

Worcester Redevelopment Authority
Citizens Advisory Committee
January 22, 2015
8:00 AM
City Hall – Levi Lincoln Room
Worcester, Massachusetts

Attendees Present:

John Brissette, Chair, Jill Dagilis, Vice Chair, Frank Carroll, Michelle Johnson, Hong Tran, Alec Lopez, Mable Milner, Linda Cavaiolli, Michael Traynor, Heather Gould, Jackson Restrepo, Jane Bresnahan, Jef Fasser, Russell Burke, Vincent Pedone, Julie Holstrom, Daniel Racicot

Chair Brissette welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their participation, stating he looks forward to working with them throughout the urban renewal process.

Vincent Pedone, Chair of the Worcester Redevelopment Authority, described to the committee that the WRA is statutory and was established in the 1960s. The WRA has been involved with six urban renewal projects. The first four projects were governed by WRA staff. In the 1990s, the WRA was stripped of most of its powers and reduced to being staffed by the City. There are two active projects remaining - Worcester Medical Center and Washington Square Redevelopment and operations of Union Station. Mr. Pedone stated that the committee has been established to advise the consultants and the WRA Board in the drafting of the urban renewal plan and to bring the urban renewal process to the community as the plan moves forward. Mr. Pedone requested Chair Brissette to identify member(s) to periodically attend a WRA meeting to update the WRA on accomplishments.

Michael Traynor stated that the Committee is subject to the open meeting law requirements and requested members to review the attached summary and sign the signature page. Mr. Traynor then presented an overview of the role and responsibilities of the Committee, stating that the Committee will work with City staff, the BSC Group, and the WRA to plan for, organize, and participate in a community input process.

In a review of past practices and reports guiding the overall vision of the Urban Renewal Plan, Heather Gould gave a PowerPoint overview of the Theater District Master Plan completed in 2012 by the Worcester Business Development Corporation and the City. Over the past decade, downtown Worcester has witnessed substantial public and private investment. The Theatre District Master Plan is a strategic review of the strengths, challenges, and opportunities of an approximately 30 acre area in the downtown. The goal: To drive growth and spur private investment by leveraging public improvements with the outcome of activating the street life throughout the District. The vision: An

active, mixed-use, 18-hour neighborhood with significant institutional growth to support a vibrant entertainment and cultural environment drawing residents, businesses, and visitors to downtown. Ms. Gould also reviewed the recommended actions and primary development opportunities outlined in the Theatre District Master Plan.

Jef Fasser, BSC Group, presented a PowerPoint to the Committee outlining their role as consultant to the urban renewal process. The CAC will play a prominent role as part of the public participation process required by Urban Renewal regulations. Mr. Fasser stated that they will work with the Committee to develop the content for the requisite public meetings/hearings for the urban renewal plan. BSC will make an inventory and review of existing conditions and report their findings to the Committee at the next meeting. Mr. Fasser reviewed the proposed boundaries of the Urban Renewal Plan, stating that the current area included the Theatre District Master Plan area as well as extending up Pleasant Street to Chestnut Street to High Street to Chatham Street back down to Main Street to Southbridge Street and extending over to the streets surrounding Wyman Gordan.

A question was asked about State participation. Russell Burke, BSC Group, answered that as part of the Urban Renewal Plan designation, an area could not be officially considered as an Urban Renewal Area until the State's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) approved such a plan, and that the plan had to be prepared in accordance with State regulations. Mr. Fasser also advised that he has worked with the State's DHCD on other urban renewal plans and has a good working relationship. Mr. Traynor advised the Board that Carol Wolfe from DHCD has reviewed and walked the proposed urban renewal area.

At the conclusion of the meeting it was determined that the Worcester Redevelopment Authority and its Citizens Advisory Committee will hold a joint meeting on February 13, 2015 at 8:00 AM – Levi Lincoln Chamber.

A motion was made by Jill Dagilis and seconded by Frank Carroll to end the meeting. The meeting ended at 9:10 AM.