

**REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
MEETING MINUTES
May 20, 2021 - 7:30 A.M.
VIRTUAL via ZOOM**

Members Present: Aaron Wlochowski, Chairman; Terry Bogli, Vice Chair; Mike Farina; Louis Spadaccini; Matthew Peak; Neverill Coleman; Jerald Lentini; Maria Cruz; Stephanie Knybel; Steve Carter; Patricia McMann

Members Absent: Gary Sweet

Staff Present: Gary Anderson, Director of Planning & Economic Development;
Kyle Shiel, Senior Planner;
AnneMarie Boyle, Sr. Account Associate

Approval of Minutes – April 15, 2021

At 7:32 am Mr. Wlochowski called the meeting to order.

Mr. Lentini moved to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. McMann seconded and six members voted in favor. Ms. Knybel abstained.

Project Updates

a. Parkade Development – Manchester Parkade I LLC

Mr. Wlochowski welcomed Mike Licamele and Harry Freeman from Manchester Parkade I LLC. Mr. Licamele said he wanted to provide a general overview of the current status of their development plans. He said his team received zoning approval for the master development plan and detailed utility plan on March 31 and that was a great step forward. Mr. Licamele said the team has also executed a final development agreement with the Town. The initial closing would be the next step in the development process. While they will begin work on Phase 1, the Town will retain ownership the land for Phases 2 and 3. He said his goal is to work on the infrastructure this fall with an aim to begin construction of buildings in the spring of 2022.

Mr. Licamele said in terms of financing they are working with HUD on a 220(d) program loan, as the development is within an opportunity zone, they qualify for that specific program. He said everything will be market rate; this is not going to be a subsidized or affordable housing project. He said the financing stream also allows them to fund the commercial portion of the development. He said his company has preliminary approval from HUD and expects that portion of the financing to be firmed up over the course of this summer. He said this program will provide 85 -90% of the financing for the project.

Mr. Licamele said they have come very far on the construction portion, they have spent five or six months working on the construction documents for the buildings that will be part of Phase 1. He said those will probably be complete over the next several months and will be brought to the Town for approval. He said he believes one challenge they could face is the current high cost and low supply of materials, due to COVID. He is hopeful that by March of next year the market will have calmed down and there will not be delays due to those issues.

Mr. Freeman said the support the development team has received from the Town staff and the Town since the start of the process has been key. He said they've worked closely with the Planning and Economic Development Department to adjust the regulations in order to give the Town a project that is really special. Mr. Freeman then shared renderings of several of the buildings with the Agency.

Mr. Licamele said he is very excited about putting together a mini "smart city". He said the development will include smart city technologies such as parking sensors, EV charging stations and automatic lighting. He said one building will house a Ghost Kitchen, where different restaurants prepare food for take-out or delivery. They are in talks with a mini robot company that would deliver food from the "ghost kitchen" to locations on the premises. He said this will be a good, fun and convenient place to live and expects this will be one of the first developments to implement many of these technologies in one place at the same time.

Mr. Freeman said there will be a main street running through the middle of the development, with center greens where people can gather. There are four buildings that will be part of Phase 1. Building 1 will be high-end apartments, with amenities such as an indoor pool, courtyard area and a sports simulator. The second building is a two story office building. The third building will be retail on the lower floor with apartments on the second floor; he said he would expect it to be convenience type of retail. And the fourth building would be the ghost kitchen building. He said the whole development, as well as the existing retail stores next door, will be powered by fuel cells.

Mr. Freeman said Phase 2 of the development would include another residential building, another office building, and a mixed use building. Phase 3 could be another residential building and small office building, but that phase will be dependent on market demand at that time. He said the other building will be a hotel and they have been in talks with cutting edge hotel developers.

Mr. Freeman said they wanted to make the best use of space and be environmentally friendly, so rather than a large swath of parking lots, there will be underground parking below the residential units. There will be fields behind the first residential building with amenities such as a beach volleyball court and a dog park. Balconies will be included on the upper floors in the first residential building and a rooftop deck on top of the first office building. He said they are reworking some of the construction materials, as they want to tie in traditional New England brick with some newer materials. They want to be cutting edge while still maintaining the beauty of New England architecture and brought in nationally known architects in order to accomplish that.

Mr. Licamele said the greenway that starts from Broad St. will double as a multi-use pathway and an access road for emergency vehicles. The pathway will lead out to a pond that will serve as both an attractive natural feature and as a functional detention area. The greenway is to connect to Center Springs Park on the other side of Broad St. Mr. Licamele said a goal is to connect the pathway out to West Middle Turnpike and they are working with the movie theater and condominium owners to accomplish that.

In response to a question from Mr. Wlochowski, Mr. Licamele said the development is served by a micro-grid. They are connected to the grid with Eversource, but will be generating their own power on site. So if Eversource should lose service connection for any reason, the development would be able to remain running through its own generated power. This would be a draw for the office and retail sites. If they overproduce energy, it goes back to the grid and they would receive credit for it. They anticipate having numerous EV charging stations on site over time and will lay conduit for that in order to add stations gradually. In response to a question from Mr. Anderson, Mr. Licamele said that there will be solar panels on the roofs of the buildings and estimated the panels would generate approximately 20% of the power.

In response to a question from Ms. Bogli, Mr. Freeman said during construction they will have temporary trailers set up, to be used as construction offices. He said any areas not being worked on during Phase 1 will be graded and seeded, so the areas will be green. He said they have talked with local artists about creating “coming soon” signs and murals to highlight what would be coming in future development phases.

