



City Council Meeting Minutes
Monday, January 24, 2022
Public Session - 6:00 p.m.
Nonpublic Session -
Council Chambers, City Hall

Council in attendance: Mayor Jo Brown, Councilor Jay Chandler, Councilor Olivia Zink, Councilor Ted Starkweather, Councilor Bob Desrochers, Councilor Valerie Blake, Councilor George Dzujna, Councilor Vincent Ribas.

Absent: Councilor April Bunker, Councilor Paul Trudel

Others in Attendance: City Manager Judie Milner, P & Z Director Seth Creighton, Mill City Park President Marty Parichand, F & D Consultant Niel Cannon, and FBIDC Director Jim Aberg

Mayor Brown called the public meeting to order in Council Chambers at 6:02 p.m.

Salute to the Flag was led by Councilor Desrochers.

The public hearing opened at 6:02 p.m.

City Manager Milner asked the public to use note cards for any comments or questions that will be discussed at the end of public meeting.

Public Hearing

Agenda item I: Economic Development Update

City Manager Milner spoke on behalf of the Franklin Economic Development Task Force, sharing a PowerPoint presentation with the council and public. She began by introducing and explaining who is on the task force and why this task force was established. They wouldn't be able to do what they do without the support of the City Council and won't do anything without looking at the vision and mission of the City that was adopted 3 years ago. How the task force supports that mission is by providing opportunities to mentor and engage youth in healthy activities, through promotion and expansion of outdoor recreation, including the white-water park and proving a safe environment for potential investors to vet their ideas, provide financial expertise, and expand the tax base through new values. Why is Franklin focused on downtown? It's to help grow a vibrant community which will in turn provide a quality of Life for Franklin. A vibrant community in the downtown never has a community outside that is not benefiting in some way, which is why Franklin is focusing on downtown.

What does the task force do? They work on the vision with short and long-term goals, to support the end goal to create a vibrant community. They assist organizations and investors and help businesses identify and resolve obstacles with current needs, identify financial resources, program eligibility and solutions, grant writing and deal with long term strategic planning.

One of the focuses has been on the mills in downtown, they took a while to get into the current situation of deterioration, as they were closed in the early 70s and they are not economically viable. It will take time to change them to become economically viable, and the City has already seen progress. The task force is educating and communicating with the public, and building relationships and partnerships throughout the state. The task force does not drive or control the market, no overnight instant gratification, don't make recommendations based on opinions, they can't be everything to everybody, they don't spend money on the projects, and they are finding money through investors and grants. The accomplishments that the task force has seen since the project began is the perception of Franklin is changing statewide, to an up and coming community, and our model should be emulated nationally. There is a lot of partnerships occurring, grant and funding for projects. The diversity in housing throughout the core downtown will have all sorts of housing, to make it work. The task force has forged many partnerships throughout this project to help support the growth and development within the City. They have been supported through direct donation, grants, or through some in kind help.

F & D Consultant Cannon spoke about accomplishments they have had with the funding and grants received for this project. The piece that needed to happen before anyone could look at funding and grants was to identify the problems in the City and then find the funding to support the needs and solve the problem. With the white-water park they have raised over \$2.5M to support this development. The idea is to get grants, state and federal money as the bottom line which triggers private investment that will add new value to the City. Franklin's assets value 5 years ago was behind the state per capita and now demographically it has picked up in value and is catching up to others. With the support of the City, F & D Consultant Cannon, FBIDC Director Aberg, and Mill City Park President Parichand have received over \$650K in donation and \$3.7M in grant funding distributed throughout downtown for improvements. That has spurred private investment and \$75M in value to downtown Franklin.

FBIDC Director Aberg spoke about the current assessed value of downtown which is \$28M and when we look at investments over the next 24 month you have \$32M Chinberg, \$48M Peabody Place, and roughly \$5M to \$6M for Cumberland Farm bringing in \$70M to downtown. These investments will help the City be able to catch up on capital improvements, increase school funds, that they need and the way to do that is to increase

the assessed value in the City. The tax rates can stay the same but the tax revenue can go up because the value goes up, which is the best way to stabilize tax rates.

F & D Consultant Cannon spoke about the Façade Improvements, which was a program initiated in 2017 with a \$320K CDFA tax credit grant through FBIDC in which the City targeted 3 buildings in downtown Franklin. According to guidelines the task force set out to help leverage about \$2.5M in additional building improvements. With the improvements it attracted three new businesses and brought in 33 new jobs, setting the stage for additional façade and building improvements.

