

**TOWN OF SOMERS  
SOMERSVILLE MILL STRATEGIC PLANNING AD HOC COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
Tuesday, July 28, 2015  
7:00pm  
Selectmen's Conference Room  
Town Hall**

**Call to Order:**

Chairman Tim Keeney called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

**Members Present:**

Members present included Chairman Tim Keeney, Vice Chairman Brad Pellissier and Members Erik Ness, Tim Potrikus and Ralph Williams. Also present were First Selectman Lisa Pellegrini (recording) and one interested resident.

**Review and discussion of reuse potential, brownfields funding programs, municipal risk and liability and possible next steps:**

Chairman Tim Keeney begins the meeting by updating the group on the progress of the environmental studies being conducted by GEI. Eight wells were dug and a dozen test pits and 9 borings were completed. Testing is on target with the time line. Chairman Keeney did ask GEI for a feel as to the cost of cleaning up the site (removing brick and steel) and filling building voids with gravel to level them and then topping with soil. He said the answer was between \$800K and \$1 million. It should be noted that this amount was not a formal quote.

Vice Chairman Pellissier stated the group should look at one liability plan that includes the transfer of the property to a developer. The group then began discussing a big picture plan for reuse that included aspects of retaining the natural beauty of the site, keeping the historic elements intact and possible mixed use potential.

Mr. Potrikus said that partnering with a developer would most likely require the Town to clean it up. Mr. Ness said it was important to define the use so that we would know how much remediation/clean-up is required. This also ensures we do not limit the type of development desired. Chairman Keeney said that we need to tell residents that costs could be substantial.

Mr. Williams mentioned that it was not likely to find a developer to build on the footprint of the mill. Mr. Potrikus said that building on the exiting footprint would be good and is something that might most likely happen.

Vice Chairman Pellissier began a discussion around the idea of a development district, specifically taking an area and developing it to achieve a certain look. Discussion followed regarding zoning regulations that would be needed. Vice Chairman Pellissier continued to discuss the preservation of open space for public access and recreation use

as a possible option now, with development of the rest of the property as an option for the future. He threw out the suggestion of subdividing it to preserve the options.

Mr. Potrikus believed that linking businesses was important and discussed a possible connector road. He also brought up the possibility of using an overlay district concept to connect properties.

Chairman Keeney brought up the question of housing options and said that he had previously heard that housing may not be the best use. Vice Chairman Pellissier stated that many are concerned when housing options are brought up due to fears of creating a “ghetto”. Discussion then centered around the subject affordable housing and what it is and isn’t. Mr. Potrikus discussed the economic viability of housing being limited at best. Mr. Williams talked about the possibility of a residential or facility type development and said that the townspeople may not be receptive to a housing facility at all and said that it might not be the best use of the property. There was general consensus.

Mr. Williams and Mr. Ness talked about restoring the site to a level at which it could be used for recreation use but still create conditions that could be conducive to development in the future. Mr. Potrikus said it was important to find a partner that sees future possibilities and stated he believed the site is exactly the type the State is willing to help with.

The group then began discussion regarding funding sources. Mr. Williams said that funding would not be available unless the Town owns the site. Mr. Potrikus stressed it was important to get it back to private hands. Vice Chairman Pellissier agreed and stressed a good partner is needed.

Chairman Keeney led the group back to the topic of incentives. Water and sewer availability and the potential for natural gas and high speed internet accessibility were discussed. All agreed the Town should be willing to provide incentives, however Vice Chairman Pellissier stated that if incentives were the only issues someone would have taken over the site by now. He believed there were other issues, such as the cost and difficulty of clean up and the unknown environmental factors, were concerns. The group discussed potential partners but all believed that key factors for success came down to the site being Clean, Safe and Accessible.

The group then discussed risks associated with Town ownership of the property. All agreed that the Town had options of applying to the municipal liability programs. Vice Chairman Pellissier outlined three risks and the group discussed them. They included:

1. The Town taking possession and having the clean up be acceptable by State standards but not be Federal standards.
2. Commit to cleaning it up but then not have any grants to cover the clean up.
3. Clean up the property and then have it sit there with no one wanting it.

Mr. Potrikus added another risk which included doing nothing and having the property continue to sit as it is.

The group then discussed the property retaining its industrial zoning. Vice Chairman Pellissier posed a question to the group asking if it is sold then what is any backlash. Discussion continued. Discussion ended with group leaning in direction of the Town taking the site over. Questions as to how much control the Town would have over the site if they did not take it over still lingered as a concern.

**Process Discussion and Schedule for Future Meetings:**

It was agreed to have a meeting on August 11, 2015 with hopes for Glenn Chalder from Planimetrics attend, as well as for Evan Plotkin to attend as well.

**Approval of Minutes:**

**July 21, 2015 Meeting Minutes:**

*Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015 Meeting Minutes, seconded by Mr. Potrikus. Vice Chairman Pellissier, Chairman Keeney, Mr. Williams and Mr. Potrikus approved. Mr. Ness abstained from voting. Motion passed.*

**July 23, 2015 Meeting Minutes:**

Ms. Pellegrini pointed out that there was a mistype on the agenda. It should have listed minutes for July 23<sup>rd</sup>, not July 28<sup>th</sup>. The Minutes for July 23, 2015 were tabled until next meeting.

**Adjournment:**

*Vice Chairman Pellissier made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:17pm, seconded by Mr. Ness. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.*

Respectfully Submitted,  
Lisa Pellegrini, Recording

*Minutes are not official until accepted at a subsequent meeting.*