

PEDA awaiting word from retail developer in wake of public forum

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PITTSFIELD -- The Pittsfield Economic Development Authority is awaiting a phone call from the group that's proposed a retail complex at the William Stanley Business Park.

The Pittsfield Economic Development Authority hasn't heard from the business group proposing a retail development at the William Stanley Business Park since last week's public forum at City Hall.

PEDA hopes to hear from Waterstone Retail Development of Needham sometime this week, executive director Corey Thurston said on Monday.

But Thurston said further discussion on the project depends on what Waterstone decides to do next.

"It's entirely up to Waterstone to pursue the site or not," Thurston said. "PEDA won't vote for anything if it's not real. If they're not asking for an LOI [letter of intent] right now, there's nothing to vote on."

In July, Waterstone proposed building a \$30 million retail complex on a 16-acre site at the Stanley Business Park. The group says it would bring 200 mostly full-time jobs to Pittsfield, create 350 construction jobs over a two-year period, and bring \$300,000 in tax revenue to the city.

For the project to move forward, Waterstone would need to sign a letter of intent with PEDA, the quasi-public agency in charge of developing the 52-acre business park. Once it obtains a letter of intent, Waterstone can begin the permitting process with the city of Pittsfield.

Waterstone had signed a letter of intent with PEDA before proposing an earlier retail complex for the same spot in 2011. But that project fell through after the tenant pulled out. That original letter of intent has expired.

PEDA also would have to vote to accept or reject the letter of intent for this new proposal.

The PEDA board's next meeting has been rescheduled from Oct. 23 to Oct. 30, and PEDA won't meet after that until Dec. 11. So if a decision to approve or deny Waterstone's proposal isn't reached by the end of this month, the next time the board could officially consider the matter would be two weeks before Christmas.

On whether the proposal would be discussed at PEDA's next board meeting, Thurston said, "I imagine it would be discussed, yes. Whether there's an agenda item or not, something specific that might require a vote, that piece we're still up in the air on.

"I have not heard back from them since the public forum."

Thurston said the principals in Waterstone told him after the public forum that they planned to have a group discussion about the proposal, then get back to the board.

"I expect it to be this week," he said. "It shouldn't take that long for them to decide what approach they're

going to take."

Calls to Waterstone Principal Neal Shalom and Vice President of Development Douglas Richardson were not immediately returned on Monday.

More than 100 people attended the public forum hosted by PEDA on Sept. 30. More than two dozen city residents spoke and offered pleas for and against the project.