



Town of Camden
Minutes of the Meeting of the
Camden Economic Development Advisory Committee
November 26, 2012
5:30pm

PRESENT: *Members:* Chairperson Peter Gross, Rick Bates, Pete Brown, Kipp Wright
 Alternates: Deb Dodge
 Liaisons: Brian Hodges (Development Director), Martin Cates (Select Board), Lowrie
 Sargent (Planning Board), Robin McIntosh (Chamber)

ABSENT: Ellis Cohn, Meg Quijano

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm.

2. Approval of Board Minutes

Rick Bates made a motion to accept the minutes of the October 22nd meeting as presented. Deb Dodge seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.

3. Tannery Site

Peter Gross said that he'd received a memo from the Town Manager asking CEDAC to create an RFP that could be put out to commercial real estate firms to market and sell the Tannery property. Gross reviewed the background on this matter, saying that earlier in the fall the Select Board had asked CEDAC to revisit the approach to selling the Tannery property. In response, the committee had voted at the October 22nd meeting to recommend to the Select Board that they proceed to enlist a commercial real estate broker to market and sell the Tannery site in compliance with the allowed uses in the Guiding Principles. This recommendation would be presented to the Select Board at their meeting on November 27th, he said.

The group discussed the next steps that would take place were the Select Board to adopt the recommendation. Brian Hodges suggested that a member of the committee work with him on putting together the language for an RFP to go out to commercial brokers.

Martin Cates noted that marketing fees associated with listing a commercial property can run upwards of \$1500. He offered three scenarios that could be considered:

- (1) The Town could offer a 6% commission plus \$1000 to assist with marketing costs;
- (2) the commission could be tied to a selling bonus, offering an extra \$1000 if the property goes under contract within three months;
- (3) a higher commission (around 8%) could be offered to help defray marketing costs.

Cates added that these scenarios would not be included in an RFP but could be part of the negotiations once the bids come in.

4. Downtown Network Board – Recommended Priorities

Brian Hodges reported that Oscar Verest and Peter Gross would also be presenting the Downtown Network Board's list of recommendations from the Downtown Master Plan to the Select Board as part of the agenda for November 27th. He described the process that the Downtown Network Board had undertaken to prioritize the list of projects and said that the list presented would contain these items:

- * Marketing/Advertising/Branding strategy and campaign
- * Town-wide signage design and installation
- * Camden Opera House improvements (2nd and 3rd floors)
- * Streetscapes and amenities; design and construction (pending)
- * Waterfall repair
- * TIF for Knox Mill and Credit Enhancement Agreement policy (CEDAC)
- * Public Landing and River to Harbor Walk (design; grants approved; excl. construction)
- * Enhance (make "free") high speed internet access in downtown
- * Upgrade alley to Public Landing (located next to Lily, Lupine, and Fern)

The group talked over the projects on the list. Rick Bates suggested that improvements to the Mechanic Street parking lot be included and it was decided that this could fall under streetscapes rather than being listed as a separate item.

Pete Brown suggested that as part of the Select Board presentation, Gross and Verest might point out that a great deal of public input had gone into formulating the list of improvements, citing the large community meetings that had each drawn over 80 participants. Martin Cates noted that several items on the list had been discussed by various committees dating as far back as 3 – 4 years ago, showing that these are not new ideas. After some discussion it was decided that CEDAC would show its support by endorsing the list of projects put forward by Downtown Network Board.

Deb Dodge made a motion that CEDAC support the recommendations of the Downtown Network Board on the priorities from the Downtown Master Plan. Rick Bates seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.

5. TIF Funds Recommendation

Hodges told the group that an amount of \$60,000 would be available for TIF-approved projects from the first year of collections. Of that, he said that \$30,000 had been approved in the budget for this year and that this amount is now available to be spent from the TIF account. Hodges noted that the State, which oversees the TIF program, provides these benefits to the community with an expectation that the funds will be used, noting that they like to see the money spent.

There was some discussion on the types of projects that are most appropriate for TIF funds. Lowrie Sargent suggested that it might be preferable to fund projects that produce tangible, visible results like infrastructure improvements.

The first item on the Downtown Network Board priority list, *Marketing /Advertising/ Branding Strategy and Campaign*, was talked over at some length. Pete Brown noted that it would be a good first step to educate the group on what a branding strategy is and how a town goes about launching such a process. Brown also noted that the group would have to define exactly what we would be branding, whether it would be the downtown area, Camden a whole, or a broader region. To that end, it was decided to invite a consultant to join an upcoming meeting to talk over how a branding and marketing process might work.

Snow Bowl redevelopment improvements and connectivity to the town were also brought up as possibilities for TIF funding. Martin Cates noted that the Select Board would be receiving an update on how work is coming on the Kingdom Trail concept that has been proposed for the Snow Bowl, which has the potential to make the area into a four-season recreation destination.

Hodges told the group that the state will be most interested in activities centered on economic development. He explained that the funds cannot be dedicated for future projects as in the example of the renovations to the Opera House, saying that the key to TIF funding is to spend it rather than saving it for a project that will take place down the road.

Hodges noted that more TIF funding will be coming in year two. The committee discussed formulating a process for weighing options for the expenditure of TIF funds. They decided to come up with a list whereby potential projects could be rated and evaluated by committee members in a manner similar to how the Downtown Master Plan priorities were assembled. This way the group could get into a consistent rhythm for spending the funds prior to creating new TIFs.

It was decided that the next CEDAC agenda would include continuing to work on defining the use of TIF funds.

6. Public Comment / Questions on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Downtown Network Board will be held on Monday, December 17th at 5:30pm.

Adjourn

Rock Bates made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Deb Dodge seconded this motion. The motion passed unanimously and the committee adjourned at 7:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

CEDAC

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Karen Brace
Recording Secretary