

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District Advisory Board

10.26.07 Meeting minutes

Town Hall Board of Selectmen's meeting room

Present:

John McCormack, Chairman
George Infanti
Al Hicks
Mike Trojano
Jacob Akers
Mel Reever

Not present :

Tom Brennan
Jim Dannis
Dave Roedel

Bill Parker, Director Community Development/TIF Administrator
Cliff Harris & May Balsama, Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce
Jacob Akers, Grubb & Ellis/Coldstream R.E.

John McCormack called the meeting to order at 7:30AM.

Review of Agenda & Minutes

J. McCormack distributed and reviewed the agenda and minutes. G. Infanti made a motion to accept the minutes as written and all members were in agreement.

TIF District marketing update

J. McCormack noted that the marketing agreement with Grubb & Ellis/Coldstream Real Estate Advisors has been signed. J. Akers said they have begun work on the marketing package and it should be out by your next meeting. He then distributed copies of the aerial photographs taken last week, a first-draft of the flyer for the property and samples of the nhlands website, saying any comments or suggestions would be appreciated. J. Akers noted that the aerials would be shown on the website. J. McCormack commented that this information would also be helpful for the Select Board's presentation. J. Akers offered to provide a digital copy for Bill.

J. Akers said there were still a couple of items to be resolved. We're still in a holding pattern regarding the brush clearing along Rte 101; we have some time until we figure out what to do for signage. We would also like to start coming together with articles for publication written by different Board members. One perspective will be to send an article to the Cabinet and other local publications explaining what the TIF District is, so that the lay person will have a better understanding. The second perspective would be a broader New England scope, as to why this property would be beneficial for businesses to locate and develop here in Milford. J. McCormack said we could recycle some of the information from last year, including some successes stories of businesses that are already here; tie in public interest stories with the data. J. Akers said they would also try to incorporate the Londonderry Eco Park information into the marketing for this property to aid in ideas of what can be done.

J. Akers explained the proposed marketing plan for Brox using the Atomic Ski building as an example. We direct mailed 600 pieces to industrial users all over Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire and then followed up with a phone call to those who were prescreened based on square footage and industrial revenue among other factors. For this project we would include the area's top 100 developers for the initial mailing and then work our way down. If there are no hits after the initial mailing we would rethink our approach, all of which will be detailed in the monthly report.

Collaboration with Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce

J. McCormack welcomed Cliff Harris and May Balsama. B. Parker told the Board that he and May had spoken at the recent Greater Nashua Workforce Housing strategic planning session regarding increasing governmental communication with the Chamber. Knowing how this group is moving forward, we invited May & Cliff to meet the group and discuss common goals and efforts.

May Balsama said the invitation was very much appreciated and they welcome the idea to communicate freely. This gives a good start to address concerns and make sure information is accurate and duly noted. J. McCormack brought up the *Milford Advantage* and said that we might link our websites together. M. Balsama concurred that there is definitely a Milford advantage and went further to say there is a *Souhegan Valley Advantage*. To attract potential employers, you've got to have quality of life for the employees and I certainly think we have that. The Chamber could help broadcast that advantage by being part of the effort. J. McCormack said the theme here should be collaboration. M. Balsama added that she would like to be involved in this process.

M. Balsama explained that the Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce encompasses eleven towns that stretch from New Boston all the way to Mason and New Ipswich with Amherst and Milford being the largest participating communities. M. Balsama added that they are also working with local associations and bringing them together to promote themselves and life in the area, including the Heritage Corridor now designated here in New Hampshire. Some of these groups sound esoteric, but together, it shows that the region has much to offer. The chamber also has relocation packages containing a variety of information that are distributed to individuals moving into the area. M. Balsama said if that information wasn't already on the website, they would add it and get a copy of the packet to Jacob.

M. Balsama inquired if someone from the Cabinet would be asked to sit in on these discussions or maybe to come interview members to help create the story. J. Akers agreed that an interview would be a good way to go and we will all collaborate together.

