the meeting at 10:27 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Dunn
Chief Executive Officer