RUTLAND REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
CITY OF RUTLAND
1 Strongs Avenue
RUTLAND, VERMONT 05701
(802) 775-2910 spauldingrra@rutlandvtbusiness.com

Regular Meeting / September 14, 2021
Minutes

Attendance: Dave Cooper, Brennan Duffy, *Andy Paluch, Barbara Spaulding, Mary Markowski, Tiffany Walker, Ed Clark, Israel Mac, Stephanie Romeo and *Mike Doenges.

Absent: Matt Reveal.

Also attending: Chris Ettori and Stephen Box.

I. The meeting was called to order at 8:02 am.

II. Additions/Deletions to the Agenda – None.

III. Ed moved to approve the minutes of August 24, 2021. Israel seconded. Motion was approved.

IV. Public Comment – Chris Ettori said he was concerned that he was not notified that there was a possible COVID exposure during an RRA meeting where he was present. Dave said he appreciated being made aware.

V. Warrant – Ed moved to authorize Dave to sign the warrant for the payment of Fund 800 expenses totaling $24,461.95 and recommend to the Board of Finance approval of Fund 100 expenses totaling $9,395.22. Israel seconded. Motion was approved.

*Andy Paluch arrived.

VI. Grant Updates – Barbara provided the following grant updates:

Rutland County Parent Child Center – The first requisition has been submitted after sorting through 5 years of project management invoices. Funds are expected to arrive Sept. 23. A progress report for the period ended 9/30 is due Oct. 30.

BROC Refrigerator/Freezer –The permit comment period expired August 4 so construction is clear to start. Tom emailed that construction is expected to start mid-September as they are still waiting for the electrical specs. A progress report for the period ended 9/30 is due Oct. 7.

Lincoln Place – The first requisition was submitted, approved and the funds have been transferred to the City. A check was cut on Aug 27 to HTRC. A progress report for the period ending Sept. 30 is due Oct. 30.

Zoning Density & Design Bylaws – The Planning Commission will have its final meeting with the consultant for the zoning bylaws rewrite on Sept. 22. The grant ends Sept. 30 and the closeout documents are due Oct. 30.

Rutland Creek Path Segment 3 – Working on Requisition 10. The abstract title search for the donated Suburban Propane property has been completed and submitted to VTrans. The project is now in right of way review.

Better Places Grant – A financial report and final project implementation, outreach and promotion report for the period ending Aug 31, 2021 is due Sept. 30.

Tuttle Block Loan Forgiveness – The C&ED committee met on Aug 16 and referred the forgiveness of the Tuttle Block Loan for $600,000 to the full Board of Aldermen on Sept. 7. The Aldermen agreed to forgive the loan and the next steps will be working with City Attorney to discharge the mortgage deed and note. Once this is recorded in the land records the documents and the minutes of the Sept. 7 BOA meeting will be sent to VCDP so the Closeout Agreement with the City can be terminated.

Municipal Planning Grant – Grant application is due Nov. 1. Could be used to hire consultant for TIF district planning. A resolution to apply will need to be signed by the Aldermen no later than Oct. 18 and the Planning Commission by Oct. 14.

VII. Project Updates – Brennan provided the following project updates:

Coffee Exchange Location – Brennan said he, Nikki and Tyler met last week with the new tenant who is opening an Indian Cuisine Restaurant. They provided her with resource information.

*Mike Doenges arrived.

Market Rate Rental Housing – The C&ED will hold a meeting today to discuss the market rate rental housing initiative. Brennan was asked to research whether ARPA funds could be used for this. He had discussions with ACCD, VLCT and the VT Housing Conservation Board and he will report out to the committee that ARPA is not a fit due to the low/moderate income requirements. Brennan discussed a potential for ARPA funds for seniors who own property to assist with improvements and accessory dwelling units. Brennan also discussed how ARPA funds can be used in HUD eligible census tracts but that none exist in Rutland City. To qualify 50% of residents must be at 60% or lower income and there are nine eligible tracts in Vermont. There is an initiative underway to lobby the Treasury Department to expand the current tracts. Final guidance is expected in October. Andy asked about whether the ARPA guidelines defined affordable housing and whether the income range was outlined.

Ed said the funds are a one-time windfall that should be used toward foundational changes for the City to encourage development. He recommends using ARPA funds for the combined sewer infrastructure that could encourage developers to develop a project downtown. Jim Rotondo is aware of this eligibility.

Brennan reminded the Board of the idea for a business plan competition for new businesses or businesses that need to change due to COVID. He noted that funds applied for this could result in long term benefit for city businesses.

Heartland Development – Brennan discussed that there have been several meetings held with the Heartland folks including one with VCDP staff. During that meeting ways VCDP funds could be used were discussed including the City seeking direct funds for infrastructure at the site instead of sub-granting them to Heartland. Brennan, the Mayor and Matt Whitcomb will be meeting with Heartland today at the Rutland Rec. Comm. Center at 9:30am.

Center Street Parklets – The installation on Center Street for outdoor seating will be decommissioned in mid-October and stored for use next year. A stakeholder meeting with DPW and Recreation & Parks to finalize the plan will be held on Thursday.

Center Street Scoping Study – Dubois & King collected public feedback regarding Center Street during FNL on Sept. 10. They will present their initial findings to the Steering Committee for discussion.