B. Parker inquired what kinds of issues, if any, have been brought to the Chamber's attention. M. Balsama replied that the largest issue was finding employees. C. Harris added that there is also a lack of qualified employees. Fletcher Granite has expressed issues with finding manual labor and compounding that, is a lack of housing for them. C. Harris also noted that farmers in the area bring in seasonal workers from the south to work during spring and fall. J. McCormack asked if there were any issues with the skilled labor force. C. Harris answered that corporations tend to look to the Salem area so they can pull from the higher skilled Massachusetts employee base. There is definitely a lack of skilled workers here. Discussion followed. M. Balsama said that Hitchiner recruits professionals from all over the country and the perspective employees look at the area finding wonderful communities they want to be part of, but can't afford the housing. C. Harris explained that for available housing in this area, two incomes or, at minimum, an income of \$77,500 is needed. J. McCormack noted that he moved from Ohio last year and the cost of housing was a real shock. C. Harris said he didn't know if there was a solution. A two bedroom 1,300 SF "affordable" house right now costs between \$229,000 & \$239,000. Another issue is that the typical thirty-five year old making \$60,000 + is going for a more urban area with nightlife. They are looking for something to do after work and could get around without a car if they were closer to Boston. J. McCormack brought up that there are so many activities here for young families, though.

J. Akers explained that even cities like Manchester are having problems bringing manufacturing in as well. J. McCormack said it is difficult to get manufacturing, so at some point, we may have to consider commercial or some type of mixed development. J. Akers said for example that Cabelas coming into

Hooksett could pull shoppers from four to six hours away and that brings in a whole new marketing scenario. G. Infanti said retail is a good industry, but it doesn't pay and we don't have the type of housing for that wage level. A discussion regarding the cost of living in the area ensued. He then gave an example of an individual who was laid off from Hitchiner after working there for thirty years, the only job he's ever had since high school, only to be replaced by someone making \$10.00 an hour less with a lot less benefits. This is not an isolated statistic.

C. Harris also brought up the cost of doing business in New England versus the Midwest or Southwest; products actually cost less to manufacture in other regions of the country as in Ohio where the cost of living is cheaper. That's why the manufacturing plants are moving out of this area. M. Balsama said having been in retail for many years, the best way to market the town is to let people know that they are moving into an area not just into Milford; we are many little towns with many opportunities. There are communities where land isn't quite as expensive and housing is a little more affordable, such as Greenfield and Lyndeborough. There may be opportunities off the beaten path and the impact is spread out a little more so that not all the children will be going to Milford or Amherst schools. J. Akers said it is called disconnect and reconnect; disconnect from the internet and the major malls and reconnect to your local providers. Some call it shopping locally.

West Milford commercial/industrial activity report

- **Hollis Line Machine.**

B. Parker told the Board that he, along with Code Enforcement and Fire, met with John Siergiewicz, Jr of Hollis Line Machine recently. They just purchased the New England Steel building and will be moving from their current location on S. Merrimack Rd in Hollis. They build high end specialty steel machinery and promote training and careers on their website, www.hollisline.com. They will be adding 40 to 50 new jobs. J. McCormack said this is success story that could be used in our marketing efforts. B. Parker stated it's the manufacturing companies that create and bring in other businesses and in turn, more jobs to the area. A. Hicks asked where they were going to find 40-50 machinists. C. Harris replied there are many people in the area that have been laid off, including in and around Boston. There are people who would drive from there or even Pembroke to work in the Souhegan Valley. M. Balsama said that we do have a technical sector in Milford and we have a great community college. We just need to find what skill sets are required and maybe help to bring the training to the manufacturer. Those linkages will be key. G. Infanti touched upon the topic again, of County Stores hiring young people right from high school. The Chamber's mentoring program allows those junior and senior high school students, not on the college track, to follow someone around for a day or two to get a better understanding of local businesses and professions. It's not a long term solution, but it is a great program and it does work. There are still respectable people and kids out there who just want to work.

- **Pine Valley Mill building**

B. Parker said there has been some interest in the Pine Valley Mill building by a group that would like to do mixed use out there. They are proposing a whole redevelopment of the center to include the land across the street; maybe up to forty (40) housing units while keeping the office and commercial uses along with adding some manufacturing. They're currently working with the NH Housing Finance Authority and would like to meet with the Planning Board for discussion, at some point in the future. The planning Board is currently reviewing the Growth Management Ordinance, which has precluded some of this type growth, to maybe bump up the totals somewhat. What is being proposed should be much more flexible.

