

# TOWN OF HIGHGATE

## Village Core Master Plan Mtg.

### October 1, 2019 @ 6:00

Present were: Steve LaFar; Woody Rouse, Clarence Miller, Sue Cota, David Roddy, Richard Noel, Ken Thompson, Greta Brunswick and Heidi Britch-Valenta.

**CALL TO ORDER-** Steve called the meeting to order at 6:10pm.

MINUTES- Sue made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from September 24, 2019. Woody seconded the motion. APPROVED.

BROWNFIELDS PROGRAM- Greta did a recap on Brownfields Funding for this project. She covered a timeline starting with the Town entering the program in 2017 to fund a PHI environmental assessment on the Machia Estate prior to the town purchasing it. The funding also covered the cost of a PHII to get some material and soil testing performed. Then remediation funding covered 75% of the cost of the removal and disposal of contaminants in the Stinehour Café. The Town performed the demolition after the qualified consultants removed asbestos and lead materials from the abandoned building. This happened prior to the completion of an overall property development plan because the building was considered a risk for fire and was an eyesore in the Village Center.

Greta explained the next steps required in the funding timeline is to determine whether the development plan includes demolition or rehabilitation of the Machia Estate. A Historic Section 106 Assessment is required on the Machia Property to be eligible for EPA Funds but the assessment is typically completed based on an assumption of demolition or rehabilitation, which there is currently no consensus on. She recommends completing an expanded historic assessment that would consider the feasibility, cost/benefit and historic impact of demolition versus rehabilitation and she thinks that the Preservation Trust of Vermont may be able to provide assistance. She has \$5,000 set aside for a Section 106 report for this project but this may not cover the cost of an expanded assessment. Greta will be in touch with the Preservation Trust of Vermont and report back to Heidi. The Committee really wants the assessment to give perspective on the cost to tear down the building versus repurposing.

The group discussed potential uses of the property. It was stressed that the committee is not interested in entertaining any business ideas that would have a negative impact on existing businesses because that would be counterproductive to economic development. They asked Heidi to coordinate a discussion with a local business owner at the next mtg.

The appropriate order for next steps was discussed. Greta shared that it varies from project to project but the wastewater and water capacity information that we will get from the ongoing ANR WW and Water Planning Advance study will be important to have for discussions with anyone regarding desired use of the property.

COMMUNITY CELEBRATION RECAP- The conversation moved to a recap of the community celebration. An expense summary was distributed. A total of \$1,716.94 was thought to be the total cost of the party but the bill from channel 16 for the video production has not been received yet so it may be less than anticipated. The group had received a \$1,500 CAT grant from Ben and Jerry's Foundation which was the primary funding source for the celebration. There was also income from vendor fees, t-shirt sales and dunk tank equaling \$518. With all of this considered, the party fund came out ahead by \$301,06. Then Clarence provided \$10 for

another T-shirt he has sold which brought the amount up to \$311.06. The group will continue to sell T-shirts at Town Meeting and other large gatherings.

There was a separate fund of \$2,000 the Selectboard had authorized for the clean up of the property. This money had been used to secure the building, paint and supplies for the MVUnity work crew, and for an electrician to reinstall electric service for the party and there was still \$730.37 left in that fund. There was a discussion on installing an information kiosk on the property to display plans and info on the project in an easy to view location on the property. The discussion was inconclusive.

Comments received at the celebration in the suggestion box or black boards comment areas were reviewed. There were many positive comments regarding the event and requests to hold something similar again. Some committee members shared verbal comments from participants. One suggestion for next year was to move the vendors closer to the action and to shorten the length of the event.

Thank you letters for donors for the event were signed by those in attendance.

ANR PLANNING ADVANCE - Committee members managing the WW Study had met on September 24<sup>th</sup> to interview four consultants. They have selected Otter Creek Engineering to perform the Wastewater and Water Study in the Village.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING GRANT- The application was submitted on October 1<sup>st</sup> for funding to hire a consultant to work with the engineers performing the WW study. They will perform the required services that are outside of what the ANR Planning Advance will fund. We should hear the results of this application by late November. This grant is for \$12,845 and the Town will be able to use the ANR Planning Advance as our match funds.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

FACT SHEET- the group had previously agreed that a fact sheet was needed to spread accurate information to the public. Heidi circulated a draft summary of facts for review. She asked members to review the facts carefully and make suggestions for additions or corrections then she would put it into an attractive format to distribute. The content was discussed.

The topic turned to the work the library had done prior to the formation of the Village Core Master Plan Committee. Some felt the work was separate from the work of the committee while others felt it played an important role in the whole process of moving forward on the development. It was agreed the representation from the Library on the Committee would be important to achieving shared goals for the property. Heidi will invite the Library representatives to participate in the planning meetings going forward.

LAND PURCHASE MOTION- The 2017 Town Meeting minutes with the motion to purchase the Machia Property were distributed. The Committee had previously asked for clarity on what the voters had intended for the Committee to do with the property. The question on the Town Meeting Warrant reads as follows:

*Shall the voters of the Town of Highgate authorize the Selectboard to utilize \$250,000 of General Fund reserves for the purchase price of the properties located at 14 St. Armand Road and 3119 VT RT 78 from the Ephraim Machia Estate, for the purposes of increasing employment, income, business and investment and to plan for the orderly growth of the Town in the face of increasing development pressures in the interests of public health, safety and welfare?*

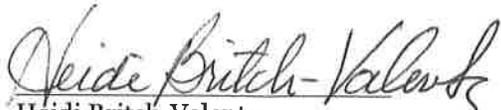
DOMINIC CLOUD- the group discussed Dominic Cloud, St. Albans City Manager's presentation to the Planning Commission on September 17<sup>th</sup>. All agreed the presentation was very informative and inspiring. An editorial from the St. Albans Messenger on the topic of his visit and the momentum in Highgate was shared.

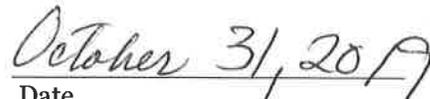
MEETINGS-Next meeting will be Tuesday, October 29<sup>st</sup> at 6:00pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Richard made a motion to adjourn at 8:00pm, seconded by Woody. APPROVED.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

  
Heidi Britch-Valenta

  
Date

