

Community & Economic Development Committee Report

RE: 1) Disposal of City-Owned Properties
2) Business Incentive & Assistance Program

Date: July 12, 2017

Chair: Christopher Etori

Other committee members present: Aldermen Cook, Humphrey, Ryan

Other Aldermen present: President Davis

Others present:

Mayor Allaire

Matt Bloomer, City Attorney

Tara Kelly, Planning/Zoning Administrator

Brennan Duffy, RRA

Patrick McArdle, Rutland Herald

Alan Keays, VTDigger

The meeting convened at 5:33pm. First on the agenda was a continuation of the discussion on developing a fair and transparent process by which the city will put city-owned properties back into use. After the June 29 meeting Tara Kelly revised the process to reflect the feedback received from the aldermen and department heads. It was reiterated that the goal of the process is to return the properties to the grand list in a manner that is consistent with current housing studies and community development goals throughout the city.

Points of discussion included the role of the Board of Finance, the role of the RRA, and what entity would review applications for lots that are buildable or where the building is salvageable. Attorney Bloomer gave an opinion that that **Board of Finance, with the mayor's recommendation, would make the determination about "retaining a property for future city use"**. Additionally, it was determined at the previous meeting that the Board of Finance, with its charter-given role of "care & control" for city property, should also determine the best option for disposal and is well-suited to performing this task. However, given the contracted role the RRA has for addressing community and economic development by the City, and the goals and assumptions that drove the creation of this process, it was determined that the **RRA should provide disposal recommendations to the Board of Finance** in addition to serving as the lead for properties that were determined to be retained for special disposition to address compelling city goals.

Lastly, the most discussion was had around what entity would review applications for the properties in option three – the BoF, RRA, the blighted properties committee, a Housing Review Board, or new committee. The chair agreed to look into the options and **propose a committee to review applications** based on the opinions of those present at the full Board meeting on 7/17. With that in mind, Alderman Humphrey made a motion to accept the draft of the process as revised with the three new changes (highlighted above) discussed and as written on the attached "Putting City Owned Properties Back Into Use" process. The motion passed 4 – 0, and I so move.

BIAP

Next the committee took up a revision of the Business Incentive & Assistance Program as recommended by the RRA. Brennan detailed the changes made, including opening it up to all sectors of the economy, establishing a minimal level of investment, and developing a list of new criteria by which to examine potential applicants. The RRA board determined the revision is needed as there had only been two applicants to the original program, both of whom were awarded by this board, but one had their plans to purchase a property fall through so did not receive the award leaving just one recipient – Vermont Maple Sriracha who received a grant to help purchase a packing machine.

The BIAP is funded through the revenues from the Solar Farm leases on city property with approximately \$80,000 currently available for a variety of awards. Given the lack of use, members present asked Brennan about the marketing of the program. He explained he was advertising it at trade shows, business expos, and in ads in Vermont Business Magazine. The committee encouraged him to reach out to market the program in other manners and the chair encouraged him to reach out to the other economic development entities in the region as well as real estate and business brokers who might help us spread the word that Rutland City is open and inviting for new and expanding businesses.

Alderman Humphrey made a motion to accept the Business Incentive & Assistance Program as revised. The motion passed 4 – 0, and I so move.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Christopher Ettori, Chair