

**Minutes from Downtown 2020 Committee Meeting November 20, 2012
Room # 309 at 8:30 AM**

In Attendance: Lou Gagliano (chair), Dan Kail, and Robert Jacobs

Absent: Gerry Kagan, Ken Bernhard, Craig Rebecca Schiavone
and Valerie Smith-Malin

Summary of Minutes

1. Minutes from the previous meetings were approved without any change.

2. Chair provided an updated of his effort to raise funds to pay for the consultant led Master Planning process. To date he has received commitments of \$17,000 towards the goal of raising one half of the private portion, total expected cost is \$150,000. Chair requested that the members of the Committee become more active in this effort and network to their contacts requesting contributions.

Bob Jacobs suggested that we develop a brief and consistent Executive Summary type document to aid in this effort. Based upon comments from members of the public in attendance it was suggested that the entire \$150,000 be sought from the town. The Chair reminded that this process while logical has timing consequences tied to next year's budget cycle preventing us to begin the consultant led effort sooner.

3. Discussions of the storm impact on the downtown area provided support for the fact that this issue needed to be incorporated in our work. Any planned changes to the Parker Harding area needs to review related impact to storm water issues. It was noted that those stores that seemed to recover quickest were the smaller local retailers and that the national chains preparation was seemingly not as effective as that of the local stores. Chair distributed copies of the system used by David Waldman's realty group involving "storm gates", panels secured into the sidewalk, which effectively kept the Gap building and its basement dry. David Waldman pointed out that the basement during reconstruction had received special treatment and other measures to help "seal" the area. It was agreed that coordination and review with the Public Works would be important. Chair pointed out that the Selectman was calling a post storm review meeting that he would attend

which among other participants would include the Public Works Director and CL&P.

4. Chair distributed a one-page plot plan prepared by the Bedford Square Group (BSG) showing the repositioning of the Gunn Building to a location on the Baldwin lot. The proposal is to relocate the building and renovate for the purpose of smaller retailer use. BSG would propose to pay all associated project costs, and rent the space at rates equal to 80% of current Westport rates. David Waldman further described the project and pointed out while his group would be happy to be the owners, he would have no problem if another group wanted to take responsibility and own the concept. The approvals through the town including approval by the Selectman's Office were noted. David Waldman noted that the move had to take place by the end of summer to not impact his expected time line of the Bedford Square Project. Members of the HDC in attendance commented on their support of the idea, and supported a joint work session to consider the proposal at their upcoming December meeting. Chair and members of the Committee echoed their support of the proposal as it provided a means to save the structure, repurpose it for small retail use at rates below market, and continue to have this facility on the tax role- substantial benefits to the community and the downtown area. Committee and Chair agreed to continue to support and help the process of approvals and review of the proposal.

5. A brief discussion involved an old proposal as to the elimination of the town old parking lot time limits. It was agreed that the Chair would review the practical implementation as to the elimination of these parking restrictions, and that the Police Chiefs opinion be sought out as a starting point for the consideration of this type of change.

6. The last topic on the agenda was that of the upcoming meeting of next Tuesday PM public session for the auditorium. The session is designed to provide a forum for members of the community who can not attend day time sessions to receive an update as to the Committee work, and to comment on the Charge of the Committee and provide other public input. The Chair asked that as many members of the Committee attend, a he would send out a reminder to the Committee members to attend. A press release will be sent out through the Selectman's Office.

7. The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 AM, the Chair wished all in attendance to have a Happy Thanksgiving.