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*Linda Paradise*  
TOWN CLERK ASST

## REGULAR MEETING

Mill Sites Redevelopment Advisory Committee (MSRAC)  
Friday, March 9, 2018 – 9:00AM  
Merrill Seney Community Room  
Thompson Town Hall

### MINUTES

PRESENT: J. Blanchette, Chairman  
S. Lewis, Vice Chairman  
J. Hall  
N. O'Leary

ABSENT: B. H. Davis

ALSO PRESENT: M. A. Chinatti, Director of Planning and Development, S. Donohoe, Property Owner Liaison, W. Bugden, CME Associates, S. Kellerson, CME Associates, J. Guzkowski, CME Associates, C. Langlois, J. Rice

1. CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Blanchette called the meeting to order at 9:03AM.
2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
  - a. February 9, 2018 Regular Meeting  
(**M/S/C Lewis/O'Leary**) to approve the minutes as presented.  
Carried unanimously.
3. CORRESPONDENCE - NONE
4. CITIZEN COMMENTS - NONE
5. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

(**M/S/C Lewis/Hall**) to modify the agenda to add, as NEW item (a) 630 Riverside Drive Update, and to move item (a) 929 Riverside Dr. to NEW item (b). Carried Unanimously.

- a. 630 Riverside Dr. Update  
S. Donohoe stated that, due to the amount of environmental clean-up is a deterrent to potential developers; it's estimated at between \$500K - \$1M,

depending on what needs to be done. He continued, stating he did not know if it's this meeting or if it's a Selectmen meeting, but additional help is required to a developer with the environmental issues to make the property more attractive. He stated he's being told by realtors that there is no company that would be willing to move into town and put down that kind of money before there's brick and mortar in the ground. He stated the property owner has not listed the property with a real estate agent due to the fact that the asking price is unknown, considering the costs for clean-up. He stated he thought an agent would sign the property, put it on the market and get the activity going but basically they don't want to waste their time if the price is higher than any other around.

J. Hall reiterated S. Donohoe's comments to confirm understanding, saying that the property isn't listed because it's the potential realtor that's questioning the amount of clean up and not the buyer.

S. Donohoe responded, saying that he went to a realtor and said he wanted to put the property on the market, and told the realtor the estimated clean-up costs, and asked who would buy that – that whoever buys that is writing a big check “before they even have brick and mortar on the ground”. S. Donohoe then said it could use another grant and put a fire station there then that grant has the ability to contribute as far as the Town could do a portion of it – fire station, park, etc. – and contribute to some of that. He stated the owner is at a stand-still.

In response to J. Hall's question re whether there is some sort of price range that the property owner was given that it may sell for or that the owner is looking for, S. Donohoe stated there is debt on the property so the owner is looking to get out of the debt and pay the taxes, citing a \$300K cost. Ms. Hall then noted that if the property were listed for \$300K that would get the property owner out, to which S. Donohoe responded, asking what realtor would list it for \$300K when it's actually \$800K - \$1.3M. J. Hall stated that once the property is listed and distributed through the appropriate channels, the right people will look at it.

There was lengthy discussion between S. Donohoe and the Committee re why a realtor would accept a listing when, in addition to the asking price, the realtor would have to tell a potential buyer there's also the clean-up costs ranging from \$500K - \$1M. S. Donohoe indicated he would contact more agents.

J. Blanchette stated that the Town's grant put a significant investment into that property for the purpose of eliminating a large unknown so as to generate more interest for potential buyers. Now the Committee is being told that there still is no interest without even signing with an agent. S. Donohoe responded, saying that an agent he'd spoken with said he (the

agent) had three people who looked at the property, and once they found out about the environmental issues they were no longer interested. J. Blanchette responded, saying that the effort can't stop just based on that, to which S. Donohoe stated the owner would give the listing to a realtor and J. Hall recommended it be given to a commercial realtor.

J. Blanchette then stated that clean-up grants are given to municipalities and not private individuals. M. A. Chinatti agreed, stating there are no clean-up grants available to private property owners but that there are clean-up loans private property owners could apply for. J. Blanchette then asked if S. Donohoe, by suggesting the Town apply for a grant, meant that the Town should take the property. J. Hall stated that may be the only alternative, as the Town has put so much effort and work into the property, adding that it's being marketed incorrectly.

