

Pittsfield Economic Development Authority

Meeting Minutes

April 11, 2012

In attendance were Chairman Grunin, Beth Mitchell, Christina Barrett, George Whaling and Dan Bianchi, Board Members.

Also in attendance was Pam Malumphy, One Berkshire, Beth Goodman, Legal Counsel, Cory Thurston, Executive Director, and Colleen Hunter-Mullett, Clerk.

I. Administration

a. Call to Order

Chairman Grunin called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.

b. Approval of March 7, 2012 Minutes

There was a motion to approve the March 7, 2012 meeting minutes as presented, seconded and approved.

Chairman Grunin informed the Board that he would be putting together a Finance Sub-Committee, which would include Mike Matthews as Chairman and Dan Bianchi, who will meet and report back to the Board at next month's meeting.

Mayor Bianchi updated the Board on the legislation to increase the number of Board members, stating that it is in Committee right now and the Board should have approval in the next month or two.

Mr. Thurston informed the Board that Mr. Whaling had been re-appointed to the Board by the Mayor. Mr. Thurston introduced Donna Cowan to the Board, informing them that she is a part time clerical staff person.

II. Executive Director's Report

Silver Lake Shoreline – Mr. Thurston informed the Board that there is some additional work to be done on the Solar Easement and the ERE's, both of which are exhibits to the and are all that remain prior to executing the purchase and sale agreement with WMECO and transferring the property to PEDDA. He then submitted a draft Order that will be presented to the City Council that pledges an easement and maintenance agreement to PEDDA in support of the walkway project. Ms. Goodman is working with the City Solicitor on it.

Mr. Thurston stated that GE may begin work on the shoreline in the spring or summer and that the project is estimated to be complete by December of 2013.

Ms. Goodman informed the Board that the comment period for the PPA ends on April 16, 2012 and if there are no comments, it becomes effective from EPA. EPA has asked that PEDDA set a closing date.

Mr. Thurston informed the Board that he's working on an Access & Non-Interference Agreement for GE to be able to use PEDDA's property during the shoreline project. He stated that there will be no dollars involved and that PEDDA's legal counsel has approved the agreement.

Mr. Thurston reviewed GE's proposed process regarding above ground piping, project time frame and opening and closing of Silver Lake Boulevard. He also informed the Board that WMECO's pole yard will be moved to accommodate GE's use of the property.

Beth Mitchell made a motion to authorize the Executive Director to execute an "Access and non-Interference Agreement" with GE for the use of the Building Demolition Area/Parking lot off Silver Lake Boulevard as a staging area for the remediation and capping of Silver Lake for a period of two years. Mr. Whaling seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Life Sciences Project – Mr. Thurston informed the Board that he is working with the Mayor to try to identify candidates to assist in getting this project on track and that he will be following up with UMass on potential prospects this week.

Mayor Bianchi informed the Board that he had contacted Congressman Olver's office to get involved because they've assisted others in the past. Mr. Thurston informed the Board the he is working with One Berkshire as well as Deanna Ruffer from the City's Community Development office because it will impact the entire county, stating that both will be a great asset to this project.

Mr. Whaling asked what the time frame is. Mr. Thurston stated that he doesn't have a specific time frame as of yet.

MassDOT/CSX Meetings – Bridge – Mr. Thurston submitted a draft agreement, stating that he will not sign the demolition agreement until PEDDA has a letter of commitment from MassDOT to finance the reconstruction. He stated that he expects it to be complete by September.

Financial Update – Mr. Thurston informed the Board that the annual audit has been completed and that the auditors will be at the May meeting to make their presentation.

Mr. Whaling expressed concern regarding the interest expense that PEDDA is paying on the loan. Mr. Thurston stated that PEDDA will definitely be paying off the loan this year, but not before negotiations concerning improvements to the water quality basin have taken place. He informed the Board that there may be some early payment penalties, but he will confirm this.

Ms. Mitchell asked where PEDAs stands regarding insurance. Mr. Thurston informed them that he has a meeting scheduled with a local insurance representative tomorrow and is in the process of obtaining quotes for the large policy due in August.

Marketing Update – Mr. Thurston informed the Board that he had held back on the Marketing RFP because he was focusing on working with One Berkshire and the Life Sciences project.

Pam Malumphy, One Berkshire, informed the Board that a regional grant had been obtained and a portion of that is for marketing. She stated that Housatonic Creative will be creating an insert slip sheet and they're offering other cities and towns to do one as well so that they're all similar in look. Mr. Thurston stated that he felt consistency in look was important. Mr. Whaling asked if PEDAs was developing one. Mr. Thurston informed him that he was working on one that will focus on Life Sciences.

Mr. Thurston reviewed what he's doing and has done to make sure that the web site gets people where they want to go.

Ms. Barrett expressed concern regarding the PR messaging issue, stating that she felt PEDAs needs to get someone on board to address the potential issues when Silver Lake Boulevard is closed and there are pipes running across the road. She stated that PEDAs needs to manage the message. Mr. Thurston stated that having a part time staff person will free up some time for him to address this.

III. Feature Presentation

Jeff Donohoe introduced himself as a real estate economist, giving Board members a brief history of his involvement with PEDAs, stating that he originally worked for RKG Associates when the original plans for the William Stanley Business Park were drafted.

Mr. Donohoe gave a lengthy presentation, highlighting economic trends, retail development, mixed use development, office development, manufacturing and life sciences.

Mr. Donohoe stated that PEDAs's location is seen as a challenge because it's too far from the Mass Pike. He also stated that Massachusetts is widely thought of as the top place for technology and innovation.

Tony Dobrowolski, Berkshire Eagle Reporter, asked Mr. Donohoe what distance from the Pike is close enough because Pittsfield is only 14 miles from the Pike. Mr. Donohoe stated that it would depend on the product and transportation routes. Mr. Thurston stated that he's optimistic that these and other reasons will make the rail access more attractive.

Mr. Thurston asked Mr. Donohoe how he viewed PEDAs's rail access. Mr. Donohoe stated that rail is a significant marketing advantage, but only certain items can be moved effectively by rail. He stated that rail transport has grown tremendously in the past few years. There was some discussion regarding how many rail sites the Park has and the work that will have to be done to make them usable, but he's encouraged that this will happen.

Ms. Goodman stated that the presentation was right on and that it will need to be included in the marketing plan.

Mayor Bianchi asked Mr. Donohoe what he thought PEDAs marketing strengths are. Mr. Donohoe stated that the area has a good work ethic, a good work force, is business friendly, has rail access, is permitting land with water and sewer and its close proximity to downtown. He did say there were also some environmental challenges.

Mr. Mitchell stated that getting manufacturing back on site will be difficult. She stated that she felt the general public sees manufacturing jobs as the good old GE days where people made a lot of money. She and Mr. Whaling agreed that the average wage for retail versus that of manufacturing would be surprising close. Ms. Mitchell stated that PEDA needs to educate everyone with all of the facts.

Mr. Donohoe stated that PEDA has to look at whether it would be creating new jobs or taking from other communities.

Mr. Whaling asked Mr. Donohoe if he knew of another successful site of PEDA's size and what they did to be successful. Mr. Donohoe stated that he knew a site that flubbed it, Stratford, CT, and it's been 20 years.

IV. Meeting Calendar

The next scheduled Board meeting is May 9, 2012 @ 8:00 AM.

There was a motion to adjourn at 9:15 AM, seconded and carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Colleen Hunter-Mullett
Clerk