In response to a question from Mr. Farina, Mr. Licamele confirmed that the detention pond is part of Phase 1, all drainage structures have to be completed in phase 1. He said the paved area of the greenway will be 10’ feet wide to allow for emergency vehicle access. Mr. Licamele said the greenway is a multi-use path, not a roadway, with the exception of emergency vehicle use.

In response to a question from Ms. Knybel, Mr. Freeman said the Town has ownership of a portion of Green Manor Blvd. Mr. Anderson said the Town, as part of the agreement, is bringing the condition of the road up to a reasonable standard prior to passing ownership to the developer as part of the property sale. Mr. Freeman said as part of their project they will be rebuilding that road. In response to a question about traffic flow from Ms. Knybel, Mr. Freeman said you will be able to make left and right hand turns into the property from Broad St., but leaving the complex drivers will only be able to make a right hand turn onto Broad St. Mr. Licamele said those who need to take a left can exit through Green Manor Blvd. and take a left at the light. In response to a question from Mr. Coleman, Mr. Freeman said that there would be more than one way to exit the complex out onto Green Manor Blvd. Mr. Anderson said the traffic issues were discussed in great detail over several months with Town staff and the Planning and Zoning Commission. Mr. Licamele said they also worked with their traffic consultant and submitted the plan to the State Department of Transportation for their sign-off, which should be coming in the next month or so.

In response to a question from Mr. Peak, Mr. Anderson said after the initial closing, the land is not transferred to the developer until they have a building permit in place. Mr. Freeman said they do have access rights to do landscaping and to maintain the parcels, even before they are in the developers' ownership, as they are all committed to making the property look great from day one.

In response to a question from Mr. Peak regarding the timeline, Mr. Licamele said they would be building sequentially. As a general guideline, he said if they begin Phase 1 in 2022 and it is completed by 2023, then Phase 2 would likely begin in 2023/2024 and be completed by 2025. Phase 3 would probably begin in 2025/2026.

In response to a question from Mr. Lentini, Mr. Licamele said the entire length of Green Manor Blvd is not owned by the Town, part is owned by the owner of the existing shopping center.

Mr. Wlochowski thanked Mr. Licamele and Mr. Freeman for their time and the overview and wished them the best on the project.

Mr. Licamele thanked the Agency and said working in the Town of Manchester has been the best development experience he has had by far.

b. Nichols Properties

Mr. Shiel said they received official confirmation from the State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) that the Town has been accepted into the voluntary remediation program. He said they have 90 days to work with the consultant to submit a schedule of proposed actions as to how they plan to clean up the site. They will work on the environmental restriction on one portion of the site. He said he is hopeful that by this fall it will be ready to be marketed properly for office or commercial use.

c. Greenway

Mr. Anderson said Citizen's Bank is willing to work with the Town in order to grant an easement on part of their property for the greenway connection. He said they have not yet gotten a response from the cemetery regarding the easement. In response to a question from Mr. Wlochowski, Mr. Anderson said that the developers are the ones working on getting the greenway to connect out to West Middle Turnpike, he said the developers are in contact with the theater and condo owners. In response to a question from Mr. Farina regarding the use of existing trails off of St. John St. to connect to the greenway, Mr. Anderson said that the main priority right now is to make the connection from Broad St. to the Parkade Development. He said connecting the trails from the St. John St. neighborhood could be a possibility they could look into in the future.

Redevelopment Plan

Mr. Lentini said that the traffic reports in the plan are from 2006, he would like to see it updated. He said property conditions have changed dramatically since this report was compiled and the market conditions on Broad St. may have changed to the point where the RDA still has work to do there. Mr. Peak said the main impetus of the Redevelopment Plan was to make the Parkade project happen, and it is happening. He said it is accurate that the studies are now dated, but rather than updating the Plan he feels it would make sense to add an updated report. In response to a question from Ms. Bogli, Mr. Anderson said that Town staff is responsible for overseeing the Parkade Development. In response to a question from Mr. Wlochowski, Mr. Anderson said the Redevelopment Plan was done according to state statute, which requires an area to be blighted and for a significant portion to be vacant. They created that plan with goals outlined to address those issues, and they have done almost all of them. He said to do a Redevelopment Plan for Broad St. now, he does not believe it would comply with statutory requirements, it would no longer be considered a redevelopment area. He said the Redevelopment Agency was created to write and implement the Redevelopment Plan.

Mr. Wlochowski asked if the Agency should update the Redevelopment Plan or let it expire. Mr. Spadaccini said that he does not think their primary focus should be revising the Redevelopment Plan. He said he feels their primary focus should be making sure the developer is meeting their deadlines and doing things that are consistent with the plan. Mr. Coleman said his understanding from when he first joined the RDA, was that their main focus was the redevelopment of the Parkade area. He said he does think revising the plan is something that should be looked into, as there are parts of the Broad St. area that could still be improved upon. Mr. Carter said he thinks their main focus right now should be on helping the developer get this project done. Ms. Cruz said she agrees that their focus should be on this project, but also thinks making necessary revisions or amendments to the original plan would be part of the RDA's responsibility.

After some discussion Mr. Anderson said his staff could begin some work to start gathering updated data. He said the current plan expires in September and revising it may not be useful or practical. Mr. Lentini said he believes the RDA could create a report on the status of the plan, which he does not believe would require a public hearing. He suggested the RDA could append a report to the plan to show the change in status over the course of the plan and use it as a guidance document moving forward. Mr. Wlochowski asked to make the possibility of doing a report an agenda item for the next meeting.

Executive Session

Ms. Bogli moved to enter into Executive Session to discuss potential real estate transactions. Ms. Cruz seconded and all members voted in favor. The agency moved into executive session at 8:52 am. The agency came out of executive session at 9:02 am.

Mr. Lentini moved to adjourn, Ms. Bogli seconded, all member voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 am

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