

**TOWN OF SOMERS
SOMERSVILLE MILL STRATEGIC PLANNING AD HOC COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, July 23, 2015
7:00pm
Selectmen's Conference Room
Town Hall**

Call to Order:

Chairman Tim Keeney called the meeting to order at 7:11pm.

Members Present:

Members present included Chairman Tim Keeney, Vice Chairman Brad Pellissier and Members Erik Ness (via conference call) and Tim Potrikus. Member Ralph Williams was not available. Also present were First Selectman Lisa Pellegrini (recording), Town Engineer Jeff Bord, adjacent business owners Ralph Guisti and Mike Eastwood and one interested resident.

Discussion with Town Engineer re flooding issues/flood remediation efforts:

Each participant introduced themselves and Mr. Bord, Mr. Guisti and Mr. Eastwood were welcomed to the meeting by Chairman Keeney. Before discussing flooding issues Chairman Keeney updated guests as to the three charges the Ad Hoc Committee were assigned to by the Board of Selectmen. They include:

1. Identify potential reuse of the Somersville Mill property.
2. Identify potential sources of funding to be used to remediate the Somersville Mill property.
3. Identify risks associated with taking title to the Somersville Mill property.

He also remarked as to the Town needing to have a vision for the site and if that vision is feasible. He also added a statement about finding out how to go about attracting the best use partners. Mr. Potrikus stated it was necessary to have a good development plan.

Town Engineer Jeff Bord began with informing the group that there was \$2.5 million in total funding to work on the bridge and reduce flooding. The money comes from two sources; \$500,000 from former earmark funding and \$2 million from STP Urban Funding. Ms. Pellegrini clarified for the group the history of the funding.

The funding can be used for rebuilding or replacing the bridge. It is not believed the bridge needs replacing. As a first step in the process the Town has hired a consultant to do field survey work of the area. This would include data collection, mapping and preliminary design, as well as updating hydraulic studies to a 500 year flood. When it was standing the mill building created a back-up during previous flooding instances. To a lesser extent the rubble also creates flooding potential.

Much discussion continued about previous floods. Mr. Bord shared with the group various photos and drawings that assisted him in explaining the way flooding occurs at the site. He explained potential work that would help reduce flooding such as lowering the riverbed by a foot or widening a section to allow for desired stream flow. Any work done will need appropriate permitting, as well as approval from the Army Corp of Engineers.

The studies by the hydraulic consultants above will also assist in giving us information as to what development options are available.

Discussion then focused on the actual bridge. Its historic aspects were addressed and it was shared that upgrading the bridge would be the most likely result. Questions regarding sluiceways were asked. The sluiceway was removed after the fire when the new sanitary sewer was installed.

Mr. Guisti asked if any thought about harnessing hydro power was considered. Mr. Eastwood asked questions about the possibility of widening the floodplain.

It was also mentioned by Mr. Bord that there may be a possibility of using some of the money to remove some rubble to create a staging area for bridge repairs. The consultant is beginning work in August and it will take one year. At that time we will be able to have some preliminary layouts.

Round Table Discussion with adjacent business property owners:

At this time talk centered around challenges that are faced by the adjacent property owners. Mr. Eastwood commented that his biggest challenge is parking. He said his location is not ideally suited for a machine shop, as more room for machines is needed and additional parking is required. However, he explained that was what was available at the time and they made the best of it. Mr. Guisti stated that his location's biggest challenge was the lack of signage and drive by traffic. It is very hard to attract tenants as it is too hard to find. Thus, you really need to have an anchor business that is able to attract business. He says it is important to have a plan centered on a focal tenant and have the businesses in the area somehow linked. Discussion then centered on the concept of planned development districts. At this point Chairman Keeney distributed a July 23, 2015 editorial from the Hartford Courant regarding the Capewell Horse Nail Company remediation project. Comments were that the Mill building is a much prettier building, however the location of the Capewell building is located in an area that scores high for funding.

Talk then centered on the importance of historic preservation. A question was raised if the town considered housing options. There was a concern as to the number of units needed at that location to make the investment profitable for a developer. Mr. Ness also talked about the need for a heightened level of cleanup for residential units. That discussion led into a discussion on the current testing (Phase I and Phase II Environmentals) being done at the mill.

The possibility of a boat launch was discussed. Mr. Potrikus also discussed the utilities that are available for the site. Vice Chairman Pellissier commented that control of what happens to the site is lost if the site is privately held. This led the discussion back to possible reuse and the need to draw the right people in. Discussion centered around unsuccessful retail operations. Mr. Guisti commented that what is needed is a commercial venue that doesn't rely on a retail component. Light manufacturing may be the desirable option. The conversation then turned to investors and redevelopment funding that may be available. The mention of an EB5 program was made in which foreign investors guarantee redevelopment.

Review and discussion of brownfields regulations/cleanup legislation and programs, funding sources, municipal liability and reuse potential:

See above.

Process Discussion and Schedule for Future Meetings:

It was agreed to have a meeting on 7/28/15 to discuss all info that has been heard and begin to formulate a plan of action. It is hoped to have Glenn Chalder from Planimetrics at a meeting on August 4th.

Approval of Minutes:

July 14, 2015 Meeting Minutes:

Chairman Keeney would like the following revisions made to the minutes:

1. Add a comma to the last sentence in the last paragraph on page 1 "Once the community decides what path to take, the state..."
2. Add the following to the end of the last sentence in the first paragraph on page 2: "...is proceeding in the right direction *and can expect a high score from a well thought out Town proposal*".
3. Add the following to the third sentence in the last paragraph on page 2: "In signing up for this *relief program* the town doesn't..."
4. Add the following sentence after the next to the last sentence of the second paragraph on page 3: "...innocent parties. *It was also mentioned that it is important to bring EPA in early on in the process.* It is understood..."

Vice Chairman Pellissier mad a motion to approve the July 14th, 2015 Meeting Minutes as amended above, seconded by Mr. Ness. Vice Chairman Pellissier, Chairman Keeney and Mr. Ness approved. Mr. Potrikus abstained. Motion passed.

July 21, 2015 Meeting Minutes:

Tabled until next meeting.

Adjournment:

Mr. Potrikus made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:50pm, seconded by Vice Chairman Pellissier. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lisa Pellegrini, Recording

Minutes are not official until accepted at a subsequent meeting.