

Worcester Redevelopment Authority

Vincent A. Pedone
Chairman

Peter Dunn
Chief Executive Officer



WORCESTER REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Friday, February 12, 2021

9:00 A.M.

City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber

Worcester, MA 01608

Present:

Worcester Redevelopment Authority Board

Vincent Pedone, Chair
David Minasian, Vice Chair
Jennifer Gaskin

Staff

Peter Dunn, Chief Development Officer
Michael Traynor, City Solicitor
Alexis Delgado, WRA Finance Manager
John Odell, Energy & Asset Management
Jane Bresnahan, Office of Economic Development
Amanda Cornwall, Office of Economic Development
Greg Ormsby, Office of Economic Development
Robert Stearns, City Auditor

Pursuant to a notice given (attached), a meeting of the Worcester Redevelopment Authority was held at 9:00 A.M. on Friday, February 12, 2021

Chair Pedone announced that all votes will be roll call.

1. Call to Order

Mr. Dunn called the meeting to order at 9:05 A.M.

2. Roll Call

Mr. Dunn called the roll – Mr. Pedone, Mr. Minasian, Ms. Gaskin

3. Approval of Minutes: January 15, 2021

Chair Pedone asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Chair Pedone thanked Ms. Bresnahan for providing the minutes verbatim during discussion of certain items as the Board felt it was important for the record, which reflected actions taken during that meeting, were explained fully, and the conversations between the members were captured. Chair Pedone noted that Mr. Tilton and Mr. Angelini are not attending because

the majority of the agenda is dealing with Ballpark related items. Both Mr. Angelini and Mr. Tilton need to recuse themselves from these discussions in the meeting.

Mr. Minasian made a motion to approve the minutes, Ms. Gaskins seconded the motion.

The minutes were approved 3-0 on a roll call.

New Business –

Chair Pedone previously requested we move Items 5 and 6 Status Updates to the front of the meeting, however, that is not necessary now. Chair Pedone advised we will take up Items 1 and 2 together: execution of Amendment #9 to the Cooperation Agreement for the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan and Item 2 execution of Amendment #10 for the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan.

Mr. Dunn stated that it makes sense to take the two items collectively. The first item is broken out separately, which relates to the net proceeds from the Loan Order that was adopted by City Council. The reason that this is taken out as a separate amendment because that is an amount that is repaid. The second item the \$3.2 Million Dollar Amendment #10 is the amount of the Team equity and will not be repaid. Both of these collectively through the cooperation agreement with the City is the way that dollars flow from the City to the Worcester Redevelopment Authority to carry out the actions that the Board took last month in terms of the approval for the next amendment for Gilbane-Hunt, the Joint Venture doing the construction of the Ballpark. Chair Pedone are there any questions or discussion.

1. Authorize Execution of Amendment #9 to the Cooperation Agreement for the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan in the amount of \$10,017,500.00

Ms. Gaskin offered the following motion to:

Voted that the Worcester Redevelopment Authority hereby authorizes its chair or vice-chair to execute Amendment 9 to the Downtown Urban Revitalization Cooperation Agreement between city of Worcester and Worcester Redevelopment Authority in the amount of Ten Million, Seventeen Thousand, Five Hundred Dollars and No Cents (\$10,017,500.00).

Mr. Minasian seconded the motion.

The item was approved 3-0 on a roll call.

2. Authorize Execution of Amendment #10 to the Cooperation Agreement for the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan in the amount of \$3,230,882.00

Mr. Minasian offered the following motion:

Voted that the Worcester Redevelopment Authority hereby authorizes its chair or vice-chair to execute Amendment 10 to the Downtown Urban Revitalization Cooperation Agreement between city of Worcester and Worcester Redevelopment Authority in the amount of Three Million, Two Hundred Thirty Thousand, Eight Hundred Eighty Two Dollars and No Cents (\$3,230,882.00).

Ms. Gaskin seconded the motion.

The item was approved 3-0 on a roll call.

3. Verizon Easement – Conduit & Cable – 100 Madison Street, Worcester

Mr. Dunn explained this conduit and easement is required for Verizon New England service for the Ballpark. A copy of the easement is included as well as an exhibit of that conduit and location.

Mr. Minasian offered the following motion:

Voted, that the Worcester Redevelopment Authority hereby authorizes its chair or vice-chair to execute a deed of easement for Verizon New England Inc. through a portion of 100 Madison Street for the purpose of supplying telecommunication and data service for the Canal District Ballpark Project.

Ms. Gaskin seconded the motion

The item was approved 3-0 on a roll call.

