



CITY OF NORTH ADAMS, MASSACHUSETTS

Redevelopment Authority

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**REGULAR MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**October 19, 2020**

**Members present virtually** David Bond, Kyle Hanlon, and Michael Leary

**Members absent**

**Others present virtually** Tammy Daniels – iBerkshires, Zachary Feury – Office of Community Development, Judy Grinnell – Hoosic River Revival, and Richard Tavelli – Hoosic River Revival

**Call to order** 6:00 pm

**Chair statement for virtual public hearing**

Chairman Hanlon read the following statement: Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this public hearing of the North Adams Redevelopment Authority is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but the public can listen to this meeting while in progress via teleconference. Members of the public attending this meeting virtually will be allowed to make comments if they wish to do so, during the portion of the hearing designated for public comment, by teleconference.

**Public hearings new business**

- **Potential grant opportunity**

Chairman Hanlon opened the meeting to Zachary Feury from the Office of Community Development (OCD). Mr. Feury explained that the OCD is looking to secure potential funds through two separate grant programs. The two programs are MassDevelopment's Real Estate Technical Assistance program and MassDevelopment's Site Readiness program. He explained that the technical assistance program is designed to address site specific and/or district wide economic development challenges by providing funds to advance priority planning and development projects. Eligible services accessible via technical assistance funds include:

- Master Planning and Visioning
- Market Feasibility and Financial Analysis
- Surplus Property Reuse and Activation Assistance
- Local District Management Technical Assistance
- RFP Development and Process Management
- Regional Economic Development Planning

The local project for which OCD applied for funding is a market feasibility and financial analysis for a combination of properties owned by the Redevelopment Authority and the City of North Adams. These properties include: the Northern Node of the Urban Renewal Plan area, Heritage State Park, the Sons of Italy, and three parcels comprising greenspace on State Street between Christopher Columbus Drive and the Hadley Overpass.

The scope of work for this project, if awarded, will include: a review of existing conditions, which would include building and infrastructure assessments; development objectives, essentially creating a new vision for the properties; and a financial

plan based on existing conditions and development objectives. This scope of work was crafted to follow the outline for an Urban Renewal Plan amendment, which it is intended to yield.

This program is intended to advance preparation of development sites, eligible activities for which include: land acquisition and site assembly; site preparation and improvements; and such predevelopment work as: due diligence; site identification; market studies; and master planning.

The local project for which OCD is currently crafting an application is a master plan for site redevelopment for several properties owned by the City and the Redevelopment Authority, including: the Sons of Italy and several parcels to the south of the south thereof, the three parcels comprising greenspace on State Street between Christopher Columbus Drive and the Hadley Overpass, and the small City-owned parcel between the Brien Center and the American Legion.

The scope of work for this project comprises an existing conditions analysis for utilities, infrastructure, and traffic and accessibility. A determination of the feasibility of redevelopment of the site based on the existing conditions of the site, the results of a land use and legal analysis and the envisioned end use of the site. The scope includes site planning, which is intended to yield site plans for redevelopment with the envisioned end use in mind, which is a shared-use heritage and cultural center that celebrates the city's past while promoting its present.

This is intended to be a joint venture with support from the City of North Adams, the North Adams Redevelopment Authority, the Town of Adams, North Adams Historical Society, and the Berkshire Scenic Rail Museum.

The site plan yielded by this project will look to locate the proposed building on the site, locate the optimal site for a Hoosac Valley Rail terminal; and locate infrastructure improvements, such as: a pedestrian tunnel beneath the railroad tracks, a multi-modal bridge over the Hoosic River, and improved parking facilities.

These grant applications have not yet been and may not be funded. The ideas and plans are all at a very early stage. The OCD would like to get the board's input.

Chairman Hanlon requested questions from the board. Member Leary inquired about whether the existing Hoosac Rail depot would be converted to the Heritage Park area should this come to fruition. Mr. Feury stated that that is something to consider in order to optimize the building and bring more people in to Heritage State Park. Part of the proposal of the feasibility study is locating the envisioned end use on the site which is the Sons of Italy parcel and the three parcels south of it. The envisioned end use is a heritage and cultural center for the city such as the North Adams Historical Society, the Berkshire Scenic Rail Museum as well as the Office of Tourism for the city as well as moving the DCR museum that is currently at Heritage State Park to the new location.

Judy Grinnell inquired about the property in question and the plans for the property. Chairman Hanlon explained that nothing specific is being worked on at the time and Mr. Feury gave a brief overview of the presentation. Ms. Grinnell inquired about whether there was an overlay of the restoration of the river plans. Mr. Feury explained that this is the beginning of the process and Hoosic River Revival would be added as a stakeholder to be engaged throughout the process. Ms. Grinnell expressed concern that this is proceeding knowing that flooding is a concern in this area. Mr. Feury explained that this is not construction, engineering, or design money. It is funds to create a review of existing conditions to understand what is going on with the building, the parking lot, the various infrastructure surrounding the area which would include the flood chutes. From there, that review of existing conditions would be utilized to help create a determination of feasibility for locating the end use on this site. The determination may be that it's not feasible or it may not be feasible until X, Y and Z are completed. From there, with all of its dependencies, the next phase would be to create a site plan that works in the necessary infrastructure improvements.

Ms. Grinnell requested a meeting with Mr. Feury and confirmation that the plans for the railroad museum are defunct. Mr. Feury could not confirm and explained that they are moving forward with plans for redevelopment of the site. Chairman Hanlon explained that there has been no movement from the railroad museum recently so the plan is to conduct a feasibility study not predicated by an expectation of results from them in the short term. Member Leary stressed to Ms. Grinnell that the board is only approving pursuing grant money that doesn't even exist at this time.

Discussion of good communication from Ms. Grinnell.

Chairman Hanlon requested a motion to approve the two grant submittals. Member Leary made a motion to approve the grant proposals. Member Bond seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

- **Resolution to extend the timeframe of the Western Gateway Urban Heritage State Park Urban Renewal Plan**

Mr. Feury explained that earlier in the year there was discussion to extend the expiration of the city's Urban Renewal Plan by two years. The current expiration date is set for September 8, 2021 and it seems prudent to extend the date due to the benefits of the plan. The area is cited in the Vision 2030 plan as a priority development area. In order to put together an Urban Renewal Plan amendment proposing major changes such as extending the boundary of the previous noted split lot as well as incorporating all of the properties owned by the Redevelopment Authority that requires a major plan change. That will trigger a need for a plan amendment that follows the updated regulations from 760 CMR 12. The reason behind extending the plan by two years is to provide adequate time to accomplish all that needs to be accomplished to make the major plan changes with the new amendment.

Chairman Hanlon requested questions from the board or the public. Ms. Grinnell inquired about whether the agreement held in the past with the railroad museum was being extended. Chairman Hanlon explained that this is the Urban Renewal Plan and it's approaching its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and expiration date. This is to extend the expiration date of the plan.

Chairman Hanlon requested a motion to approve the Office of Community Development applying for an extension of the Urban Renewal Plan. Member Leary made a motion to approve. Member Bond seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion carried.

#### **Approval of minutes**

- Regular meeting – March 9, 2020

Continued to next meeting due to lack of quorum approval due to Member Leary's absence from the March 9 meeting and need to abstain.

**Adjournment** Meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Michelle Ells  
Redevelopment Authority Secretary