City Manager Milner spoke about the new Cumberland Farms project which will be a 4,600 sq. ft. Convenience store with 8 pumps located at the old Elks building, Ciao Pasta and Lucky Lenny's locations. Those three parcel lots are going to be combined to house a bigger store layout for Cumberland Farms compared to the current Cumberland Farms in the City. The store front will tie in and blend with Franklins industrial feel by bringing brick to the building's façade. This location will create a better flow of traffic compared to the current location. This project is scheduled to break ground on April 11th.

P & Z Director Creighton spoke about the progression of Peabody Place and where they are at with the construction on the new residence. He stated they hope in late February early March phase one of moving the residents in will begin in the new building. The demolition of the old building will begin before moving onto phase two where they will begin working on a new multi-story 20,737 sq. ft. building for main living space and shops with independent living space on the second and third level. This project will be going back to the planning board on Wednesday to discuss a technical ~~clie~~^{ch}églitch; it didn't get approved in phases even though it was always discussed in phases. He has no doubt that the planning board will approve it. This final phase will take about a year before the project is completed. It will become an "aging-in-place" that will create diversity in housing and income levels within the City. After completion it will have easy traffic flow around the building that will allow for traffic and emergency services to easily maneuver around the building.

F & D Consultant Cannon spoke about the Stanley Mill and it being a neat location along the river. With it being a prime river front location, the structure needs updates, however it is unsalvageable due to environmental contamination inside, outside and under the building therefore it needs to be demolished. With the help of Lakes Region Planning Commission the funds were available to have Nobis Engineering completed a remedial action plan, which qualifies Stanley Mill for some federal assistance, in that plan it identified \$2M in remediation costs. Clean up funding maybe available in the fall from the EPA in greater numbers than expected. Stanley Mill has multiple potential uses for the City that would open up the river to the community. The current intent is to save the Armory building for repurpose. The EPA has notified the current owners of the Armory, and the City Code Enforcement Team has issued an order requiring demolition of the building which would need to occur by November 2022.

The task force and the current owners are working on a redevelopment strategy to find a way to continue what started with Stevens Mill and the catch housing project within this area.

F & D Consultant Cannon spoke about Stevens Mill which was purchased five years ago and is a mixed-use project of commercial redevelopment and 147 residential units. This project is a \$32M investment which would translate to assessed value for the city. The demolish of a non-historic building is completed and construction on the project should start by the end of February. The task force provided substantial assistance in a complex financial package that they worked with the City to receive tax credits and sub debts from CRDC, NHBFA, and REDC. The City provided support for purchase and demolishing of 33 Memorial St for additional parking, received \$80K in CDBG support, approved \$1.4M in TIF Bond for Mill district improvements and the whitewater park. The City approved the 79-E tax stabilization for the developer in return the city and FBIDC sold 42 Canal St and 81 Memorial St to Stevens Mill in order to accommodate parking. Everything north of Canal Street is owned by Stevens Mill and everything south is the City's property.

FBIDC Director Aberg spoke about the IFA Building (IOOF Building) and the improvements that they have made and what will be happening with the residential spaces. IFA redid the façade improvements on their own as a sign of the success of the façade improvement program within the City. When completed this will be a mixed-use structure for residential and commercial space. FSB bought the building and are expanding on the main floor. The 2nd and 3rd floor will be residential space with 7-8 condo units. The units will be first class luxury apartments that will put units in downtown with a sale price of \$180K small 1 bedroom and studio units and up to \$950K with 3rd floor and 4th floor 4,100 sq. ft. with exclusive access to the roof deck.

City Manager Milner spoke about the Municipal parking improvements for the infield parking lot at Stevens Mill. This will bring more trees and parking to the City, there will be bioswales placed which take care of oil from the parking lot which will help remove it before it gets to the river. It is a CDBG project consisting of \$80K match with the TIF funding \$150K, bidding in early spring for a later spring ground breaking.

City Manager Milner spoke about Toad Hall, also known as Shepard Block. Permacitylife was one of the first entities to come into City and buy up seven buildings. FBIDC Director Aberg took over discussing Toad Hall starting with the backing from FSB who were able to do façade improvements and then went and found new owners to take over the building spaces. Currently the first floor is not occupied, and the second and third floor are residential space. The second floor is currently occupied and sold for roughly \$350K. F & D Consultant Cannon spoke about how the timing was ideal for these spaces because people were looking to move out of the city due to COVID. It did show the City of Franklin that there is a market for upper story residential on Main St. Mill City Park President Parichand spoke about how Franklin was outpacing growth in the City comparing to other cities in the State.

F & D Consultant Cannon spoke about how the demographics, for the first time in decades in Franklin, the median income family is increasing at the same pace as the State's and Franklin's poverty rate is decreasing. These are changing because it's a small community and things can change fast with new demographics of residence.

