

Pittsfield Economic Development Authority
July 25, 2013

Meeting Minutes

In attendance were Board Members, Chairman Mick Callahan, Pam Green, Dan Bianchi, Doug Crane, Larry Tallman, George Whaling, Mike Matthews, Christina Barrett, Paul Dalton, Mike Filpi, and Patrick Reuss.

Also in attendance was Kevin Morandi, City Councilor, Diane Marcella, Tyler St. Business Group, Beth Goodman, Legal Counsel, Doug Clark, Director of Community Development, Rod Jané, Life Science Consultant, Cory Thurston, Executive Director, Colleen Hunter-Mullett, Clerk, and members of the press.

I. Administration

Call to Order – Chairman Callahan called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM reminding all present that the meeting was being audio and video taped.

Approval of June 12, 2013 Meeting Minutes – **There was a motion to approve the meeting minutes of June 12, 2013 as presented, seconded and carried.**

II. Committee Reports

Berkshire Life Sciences Initiative Feasibility Study Update – Mayor Bianchi informed the Board that they had a successful meeting with the MA Life Science Center where PEDa made a presentation in order to obtain funding assistance for a feasibility study. Mayor Bianchi reviewed the Life Science Center's (LSC) creation and the number of earmarks that have been awarded by them to date. He stated that the LSC insists that wise investments be made with the money they grant and they like to see synergistic relationships between partners.

Mayor Bianchi informed the Board that the City had hired Rod Jané, through an RFP process, to perform the feasibility study.

Rod Jané gave the Board some background of his experience and gave a brief power point presentation that he has given to prospects, stating that the proposed Berkshire Life Science Center has to work for this region. His presentation highlighted Phase I objectives, initial concepts and ideas, the feasibility process, and potential partnership/cooperation opportunities. Mr. Jané reviewed questions that he will ask companies and organizations in order to create collaboration/partnerships or expand on existing collaborations. He informed the Board that in Phase I he expected to see Letters of Intent (LOI) and in Phase II Memorandums of Understanding (MOU).

Mr. Filpi asked if the feasibility study included or determined if there is enough housing to accommodate 300-400 new employees, should PEDa be successful. Mr. Jané informed him that this information was not part of the feasibility study.

Ms. Barrett asked what the time line was. Mr. Jané stated that Phase I would take four to five months and at its conclusion, he would make another presentation to the MA Life Science Board sometime in November with the results of Phase I and ask for funding to continue with Phase II.

Mr. Crane asked if PEDA was capturing the impact of creating 300-400 jobs from a financial standpoint. Mr. Jané stated that the value and return on investment comes from the private sector by delivering an economic value to the region.

Mr. Thurston informed the Board that he would provide Mr. Jané's schedule so that Board members might be able to meet with him individually the next time he's in town.

Special Projects – NPDES Permit – Ms. Green informed the Board that they are continuing based on communications with EPA. She stated that Phase I testing will be completed at the end of July and that EPA sent a letter stating that they are looking forward to seeing the best management practices that PEDA develops as well as continuing to receive the monthly reports. She stated that progress is being made.

Chairman Callahan informed the Board that EPA's offer of assistance has encouraged him to seek a technical assistance grant from them to assist PEDA in covering some of these costs. He further stated that if the site is developed, some of these costs will go away.

III. Executive Director's Report

Woodlawn Bridge – Mr. Thurston informed the Board that they are still looking at an advertising date in September and a ground breaking by the end of the year. He stated that PEDA is assisting with the environmental piece of this project and the notification process to agencies.

Mr. Filpi asked if the funding is in jeopardy with the transportation issues with the Governor. Mr. Thurston stated that he did not believe so and he felt the funding was secure.

Greylock Lease – Mr. Thurston informed the Board that the Greylock parking lot lease had been signed by all parties and liability protections are now in place.

Open House – Mr. Thurston informed the Board that the open house was very successful. He stated that there was a nice turnout of neighbors. He pointed out the enhanced look of the PEDA offices with new decorations on the walls. He thanked Regina Burgio for her assistance with this effort.

Practitioner's Meeting – Mr. Thurston informed the Board that he and David Curtis, 1Berkshire, and Doug Clark, Community Development Director had met with a number of local organizations to discuss economic development throughout the county and state. Mr. Thurston assured the Board that they are all working together on community outreach, sharing information and working together on prospects as well.

Sub-Committee Meetings – Mr. Thurston informed the Board that all sub-committees would be meeting before the next full Board meeting.

