

Housatonic Improvement Committee

Minutes

April 27, 2021

Attending: Dan Bailly, Patrick Barrett, Eric Gabriel, Angela Lomanto, and Beverly Nourse

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm.

Dan read the required Massachusetts statement.

Acceptance of Minutes

- The minutes for 2/25/21 were accepted unanimously with the change in spelling of Ed Abraham's last name.
- The minutes from 4/15/21 were accepted unanimously with the addition of the words "High School" to Berkshire Waldorf.

Charette update:

No date for the charette is set

Kerry Bartini sent a list of "to do's"

- Check the scale of the blueprints
- Resend zoning information (AL will do this)
- Asset mapping – maybe will come from MUSE

Potential uses could include artisan space, housing, PO, retail, education, studios, commercial kitchen

Look to Housatonic School Task Force report from Town Clerk

Patrick will collate the information we have, so far and develop a table of contents

Eric reported that he spoke to this contact at Milltown Capital. They asked a lot of questions which Eric forwarded to Mark Pruhenski

The Selectboard is waiting to hear from HIC about potential uses prior to any RFP process.

Angela reviewed answers from HIC's previous meeting as answered by Chris Rembold. They are:

- 1. Can a sign be placed prominently on the school building to direct those with inquiries to the Town?*
- 2. What goes into designating an Opportunity Zone and would it be feasible for the site? What incentives go along with that designation?*
- 3. Can tax credits be made available without a special designation?*
- 4. What's being done to publicize that the building is available? (I guess that assumes a lot -- could the town sell it?)*
- 5. Is it possible to apply for CDBG money specifically for Housatonic or would \$\$ gall under Great Barrington's pot of funds?*

1. *I think the town could erect a sign at the building if the decision is made to market it again;*
2. *Opportunity zones are federal designations based on criteria of economic distress. There are only a few in Berkshire County and Housatonic would not be eligible, so far as I know. I believe the incentives are in the form of tax credits to private investors.*
3. *The answer is complicated, but in summary, tax credits go to private investors in development projects that meet certain criteria. For low income housing tax credits, affordable rental housing must be created. For historic preservation tax credits, obviously there must be historic preservation. The details of these programs are incredibly complicated, and are only for developers who have the financial and legal ability to navigate these very complicated programs – both the applications and the continuing restrictions.*
4. *The building is has not been marketed formally since the last RFP. I assume it would take the form of advertisements in newspapers, state websites, and our social media.*
5. *Yes. In the past we have applied and been awarded CDBG funds specifically for projects in Housatonic.*

Huckleberry Elling from Muse made a presentation about the history of Muse, what is populating each floor of the renovated mill, the range of rents, and future plans for public gatherings, artist residency programs, markets, and movies.

All Things Housatonic:

Sidewalk project: HIC noted that some telephone poles weren't moved and seem to be non-compliant with ADA requirements. (Dan will check this). It was confirmed that asphalt is the finish material for sidewalks and it's not comparable to the streetscape project done in Great Barrington. Patrick inquired about the design process.

Citizen Speak:

Pat Hollenbeck underscored the need to act on the Housatonic School

Ed Abraham complimented the committee on its work.

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 13th, 6:30 pm

Adjourned: 7:39 pm

End Of Minutes

Respectfully Submitted,

Angela Lomato