



MINUTES

Board of Directors Meeting

Friday – December 16, 2022

7:45a – 9:15a

In-Person L.L. Bean Headquarters

1. Welcome and Introductions

Attending Board Members: Mary Davis, Mark Malone, Candice Rinaldi, Nikki Yanok Schneider, Dan Bacon, Tawni Whitney, Sarah Tracey, Stefanie Millitte, Leanne Barschdorf-Nichols, Becky Doten-Lizzotte, Jason Sulham.

Not Attending. Chip Gray, Peter Joseph, James Hendricks

Others Attending. Ed Bradley, Dan Piltch, Brett Richardson

2. Consent Agenda Items

Minutes of November 29, 2022 Meeting were unanimously approved as presented.

Financial Report as of November 31, 2022 were unanimously approved as presented.

Fiscal Year 2021 Tax Return/990. Brett raised for Board consideration the fact the FEDDC is in arrears for filing its 2021 tax returns by one month. The previous accounting firm had ended its relationship with FEDDC and the 990 slipped through the cracks. Brett shared a plan to rectify the issue and to petition the IRS for an abatement of penalties based on the one-time nature of the issue, staff and accounting firm turn-over, and a good faith effort to file as soon as the issue was discovered. Brett shared quotes from Runyon Kersteen Ouellette (RKO) and Berry Talbot Royer. Brett recommended retaining RKO because the quote was \$1,000 compared to \$1,850, plus RKO could complete the work by the end of the year and has an established relationship with the Town.

Action. The Board unanimously approved the action to retain RKO after a motion by Candice that was seconded by Mark.

3. Action Item follow-up from November meeting

Bartol Library update. Brett provided a brief update that follow-up had occurred regarding the future of Bartol and that progress between the Town and L.L. Bean was ongoing.

FEDC Board Survey regarding Downtown Vision. Brett summarized the six responses received from Board members that FEDC is on track with its DTV focus on Sewer, Housing, ordinance and design review process improvements, and business attraction.

Dan Bacon highlighted an upcoming opportunity to integrate Main Street redesign with L.L. Bean Flagship redevelopment, including undergrounding utilities. Continued and regular engagement between the Town and Bean staff will be important to sync up timelines and workplans.

Mary provided an update on the Town's development review process improvements highlighted in the Downtown Vision. Mary has begun to map out the process and shared ideas for how FEDC can support the Planning Department, including offering volunteer and staff capacity and gathering input from FEDC Board members to share with the Planning Department to inform their updates.

Mark Malone mentioned that he has heard from developers that Freeport has a reputation as one of the most difficult towns in New England for approvals.

Brett shared that former FEDC Board Member David Latulippe is available to attend the January Board meeting to share his recent experience permitting Freeport Station Apartments.

Sarah suggested a roundtable with developers, Town Councilors, and Planning Board members.

Dan Bacon agreed and emphasized the importance of including Planning staff and Planning Board members in the round table so that they can hear directly from developers to best understand the issues and begin to work towards process improvements.

Dan Piltch reminded the group that Council had allocated funding for the current fiscal year to support design ordinance improvements. Dan continued that the Town Comprehensive Plan Update would kick-off soon and that the Planning Department is a small team tasked with complex work.

Mark noted that Freeport has an unusually splintered approach to planning and project review due to the separation of powers between the Planning Board and Project Review Board. Mark observed that the Planning Board writes ordinances that they have no direct experience in working with because the PRB interprets the PB's language during project review. Mark wondered if the PRB and PB could be combined or better integrated as part of the upcoming process improvement work.

Mary noted that Complete Streets operates in a separate jurisdiction and further complicates approvals. Mary continued that staff and volunteer Board members are good people who have the best interests of the community at heart, but they have so much work to do with limited capacity. Mary wondered how FEDC could help.

The conversation turned to potential staffing structures to support DTV and other special initiatives.

Brett provided a brief overview of possible options, including initiating a Main Street affiliation and offering FEDC staff to support Town staff on strategic priorities related to the Downtown Vision and economic development, including hosting contract staff proposed by Town Council on 12/6 within FEDC.

Nikki shared her perspective that a clear hierarchy must be defined and that the contract staff must have agency to execute. The structure wasn't clear to her yet.

Stefanie observed the benefits of approaching the opportunity as an incubation phase with plenty of flexibility to learn and adjust.

Councilor Ed Bradley suggested that the contract staff could serve as a pop-up to support grant fundraising efforts within FEDC.

Dan Bacon offered that contract staff should be technical experts who can execute projects, such as a joint CIP between the Town and Sewer District, and that the progress required more specialists rather than generalists.

Dan Piltch shared the need to convene DTV Project Management Team to navigate staffing plan and priority tasks.

Stef wondered if the Town Communication Specialist that had been proposed earlier would help address some of the current issues. Dan P. agreed that the communication function was a central need that would help address the current capacity limitations.

Mary stressed the importance for FEDC to continue its traditional role as good partner that helps how navigate development "hair balls."

Sewer Committee member Dan Bacon provided an update on the sewer work being coordinated by Ed. Dan shared that the Committee had a positive and productive first meeting. The Committee discussed funding needs, key projects, and funding mechanisms, such as grants, assessment districts, or other.

The Board discussed the benefits that the District provides to economic development, including that almost all Freeport businesses are served by the District.

Ed B. shared that the committee has started out well; but will need resources soon for technical assistance soon to advance the work. Dan Piltch shared that the Downtown Task Force would be developing projects and funding requests for the upcoming Town budgeting process or that the Committee could seek a special allocation now.

4. New business.

- GPCOG would award a planning grant to the Town to analyze downtown parking supply and demand relative to surface parking conversion to infill development.
- An economic development-focused accessibility initiative was taking shape to promote Freeport as an accessible destination. The accessibility community spends over \$7 trillion annually in communities that take steps to be welcoming and supportive.
- A local resident had inquired about how FEDC discloses private donations. The Board discussed transparency and felt that the current audit, tax filing, and 990 form were good steps.
- Tawni shared a business pitch competition concept was under development. The “On Ramp” could connect the winner with commercial real estate as proposed by Councilor Jake Daniele. The Board was supportive.
- Tawni also highlighted upcoming discussions about mountain biking trail development at Hedgehog mountain. The Conservation Commission has proposed a management plan that limits trail development to flat, low trails and precludes trails around the summit, which would not be attractive to the mountain biking community that enjoys trail elevation changes. Tawni shared that \$200k has been raised to date towards the \$500k needed. The Council would have a public hearing on January 17th regarding the management plan and trail advocates should attend to share support for bike trails.

The meeting adjourned at 9:37a.