

City of Worcester, Massachusetts

Edward M. Augustus, Jr.
City Manager

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Chief Executive Officer
Worcester Redevelopment Authority



WORCESTER REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

January 19, 2018

8:00 A.M.

City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber
Worcester, MA 01608

Present:

Worcester Redevelopment Authority Board

Vincent Pedone, Chair
David Minasian, Vice Chair
Michael Angelini
Sumner Tilton, Jr.
Jennifer Gaskin

Staff

Michael E. Traynor, Esq., Chief Development Officer
Jennifer Beaton, Deputy City Solicitor
Heather Gould, Assistant Chief Development Officer
Erin Cahill, WRA Financial Manager
John Odell, Energy & Asset Management
Jeanette Tozer, 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 8:00 A.M. on Friday, January 19, 2018.

1. Call to Order

Chair Pedone called the meeting to order at 8:05 A.M.

2. Roll Call

Mr. Traynor called the roll.

Chair Pedone read the following statement:

Mr. Angelini has requested to participate in today's meeting remotely because he is out of town. Since his physical presence at today's meeting is not feasible, I have agreed to his request. Please let the meeting minutes reflect that Mr. Angelini's request has been approved and that he will be participating remotely by telephone today. All votes at today's meeting will be taken by roll call.

3. Approval of Minutes: December 11, 2017

Chair Pedone asked the Board to review the minutes of the December 11, 2017 meeting. Mr. Traynor also provided the Board members a copy of the December 11, 2017, executive session minutes. Chair Pedone sought a clarification on whether the Board was making the executive session minutes public. Mr. Traynor stated that will not be made public at this time because the grounds for the executive session still exist. It was decided that the executive session minutes would be reviewed and discussed in the executive session that would occur later in the meeting. The approval of the December 11, 2017, regular meeting minutes was moved by Mr. Angelini and by a 5-0 roll call vote the meeting minutes were unanimously accepted.

New Business

1. Submission of WRA Capital Projects List for FTA Funding

Mr. Odell reviewed with Board members the list of capital projects and preventive maintenance costs to be included in the upcoming application for Federal Transit Administration grant funding. Chair Pedone inquired about Item 8 on the list, Plant Engineer, and whether or not an employee can be covered by FTA funding. Mr. Odell informed the Board that it is eligible for FTA funding and maintenance is included as an eligible expense. Mr. Odell informed the Board that this listing is what is being applied for as eligible expenses and that final costs for all projects will be approved by the Board. Chair Pedone inquired about the eligibility of item 1, the design of the Worcester Police substation, and Item 9, Security Services (Worcester Police Department), and Mr. Odell stated that both items would be covered by the FTA funding.

2. Financial Update Report

Monthly Expenditure Report Updated Executed Contracts and Payments

Ms. Cahill stated that for the period November 5, 2017, through January 16, 2018, there were expenses incurred totaling \$174,390.68. Approximately \$124,000.00 was for operating expenses and approximately \$50,000.00 was for capital expenses. What is not included on this report are a couple of checks that Chair Pedone signed on January 19, 2018, for real estate taxes and exterior stucco repairs at Union Station.

3. Status Reports – Miscellaneous/Improvement Projects

- a) Union Station Exterior Stucco Project**
- b) Union Station – Vendor & Maintenance Performance**
- c) Union Station – Leak Remediation Project**
- d) Tenant Updates – Former Tenant**
- e) Security Update**

f) Urban Revitalization Plan

Mr. Odell informed the Board that construction for the Exterior Stucco Project will begin in early March, weather permitting. In terms of Vendor and Maintenance Performance, a new cleaning company has been awarded the contract and will be starting at the end of the month. Design work for the Leak Remediation Project is ongoing with Lamoureux Pagano & Associates. The company is going through a brief transition right now and the Board will receive an update at the next meeting regarding major changes in the scope of work. Security services have been performing as well as they have in the past. A few issues have cropped up but have been handled appropriately.

Chair Pedone advised the Board that he received an email earlier in the week from Juan Gomez, former City Councilor and community leader, who asked to speak with the Board about the Urban Revitalization Plan in response to the proposed expansion of the Urban Revitalization Plan. Chair Pedone noted that Mr. Gomez spoke at the Urban Revitalization Plan public hearing in 2016 with a request to increase the scope of the plan, and that the WRA was unable to do so because the request essentially doubled the size of the proposed area.