- **Hollow Oak Ln**

At the very end of Hollow Oak Ln, Joe Swiezynski will be coming before the Planning Board for site plan review of a retail/industrial/commercial development totaling 32,500SF to be built into 1,300 to 2,500 SF units.

- **Update on Hendrix expansion.**

B. Parker said he spoke with Tom Wilson yesterday and was informed that everything is on hold; there are no additional details at this time. A. Hicks noted that at the Gateway Development Board meeting last Friday, a comment was made that the expansion was going to Ohio. A brief discussion followed.

- **Talarico site.**

B. Parker said that the Talarico dealership on Elm St has been sold. They will actually be adding Saabs to the dealership and there are plans to expand the building, as well. C. Harris commented that the western portion of Elm St is dying and definitely needs to be improved. There are certain areas within town that will develop more easily than others and in Amherst, the Planning Board focused on one area for retail, which kept other areas purely for residential. C. Harris reiterated the need for both towns to get together do determine what they want the area to look like. Manufacturing comes and goes, so what can be done with the vacant buildings. G. Infanti mentioned that one of the perspective buyers for his building, a computer recycler, literally stole a building in Jaffrey that could have added fifteen (15) new jobs. G. Infanti said it was important to look at growth from the Amherst line to the Wilton line. Somebody will eventually come in and he's not sure Milford will be prepared. C. Harris said the key area will be to develop off the Rte 101 by-pass, using highway access. The use should be left open, maybe a good retailer could come in. B. Parker said a big retailer could front the costs for major infrastructure and intersection improvements, because it's worth it to them.

TIF District Expansion Discussion: further discussion and schedule for warrant article

B. Parker suggested devoting the next meeting to this topic, based on the discussion we had at the last meeting. Do we focus this TIF district strictly on the Brox infrastructure or will we also incorporate improvements for some of these other properties. It does make sense to go wider and the key is to work with our acreages. We have a lot of potential development out there; expansion of the existing businesses and future development of the OK Tool and former police station sites. We also need to look at how property taxes would tie into the Brox infrastructure and at possible intersection improvements, such as a signal at Phalen Rd/Jones Rd/Meadowbrook Rd, the Market Basket intersection. There needs to be discussion to move forward with this. J. McCormack added that all this should all be fed back to the Selectmen. B. Parker suggested presenting to the Select Board at the November 26th meeting, and to get everything to the budget committee, water commissioners, etc in early December.

Other business

- **Website:** Ongoing - update next meeting

B. Parker noted that Jacob and Shirley will be meeting next week to coordinate the websites. We should be able to have everything up and running by mid December. A. Hicks mentioned that the National Regional Planning Commission is in the process of developing a regional website. The process may take up to a year with a cost of around \$70,000. J. McCormack said we should try to get tied into that somehow.

- **Development/Engineering plan update.**

B. Parker said he will be meeting with Clough-Harbour, the firm who did the original work, next Tuesday regarding the engineering discussed at this committee's last meeting. Marty Risley of Clough-Harbour advised that since they'll be out there to delineate the wetlands for the north side of the property, there would be opportunity to get the south side done as well. B. Parker said he didn't know where we would get the money, but we should at least get a cost for all areas. Right now we are asking them to redefine the developable space on both sides of the land and remap the wetlands to the north of the bypass. They will go out as soon as the leaves drop. B. Parker added that we have had discussion with Guy regarding allocating some money in next year's budget. We may have to find some other way to

work \$5,000-\$10,000 into the budget. G. Infanti said if we're trying to market a \$2M property, the Selectmen should be creative enough to understand the scale of this and find \$10,000 to cover engineering fees. B. Parker said maybe Jim would help carry that message forward to the Board. G. Infanti said it may even take some of us going to the Board as well. We're sitting on a property that is not tax positive and finding \$10,000 should not be a problem if it's presented properly.