4. Canal District Ballpark Project workforce diversity and inclusion report.

Mr. Dunn introduced Ms. Skilling from Gilbane-Hunt. Ms. Skilling advised there are not giant updates this month and the numbers are holding steady. For workforce, the current status is about 22% Worcester residents, 25% people of color, and female 6%. Ms. Skilling we seem to be filling in some of the zeros which is positive. As far as the MWBE, she is in the middle of a comprehensive update and review. Right now, the MWBE is at 18% and no changes expected. For the next meeting, there will be a comprehensive update that will reflect the values and such of the project. Ms. Skilling advised that next week the City Manager, herself and Mr. Minasian will be involved in a Webinar about diversity in the construction industry on Thursday, February 18, 2021. She invited everyone to logon, it's open and you can register. Ms. Skilling will be sharing some of our practices with the group in the event.

Mr. Minasian stated he has a couple of questions and thanks for continuing to participate in the community around this issue. As we said last month this has been a great value to the community at large to Worcester and another fantastic report. You have a high impact low performer and I'm looking at Harold Brothers Mechanical, their hours are twenty-seven thousand they are in the top five in terms of hours, there is a little bit of change maybe one of the zeros you were referring to on the female participation. Did they hire someone? Mr. Skilling stated she has continued for the duration of this project to go back and forth with Harold Brothers because as you said they are a high impact contractor. They are nonunion which makes their hiring process a little different. They do have an exorbitant amount of workers, they've had fifty workers on site. They have brought in one person of color and they had a female on site briefly. I actually believe from speaking with them that as a company, they have a female workforce including foreman that are woman. Other than continuing to reprimand them, they have sent verification that they've placed ads and made efforts and unfortunately have managed to cover the bases in showing they've made the efforts. Again, we they don't have a pool of workers that's already there that they can go to sometimes, so this is what we see when we have contractors that do not have the hiring benefits of other union pools to reach out to. I ran

the numbers without Harold Brothers Mechanical and it brings the female project numbers up a full percent and 24% for Worcester residents. Ms. Skilling stated as you know, we have to work in public projects and public process with a union and non-union environment, hopefully when we are working with non-union contracting partners, we would like to see them be more responsive and responsible. We can continue to reprimand them, update them and ask for their documentation, and unfortunately as long as they provide what's required to show, why they haven't made and met these goals, the diversity and inclusion environment doesn't provide any sanctions other than the possibility of not using these contractors on future work, when we have that option. Mr. Minasian said he knows there are filed sub bid contracts and appreciates the conversation and that is what this is all about. Provide a solution and have folks in the workforce and swing over and help here. Ms. Skilling said she likes to believe that she's really good at what she does with certain situations like this and is frustrating. Mr. Minasian appreciated the effort.

5. Financial Update Report

- a. Report on Prior Month's Executed Contracts and Payments**
- b. Report on Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan Expenditures**

Mr. Dunn the numbers are very consistent month over month with the focus on the Ballpark project. The total expenditures from the last report from January 12, 2021 through February 8, 2021 were \$8.14 Million Dollars. About ninety percent, \$7.4 Million Dollars were for Gilbane-Hunt the Joint Venture carrying out construction of the Ballpark. Other highlighted expenses, LiRo Engineering doing materials testing for the Ballpark, National Grid for work related to the service connection for the Ballpark, over ninety- five percent expenditures were Ballpark related.

6. Status Reports:

- Union Station – Vendor & Maintenance Performance**
- Union Station – Miscellaneous Renovation Projects**
- Urban Revitalization Plan**
- Midtown Mall**
- Great Wall**

Chair Pedone requested status updates on the ongoing projects at Union Station, as well as the Midtown Mall, and would like an update on the Great Wall property at 521 Main Street. Also as an aside, a general update on the Ballpark project itself due to the pandemic, the recent weather over the past couple of months, it seems the project is moving along and generally on track which is great news. Mr. Dunn advised we are on track for April, there are still a number of entities that are deliberating and need to concur for the start of the season, but construction is still on track for April. Mr. Dunn said we were not sure if there would be a month delay for season schedule. As it stands today the start of the season would be in April. There are still unknowns as it relates to capacity restrictions and fans in the stands, which will also involve the Governor of the Commonwealth. Right now, outdoor gatherings are continuing to be at the twenty-five person limit. If the population continues to be inoculated in the next several months and the numbers continue to trend downward, we will hear additional updates from the Governor on his reopening plan. As it stands, we're still tracking that April date and the Ballpark could be provided an occupancy permit unless there are any unforeseen circumstances between now and then, so baseball could be played in April. As we know, and I think I mentioned last month, there will be buttoning up on detailed features but in terms of being able to utilize the Ballpark and have games played we are trending in the

right direction. There are still a few unknowns in terms of what opening day looks like two months from now. Ms. Gaskin replied, regarding what Chair Pedone mentioned, things progressing along despite COVID and the weather, I've been impressed with the progress of the project despite all the things happening around us and thank you for bringing the item up and Mr. Dunn presenting the update.