F & D Consultant Cannon spoke about the Opportunity Zone program that Franklin was eligible for because of its wealth and distress. This program was established by the tax cuts and it encourages investments in low-income communities for non-realized capital gains. This would allow you to defer your taxes for 7 years on those capital gains and you get 5% off. If you leave your investment in the project for 10 years you would receive no tax on the gain in the project you invested in. It has the potential to be one of the largest economic development programs in the country. When you look at the uses of this program you can layer it with other programs as well as to pay for projects.

FBIDC Director Aberg spoke about Trestle Bridge and the current status of the bridge and the potential for integrating it in with the white-water park. In the beginning the thought was to make this a viewing platform for people to watch as kayakers and whitewater rafts came down the river. The city was awarded \$700K to help pay for an engineering study and fixing it. The first part was completed however the condition is more deteriorated than originally thought. To replace bridge would cost \$4.5M which would roughly cost \$300K per each span. The second alternative would be to use timber to replicate the original structure. On a rough budget this would cost \$2M, which would fall on the City to raise the funds to replace this as it is a City owned structure. There is money out there that could potential be used; however, they need to get a budget together of what this would cost. This is a landmark for the City and would be crucial for the City to keep this as a vital part of community. Mill City Park President Parichand spoke more about the bridge stating that it will have to come down one way or another due to the current conditions and needs to be resurrected. The current plan is to have the current section that the W.O.W. trail goes through to be fixed by spring and the City is working with Beck and Bellucci on ideas of how to make it work.

Mill City Park President Parichand spoke on behalf of the Mill City Park Team and the project with the white-water park. Mill City Park is a 501-c3 nonprofit with a 5-person board of directors, that started in 2015 and signed a MOA in 2017 with the City. In the first year they were able to raise \$30K to see if the white-water park was a feasible project to complete in the City. This project is not a City funded project as it is something that Mill City Park has raised money to support the growth. This white-water park is the first one of its kind in New England however there are 7 towns trying to do this. The first wave of the project has been fully funded, and construction is ongoing, with delays due to rain and highwater. The park isn't fully open but with that being said there has been an incredible amount of people using the space already. The economic impact will be substantial, it will draw people to not only go

down the river but also watch. It will also drive more restaurants, people and business to the City to help create new value within the economy.

Mill City Park President Parichand spoke more about the land base park that is currently open. The Mill City Park stewards more the 31 acres as part of the project. They had cleanup days in the fall and had over 400 people come to help remove trash to help reclaim unused space within the City. There is a graffiti wall which changes daily and there are people coming from all over to visit and create art.

Mill City Park President Parichand spoke about how the park has been apart of raising over \$2.5M to create this vision for the park. They are working on the second and third features for this project, which include, working on second round of land improvements, working with highland bike park to see if there is a way to incorporate that with the park, raising funds for trestle bridge and new signage with the City. Concord Hospital will be working to redo the Hospital sign to tie in the new sign with the City's look. There is change happening and things are moving forward to benefit the City but they need more people to get involved.

F & D Consultant Cannon spoke about the next steps and the marketing initiative. About 90% of the marketing is being carried out through the social media, Mill City Park President Parichand and the Mill City Park Board is telling the world about. There is a CFBG grant to do a hotel feasibility study which will be discussed more at a later date once the final draft is reviewed. About a year ago a focus group was established and there are two areas that they can start focus on the future which are arts and culture and downtown streetscapes. Some topics of conversation around that have been to collaborate with the schools and a relic walk. As part of the relic walk they have spoken with Alan Larter about sculptures of old industrial parts machinery that he is willing to gift the City or organizations within the City to place at landmarks.

City Manager Milner closed the public meeting by discussing how we can all help. The first step is to be mindful of the market and its drivers. It is important to be mindful that decisions are made based on evidence and not the opinion. Be respectful of social media and what is being talked about, along with old school hang ups. The City is in this for the long haul, these sustainable changes are not instantaneous they take time.

Agenda item II: Other

Comments and Questions from public:

Leigh Webb stated there was discussion about the unused money for Trestle Bridge, from the tap grant, what about using the funds for upside-down bridge? Mill City Park President Parichand stated that WHO SPOKE HERE??? This is money that comes from the NH DOT funding that is specified for the Trestle Bridge project. This wouldn't be able to be

transferred without going through a new application with the NH DOT. The city is hoping to let the City continue with a different build, but they may have to go out for another tap bridge in the future. The focus right now is on the one that is center of focus right now and needs the immediate attention.

Yama made a statement that working with the schools for art and culture could sometimes be challenging. Have we thought about using locals to provide art and culture to the City? He suggests that we publicize to locals' ideas to bring art and culture to the City. He knows of someone around the Sanbornton area that maybe interested, but maybe it might be better to look at other ideas. City Manager Milner stated as part of the focus group we do have some other artist as part of it along with other ideas, and will wait until spring.

