

Woburn Redevelopment Authority
Minutes for November 28, 2017 Meeting
In the Council Committee Room
10 Common Street, Woburn, MA

Chairman Queenin called the November 28, 2017 Woburn Redevelopment Authority meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

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. Additionally, WRA Administrator Tina Cassidy and City Planner/Grant Writer Dan Orr were in attendance.

2. Approval of Minutes October 23, 2017

Mr. Art Duffy moved to approve the aforementioned minutes;
Mr. Gary Fuller seconded;
Motion carried, 3-0-0.

3. Bills to be Paid

Administrator Cassidy stated the Authority is in receipt of bill from the GIC in \$1,027.38

Motion to approve the request to pay bill from the GIC in the amount of \$1,027.38, made by Mr. Gary Fuller;
Seconded by Mr. Art Duffy;
Motion carried, 3-0-0.

4. Monthly Financial Report

Administrator Cassidy reported a WRA account balances in the amounts of \$80,137.29 and 5,684.73.

Motion to accept the financial report as submitted, made by Mr. Art Duffy;
Seconded by Mr. Gary Fuller;
Motion carried, 3-0-0.

5. Correspondence

None to report.

6. Update to Façade and Signage Improvement Program

City Planner/Grant Writer Orr stated that to date he has still received only one inquiry for a façade loan for a business residing on Main Street and provided the requisite paperwork.

Mr. Gary Fuller stated that the Orange Leaf frozen yogurt store is reconfiguring itself; a new café/lunch business is forthcoming. He intends to inquire as to the owner's interest in participating in the sign/façade program.

7. Other Updates

Chairman Queenin inquired about the proposed 2018 WRA meeting dates provided by staff. Administrator Cassidy responded that the proposed 2018 WRA meeting dates are in members' packets for consideration.

Chairman Queenin stated that he would appreciate if the proposed meeting dates were emailed out to all members.

8. Update on Downtown Parking/Development Projects

Chairman Queenin inquired to Administrator Cassidy about the pending renovation/construction project taking place at 371 Main Street (formerly Moore & Parker) and whether the Authority could play a role in endorsing a proposal plan for the property.

Administrator Cassidy responded that her understanding is that the property next to the Brickyard was purchased by the owner of that establishment. The intent is to demolish the existing building and construct a new building as an extension to the existing Brickyard structure. She believes that the first floor of the extended building would be reserved for commercial use, with residential units above, although she is unaware if it is related to an expansion of the Brickyard business.

Administrator Cassidy further stated that the petitioner for the project will be submitting a plan to combine the two affect lots to facilitate project approval.

Administrator Cassidy further stated that she believes the impact to the downtown would overall be positive as this project would reanimate the first floor with an active use. Another consideration is the effect of a proposed zoning change to increase its affordable housing threshold that is under review by the Planning Board and City Council. The proposed amendments, if adopted, would expand the applicability of the affordable housing ordinance to the downtown district (which is currently exempted) and increase the required amount of affordable housing to 25% of all units. Depending on the timing of approvals, this zoning amendment may have an impact on the Main Street project.

Mr. Gary Fuller inquired about the timing of the zoning amendment adoption. Administrator Cassidy responded that the Planning Board must first issue a recommendation to the Council before they vote on potential adoption (it is before them as a matter on January 16th).

Mr. Gary Fuller inquired about the Planning Board's thoughts on the proposed zoning amendment. Administrator Cassidy responded that the Board has only heard testimony on the proposal thus far and will likely have a more detailed discussion at its meeting later this evening.

Chairman Queenin inquired about the impact of the proposed zoning amendment on the proposed Federal Street Smart Growth Overlay District apartment project. Administrator Cassidy responded that because that project is being sought in relation to proposed 40R Overlay District, it is considered separate from other properties within the Downtown Business (B-D) District.

Chairman Queenin inquired as to whether any plans for the Moore & Parker building have yet circulated. Administrator Cassidy responded that she has not yet seen any plans; other members commented that it should blend-in with the adjacent façades.

Chairman Queenin inquired to the Authority is to whether they are inclined to take a stance on the affordable housing zoning change before the Planning Board and City Council, which would require the inclusion of projects in the business district.

Mr. Gary Fuller stated that he is in favor of leaving the affordable housing zoning as it is with respect to the business district exemption. Otherwise, it may be a roadblock to development. He would be in favor of setting a threshold for the applicability of the ordinance for downtown Woburn. Chairman Queenin responded that this would be a good idea for an approach.

Administrator Cassidy stated that one of the modifications to the proposed zoning change she has recommended to the Planning Board is to increase the threshold of applicability, particularly as the percentage requirement will likely increase.

Chairman Queenin inquired to the Authority as to whether they would agree with the approach of issuing a letter of support to adopt a higher threshold of applicability in the business district. Mr. Art Duffy responded that he would be in favor of setting the threshold to 10 units.

Chairman Queenin called for a motion for drafting a letter to the City Council in support of the proposed affordable housing ordinance, with an added provision for a 10-unit threshold of applicability in the business district.

Mr. Gary Fuller made a motion in support of letter drafting;
Seconded by Mr. Art Duffy,
Motion carried, 3-0-0.

Mr. Art Duffy inquired about the state law that dictates the threshold of affordable housing. Administrator Cassidy responded that Ch. 40B of Massachusetts General Law mandates that each municipality maintain at least 10% of its housing stock as affordable, with a specific definition of what is considered "affordable." Cities that do not comply with the 10% 40B threshold are subject to "40B" development applications for affordable housing, which override local zoning code. Currently, Woburn is in what is referred to as "safe harbor" status from the state for a 2-year period, which provides much more flexibility in turning down a 40B application.

Mr. Art Duffy inquired about the status of the “The Ledges” project in North Woburn. Administrator Cassidy responded that her understanding is that it is still in the appeals process.

Chairman Queenin stated that overall, the WRA stance should be to support affordable housing overall, although with some conditions in the downtown.

9. Upcoming Meetings

Chairman Queenin stated that the next meeting of the WRA is currently scheduled for December 12th, although if no further business comes up, he is happy to reconvene in January.

10. Other Business

Mr. Gary Fuller inquired about the proposed implementation of a Downtown Parking Enhancement Fund was passed by the City Council. Administrator Cassidy confirmed that it was and downtown project developers must now pay \$4,500 per off-site parking space used toward their parking requirement calculation.

Chairman Queenin inquired about the status of the traffic reconfiguration project on the Woburn Common. Administrator Cassidy responded that it is an “Origin and Destination Study” to determine the traffic flows. The report may be complete by the January meeting, at which point it may be shared with members.

Chairman Queenin inquired about the status of the downtown wayfinding project. Administrator Cassidy responded that the Phase II Scope of Work was presented to members at the November meeting. As part of this scope, Mr. Mark Favermann, the wayfinding consultant, would be charged with identifying appropriate locations to place signage, as well as information kiosks. If members find the scope agreeable, the next step would be for the Authority to work on identifying a funding source.

Mr. Art Duffy inquired about a construction project on Montvale Avenue. Administrator Cassidy responded that she was informed by Building Commissioner Thomas Quinn that the developer’s building permit has been reviewed and is ready for issuance, although fee payment remains outstanding.

Administrator Cassidy further stated that the Montvale Avenue project is exempt from changes to the Affordable Housing Ordinance, due to prior Special Permit approval. The project will include a first floor commercial space (pizza shop), with 4 residences above.

11. Adjourn

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

Mr. Art Duffy moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:25 p.m.;

Mr. Gary Fuller seconded;

Motion carried, 3-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Orr
City Planner/Grant Writer

APPROVED