



MINUTES

FEDC Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday – March 28, 2023

7:45a – 9:15a

Via Zoom

Attending Board Members: Mary Davis, Mark Malone, Nikki Yanok Schneider, Tawni Whitney, Sarah Tracey, Stefanie Millette, Leanne Barschdorf-Nichols,

Not Attending. Chip Gray, Peter Joseph, James Hendricks, Becky Doten-Lizzotte, Candice Rinaldi, Dan Bacon, Jason Sulham.

Others Attending. Dan Piltch, Brett Richardson

Welcome and Introductions. There was no quorum during the meeting. The following captures participants' informal discussions and planning but no formal decisions were made.

April Board Meeting. The group decided that the April Board meeting should be in person with a simple agenda to prepare for the May FEDC workshop with the Town Council.

“Look Book” Leasing Brochure Development. Stefanie shared her research into a marketing brochure. Stef proposed hiring a local designer to develop a PDF with simple photos and fonts that would be “device agnostic” to make the brochure easy to access and scan from any type of device. FEDC would provide a mock-up that the designer can refine. The estimated budget is +/- \$1200. Stef volunteered to create the mock-up for Board review.

Mark shared the importance of including the breadth of the draw for visitors. Many visitors to Freeport travel significant distances. Freeport's strength is not local population, but how far visitors travel to visit Freeport. Mark observed that the Town should consider reinstituting on-street parking to facilitate easy access and visibility for local businesses.

ACTION: Participants agreed that Stef should proceed with brochure development and mock-up and that funding could be allocated during the April meeting for the designer to begin in July.

Town “Stretch Codes” Public Hearing. The Board discussed the upcoming Public Hearing on April 4th regarding the Town adopting the latest energy conservation codes. Participants agreed that energy efficiency is important, that the market is moving towards greater efficiency, and that neighboring Towns and the State would soon adopt the latest energy codes as proposed by the Freeport Sustainability Advisory Board.

Stef observed that many of the cautioning comments that she has heard about economic development are generated by concern for environmental resilience and that FEDC should consider the bridge-building potential of support the recommendation.

Councilor Dan Piltch shared that the Council had explored the topic for a few months and that the Council’s research indicates that the adopting the new energy codes is not controversial, is already required by Maine State Housing, that Codes staff is not concerned.

The group discussed barriers in current ordinances that prevent the expansion of existing homes and limit the creation of ADUs. Updating the ADU regulations were flagged as a top policy goal.

ACTION. Brett will do some quick due diligence and report back to the Board in advance of Tuesday’s Council meeting.

Letter of Support for Sewer District’s RD financing. Rural Development is working to finalize the financing package for the Freeport Sewer District. The RD representative requested a letter of support. The Board endorsed the FEDC letter of support to RD on behalf of the Sewer District.

ACTION. The Board endorsed the FEDC letter of support to RD on behalf of the Sewer District. Brett will submit the letter to RD.

Town Manager Update. Council Chair Dan Piltch shared that Town Manager Peter Joseph accepted the Manager position in York, Maine. The Council has developed an Request for Proposals to hire a consulting firm to conduct a national search for Peter’s replacement. Planner Caroline Pelletier will serve as Interim Town Manager during the transition period. Assistant Town Manager Judy Hawley will manage human resources. Jessica Maloy will be in charge of the budget for the next fiscal year. The Council hopes to wrap up the search by November with the current Councilors. The process will include input from Town staff, residents, and other

stakeholders. Caroline will serve as Planner in addition to Manager. Dan shared that the Town would appreciate support from Brett to assist the Planning Department during the transition.

Mary highlighted the importance of achieving a careful balance for FEDC to support the Planning Department, but also to retain an appropriate level of independence to be the community's economic development champion.

Brett reiterated support for the Planning Department and shared with the Board general guidelines from conversations with Caroline. Caroline hasn't identified specific needs yet. Brett recommended that he support Caroline with three general guard rails/ guidelines: 1) Brett will monitor time demands and keep the FEDC Board apprised on the requested level of commitment, and will seek approval if the work load could dilute current FEDC priorities; 2) FEDC support for the Planning Department will be managed such that FEDC's independence as economic development champion is not impacted; and 3) The Planning Department will manage FEDC participation in consideration that the Department must maintain the role of neutral convener during Town planning processes.

Sarah Tracy endorsed this approach and shared that now is an exciting time of transition and opportunity for Peter and the Town. Sarah offered that the transition offers the opportunity to review how FEDC and the Town structure their relationship.

ACTION: Brett will work with Caroline to anticipate and understand opportunities to assist the Planning Department under the following guidelines: 1) Brett will monitor time demands and keep the FEDC Board apprised on the requested level of commitment, and will seek approval if the work load could dilute current FEDC priorities; 2) FEDC support for the Planning Department will be managed such that FEDC's independence as economic development champion is not impacted; and 3) The Planning Department will manage FEDC participation in consideration that the Department must maintain the role of neutral convener during Town planning processes.

May Board Meeting Date Change. Brett proposed adjusting the FEDC Board schedule to use the upcoming FEDC/Town Council workshop to the May FEDC Board meeting. Board participation in the Council workshop will be a great step.

Leanne offered that FEDC's April Board meeting would be a working session to refine FEDC's annual goals and recommendations to Council.

Mary looked forward to the opportunity to have a true workshop between Council and FEDC's Board, including an open exchange of ideas.

Dan Piltch suggested May 23rd for the Council / FEDC workshop.

Leanne highlighted the importance of choreography between FEDC's Data and Policy teams.

ACTION: May meeting moved to May 23rd; April meeting in person on April 25th; Brett will circulate a presentation agenda to the Board, including roles for various interested Board members and teams.

Annual Goals Approval. Will be taken up in April.

Data Team Update. Leanne provided an update from working with Minh, the Town Assessor. The Team identified what data is readily available and what data to collect on a regular basis.

A Muskie School intern is anticipated to assist the Data Team and Housing Committee over the summer.

Mary provided an update from the Downtown Vision's process mapping team working on ordinance updates. Mary shared that the process mapping team would like to see FEDC fill the role of central data clearing house.

ACTION: Leanne the Data Team Char and the Board directed Brett to develop a scope of work and interview intern candidates.

Downtown Vision Update. Dan shared that the DTV project teams are moving into implementation. The Town budget plan is not yet complete, and fiscal implications for Downtown Vision investments relative to the Town's broader CIP and operating budget will be an important community conversation.

Leanne elevated the importance of growth planning for long term sustainable fiscal management of the Town. Understanding the impacts on local schools was prioritized.

Dan Piltch noted the impacts to other Town services in addition to schools, such as police, fire, water, and sewer.

Stef highlighted the importance of planning for growth impacts to the Library, childcare, and waste management.

The meeting attendees agreed that change is hard but Freeport is navigating an exciting transition and the future is bright.