Mr. Gomez stated that he wanted to speak to the Board after reading that the WRA was considering expanding the plan's boundary near the vacant Wyman-Gordon property off Madison Street. Mr. Gomez stated that he is looking to bring attention to a specific segment of the city that Centro has been a part of and at its current location since 1977. In 2007, Mr. Gomez became Executive Director and is now President and CEO of the institution. When Mr. Gomez took over Centro it had 23 employees; now the agency has more than 80 employees and serves clients in over 34 cities and towns in the Commonwealth.

In 2003, in light of this growth Centro needed additional space and parking beyond what their old building on Sycamore Street could provide, Centro gathered a strategic group of community leaders and board members to explore if they could build another facility in their present neighborhood. Other than the YMCA there is no other anchor institution that serves their neighborhood, defined as the area bordered by Main Street, Madison Street, Southbridge Street and Hammond Street. Aside from investments made by the Main South CDC years ago there have been no significant investments in that neighborhood, and it continues to deteriorate as a result. The Board of Centro was charged Mr. Gomez with trying to find a location where the organization could expand. 701 Main Street was under consideration but it did not work out for many reasons. Centro created the New Americans Community Development Corporation as a vehicle to work on expansion plans and he said it has been recognized by the City of Worcester and the Commonwealth as a Community Development Housing Organization. Since that time the organization has acquired several properties and made improvements in the neighborhood.

Mr. Gomez stated that when the Urban Revitalization Plan was announced they felt it was an opportunity to request that the URP area be expanded to include their section of the City, which has the highest concentration of poverty within the City. Centro is asking to be included now for two reasons and does not intend to slow down the process nor increase costs for the City. They do not intend to ask the City or the WRA for any operating dollars. Centro believes that this expansion would allow Centro to obtain dollars from local and national foundations as well as from the state and federal government. Mr. Gomez stated that the Main South area is in a critical situation because there are three or four major real estate holdings on the market and it could be detrimental to that area if they end up in the hands of absentee landlords.

Mr. Minasian sought clarification from Mr. Gomez regarding his request to change the boundaries and to incorporate the Centro neighborhood in the Urban Revitalization Plan. Mr. Gomez responded that if the area were expanded to include Centro's neighborhood it would provide public acknowledgement by the WRA that they support the New Americans Community Development Corporation.

Chair Pedone requested that Mr. Gomez supply the Board with a map of the proposed area that Centro wants added to the Plan. Mr. Pedone noted that Mayor Petty has just announced his subcommittees, and he encouraged Mr. Gomez to meet and continue the conversation with them. Chair Pedone noted that the cost of the Urban Revitalization Plan at the time of the 2016 public hearing was \$350,000 and that those funds were used to inventory properties and to complete assessments and market evaluations. At the meeting that prompted Mr. Gomez's call and email, the WRA Board approved the limited expansion with a handful of properties. Chair Pedone stated the WRA does not have the financial capacity to expand the plan to include the scope that was presented by Mr. Gomez. Chair Pedone stated that the Board works hand in hand with the City, the administration and the City Council to ensure that everyone is on the same page and works in conjunction as part of the economic development arm of the city. Chair Pedone further noted that the item presented before the Board would need a significant investment and that approval would need to come from the City Council. Chair Pedone also stated that Centro should have these conversations with the City Council Economic Development Subcommittee – if they were to move in that direction, the process would essentially start all over again, as this request would essentially be creating a new urban renewal plan. The process would include public hearings and approval by the WRA, City Council, and the State; it would not be a small amendment to the existing plan.

Mr. Traynor informed the Board that BSC Group is preparing a scope of services for the last amendment that the Board approved and will provide an update at the next meeting. Mr. Minasian inquired about the relocation plan from BSC Group that was approved at the previous meeting in light of questions that have been received from community members as well as Councilor Rivera's related agenda item on the next City Council calendar. Mr. Traynor stated that there is no timetable for the relocation plan; the WRA has authorized the relocation specialist, Steve Molica, who was identified by BSC as a sub-consultant. Mr. Traynor further noted that if the WRA takes a property they must provide both business and residential relocation assistance and that it's on a case by case basis. The scope of financial assistance is dependent on the particular property and the State has to review and approve both the taking and the relocation assistance.

4. Request Executive Session to Discuss the Value and Acquisition of Real Property

Chair Pedone offered the following motion:

**Whereas, the chair has declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Authority;
Now Therefore, Be it Voted that the Worcester Redevelopment Authority hereby convene in executive session for the purposes of considering the value and acquisition of real property. The Authority will not reconvene in open session.**

The Board voted 5-0 on a voice vote.

5. Adjournment

There being no further business, the Board motioned to adjourn the meeting at the end of the Executive Session. The meeting adjourned at 9:35A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael E. Traynor, Esq.
Chief Executive Officer