

**Worcester Redevelopment Authority
Citizens Advisory Committee
April 16, 2015
8:00 AM
City Hall – Levi Lincoln Room
Worcester, Massachusetts**

Present:

John Brissette, Chair, Jill Dagilis, Vice Chair, Frank Carroll, Linda Cavaoli, Jack Donahue, Paul Demoga, Alex Dunn, Alec Lopez, Stacey Luster, Mable Millner, Deborah O'Malley, Hong Tran,

Staff:

Michael Traynor, WRA Chief Executive Officer
Heather Gould, Chief of Staff, EOED
Jane Bresnahan, Administrative Assistant, EOED

Mr. Brissette called the meeting to order at 8:06 A.M.

1. Introduction of New Members

Mr. Brissette advised the Committee that at the request of community leaders, discussions with the Administration and the CAC, it was determined that a representative from the Canal District and the Crown Hill District be added to the Citizens Advisory Committee. Alan Fletcher from the Canal District and Honee Hess from the Crown Hill Historic District have been added to the committee.

2. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Chair Brissette to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2015 and February 26, 2015 Public Hearing. Mr. Donahue seconded the motion.

3. Downtown/Theatre District Urban Renewal Plan

As part of a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Jef Fasser (BSC Group) reviewed the information needed within an urban renewal plan. He provided Committee members with a hand-out of proposed project goals and objectives. He continued his presentation by reviewing the study area, the footprint of the current Theater District Master Plan, and proposed development opportunities.

Mr. Fasser advised the Committee that he has met with representatives from the Department of Public Works and Parks to discuss existing conditions and planned infrastructure improvements – noting that the existing city utilities (water and sewer) are

in good condition and adequately sized for the uses within the urban renewal proposed area. Mr. Donahue requested that BSC try to get information on existing infrastructure from the gas and electric companies in the city to make sure the infrastructure is up to standards, and Ms. Dagilis stated that BSC should be aware of the potential need for buildings within the URP to require upgrades to utility connections to buildings and within the streets as well as vaults. Members discussed pros and cons of housing – particularly student housing, tax exempt properties/not taking properties off the tax rolls, and working with existing tenants/property owners.

Ms. Luster was particularly concerned about displacing local small businesses, particularly minority businesses and relocation. Mr. Burke explained the DHCD parameters for relocation in an urban renewal scenario. Mr. Fasser stated he will provide members with a description of the State mandates on relocation. Mr. Burke also noted that the mandates have been updated and retooled to current standards.

Mr. Fasser offered potential development opportunities, starting with the Mid-Town Mall at 10-22 Front Street. The Committee requested careful consideration be made when thinking about actions that may affect businesses and relocation of those businesses. Mr. Fasser continued with the presentation outlining additional proposed development opportunities: Aldrich Street, Park Plaza on Main Street, 517-521 Main Street, 521-545 Main Street, Chatham Street at Main Street, Chatham Street at High Street, Federal and Portland Street, McGrath Parking Lot at Salem Square, Southbridge Street, and Wyman Gordon owned parcels. The discussion turned to the urban renewal area boundary and whether or not the area could be expanded. Mr. Traynor gave a brief background to the Committee of why the area was selected to be the focus.

Mr. Fasser stated that the WRA is looking to complete the urban renewal plan for submission to DHCD in Fall 2015. The Committee requested that the presentation and most current maps be forwarded for review. The Committee will meet again at 8:00 am on April 30 to discuss further.

A motion was made by John Brissette and seconded by Jack Donahue to end the meeting. The meeting ended at 9:40 AM.