

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of December 21, 2022

I. ROLL CALL. Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Economic Development Director Tom Davis, Committee Member Lydia Petty. Also in attendance: Dave Maxwell, Select Board Chair, Nancy Peck, Member of the Northfield Planning Commission, Shawna Foran, and Kevin Camisa, Guests.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Scheduled): None.

III. APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING MINUTES: Minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

IV. DISCUSSION

a. 70 Depot Square: Mr. Davis provided an update on potential buyers of the property and a meeting with one investor group who visited the building with their contractor. An appraiser also visited the property and is working on an appraisal for the owners. Mr. Davis also reported on the request to have Amtrak stop in Northfield, saying he has heard it will be a long process but with some positive signs.

b. Downtown Center Designation: Mr. Davis said he and Mr. Schulz are working on the preliminary processes to consider applying for a Downtown Designation for the town. Items needing attention include determining a downtown board, which could be selected from new volunteers or an existing group in the community, with the Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN) as one possibility. Mr. Schulz pointed out that another aspect required before applying is a close look at our historic guidelines for the community and more specifically written zoning guidelines for the town's Development Review Board to follow when issuing permits. Ms. Petty asked what the process is from now going forward. Mr. Davis said the steps included the following:

i. Working on Northfield's zoning modernization plan which is being led by a planning expert paid by grant money to assist the town. The suggested changes will be reviewed by the Planning Commission for their suggested changes, and also reviewed with suggestions from the Economic Development Department, the Northfield Housing Task Force, and the public, before the Select Board votes on the adoption of revised planning and zoning bylaws.

ii. Discussions with NCDN regarding the scope of work required by their organization as a Downton Board, followed by options for establishing a board for the Select Board to consider.

Mr. Camisa asked to comment on this topic and told the group that he felt that the town was on the right track toward the development of housing and creating a downtown center. Mr. Camisa, who is a developer in Vermont, also said that Julie Beth Hines, the planner hired to lead the zoning modernization process for the town, is a "genius" when it comes to working on these types of projects with experience throughout the state of Vermont.

Mr. Maxwell noted his appreciation of Mr. Camisa's comments.

- c. Grants Update:** Mr. Davis updated the committee on the following grants:
- i. Community Recovery and Revitalization Act:** Mr. Davis explained that, while there are \$40 million in funding for various categories across the state, the ARPA-based grants require an 80% match from the applicants, providing the other 20%. This is limiting their usefulness for many potentially eligible candidates in Northfield.
 - ii. Working Land Grant for Mureta’s Butcher Shop:** The application for a \$35,000 grant for the business to upgrade to a USDA-certified slaughterhouse will be determined and announced in the first two weeks of January. Mr. Schulz stated that having this grant award would be an excellent outcome for Mureta and also a victory for the municipality.
 - iii. Phase II Brownfield Funding for Cetrangolo:** Mr. Davis and the Northfield Development Company, created by a team of Norwich University alumni, applied for \$25,000 to pay for Phase II engineering on the planned apartment complex next to Dollar General. The Central Vermont Planning Commission awarded the full amount of \$25,000.
 - iv. Recreational Trail Grants:** Mr. Davis is working with VOREC and the Paine Mountain School System on grant applications for trail improvements through the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation. The VOREC grant request will be in the amount of \$30,000 and the Pain Mountain grant application will be in the amount of \$25,000. The deadline for filing is January 30, 2023.
 - v. Pedestrian Walkway from Common to Dog River Park Scoping:** Mr. Davis is working with the state on the \$38,400 received for the scoping of the walkway. He has to submit a preliminary application to be approved by the state as the project manager and is in the process. Ms. Petty noted that the town should start thinking about how to connect this walkway to the Connector Pathway that is under construction between the back of Freight Yard Way and the Norwich Rugby field.
- d. Housing Projects:**
- i. Cetrangolo Project:** Mr. Davis reported that progress continues on the Cetrangolo lot next to Dollar General with Phase II engineering. He also reported that the seller, Nick Cetrangolo, has passed away, and he is working to find the executor of his estate to continue the work.
 - ii. Foran Family Farms:** Shawna Foran came to speak about the 181-acre parcel that is in a trust for her son and is managed by Foran’s mother, Bonnie Chouinard. Mr. Camisa, who was also in attendance, worked for Ms. Chouinard’s late husband, Barry Chouinard, and was present as an advisor to Ms. Foran. Mr. Davis was working first with Ms. Chouinard, and now also with Ms. Foran and Mr. Camisa on the potential of developing this parcel for housing for the town of Northfield. Ms. Foran said she hears from people all the time to move back to Northfield and there is no place for them to live. She said with the property in the trust and the water and sewer adjacent to the property, the time to build on the property is now rather than when her son is old enough to develop the land himself. Foran pointed out the urgent need for workers, young people, and families to want to be here. Foran took objection to the people in the town who claim that developers want to turn Northfield into a “little Burlington.” “That’s not true,” said Foran.

Mr. Davis reported that he is working with Ms. Foran, her brother, Jeremy Drown, and Mr. Camisa to work out a plan together to develop the land with a variety of housing options, family-friendly services, and more amenities for children. Ms. Foran also said she would like to see a daycare developed on the property, as well as walking paths, a community center, and a potential 55 and older housing opportunities that will open up housing stock in town as more housing options are generated. Mr. Camisa pointed out that the Northfield schools need more kids and housing brings that. Ms. Petty expressed the importance of the opportunity to connect Northfield Falls with the town via a hike/bike path without having to use Route 12.

- e. **Other Business:** Mr. Davis reported that Select Board and Subcommittee member Charlie Morse had some questions to consider regarding economic development getting out in the community and the success it can bring. The board agreed it would be best to hear Mr. Morse's observations at the next meeting and is looking forward to his perspective. Ms. Peck asked if the group had explored land trusts as an option to keep the price of land down. The group it was a good idea to explore that option.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Unscheduled) There was none.

VI. ADJOURNMENT. The subcommittee was adjourned at 3:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas G. Davis

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Economic Development Director and Acting Clerk