Chair Pedone asked about an update on the Midtown Mall, a communication from the owner, but before we discuss that matter can you provide the Board with a status report on the Union Station projects. Mr. Odell said the miscellaneous renovations project is complete. We are now working on miscellaneous renovations part two to put together a package so that we can apply for FTA grant funds as well as your approval based on the projects that we are reviewing right now and will provide the Board in a couple of months. For the Cannabis Commission we expect to have the final piece of a payment which has been an outstanding and will have a resolution that we can present at the next meeting. No other updates. Mr. Minasian asked for clarification about the outstanding issue. Mr. Odell responded that work is ongoing to finalize that and would be premature until it's finalized. We had a concern between the contractor and the WRA regarding one of their subcontractors and that's as much as I can say at this point. Mr. Minasian the contractor APC Development and the subcontractor they hired directly. Mr. Odell that's correct this was a Chapter 149 bid so those subcontractors were not chosen by APC. Mr. Minasian asked if that project finished construction wise and now we are just working on the payment. Mr. Odell replied correct.

Chair Pedone mentioned he communicated with Mr. Dunn regarding the bathrooms at Union Station. There was a community member who reached out to Chair Pedone and stated that the bathrooms at Union Station were locked and no access to those facilities for him or other commuters. Chair Pedone wanted stated in the minutes that someone reached out with concern over the course of the last few weeks bathrooms seemed to be locked. Mr. Dunn advised we did respond to that inquiry and everyone related to the City staff and the building, Police Sub Station and facility staff are on the same page with the restroom policy, that they do remain open unless they are being cleaned. Because of COVID there has been more cleaning activity than typically seen in previous years and they are to remain open unless being cleaned. Mr. Odell concurred with Mr. Dunn that they remain open and if one restroom is being cleaned there is another restroom on the floor above or below. On the first floor there is a ladies room and men's room restrooms so there's always another restroom available fairly close by even if one is being cleaned. Chair Pedone restated that no restroom was open and communicated to the administration that restrooms at certain times were all locked.

Chair Pedone informed the Board that Union Station was ranked 14th most beautiful train stations in the U.S. in Conde Nast Traveler Magazine article. *"Less than 40 years ago, Worcester's Union Station in Central Massachusetts was in complete disrepair, and Amtrak was actually using a separate station to service the area. But after a restoration in the late '90s, the station is as good as new, with its 175-foot-tall towers rebuilt and stained glass ceiling and marble floor returned to their former glory."* I believe it caught everyone by surprise and did not know the travel magazine was doing the survey across the country of train stations. Being ranked 14th is wonderful in the nation and had we known, I'm certain that we would have been able to not knock Penn Station or Union Station in Washington off the top ten list and get in the top ten and have Hot Dog Annie's popup stand involved. It's great that the Station is ranked nationally more importantly the aesthetics is one thing the Station is incredibly important and part of our intermodal transportation center for our city and region is more important.

Chair Pedone inquired about the update of the Great Wall – 521 Main Street. Mr. Dunn has not communicated with them directly since the last meeting. The restaurant is operating and doing well and looks nicer than in the past. The overall goal of having the upper floors renovated will take them some time. Between now and the next meeting will get an assessment on any projected timeline to initiate that project. The owner did suggest their financing strategy was to use the cash flow from the business and we know restaurants do not have great margins as it is, so I do not think that will be the best financing strategy to pull off a large project, renovating the upper floors. When speaking with the owner I can suggest other financing strategies that they want to pursue.

Midtown Mall – Mr. Dunn said we had hoped that the façade work would have been started by now and believe the winter conditions have affected the progress and as well as the availability of subcontractors as the construction industry is pretty busy right now. Mr. Lana the owner reached out to me and has signed contracts and are onboard committed to the projects and believes he can get started with the façade work the first week of March, with weather cooperating, that's his goal. He has continued on the renovations inside on the common areas, continuing to advertise the property to available spaces for tenants. He has showings on a weekly basis with interest and responses to marketing of the space. Mr. Dunn advised if we do not see the work mobilizing in the first week of March, will have Mr. Lana attend the March meeting with more detailed updates if the project is not moving along with the schedule he outlined. Mr. Minasian inquired about leases, a market, that Mr. Lana provided the Board, has anything be signed. Mr. Dunn reminded the board that Mr. Lana indicated he has LOIs with some of the operators and moving to an executed lease was contingent on the façade work and definitely hinging on the façade work getting started and completed.

