

TOWN OF HIGHGATE
Village Core Master Plan Committee
June 14, 2023 @ 6:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Village Core Master Plan Committee Members: Woody Rouse, Chair, Rebecca Manning, Vice Chair, Chris Shepard, Virginia Holiman, Clarence Miller, Heidi Britch-Valenta, Sharon Bousquet
Town Administrator

Absent: Alice (Sue) Cota, Lura Jacques, Secretary, Dan Swainbank, Adah DeRosier

Public/Other: Diantha Korzun, gbA Architecture & Planning, Brian Rainville, Richard Noel, David White, White & Burke Real Estate Advisors Who was the couple in attendance?

Woody Rouse, Chair called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

DAVID WHITE, WHITE AND BURKE REAL ESTATE ADVISORS

David White presented to the group. He indicated that his firm does not have the capacity to take on any new clients but reviewed the village core information and offered some thoughts and suggestions. He indicated it was a great project, a great location and a great way to honor Highgate history. He did reference that economic projects outside of Chittenden County are very difficult due to cost versus return. He mentioned that private sector projects end up being more costly and can't generate enough income for rental purposes and that single family homes and senior housing projects have more opportunities. He suggested working with large entities and development partners to bring ideas such as housing and a café/restaurant to fruition. He outlined that the project needs to be both supported by capital costs and operating costs going forward. He did indicate that restoring some of the Steinhour Hotel made sense if the costs were not excessive. He reminded the group that Vermont is really struggling with construction building costs versus a history of low rents as rents are just not high enough to begin to see profitability. David reviewed the 5 building plans and mentioned some positives and what might be considered for future use of the property but did not feel commercial space was a viable option.

MASTER PLAN PHASE II- gbA ARCHITECTURE & PLANNING

Diantha Korzun participated in the David White conversation regarding senior housing and combining some first floor mixed use commercial space. She reminded the group that there are subsidies available. Diantha reviewed the 5 building options and reviewed the community comments for each design and the trends associated. She indicated there was a strong desire for traffic calming, library location off Gore Road was favored (across historical society), senior housing was of interest, a lot of focus was to keep trees and mixed comments between keeping Steinhour and renovating versus tear down. Traffic safety concerns were discussed again and it was suggested that the previous study that was completed should be reviewed noting the previous recommendations and potential for addressing and coordinating such recommendations in the overall core project.

MASTER PLAN PHASE II- ADDITIONAL SERVICES MPG \$16,000

The draft Request for Proposal for consultants for the \$16,000 municipal planning grant was reviewed and the committee agreed it should be issued as presented.

WASTEWATER UPDATE-

The committee discussed the upcoming public FLOOR vote to be held on July 20th at the arena. Flyers need to be distributed so people realize they need to be present to vote. There was discussion regarding another informational meeting or information sharing prior to the vote. Sharon Bousquet added that each selectboard meeting the vote is discussed and this meeting is broadcast on public access TV as another way to get the word out. There was also discussion around sending Letters to the Editor to both the St. Albans Messenger and the County Courier as another means of distributing the information. If the July vote is approved, the design and estimates could be completed by late Fall. If that occurs, then a public community vote in November to construct the wastewater system could be considered. The committee was reminded that the town has secured a \$2M Clean Water grant to aid in wastewater system construction.

LIBRARY & COMMUNITY CENTER UPDATE

Adah DeRosier was absent, but Rebecca Manning gave a brief update regarding the capital campaign. She indicated that the consultant would like to see the new library further along in development before soliciting donors.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was discussion amongst the committee regarding various other community items, i.e. Paws for Thought closing, Descorcies on the market to be sold and how those transactions will affect the community as a whole.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The May 10, 2023, minutes were reviewed. What made the motion to approve the minutes? Rebecca Manning seconded the motion. APPROVED

NEXT MEETING DATE July 12th @ Library

ADJOURN

Clarence Miller made a motion to adjourn. Rebecca Manning seconded the motion. APPROVED

Wendy Rowe
Clarence Miller