

APPROVED
WOBURN REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MINUTES FOR THE MAY 5, 2020 MEETING
****MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM PLATFORM****

Chairman Queenin called the May 5, 2020 Woburn Redevelopment Authority meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and asked Dan Orr to call the roll.

1. Roll call of members

Mr. Gary Fuller, Mr. Art Duffy, and Chairman Queenin were present; Mr. Wayne McDaniel and Mr. Dave Ryan were absent. Planning Board Director/WRA Administrator Tina Cassidy, City Planner/Grant Writer Dan Orr, and Planner Karen Smith were also in attendance.

2. Approval of minutes: February 11, 2020 meeting

Queenin called for motion to approve the prior two meetings' draft minutes if members were prepared to do so.

Motion to approve the May 5, 2020 and May 28, 2020 meeting minutes, made by Fuller;
Seconded by Duffy;

Roll Call Vote on the motion to accept draft May 5, 2020 and May 28, 2020 meeting minutes, as submitted

Queenin-Aye
McDaniel-Absent
Fuller-Aye
Duffy-Aye
Ryan-Absent

Motion carried, 3-0-0.

3. Bills to be paid

Queenin stated that there are three (3) bills for the WRA to consider authorizing this evening. These include two (2) bills originating from the Group Insurance Commission in the amounts of \$20.00 and \$951.03 and an invoice from the City of Woburn in the amount of \$9,072.15 to reimburse the City for the cost of wayfinding signage recently installed. No further discussion ensued.

Motion to approve the bill roll, as submitted, made by Fuller;
Seconded by McDaniel;

Roll Call Vote on the motion to accept the bill roll

Queenin-Aye
McDaniel-Aye
Fuller-Aye
Duffy-Absent
Ryan-Absent

Motion carried, 3-0-0.

4. Monthly financial report

Queenin reviewed the monthly financial report for the period ending March 31st. The Authority's Operating and Sign/Facade Program current account balances are \$82,971.23 and \$16,294.15, respectively.

Motion to accept the monthly financial report, as submitted, made by McDaniel;
Seconded by Fuller;

Roll Call Vote on the motion to accept the monthly financial report

Queenin-Aye
McDaniel-Aye
Fuller-Aye
Duffy-Absent
Ryan-Absent

Motion carried, 3-0-0.

5. Correspondence

Queenin asked if the WRA has received any correspondence for discussion. Cassidy responded that there is no correspondence to present at this time.

Queenin asked what the current status of the Brickyard's proposed lease and summer concert series is given the current conditions of the pandemic. Cassidy responded that staff understands that Mr. Nick Leo, the owner of the Brickyard Restaurant, is still very much interested in moving forward with lease authorization under the draft terms proposed by the WRA. However, she has advised that he wait until there is more clarity relative to the state's current emergency declaration as it relates to the operation of restaurants.

Cassidy further stated that the WRA should take into consideration the possibility of prorating the current total cost of this year's lease in recognition of what will likely be a narrower "window" of time for the outdoor dining season. She added that Mr. Leo would also appreciate efforts of the WRA to hold a meeting to authorize the a lease soon as he has is able to identify a date for launching outdoor dining, as to avoid any additional loss of time for business operations. Members expressed general agreement with this approach.

6. Update on Storefront Façade and Sign Program, including financials, interest in program expressed since last meeting and efforts related to recent expansion of sign grant eligibility area

Orr stated that no new applications or inquiries have been received since the Authority's February meeting. He added that a sign vendor has been in touch with him to obtain updated sign materials and planned to distribute them to potentially interested businesses within the new sign program boundaries.

7. Update on WRA-funded downtown streetscape improvements by Department of Public Works

Cassidy stated that she has spoken and met with Deputy Department of Public Works (DPW) Superintendent Lenny Burnham since the February WRA meeting authorizing \$20,000 in WRA funding to procure street furniture from MassCOR (Department of Corrections) through a program that offers the sale of benches or trash receptacles steeply discounted from standard market rates. At this point, DPW has made much progress and purchased approximately \$15,000 worth of street furniture in the form of benches, receptacles, and planters, with \$5,000 remaining for potential purchases of tables/chairs and bike racks.

Cassidy further stated that the manufacturing of the street furniture that has been ordered is now delayed due to the impacts of the current pandemic, but delivery is anticipated by September.

8. Update on new initiative to provide economic relief to restaurants in downtown

Cassidy provided an overview of the Downtown Restaurant Initiative grant program that is being undertaken by the City with the intent to provide financial assistance to downtown restaurants, to be funded by the Woburn Development and Financial Corporation (WFDC) in the amount of \$35,000. The program will focus on restaurants located approximately within the WRA's sign/façade grant and loan program boundary. Each restaurant opting to participate will benefit from \$25-value gift card purchases of an equal number (between 40-70 gift cards per establishment) to be determined by the final "pool" of participants. The gift cards will then be distributed to the Council for Social Concern and the Woburn Senior Center to provide to families in need of food assistance, which can be done through the course of their normal program operations.

Cassidy further stated that contact with the potential participating restaurants is well underway and responses have been very positive, with a number of application forms already filed. Restaurants also must comply with a few basic program criteria for factors like employee numbers (to limit the program to small businesses) and opening times, and staff is hoping to ascertain data relative to employment generated/retained as a result of this program from each restaurant. In addition, the Council for Social Concern and the Senior Center will also be monitoring the types of clients who take advantage of receiving gift cards.

Members discussed their support of the goals of the program as a way to stimulate economic activity in the downtown and help families in financial need with food assistance.

Queenin stated that the City should consider the fact that certain “chain” establishments, like Dunkin’, are franchisee-owned and should not necessarily be considered “large” businesses.

Cassidy stated that the program announcement is now on the City’s webpage and a press release will also be issued shortly. The City plans to begin procuring the gift cards after the application process closes, beginning the week of May 18th. Staff will keep WRA members apprised of progress.

9. New/Other Business

Queenin stated that his thought is to consider suspending at least the WRA meeting at the end of May in recognition of the current statewide emergency order, with the intent to hold the next WRA meeting on the currently scheduled date of June 23rd. Members were in agreement with this proposal.

Queenin stated that he would appreciate periodic staff updates on the Downtown Restaurant Initiative program. Cassidy responded that staff can commit to such updates and will instruct members to send any questions directly to staff.

Smith asked if the WRA members would have to authorize any checks issued by the WRA to distribute funding received from the WFDC as part of the Downtown Restaurant Initiative grant program. Cassidy responded that there are two options to consider for administering the funding, which include depositing funds into the WRA’s sign/façade grant and loan account and issuing checks from that account or to deposit funds into a City-held account and issuing checks via the Auditor’s Office.

Queenin stated that he has no preference as to how the administration of funding is handled; only that it should be done in a trackable/auditable way. Cassidy responded that the planned data collection regarding all gift cards purchased, employment information, and tracked dissemination of gift cards will ensure that the funding is adequately accounted for at the conclusion of the program.

10. Adjournment

Seeing no further business, Queenin called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion to adjourn the May 5, 2020 WRA meeting at approximately 5:26 pm, made by McDaniel;
Seconded by Fuller;

Roll Call Vote on the motion to adjourn the meeting

Queenin-Aye

McDaniel-Aye

Fuller-Aye
Duffy-Absent
Ryan-Absent

Motion carried, 3-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 5:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Orr

Dan Orr
City Planner/Grant Writer

APPROVED