W. Bugden stated this is an example of the reason behind the land bank legislation whereby, because towns are very hesitant to take on a property with environmental issues, a land bank, which is a private non-profit corporation set up to do what a town would be unwilling to do. He stated they'd have the resources and skills necessary, and added that there are some changes pending in the legislation that would create an advisory committee at the state level to help regions put together land banks and they would be eligible for the grants that municipalities are. He continued, explaining the details of a land bank and how that would work re the 630 Riverside Drive site. He stated that there is no land bank in this area and putting one together would be difficult as the whole program is new, noting that volunteers to serve on a Board of Directors would be necessary, but it seems this is a classic example of a property that needs a land bank. He stated a land bank may not be a quick fix, but that it may be the only viable fix. He said this committee might make the beginnings of a land bank, to which J. Blanchette responded that is an agenda item for another day.

- b. 929 Riverside Dr.
  - i. Brownfield Area-Wide Redevelopment (BAR) Grant – Possible Project(s)

S. Kellarson stated there has been no more work done on the site since the last meeting, and that CME has been working on the Phase II/III report. He noted there is a little more sampling left that needs to be done before finalizing the Report, and they will work with GZA/Rexnord to decide what needs to be done to close out the site.

W. Bugden stated GZA/Rexnord took the position, regarding Transfer Act filing, that it is responsible for the portion of the property formerly occupied by Sanitary Dash. He stated the form they filed, and the

regulations, don't speak to part of a site, but the whole parcel. He stated, based on that, DEEP doesn't have an answer re how to close out the site. He stated that they've gone along for 20 years accepting the fact that Sanitary Dash didn't occupy the whole site but GZA/Rexnord never asked how to close out the site. He stated when he asked Mark Lewis, CE DEEP, he didn't really have an answer and was going to take it "up the chain of command" at DEEP to find out how Rexnord would be able to close out their issues. He stated the Town "are all the white knights coming in" noting that, if the property gets entered into a Voluntary Remediation Program, the Transfer Act go away and Rexnord would be out from under, and that is a big "carrot" J. Gumpert can "dangle". He noted this could be a win-win, showing a path forward to closure. He stated what's important from a lenders/developers perspective is that the whole property gets closure, and what CME is doing is attempting to combine what CME has done and what GZA has done. He noted he has not spoken directly with Rexnord other than at the meeting that was held here at Town Hall about a year or so ago. He stated they knew the milestones, but that there was no path to verify the site. He stated they have every reason to be cooperative, and they will need to come up with a solution that they like and that works for the developer and DEEP. He stated J. Gumpert spoke to Tom Frost, Rexnord's environmental specialist, and that they essentially promised cooperation. He stated CME is pulling information together to have a "road map" to closure/who needs to do what.

M. A. Chinatti informed the Committee that DECD has agreed to modify the scope of the current grant to include Phase I Environmental Site Assessments for 915 Riverside Drive and 948 Riverside Drive as they are an integral part of the River Mill complex and included in J. Gumpert's development plans.

W. Bugden stated there is no reason for 948 to be part of the Transfer Act, but that 915 did, however, have some activity/ies M. A. Chinatti spoke with W. Warzecha, DEEP about, that DEEP is of the opinion that 915 is, indeed, subject to the Act and that it would require a separate filing. He noted, however, that if all properties are part of the development, they could all be entered into the Voluntary Remediation Program and get an exemption from the Transfer Act as well as some liability protections. He then discussed Transfer Act v Voluntary Remediation Program responsibilities. He noted one of the requirements for entering into one of the programs is that you must be the bona fide purchaser and you are required to do your due diligence before taking ownership of the property. The Town's grant has become very valuable for more than 929 and is being used for "the bigger picture." He stated even entry into the program doesn't excuse

the Rexnord Corporation from completing their obligations under the Transfer Act, but if someone else comes in and does clean up Rexnord could, for example, "piggy back" onto those reportings. He stated that, if one enters into the Voluntary Program, one is not obligated for anything off-site. He stated Rexnord issues are primarily off-site and they've been investigating that. He stated that issue is still kind of "up in the air", that GZA is finishing up and said their Environmental Risk Assessment (ERA) will get reviewed by DEEP. He stated J. Gumpert wouldn't be responsible to take on that liability, and noted CME needs to see what the ERA says. He stated CME is also going to request from DEEP that it expedite the review of reports and also asking for special consideration on timing so they don't take the normal 2 – 3 years to review. He stated his thought that that is one of the reasons DECD said to use some of this grant's funds for the additional Phase I's. He stated he is confident a path will be found that all approve of.