Chair Pedone inquired of Mr. Traynor as we start getting COVID vaccines rolled out and trying to resume monthly meetings, when we start planning in person meetings, does the Executive Order for Emergency COVID meetings, which suspended Open Meeting Laws to allow us to utilize remote meetings, will that continue to extend even for members who feel uncomfortable attending the meeting in person? Chair Pedone asked if we were to call for an in person meeting and two members of our five member Authority felt comfortable at that point, coming to an in person meeting, does the Emergency Executive Order still permit us to meet in person with a majority of our Board remote? Mr. Traynor advised that order is an order from the Governor and in place until such times as he rescinds the order that suspended portions of the Open Meeting Law. It all depends on how long the Governor keeps the order in place. Chair Pedone asked if it would allow us to have a hybrid if we could not get a quorum physically present. Mr. Traynor, that's correct, you could do a hybrid right now under that order as long as that stays in place. One of the main features of the Governor's Order is that you do not have to have a quorum physically at the meeting locations. That is why you can have these meetings entirely virtual.

Chair Pedone suggested as we start wrapping up our work with the Ballpark, financing and the WRAs involvement in the Ballpark Project, I believe it is time to start getting back to the focus of the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan itself. The Plan is five years old and would to put on our radar a meeting discussion about the Plan itself and the other properties that are included in the Plan. We are significantly far along in the life of this Plan to take a look at it, have another analysis done, on the condition of the properties that have been identified that the WRA has not focused on. Clearly we are focusing on three properties in the Plan, the Ballpark Project, 521 Main Street, the Midtown Mall, Front Street properties, there are other properties included in the Plan. I'd

like to put on the radar revisiting our Urban Revitalization Plan and an update on the properties that are included in the Plan. Mr. Dunn said we are having a couple of conversations with some of the properties and hopefully we can shift focus and provide an update to the Board and hopefully will convey at the next meeting. Mr. Minasian mentioned the current boundaries and as we have been moving forward in this process and a lot of the success we've seen with additional development happening due to the Ballpark and would like to hear the status update maybe from their plant a seed does it make sense to visit the boundaries are there opportunities now that we could not foresee five years ago that are in front of us now and we should look into these areas after our discussion. Chair Pedone requested for the next meeting's agenda a General Update and discussion on the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan and look to a larger review to determine whether or not the boundaries should be reevaluated. I recognize that if it is something the Board were to undertake and move forward would require public hearings and ways to finance. With that understood and the recognition of the requirements of boundary discussion and starts with a full understanding of where the properties are that are identified already in the Plan.

Chair Pedone before we adjourn, Mr. Dunn do you anticipate for our next meeting, will we have more Ballpark items to address and do you anticipate those items being extensive that would require long deliberation and explanation or more ministerial and move quickly as we did this morning? Mr. Dunn said he would expect having just a few items as we coming to the close of the Ballpark project. Chair Pedone said I miss seeing Mr. Angelini and Mr. Tilton on the Zoom meetings what I would ask the Administration when putting together the agenda place any Ballpark related items at the end of the agenda so that Mr. Angelini and Mr. Tilton are able to attend the meetings be able to take part in the beginning of the agenda. Chair Pedone reminded that we moved our meetings from in person meetings at 8:00 a.m. on the second Friday of the month to a meeting at 9:00 a.m. virtually every second Friday of the month, and wanted to check in with the members if this time still works? The reason we moved the meetings to 8:00 a.m. to ensure people from the community were able to participate and wanted to attend first thing in the morning before work 9:00 a.m. Chair Pedone explained that the meetings used to be noon-time on Tuesdays or Wednesdays and the general public could not attend and then moved to 8:00 a.m. and the time still works for the members at 9:00 a.m. as well as more importantly the goal of assuring our meetings are accessible to the public. What I'm asking Mr. Minasian and Ms. Gaskin does 9:00 a.m. still work for you? Both members agreed the time is fine. Mr. Minasian in terms of accessibility we've not heard complaints or access about the meetings and move forward with the 9:00 a.m. start time and virtually open for anyone to join. Our next meeting is planned for March 12, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Dunn called the roll to adjourn the meeting, the meeting adjourned at 9:50 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Dunn
Chief Executive Officer