Comments and Questions from Council:

Councilor Zink asked for the Committee to discuss more about the timeline for a hotel feasibility study within the City and the camping ordinance for the park and some changes that may need to come before council.

- F & D Consultant Cannon stated that they are in the third draft of planning for the hotel, competitively hired a group out of Boston for a feasibility study, however they weren't able to focus on a community our size so the committee had to do a lot of the work. They have a deadline for January 31st, to get a major piece of funding request out. They haven't looked at it but once they have they will have a public hearing to discuss this further.
- City Council supported in an ordinance a while ago and added camping at Mill City Park on City land already. They have to follow rules no alcohol on city land unless there is a permit.

Councilor Zink, asked would we want to expand camping in the city as a destination or lodging for other activities?

- P & Z Director Creighton discussed that there was a City ordinance in roughly 2006, that addressed camping as a permitted use, which removed camping as a permitted use, so it is not an allowed use. The City however is exempt from its own land use which is an RSA rules, this allows Mill City Park to use the City property for camping use.

Mayor Brown asked Mill City Park President Parichand what the camping will look like?

- They plan to start off small, which will start with hammock style, which will be called a hammock village. The other option would be tent style for the first year. After the first year they will look more at adding platforms and other options.

Councilor Dzijuna thank the revelation group for putting together a great presentation, earlier they discussed the partnerships with other state officials. City Manager Milner went through the list more for the public and the Council.

Councilor Dzijuna asked if the 64,893 sq. Ft. is the part that is being completed now or the completed sq. Footage of the project.

- P & Z Director Creighton answered that is the completed sq. footage of the project.

Councilor Zink stated her understanding is that they are a nonprofit and don't pay taxes, with that said at all with this investment be part of the eligible for revenue.

- City Manager Milner answered and said currently they do not pay taxes so it would not be part of the tax base.

Councilor Ribas asked what the cost of the removal of Trestle bridge would be?

- FBIDC Director Aberg looked at the estimate and that cost was no bill however it was calculated into the total cost due to the fact that demo cannot be into the TAP grant. Which a no build would also require the City to return the Tap grant funds.

Councilor Ribas asked with the bridge is the plan with the timber frame to be entirely timber frame, or would you try to save any of the pieces that may be viable.

- Mill City Park President Parichand answered early discussion is no, there is architectural value to some of those pieces, and once they can quantify that better that is an open item for the budget. There is also an unknown cost of getting rid of the rotted material so you have to take into consideration the cost of getting rid of that material too.

Mayor Brown asked do we have a timeline on when the bridge will be coming down?

- Mill City Park President Parichand stated there is no timeline and they are just not solidifying the new plan and what that looks like with the Tap fund and raising money.
- F & D Consultant Cannon said this needs to be a top priority because if it comes down on its own it could be a great cost for clean-up.

Councilor Zink, could we go back to Stanley Mill and discuss the timeline on this project and what are the thoughts are around the Armory building.

- City Manager Milner stated there is a suggested motion for nonpublic and that is the subject of the nonpublic.

Mayor Brown stated they will take a short recess.

City Manager Milner asked that the Franklin City Council to invite F & D Consultant Cannon, P & Z Director Creighton and FBIDC Director Aberg into the nonpublic meeting. Mill City Park President Parichard would like a by.

All in favor. Motion passed.

Motion: Councilor Zink moved that the Franklin City Council enter into nonpublic according to RSA 91-A:3, II (d), Consideration of acquisition, sale or lease of real or property which, if discussed in public would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are averse to those of the general public. Seconded by Councilor Dzujna.

By a roll call vote.

Councilor Chandler	Yes	Councilor Zink	Yes	Councilor Starkweather	Yes
Councilor Desrochers	Yes	Councilor Blake	Yes	Councilor Ribas	Yes
Councilor Dzjuna	Yes				

Motion PASSED.

Entered into nonpublic at 8:06 p.m.

Motion – Councilor Zink moved to leave nonpublic session and return to public session. Seconded by Councilor Dzjuna.

All in favor. Motion PASSED.

Public Session reconvened at 8:34 p.m.

Motion — Councilor Zink moved to seal the minutes. Seconded by Councilor Dzjuna.

By a roll call vote.

Councilor Chandler	Yes	Councilor Zink	Yes	Councilor Starkweather	Yes
Councilor Desrochers	Yes	Councilor Blake	Yes	Councilor Ribas	Yes
Councilor Dzjuna	Yes				

Motion PASSED.

Mayor Brown thanked everyone for being here.

Motion to adjourn was made by Councilor Ribas and seconded by Councilor Dzjuna. All in favor. Motion PASSED.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

. Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Havey