J. Blanchette stated her understanding that the amount previously allocated for the structural analysis, as that analysis is no longer necessary, is now being used for the additional environmental work. W. Bugden confirmed this.

W. Bugden stated it is also CME's intent to continue to work on this project after the grant is done and that would be with J. Gumpert if he decides to use CME. He stated CME has already had some discussions with J. Gumpert about helping with master planning and will be providing a proposal to him (Gumpert) for that work. He stated none of that has been billed to this grant.

J. Guzkowski stated the BAR grant is for multiple properties with some sort of community reach.

J. Blanchette asked, for clarification, if the Town would put in the grant application and if the grant is approved the Town would then put out RFP's... which W. Bugden confirmed, noting that it could be multiple RFP's for multiple tasks within the project. He stated this is a broad program, and then discussed some projects done by other municipalities approved during the last round.

J. Guzkowski stated the Program is really a planning grant, where you'd take an area and come up with ways to kind of move everything forward from a concept by creating a road map to make the revitalization happen. He stated the underlying purpose of it is to define your area of focus/ what is your problem(s) preventing getting to what you envision. He stated part of the problem may be you don't know what you want ; he suggested maybe doing a baseline market analysis to learn what the market can accommodate, resulting in a

clear path of what's possible, and once you take that step you can do a multi-property master plan. He stated you could see how properties in the areas function together/look/ at all of these things together and not just focus on what contamination was left behind.

W. Bugden stated the Town has a lot of good things going for it – it has successfully administered two grants in the area, started branding, and the application should really “shine.” He noted there is only a couple of weeks to complete it. He suggested thinking of the grant as a blank slate, and suggested coming up with what would have the “biggest bang for the buck” – what's the best use that would be advantageous to these other properties. He stated that as long as it's a well thought-out plan DECD would probably accept it.

J. Guzkowski then suggested a pedestrian/vehicular circulation plan, trail connection, etc., noting a lot of planning money could do a whole North Grosvenordale redevelopment master plan. He stated looking at the whole 12/131 corridor may be too big and not focused enough, but if you take a look at North Grosvenordale as a separate zoning area and not “lump” it into the 12/131 zoning, “it's a different beast.” He stated there a different way to manage what is largely a commercial corridor.

J. Hall reminded that one of the outcomes of the Branding exercise was that the Town wanted to get away from the “village”, to eliminate the villages and just make the town Thompson.

J. Blanchette suggested focusing on the 12/131 corridor starting at the Rt. 12/Rt. 200 intersection, then through to where 12/131 split above the K of C. She stated that's where the mills are and where the pedestrian connectivity is important, noting that the State's connectivity/safety audit that the Town participated in about a year ago should be incorporated also, and that the Town/CT DOT should be included in the project so the end result will be a working plan and not a document that will sit on a shelf.

W. Bugden stated the audit would be of value in the application to show what the Town has done. He stated the selling feature of the BAR is the density of the village area/municipal buildings/schools/increased residential/etc. He stated the area has all the elements for a walkable community so everything flows well and it's a desirable place. He stated that, by all means, DECD will see that \$200K, knowing that there's this momentum behind the mill, that tens of millions of dollars will be spent on redevelopment of that mill, they will see this as an excellent investment.

Members continued discussion on possible projects appropriate for the BAR grant.

J. Blanchette noted, re the market analysis, J. Gumpert talked about having an event space in the mill and the branding study notes that that is one of the poorer areas. She stated possibly the market study could look at putting a day care, or possibly a boutique hotel, in the mill, and other ideas that would make sense besides residences; J. Hall agreed that a hotel would be beneficial. J. Guzkowski agreed and suggested taking a look at some of the ideas from the community and possibly include some of those as options.