Downtown Pedestrian Wayfinding Signage – The Travel Information Council approved the design and location of the signs at their meeting last week. Final designs were submitted to Nikki yesterday. Brennan suggested ordering the materials as there is an 8–10-week lag time on the posts. He will reach out to Wood & Wood Signs to determine how late in the year installation could be done or whether it will have to wait for spring 2022.

Mary asked about potential projects for a Municipal Planning Grant application. Barbara explained that MPG funds have historically been used to pay for the City Master Plan and Zoning Bylaws rewrite. Originally, she thought the funds might be used to pay for the consultant working on the TIF district. Mike asked when the application was due. Barbara said the application is due Nov. 1. Mike asked how much funding was available. Barbara said up to $22,000 for a single municipality and $35,000 for a consortium with a minimum cash match of 20%. Brennan said the RFP for consulting services to establish a TIF District was published Sept. 8 with a deadline of October 6. Barbara added that an MPG award would most likely not be made until January 2022 and no contracts could be signed prior to the execution of a grant agreement.

VIII. DRP Update – Tiffany said the next DRP meeting is Sept. 21.

IX. BOA Update – Mike discussed the visit from the Refugee Resettlement Program for the Afghan allies and that Vermont volunteered to place 100 total people throughout Vermont including Rutland. He added that several reports from standing committees were presented and a meeting was scheduled for the RRA contract look back.

X. New Business – Mary discussed the Treasurer's report for July 31, 2021. She suggested focusing on the funds available when evaluating resources for the request being made by VFFC: $10,000 committed to wayfinding signage, $38,000 in admin reserve, $19,000 in business development and $8,000 in capital projects. She added that for the audit there needs to be a review of the Conflict-of-Interest Policy and she will prepare the requirement for the next meeting.

RRA Agreement for Services look back – Brennan suggested that the Board make a motion to continue with the current contract as written that he can bring to the Committee of the Whole on Thursday Sept. 23, if the Board is comfortable that the work is being done effectively and with the amounts budgeted for the next two years. Brennan added that there is no fat in the budgets and the proposed funding keeps the RRA sustainable through the end of the contract. Dave asked the Board for input.

Ed agreed to defer to Brennan. Andy asked about the timing considering a committee existing of himself, Mike, Tiffany and Dave are working through an evaluation process that may add value within the broader system next year and it may be useful to know how it will affect the agreement with the City as to what is optimal services for the RRA to perform. Brennan said he did not feel the evaluation was germane to the contract with the City. Tiffany said she would like the RRA to report out pieces based on the definition of services. In particular b) Grand List and Job Development 2) The Authority will focus a "significant" portion of its efforts and resources on the redevelopment and/or establishment of downtown and city-wide work-force housing units. Dave said he believed that the RRA quarterly reports were more in line with the contract but agreed that the language in the contract could be better, but he was not in favor of wordsmithing the contract unless there was a proposal to change the language. Brennan confirmed that historically the quarterly report template stems from the contract. Stephen Box asked where he could find the quarterly reports. Brennan said on the RRA website however there was some updating of the website that is needed. Ed moved that the RRA Board is satisfied with the current contract and supports its continuation for the next two years. Tiffany seconded. Motion was approved.

XI. Old Business – Proposed Solar Array in Gateway District. Israel asked where the project was in terms of the Public Utility Commission process. Brennan said the application was submitted by SAMESUN of Vermont on August 30. Israel said he has concerns that the proposal is not the best use for the property and that the property owner is not interested in doing something altruistic for the City. This will provide

income for the next 30 years and subsidize the property without doing anything of value to the property. In essence, if approved, the property owner will be rewarded

for bad behavior. Israel added that if the proposed project was truly meant to help Downtown, it would be in Downtown and for the next 30 years any development from Terrill Street to Woodstock Avenue will be complicated. He asked if there is leverage to stop this project or does the City have leverage in the development during the permitting process. Andy said he did not believe there was a way for the City to stop the PUC from granting the solar array but he feels the City can support the project to make it as good as possible. He is concerned that the developer may tire of the City's opposition and only do the bare minimum. Instead, he wants to encourage the developer to be cognizant of the gateway location and facilitate a good design.

Barbara said the City Planning Commission asked Rebecca Mattis to draft a letter in support of the project that includes a list of concerns and issues they would like to see addressed. Brennan said he believes the RRPC is in favor of the proposed development. Dave said in lieu of a consensus from the Board he did not feel the RRA should take a position but encouraged the Board as individuals to write letters if they so choose. Israel suggested that Brennan write a letter to the Planning Commission. Dave asked that the letter being drafted by the Planning Commission be circulated to the RRA Board first to see exactly what it contains.

VFFC Funding Request – Tabled until the next meeting.

ARPA Funding – Tabled until the next meeting.

XII. Executive Session – Dave suggested a doodle poll to find a time for the executive session as he did not want to extend the regular RRA meeting in respect for people's time. Andy suggested starting the RRA meetings at 7:30 am. Dave said that could be discussed at the next meeting.

XIII. Tiffany moved to adjourn. Israel seconded. The meeting ended at 9:07 am. The next meeting will be held September 28.

These minutes approved this ____ day of _____, 2021.

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Mary Markowski, Secretary