

APPROVED
WOBURN REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MINUTES FOR THE JANUARY 14, 2020 MEETING
Council Committee Room
City Hall, 10 Common Street, Woburn, MA

Chairman Queenin called the January 14, 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. Wayne McDaniel, Mr. Art Duffy and Chairman Queenin were present; Mr. Dave Ryan was absent. Planning Board Director/WRA Administrator Tina Cassidy and City Planner/Grant Writer Dan Orr were also in attendance.

2. Approval of minutes: October 22, 2019 meeting

Chairman Queenin stated that next on the agenda was adoption of the draft minutes of the WRA's last meeting.

Motion to approve the October 22, 2019 meeting minutes, as submitted, made by Duffy;
Seconded by Fuller;
Motion carried, 4-0-0.

3. Bills to be paid

Cassidy stated that the Authority has received two bills in the amount of \$951.03 and \$122.00 from the Group Insurance Commission (GIC) and the U.S. Postal Service, respectively, that must be paid.

Motion to approve the bill roll in the amounts of \$951.03 and \$122.00, made by McDaniel;
Seconded by Duffy;
Motion carried, 4-0-0.

4. Monthly financial report

Queenin reviewed the monthly financial report and stated that the current balances for the Authority's Operating and Sign/Facade Program accounts are \$82,971.00 and \$18,294.15, respectively.

Motion to accept the monthly financial report, as submitted, made by Fuller;
Seconded by McDaniel;
Motion carried, 4-0-0.

5. Correspondence

Cassidy reported that members have been provided with a copy of correspondence from the Mayor's Office to downtown business owners serving as reminder to maintain clear sidewalks in front of their establishments during the Winter season.

6. Update on Storefront Façade and Sign Program, including financials and interest in program(s) expressed since last meeting

Orr stated that there has been no new interest expressed in the program or applications submitted since the September meeting.

Orr further stated that when the Authority last met it discussed potential expansion of the sign improvement program boundaries and asked staff to identify additional areas that could be incorporated into an expanded program area. Orr presented a slide that showed a number of potential expansion areas.

Cassidy stated that using the original boundaries of the sign/façade eligibility area, staff considered possible expansions at each roadway terminus in that area. The additional "segments" have been provided to members' this evening in the form of printed Powerpoint slides that include information about underlying zoning and existing signage in each area.

McDaniel stated that he is in favor of expanding the sign improvement area and supports it as an effort to potentially open up the program to additional businesses, particularly as the boundaries of downtown seem to be on the verge of expanding given pending development projects.

Fuller stated that he is not in support of expanding the boundaries of the eligibility area and believes it is most important to clearly define the boundaries of the "downtown." In addition, he would rather see more infrastructure and streetscape investments in the existing eligibility area, such as the addition of benches or public water dispensers.

Duffy asked if the business owners within the current boundaries of the downtown area have already been contacted. Orr confirmed that all business owners within the current program boundaries that have not yet participated have already been contacted. Cassidy added that Mr. Fuller personally visited most of those locations.

Fuller stated that his additional concern is that the program might be overwhelmed with applicants. Queenin responded that he believes there is some merit to both moving forward on an expansion of the program boundaries and investing in the downtown area relative to streetscape enhancements.

Queenin stated that he only supports expansion of the eligibility area relative to sign grants only, and would not support expansion of the façade loan program to the new areas under consideration. In addition, he would like to have a conversation about what the Authority would like to prioritize in terms of streetscape improvements.

Queenin stated that he believes there is money available to try to address both streetscape and additional sign grants, although a defined budget for the expanded sign program is a topic for further discussion.

McDaniel stated that he believes that the expanded boundaries for sign program participants presents an opportunity for expanded beautification. Cassidy added that recent rezoning measures undertaken by the City indicate a potential “expansion” of denser, downtown-type development on the edge of the current downtown.

Cassidy stated that members might consider making a motion to both adopt the expanded area boundaries for the downtown sign grant program, and only for the sign grant program, not for the façade loan program, and to set aside a designated sum of money to cover streetscape enhancement projects, potentially in collaboration with the Department of Public Works.

Queenin proposed a motion to (a) expand the eligibility area for the downtown sign improvement grant program as shown on the slides this evening, (b) to allocate a sum of \$20,000 toward funding additional downtown signage improvement program grants and (c) to allocate up to \$20,000 for streetscape enhancement projects in the core of the downtown during calendar year 2020, in coordination with the Department of Public Works.

Motion to adopt the proposed motion, made by Fuller;
Seconded by McDaniel;
Motion carried, 4-0-0.

7. Update on Wayfinding/Branding Initiative

Cassidy provided a summary update on the installation of wayfinding signage and indicated that many of the ordered signs have been installed at this point, although most notably staff is working on the final placement/installation of a “Welcome to Woburn” sign in consultation with DPW staff. Additionally, decorative brackets and banners have been ordered and are due for delivery by the vendor in the coming weeks.

Cassidy stated that future topics of WRA discussion include procuring an informational kiosk and any additional signage, although there are a number of technical questions that have to be considered with respect to the kiosk, including licensing and programming. The goal is to get to the point of installation of an informational kiosk by Spring.

Cassidy further stated that she would like to discuss both the procurement of additional Phase I signage to address some wayfinding “gaps” and some Phase II wayfinding signage to be placed at highway interchanges on the edge of Woburn over the next few meetings.

Duffy asked about the site work going on at the Main Street parking lot. Cassidy responded that it is part of a grant-funded EV charging station installation project through the Eversource Make Ready program.

Fuller stated that he thinks that the wayfinding signage affixed to the stop sign on Winn Street (near Warren) might be too high. Cassidy stated that she has received various feedback on that particular sign but she will explore the prospect of lowering its height.

8. New/Other Business

Queenin stated that the next WRA meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 11th at 5:00 pm.

Queenin asked whether it would be possible to extend an invitation to Deputy Superintendent Burnham to attend the next WRA meeting for the purpose of discussing potential streetscape improvement projects in the downtown area. Cassidy responded that she would be happy to extend the invitation.

9. Adjournment

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

Motion to adjourn the October 22, 2019 WRA meeting at approximately 5:25 pm, made by McDaniel;

Seconded by Duffy;

Motion carried, 4-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 5:25 pm.