

MONTAGUE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND INDUSTRIAL CORPORATION
TOWN HALL
1 AVENUE A
TURNERS FALLS, MA 01376

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday July 27, 2022 at 4:00PM
Montague Town Hall
One Avenue A Turners Falls, MA 01376

Present: Ella Ingraham, James Mussoni, Richard Ruth, John Furbish, Kimberly Williams,
Rob Steinberg (5:00PM)
Staff: Walter Ramsey

Meeting declared open at 4:00PM by Richard Ruth, presiding

Approval of Minutes: *Motion* by EI to approval the minutes of 6/8/2022. Seconded by JF. Motion approved unanimously.

38 Avenue A

Review property Appraisal Report dated 7/14/2022 prepared by professional appraiser Kim Levitch. The Selectboard funded the report which was prepared on the advice of potential real estate agent. The report concludes that the market value of the property is \$40,000. This accounts for carrying a cost of \$40,000 to demolish the functionally obsolete cinder block building. It was noted that comps were limited and the appraiser identified a single story commercial building to be the highest and best use.

Marketing the property. WR solicited a proposal from commercial realtor William (Bill) Martin & Greenfield Group Real Estate. Bill will list the property with the Pioneer Valley MLS. He will also expose the availability of the property to his clients and at least two other commercial property listing services. Bill provided a strong resume going back 50 years. He has proposed an Exclusive listing agreement with a 4 month term and a minimum commission not to exceed \$4,000. WR reviewed the sale conditions with the realtor and the EDIC (Prohibited: Drive-throughs, formula based businesses with standard façade, parking in front of building, driveway curb cut on Avenue A Required: buyer to demo structure, sale subject to Land Development Agreement, DCR to sign-off, commercial use of ground floor). The EDIC agreed to the proposal for a 4 month period to be marketed at the appraised value of \$40,000. The EDIC can opt to continue at the end of 4 months.

Motion by JM to authorize Walter R to execute a finalized exclusive right to sell agreement with Greenfield Group Real Estate at the terms described for a 4 month period. Seconded by EI. Motion approved 4-0, RR abstaining.

Canal District Planning

Canal District Master Plan updates/ review of Public Workshop #2: WR reviewed the public session from the night before which was attended by several members of the EDIC. The study is recommending a full demo of the Strathmore Complex (except building #11). The consultant team proposed various levels of open space and recreational use of the “northern section” of the district comprising Strathmore and Indeck based on market, site, and building conditions. The Griswold site is recommended for intense development such as housing. Next session is TBD, likely in September.

Continue to consider feasibility study for Cultural Heritage Center (James Mussoni)
Guest: David Brule (Battlefield Study Chair, Historic Commission Chair, Nolumbeka Project). In light of the recent information regarding the fate and condition of Strathmore Mill, JM recommend holding off on the pursuit of the feasibility study, the commission concurs. There is definitely opportunity to conduct a study, and that perhaps it should include other municipally owned downtown properties. David Brule noted that the town has been working toward a cultural center since a 2009 plan was endorsed by the Selectboard. Specifically, he feels there is a need for a physical space to house and display artifacts from the battlefield study. This would also serve as an educational center. According to DB, there is opportunity to make a meaningful place in the Canal District landscape to honor and preserve indigenous connections to the site. It need not be much more than a simple landscape feature/artwork and informational sign. The Canal District study should recommend that the town work with indigenous tribal partners to develop an appropriate feature.

Discussion of municipal broadband issues and opportunities (Rob Steinberg)

RS was formerly a leader on the moribund Broadband Advisory Committee. The group helped bring middle mile, then last mile services via Comcast to Montague residents. Nobody is currently appointed. Circa 2017 a “municipal light plant” was set up by Town Meeting to enable a town wide municipal fiber network. The plan never took off due to the Comcast investment plan that was heavily subsidized. He asked the EDIC to consider whether Broadband is an appropriate scope for the EDIC to “take on”, given the inherent economic development benefits. The EDIC agreed that access to high speed internet is critical for economic development and that the EDIC has role in facilitating that, however, developing a municipal network is outside the scope of the EDIC. The recently updated 5 year plan would need to be updated and the Selectboard would need to dissolve the Broadband Committee and charge the EDIC. Additionally, the individual members (aside from RS) lack the expertise on the subject matter. The consensus was that the EDIC has a full agenda between 38 Ave A, Canal District, Sandy Lane, and the Airport Industrial Park. WR to look into whether the “municipal light plant” vote expires due to inaction.

5:25 Motion to adjourn by EI. Seconded by JF. Motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: Wed October 19th 4PM

