



TOWN OF THOMPSON

Mill Sites Redevelopment
Advisory Committee (MSRAC)

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Regular MEETING- MSRAC

Mill Sites Redevelopment Advisory Committee (MSRAC)

Friday – April 12, 2024 – 9:00 AM

Hybrid – Merrill Seney Community Room and Zoom

Zoom Recording: https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/9OnymLISIIUC9es_R2uOzXybepsxBB06_zS5F8FHuD8ShnV4ibZ-yDUu5gfi97yg.trkCk6w_HOU5l_c?startTime=1712926886000 Passcode: #PuK6AQB

YouTube Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRWIDuQNYr4>

Members Attending: J. Blanchette – Chair, B. Davis, J. Hall, S. Lewis, N. O’Leary, R. Waldron

Staff Attending: Tyra Penn-Gesek – Director of Planning & Development

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER – 9:02 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: March 8, 2024 Regular Meeting

R. Waldron moves/**J. Hall** seconds the motion to approve the minutes as presented. **Passes unanimously.**

3. CORRESPONDENCE - none

4. CITIZEN COMMENTS - none

5. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

a. CT DEDC Community Investment Fund grant application

The most recent application was not successful, although the executive summary from DECD is overwhelmingly positive. **T. Penn-Gesek** has a meeting with State Senator Gordon to discuss the application and DECD’s response in the following week. The next round opens on 29 April and she will resubmit the application. **J. Blanchette** and **R. Waldron** ask whether the type of project or requested amount were factors. Based on other awards given, **T. Penn-Gesek** does not think so. She brings up the list of Round 3 awardees on screen for comparison. There is discussion of the differences between the 2 executive summaries received for the 2 unsuccessful applications. She will continue to adjust the narrative and budget until the grant is awarded. The announcements for awards in Round 5 will be made at the end of the fiscal year.

b. 65 Main Street workshops

The next workshop is scheduled for Monday 29 April, to accommodate for the schedules of the school faculty and BoE members. The planning project is moving into the “Education Unit,” so the input from the representatives of the school district will be critical. The purpose is to start to develop the “Farm-to-Fork” career pathway for the high school, which was a top priority coming out of the planning games. Project partner CT RC&D is working to schedule guest speakers for the June meeting from Willimantic Click and other compatible entities. That session will be widely publicized to generate high attendance. **T. Penn-Gesek** recently presented a progress report in the quarterly con-call for USDA UAIP grant recipients. The goal is to reapply to that program once the planning process is complete, to fund implementation of the food forest & park. That is a \$300k maximum award with no match requirement. **T. Penn-Gesek** believes that she will also have surplus funds in the existing planning grant at the end of the workshops, which could fund engineering documents for the sitework. On the renovation side, a professional colleague of B. Santos has been onsite all

week, repairing the foundation as an in-kind donation to the project. The roofers also have to complete the gutters under their contract. That will take place after the exterior is painted, which will expend the remainder of the SBA grant. Some siding repairs need to happen before that. **T. Penn-Gesek** will contact **D. Eddy** to see if he can take that on. ECCD has applied on behalf of the partnership to the Kubota Hometown Pride grant/contest, to potentially initiate the landscaping in the area of the rain garden and community garden area. 20 finalists will be announced on 1 August, 2 in each region. Finalists are guaranteed an award of either \$50k or \$10k, and those awards are determined based on public online voting.

c. Ongoing Committee business

a. River Mill

DECD has granted a formal extension until the end of June to finalize the contract, because of the ongoing uncertainty over the DoL prevailing wage determination. There are still documents that need to be signed by the current owner as well. State Senator Gordon has also indicated that he will try to get **T. Penn-Gesek** in front of the Governor to discuss the issue.

b. 630 Riverside Dr

T. Penn-Gesek has spoken to a commercial broker and developer with interest in the property. She has referred him to **W. Bugden** for more information on the Environmental Assessments and other relevant details. If a competent developer shows sufficient interest, the Town has the ability to follow a similar process as they did with River Mill to incentivize redevelopment. **T. Penn-Gesek** has submitted a pre-application to Advance CT to list the parcel on their website as an "Investment Ready" property.

c. Main Street Reconstruction

No progress until the CIF grant is awarded

d. Blain Road Intersection

ECCD will return in May to plant the rain garden on the northern shoulder. **T. Penn-Gesek** may add a funding request to complete the southern shoulder in the Round 5 CIF application. **J. Blanchette** reminds the members that at the last meeting they discussed DPW seeding the southern shoulder in the spring. She will email the First Selectman and DPW Director as a reminder.

e. Swanson Park

No progress until the CIF grant is awarded. Other potential options are discussed (crowdfunding, local bank foundations). **R. Waldron** suggests reaching out to Putnam to find out how they are funding their ongoing renovations at their Veterans Park. She believes that Ellis Tech students are contributing electrical work.

d. Other/New Committee Business

R. Waldron brings up the EDC Marketing campaign. The Commission has awarded a marketing contract to DKA, a firm out of Western CT. **T. Kallenbach** of DKA visited Thompson and took a tour of the downtown and the Rte 12/131 corridor with **R. Waldron** and **T. Penn-Gesek**. He will be introducing the project to the EDC at their next meeting on 17 April. **J. Blanchette** asks what is the deliverable for the "campaign." The main deliverable is the plan for the campaign, but that will include recommendations for implementation, including what it would cost for ongoing maintenance by a vendor. **T. Penn-Gesek** suggests that the campaign will likely be mostly digital.

6. MEMBER COMMENTS

R. Waldron shares that the new brewery on Main Street is planning on opening mid-May. The owner is interested in organizing a ribbon-cutting event. There is some discussion about the status of the St Joseph's School renovation. **R. Waldron** also describes the ribbon-cutting event that happened at Superior Storage. She was pleased to see the involvement of the Northeast Chamber. The new Executive Director at the

Chamber is very enthusiastic. **T. Penn-Gesek** will get in touch with the brewery owner to talk about possibilities for an opening event.

B. Davis comments that he sent a link to **T. Penn-Gesek** with historic photos of the Main St loop, to share with the marketing consultant. **R. Waldron** mentions that the retaining wall for the cemetery on Main St is in poor repair. **J. Blanchette** will go by and look at it to see whether it is made of stacked stone or concrete. **N. O'Leary** comments that the cemetery itself also needs maintenance. **B. Davis** asks if a new Wetlands Officer/Conservation Agent has been hired. 4 candidates were interviewed. The First Selectman, HR Director, Director of Planning & Development and the new Chair of IWC are meeting later in the afternoon to discuss the interviews and make a selection. The rough plan is to have someone hired and in place by the end of the month.

7. ADJOURNMENT – 10:04 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tyra Penn-Gesek, Director of Planning & Development