IV. Development Presentation

Waterstone Development Presentation – Representatives from Waterstone Development gave a power point presentation for a proposed 16 acre retail development on Site #9, which they have been working on for two years.

They gave a brief history of their experience and the types of developments that they've done with environmentally challenged sites. They stated that they have studied this site and they believe that the highest best use for this site, in their opinion, is retail. They stated that they understood some people want to see manufacturing on this site, but they did not believe that was the right use for this parcel.

They informed the Board that their proposal includes improvements to the intersection of Tyler Street and Dalton Avenue, installing a traffic signal, sidewalk improvements and landscaping improvements that will benefit future development as well as their own parcel.

They informed the Board that the project cost is 30 million start to finish. They showed an animation of the proposed construction process and reviewed the economic benefits for Pittsfield, which include a \$300,000 increase in tax revenue annually.

There was some discussion regarding other developments they had done that began as grocery stores and turned into mixed use facilities with residential and office components. There was also discussion regarding four other industrial facilities that currently have retail anchors.

There was some discussion regarding research on industrial sites in the county, showing that there is a substantial number of sites in Lee, Adams and Pittsfield. They said there are ten such sites in Pittsfield alone that would be cheaper and easier to build on.

Mr. Filpi asked if they would be using local contractors or bringing contractors in from outside the area and suggested that they meet with the local labor council on this issue. He was told that Waterstone almost always uses local contractors because they understand the value of using local labor. They stated that they are a MA organization based in Needham.

Mr. Dalton asked why the site is well suited for retail. He was told that generally speaking a good location is convenient to both population and traffic. Walkability and proximity to bus stops is desirable to retailers. They informed the Board that once this site is developed, it will attract future development of office, such as medical, across the street.

Chairman Callahan asked what the site preparation cost for the project was. They informed him that the site prep is normally one third of the total project cost, in this case \$10 million dollars. Mayor Bianchi asked how far the 10 million dollars gets them. He was told that it would get them prepared for vertical building construction, including some sidewalks.

Mr. Whaling noted that Waterstone could not reveal who the anchor is, but wondered if the proposed anchor would be moving from another site in the region because his concern is leaving an empty building somewhere else. They informed him that if this was the case, Waterstone always tries to rent the other facility and has purchased the other facility in some instances because they feel that not doing this is a disservice to the community.

There was discussion between Mr. Whaling and Mr. Thurston regarding left over acreage after this development is completed. Thurston stated that this proposal constitutes approximately 30% of the parks total acreage and one of the 7 existing building sites remaining.

Mr. Matthews asked if the capping that Waterstone is proposing would be considered done and complete and can someone else re-use the site if the need arose. He was told that there will be a true separation for future re-development if it occurs.

Chairman Callahan asked if the project had been endorsed by EPA and DEP. He was told that Waterstone is working with a third party consultant that has worked on this site for years and understands its limitations. They stated that the process they are following would obtain the agency approvals.

Chairman Callahan asked them to forecast what the process is going forward. They informed him that Waterstone would begin working with the City's planning board and starting the permitting process. Mr. Thurston informed the Board that the City Council would be the permitting authority for the City on a project of this size and that Waterstone will also begin working with the Community Development Board.

Doug Clark, Community Development Director, asked how many tenants Waterstone was looking at. He was informed that there is one tenant. Mr. Clark asked if there had been any other site investigation in Pittsfield. He was informed that there had been and that this is the most suitable site for them.

Mayor Bianchi stated that this is not the only site available for retail to which Waterstone agreed but detailed specific issues at the other sites such as the existence of ledge at one site. Mayor Bianchi asked if they had spoken to GE regarding the availability of the parcel where they had recently demolished a building on Tyler Street Extension. They stated that they had not.

Diane Marcella, Tyler Street Business Group, asked Waterstone to talk about how this may compete with as opposed to enhance existing businesses. She was told that this development will act as a draw for overall development from other companies. Waterstone stated that they are comfortable that this will not be an oversaturation, and will in fact, extend the walking town that downtown has become.

Chairman Callahan thanked them for their interest in this area.

V. Meeting Calendar

The next meeting is scheduled for September 11, 2013. Mr. Thurston asked Board members to check their schedules for conflicts and get back to him. He informed that Board that he would be sending out a survey regarding meeting dates in 2014 because a couple Board members cannot always do the second Wednesday of each month.

There was a motion to adjourn at 9:30 AM, seconded and carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Colleen Hunter-Mullett
Clerk