B. Parker told the Board that Bill Ruoff said DPW crews can do the cutting and thinning out there, but no logging, so we will need to get out there and figure out which spots to get this site cleaned out and more accessible. J. McCormack mentioned Jim Dannis's website which referred to the possibility of controlled logging on some of the town lands. That could possibly take us part way there; maybe we could look into this first. B. Parker said that Jacob has already been talking to local companies and again, we would need to work out the logistics and costs.

J. McCormack inquired about the mechanics of a sale like this, saying we haven't had a lot of recent experience. We want to be able to give our marketing folks a timeframe that they could then give to potential clients. B. Parker said that as part of a process, we should come up with a basic purchase and sale agreement and a letter of intent to streamline town counsel review. J. Akers said he will bring a template by and suggested that we ask town counsel for something that he has already worked with.

C. Harris said right now we're looking at \$1,600 per acre so the key will be to determine the buildable acreage. To marketing the property and look for potential buyers, it needs to be determined first of all, if the Town is willing to break up the acreage and then how to subdivide the individual parcels. Would the Town be looking at workforce housing within this area as well? This is more of a commercial site, but will workforce housing at least be considered? J. Akers offered to include the NRPC study that shows the breakdown of the potential twenty-five lots in their marketing package and website. J. McCormack stated that if someone makes an offer, we would be flexible. B. Parker added that anything can be put on the table. A. Hicks brought up the 100 acre land-locked, Hawes property. Would it be feasible for Grubb & Ellis to approach the owners to include it with the Brox marketing? That would make things more feasible and absorb the infrastructure more easily. B. Parker said that the Landquest proposal offered to help develop the Brox property, if we could help with getting 500 houses approved. He then gave a brief recap of the Landquest proposal and said that a change in density would have to go before the Planning Board.

- **Self-assessment Project and *Milford Advantage* marketing efforts**

B. Parker explained the relationship with Northeastern University's CURP program and the self assessment tool, saying this could be worked into the process. J. McCormack noted that this self assessment project was ongoing, not a one-time, stand alone deal. Although we are still early in the process, there is much information that can be integrated into the marketing of the Brox property. The *Milford Advantage* should be put out there, working with the Chamber of Commerce, not just discussed at this table. A. Hicks asked if we would be bringing up the Milford disadvantages as well. J. McCormack said we certainly would have to be realistic and face up to those; however, we keep coming back to the same question of affordability and workforce housing. A lot of people want to keep the rural character, but don't want to pay more taxes.

G. Infanti said what we do now will shape the whole area for the next ten to fifteen years and there is an incredible sense of complacency; yet nobody comes to the meetings. C. Harris said it would be worth having Milford, Amherst and some of the other towns get together to sit down and talk about how to develop the area. G. Infanti mentioned that the Milford and Amherst Boards got together recently and many good ideas came up, such as a senior center. Rte 101A is building up and it's coming this way. We need to be prepared. G. Infanti said he has been surprised that since the zoning change out there, almost everyone who's looked at his property on Perry Rd has been industrial or light manufacturing,

not retail. And the corner that Hollis Line just purchased would have been an incredible spot for a retail business.

- **Northeastern Partnership / NH matching funds**

B. Parker said the paperwork has been sent to the state for the grant money and confirmed that we are still \$1,000 short. He has an invoice from Don Zizzi and will send it over to MIDC. B. Parker said the check should be sent directly to Northeastern.

- **Next meeting**

The next meeting date was scheduled for November 9th at 7:30 AM.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00AM.

To do items:

- ⇒ TIF District expansion
- ⇒ Presentation for BOS (November 26th meeting)
- ⇒ Update on Hendrix progress
- ⇒ Website progress
- ⇒ Timetable for warrant articles for town vote
- ⇒ Wetlands delineation of Brox industrial property

Continuing items:

- ⇒ Brox industrial property
 - ⇒ Site presentation/clean up
 - ⇒ Tree removal quotes
- ⇒ Maintain an on-going progress file.
- ⇒ Meet with developers.
- ⇒ State support
 - ⇒ Ten year plan for access to the property
 - ⇒ Job creation within two-year periods
- ⇒ On-going contact with Land Quest.
- ⇒ Continuous revisions/updates to the Economic Development Self Assessment survey