



**Westfield Redevelopment Authority Meeting**

**February 20, 2020**

Municipal Building, 59 Court Street, Westfield, MA, Room 315  
8:00 AM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

STAFF

MEMBERS ABSENST

Kathy Witalisz, Chair

Peter J. Miller Acting Executive Director

William Parks, Vice-Chair

Christine Fedora, Office Manager

Mark Morin

Ali Salehi

Tom Woodson

1.) Chair Witalisz called the meeting of the Westfield Redevelopment Authority to order at 8:00 am. The above members were in attendance.

Also attending: Peter Currier – Westfield News

2.) Approval of January 7, 2020 meeting minutes.

Member Woodson MOTIONED, seconded by Member Morin to approve the January 7, 2020 minutes. Chair Witalisz asked if there was any discussion. With no further discussion the minutes were approved as submitted. All in favor. MOTION PASSES. 3-0

Acting Executive Director Miller noted the February 4, 2020 annual meeting minutes as well as the February 4, 2020 regular meeting minutes were included in the packet. They will be added on the March agenda for review/approval.

Mr. Woodson stated there was a page missing from the minutes of February 4, 2020. Mr. Miller to correct.

3.) Report of Committees

WRA Financials

Mr. Miller reported there was no activity with the financials this month. The \$15,000.00 that was approved by the Council has not been received. Mr. Miller to request the transfer.

Mr. Miller added there is expenditure from Mr. Annino in the amount of \$900.00 AMOUNT UPDATED TO \$750.00 PER MINTUES OF 3-3-20 this will be paid prior to the transfer of the W.R.A. funds to the city.

Chair Witalisz inquired if there would be an Executive Session? Mr. Miller replied there would not be.

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#### 4.) Report of the Executive Director

Mr. Miller reviewed the items he followed up on following the previous meeting.

- Review of opinions related to potential Conflict-of-Interest

Mr. Miller stated he received the opinion regarding the Arch Communities submittal in relation to the 2 partners listed on the R.F.I. Those partners being WestMass Development which lists Jeff Daley as one of the managing partners. The reason for their concern was Jeff Daley was hired by the W.R.A. in the spring as a consultant for the W.R.A. Given the ethics reports WestMass would be eligible if Jeff Daley's name had not been listed as a partner, given the fact Mr. Daley is on the R.F.I., the Arch Communities submission has to be disqualified.

Chair Witalisz asked how WestMass would be notified? Mr. Miller stated the purchasing department would handle that.

- TIF Analysis for potential project

Mr. Miller noted in the Arch report it was suggested they might be asking for a T.I.F. Mr. Miller met with the assessor and they came up with a model they might be looking at which showed the total to be \$117,000. Between WestMass and the Domus the values generally turn out to be in the same ball park. Mr. Miller gave a brief summary as to how the Council views the T.I.F.'s.

- Research on Repayment Obligations for Project Funds from Mass Development & City

Mr. Miller reviewed the rough estimate of the costs expended from various funding sources:

- 480,200. 00 – Mass Development  
(Site cleanup). Mr. Annino is currently reviewing the agreement to see if this funding is required to be paid back. According to the review to date, Mr. Annino feels it doesn't look like there will have to be a repayment, based on the net cost.
- 203,700. 00 – City  
(General operating)
- 838,736.00 – City  
Property acquisitions appropriations  
The expectations are this might have to be paid back, it was noted it would be 50% if it is profitable.

Mr. Miller stated the City Council has asked for a presentation on March 5<sup>th</sup> for an update on the status of the projects and would like a list of the properties purchased by the city. Mr. Morin suggested a breakdown on the expenditures as well as items should be presented.

- Draft Resolution for Vote

Mr. Miller noted no resolution has been prepared.

- Discussion with Auditor Relative to bringing WRA accounts back to the City custody.

Mr. Miller stated he has met with the city's auditor as well as the outside auditors; they are excited to see the financials under the city's control. He explained this would require the W.R.A. to follow the procedures of the 30B but does not require a yes or no from the auditor. The auditor would be checking the regulatory requirement.

Mr. Woodson MOTIONED, seconded by Mr. Morin to authorize the Acting Executive Director to begin the process of moving the W.R.A. funds into the control of the auditing department. It was noted the outstanding bill for Mr. Annino in the amount of \$900.00 be paid prior to the transfer. It was also mentioned that once the funds are in place under the city's control a purchase order should be created for Mr. Annino. All in favor.

- Annual Report to Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development

Mr. Miller stated the Annual Report was submitted to the D.H.C.D. on February 12, 2020, the report has been acknowledged as sufficient.

#### 5.) Unfinished Business

Chair Witalisz noted Mr. Salehi does not wish to continue on the W.R.A. and asked other members if they had anyone in mind as a replacement, she mentioned a couple people she thought might be a good fit. Andrea Allard, Judy Puffer, Gene Gezotis. Mr. Miller mentioned this to the mayor, and has not had any feedback as of yet. A brief discussion regarding the type of a background would be beneficial to the W.R.A., a developmental person, financial, operational. Mr. Miller added there is no deadline for the appointment; the current member is active until a new member is appointed.

Mr. Miller to research how other W.R.A.'s fill their positions.

- Discussion and possible vote on entering into negotiations with a preferred developer for Elm Street Urban Renewal Project.

Chair Witalisz opened the discussion. She felt a lot of knowledge has been gained by this experience by comparing the two submissions. She reviewed the options. The submissions can be accepted, rejected, negotiated or back for an R.F.P. She further added some of the items that might be considered would be the possibilities of a TIF, what would the cost of a TIF be in relation to not granting a TIF, parking issues, mixed uses and what percentage of each, affordability versus market rate, housing.

Mr. Miller stated the biggest challenge would be the price portion according to the requirements of the Urban Renewal Regulations. Each parcel has to be appraised, it can be no less than the fair market value, and he further noted this can be waived.

Discussion between the members as to how they want to move forward as well as other options.

- Decide what is realistic and what the city would like to see
- Think about what the city is looking for.
- Put out what the city is looking for and if there is no response to wait 6 months and do it again
- Affordable housing which would help to stimulate street activity, which is a major challenge

Mr. Miller stated the part that worries him the most is that Arch is out and Domus is not giving anything for the property, they both are good projects and both are capable of doing a quality project. What would happen if this went out again and both projects didn't resubmit.

Member Woodson felt it might be viable to negotiate with one of the proponents to see if they can meet the needs of the city, he felt they should be given the chance to come up with what the city needs.

It was suggested to have Mr. Miller meet with Domus to see if they could meet the challenges.

- Value of the property
- Scope of Project – downsizing the number of units
- First floor use

Further discussion regarding how they should move forward. Items to be considered.

- What goals are being met
- Future of the project in the downtown
- Saying what can be negotiated and what can and cannot be negotiated

Mr. Miller also noted according to D.H.C.D. there has to be a fair market value appraisal and is valid for 6 months.

Member Woodson MOTIONED, seconded by Member Morin to move forward with the fair market value appraisal.

All in favor.

Chair Witalisz suggested the 2 proposals be at the next meeting in order to come up with a combination of the 2.

A brief discussion regarding the parking lots. Mr. Miller noted the Central Street lot will be paved in the spring which should help to alleviate some of the parking issues.

A review of the items for the next meeting:

Appraisal

Call Arch

Reach out to Anne at Domus

Mr. Woodson MOTIONED, seconded by Chair Witalisz to adjourn at 9:08.

All in favor.