



TOWN OF WARE

Planning & Community Development

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Minutes from May 12, 2016 Community Development Authority

- Authority members present:** Dave Gravel, Chairman, Paul Opalinski, Tracy Opalinski
- Authority members absent:** Bill Adams, Brenda Cooper
- Staff present:** Karen Cullen, Director of Planning & Community Development
Judi Mosso, Assistant to the Director
- Public:** Lewis Iadarola (Chairman, ZBA), Sheila Cuddy (QV CDC),
Michael Harris, Peter Surreira

D. Gravel called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. Some items were taken out of order.

1. Administrative

- a. Minutes of March 17, 2016 (no meetings in February or April) – **Motion** by P. Opalinski to accept the minutes as presented. Seconded by T. Opalinski. So voted 3/0/0.
- b. Financial Report – Also see Item 2c. There was lengthy discussion about the Economic Development account. J. Mosso and K. Cullen reported that after the account was changed to a revolving loan fund (RLF), it was moved in-house so we no longer received monthly statements from Country Bank. We also did not receive statements from the Town Accountant (we do now, at our request, but they are not timely). We have been working with the Town Accountant to fix any outstanding accounting errors. The CDA requested more accounting detail for their monthly meetings; the CDA agreed that J. Mosso will e.mail accounting details before the meeting for review and provide the usual summary sheet at the meetings.

There was brief discussion about the Septic Loan Fund. The one client does not make monthly payments, instead he pays almost quarterly. **Motion** by D. Gravel for J. Mosso to send a letter to the client stating that he is to pay by the first of the month or the department will pursue foreclosure. Seconded by T. Opalinski. So voted 3/0/0.

2. New Business

- a. Dioguardi Jewelers & the Urban Renewal Plan (URP) – (Also refer to memo from K. Cullen to PB, ZBA and CDA dated 5/3/2016).

SIGNAGE

There was discussion about Mr. Harris's request that the CDA waive the URP standards; at this point, the proposed sign is 39.5 s.f. larger than what is allowed by the URP. There was lengthy discussion about: moving awning from current store to new store; eliminating signs at Main St. gable end; exact dimensions of sign; decision at PB meeting; upcoming ZBA public hearing; display window; wall signs vs. free-standing signs; changeable copy signs; signs that Friendly's used; visibility of each side of building; that the URP will expire in about 10 years. D. Gravel stated that he supports local businesses yet wants to avoid clutter and inconsistencies; he urged the CDA to allow signage somewhere between what is requested and what the URP allows; he and K. Cullen urged the CDA to consider requiring a smaller sign for the two gable ends. Other discussion included factoring in the opinion of the professional sign designer regarding the scale of the building and the design of the sign.

Motion by P. Opalinski to allow two secondary signs and diamond sign on Main Street at the size presented by the applicant, and wall signs as presented, and awning as proposed [under V-2016-02]. Seconded by T. Opalinski. There was further discussion about the likelihood that the ZBA will deny the variance request, that the CDA has not had to deal with the URP until now, and that D. Gravel was hoping that the CDA would negotiate a smaller sign.

So voted 3/0/0.

LANDSCAPING

The URP states that there must be landscaping at all four sides of the parking lot; in 1993, that was the case. After Veterans Park was created and the roadway widened, landscaping was reduced and not maintained. There was lengthy discussion about: which sides of the building and parking area should be landscaped and how much; working with the Ware Business & Civic Assn for help with landscaping; the Town's right to the kiosk area.

Motion by T. Opalinski to require landscaping in two areas required under the Urban Renewal Plan (along North Street and between sidewalk on Main Street and parking lot) and convert unpaved areas in front of the brick walls facing Main Street. Seconded by P. Opalinski. So voted 3/0/0.

There was discussion about asking Mr. Harris to request that the ZBA withdraw his variance request without prejudice so that he may re-apply using revised sign dimensions. There was brief discussion about parking on Main St. in front of Mr.

Harris' building and that any requests to change them to 1 hour parking should be brought to the Board of Selectmen.

- b. and c. Sheila Cuddy – QVDC Loan Request, and "Budget" discussion – these items were taken together. K. Cullen handed out "Proposed Budget for various accounts". There was discussion about the proposed budget for using money from various accounts, discussion points were:
- Ms. Cuddy presented a new potential loan opportunity. The loan they propose is for \$60,000 and are asking the CDA to contribute \$30,000 toward it. There was brief discussion about other available loans, the applicant and demographics. The CDA does not have sufficient funds available for this and agreed that the applicant should look elsewhere for supporting funds.
 - Ms. Cuddy handed out an Accion document "How to spot a predatory lender: Which financing makes \$ense for my business?" J. Mosso will forward it to CDA members.
 - There was brief discussion about "Education to Employment" E2E signage and logo; making it highly visible to citizens; and funding for transportation. There is some grant money available but it would require at least a \$50,000 match.
 - S. Cuddy explained the QVDC's business development goals. They now have a mini-grant for consultants (~\$750) and a maxi-grant for larger projects (~\$5,000). The QVDC tried to use those funds to address ongoing issues (e.g. a curb cut issue at one property; infrastructure improvements). Ms. Cuddy feels that a sample project would demonstrate results and attract buy-in from the state. At this point, the state grants are highly competitive and the QVDC competes against larger communities. There was discussion about structuring the sample project as a loan or as a Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) program.

Motion by P. Opalinski to commit the following funds:

- \$15,000 from the CD RLF for loans to small businesses
- \$5,000 from the CD RLF for the college initiative
- \$5,000 from the CD RLF for technical assistance for downtown real estate/engineering costs

Seconded by T. Opalinski. So voted 3/0/0.

Motion by D. Gravel to commit \$25,000 from Program Income to pay for part of the HR cost beyond the grant amount, remaining balance to come from Hardwick HR portion (per PVPC). Seconded by P. Opalinski. So voted 3/0/0.

3. Updates – see Director's Report; no discussion on the updates other than:
- a. Open Space & Recreation Plan – further discussion was tabled until the June meeting.

4. Other (any discussion and action may be postponed until next meeting)
 - a. Slum and blight designation – K. Cullen presented two maps (Alt 1 and Alt 2) of proposed slum and blight designation of the downtown. There was discussion about each alternative and that when we hear about communities revitalizing their downtowns, it is because they have been designated as slum and blight. That designation will allow us to use CDBG funds to improve the downtown. The designation would be in effect for 10 years. The process would include a survey of the physical condition of properties, it would increase our eligibility and make CDBG funds more flexible. The CDA chose Alt 2 and made additional modifications to the area depicted on the map.

5. Adjourn – **Motion** to adjourn by P. Opalinski at 9:18 p.m. Seconded by T. Opalinski.

*Respectfully submitted by Judi Mosso
Assistant to the Director*