W. Bugden stated, re a comprehensive market analysis, that it would only be a small portion of the \$200K, and noted there is a broad area of options. Members offered additional suggestions for inclusion. W. Bugden noted the MSRAC Committee is a great asset because a large part of the BAR is community involvement/bringing stakeholders into meetings, and the Committee has already done that and has been doing it as the River Mill progresses. He stated this is exactly what DECD wants towns to do which is allow people in the affected area and the taxpayers to have a say in it as well. He stated a function of the grant could be to facilitate a robust public outreach, to which S. Lewis suggested a design charrette. Possible charrette scope(s) were then discussed. J. Blanchette stated the community will be as involved as possible so the resulting document will be used in conjunction with development in the area, and will include items such as meetings with P&Z and DOT regarding their requirements.

J. Guzkowski stated he would ask some of his contacts from towns previously approved for copies of their applications to use as guidance documents in preparation of this application.

S. Lewis stated that the area between 929 and 630 Riverside Dr. is essentially the beginning/end of the "downtown" and that a study focusing on that whole area would be beneficial and enhance pedestrian movement and vehicle safety, noting that coming in from Rt. 200 is the gateway from the south, and coming in from Rt. 131 is the gateway from the north. He stated that, in addition to sidewalks, there could be Thompson's version of the "Emerald Necklace" that would wind and connect all the parks down to the Belding mill waterfall.

W. Bugden stated there may be an opportunity to include some handicap-accessible fishing, etc. to which S. Lewis responded that would definitely make Belding Mill more inviting to a developer.

S. Lewis noted that a public charrette would be a great way to kick off the study, should the application be approved.

W. Bugden stated including that on the application would fare well at DECD, as it stresses and encourages public involvement; he stated his belief that the application asks for how you will involve the public, and noted that Thompson already does that and the application just needs to talk about that/how you've advertised/the number of people who have attended to be able to speak to the prospective developers at the beginning of the grant and then go into how you want to continue this track record with the benefit of the BAR grant.

S. Lewis stated the charrette(s) might reveal information J. Gumpert could include in his redevelopment, noting that J. Gumpert is doing his own market analysis for what should go into the buildings, but if he receives input from residents as to what they would like to see, it may change his mind as to potential uses.

W. Bugden suggested combining things such as pedestrian connectivity, traffic study, compatible zone change and market study analysis for the area. He stated J. Gumpert has said on numerous occasions that his philosophy on these developments is to focus on residential – in addition to financial, he also believes that it is the residential component that drives surrounding development.

J. Blanchette reiterated that the towers/trees coming out of them are/have been concern and asked if that has been considered. W. Bugden noted there is a new property manager and he doubted that property manager would address the issue without being instructed by J. Gumpert to do so; he then stated J. Gumpert's initial opinion was that structural issues were not as important to resolve as the environmental issues. He noted J. Gumpert, at that time, had indicated he hadn't taken a "really good look" at the towers but that he would, as CME had specifically pointed that out to him. M. A. Chinatti indicated, at his last meeting with the Town, he had not taken a look at the towers but he would following that meeting. W. Bugden will follow up with J. Gumpert, noting that this would be a bit "out of scope" but is important to save the mill; he stated he will advise M. A. Chinatti after that conversation.

J. Blanchette then asked about another public informational meeting, to which M. A. Chinatti responded that one will be held in the near future though a date has not yet been determined. She noted that J. Gumpert is currently having his design teams prepare architectural and site plans and it would be beneficial if those plans – even if not at the final stage – are available for the public informational meeting.



**(M/S/C Hall/O'Leary)** that the Mill Sites Redevelopment Advisory Committee recommends that the Board of Selectmen will support the Brownfield Area Redevelopment Program grant application because it is consistent with this Committee's work on the redevelopment of the mills. Carried Unanimously.

6. MEMBER COMMENTS - NONE

7. ADJOURNMENT – With no further business, the Committed adjourned at 10:33AM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
M. A. Chinatti, Director of Planning & Development