

**TOWN OF SOMERS
SOMERSVILLE MILL STRATEGIC PLANNING AD HOC COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, September 14, 2015
7:00pm
Selectmen's Conference Room
Town Hall**

Call to Order:

Chairman Tim Keeney called the meeting to order at 7:07pm.

Members Present:

Members present included Chairman Tim Keeney, and Members Erik Ness, Tim Potrikus and Ralph Williams. Also present was one interested resident.

Roundtable Discussion re Options and Possible Recommendations:

Mr. Williams presented a compilation of steps, encapsulating the discussion of the Committee within the preceding ten weeks of meetings, which might be considered when drafting the final Committee Report, as follows (including amended language from Committee discussion):

- 1) The town should apply to the DEEP for protection under either the Municipal Brownfields Liability Relief Program or the Brownfield Remediation and Revitalization Program.
- 2) Assuming that the report from GEI includes a remediation cost estimate that is within the panel's expectations, the town should proceed with tax foreclosure on the mill property. The cost of remedial action will relate directly to the environmental requirements for subsequent use.
- 3) While awaiting the six-month process for completing tax foreclosure, the town should apply to DECD's Office of Brownfield Remediation and Redevelopment for a cleanup grant, with the understanding that no work will begin until title has passed to the Town. The application should emphasize:
 - a) The distressed condition of the property, as well as the risks to public health and safety, and threats to environmental quality from its continued dereliction.
 - b) The town's desire to preserve and enhance recreational opportunities deriving from the mill property's location along the Scantic River.
 - c) The town's intention to promote economic development that will attract jobs and enhance the nearby Somersville neighborhood.
- 4) The town also should contact EPA officials in Boston to apprise them of the planned cleanup to assure that there will be no federal requirements/liabilities.
- 5) The selectmen should begin discussion with members of the town's Zoning Commission and

Planning Commission on the merits and methods of establishing a Planned Development District encompassing not only the mill property but several clearly delineated nearby properties, in order to establish parameters for both encouraging development of those properties and closely regulating the terms of such development.

6) Assuming that DECD acts favorably on the town's request for a brownfields cleanup grant, the town should apply to DEEP for enhanced protection of the mill property under the Abandoned Brownfield Cleanup Program.

7) Once the town's land-use commissions have developed regulations for a Planned Development District and DECD cleanup funding has been secured, the town should begin to solicit RFPs for development of the mill land and surrounding properties within that district's borders.

Discussion followed which focused on the three questions posed to the Committee by the Board of Selectmen, resulting in the following considerations:

Recommended Reuse Opportunities / Options for the 5 ½ acre Parcel:

- Recreational use of the property should be a top priority when accommodating subsequent development in accordance with the Planned Development District.
- Consideration should be given to restoring the bridge destroyed by the 1955 flood for pedestrian use, constructing a public boat launch, and developing recreational trails linking with existing State conservation areas.
- Another priority should be to maintain the historic / cultural heritage of the site to include retention of some existing walls and cornerstones, and installation of interpretive signage to tell the story of the Somersville Manufacturing Company which occupied the site from 1879 to 1969 and employed as many as 400 workers.
- An MOU should be developed between the Town and the DEEP which considers management of the recreational elements of the site and includes input from the Somers Open Trails group.
- Other subsequent uses: could include commercial, residential or manufacturing and should be determined through an RFP process in accordance with the Planned Development District. The Board of Selectmen should consider input from the Economic Development Commission.

Sources of Grant / Loan funds for Site Remediation and Reuse:

- Connecticut's Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development (DECD / DEEP); municipal ownership of the property will likely be required to access grant funds. The Town's vision for reuse of this property and adjacent parcels will enhance any application in this competitive grants program.

- DEEP Open Space Grant
- Accommodating Town financial support and development incentives will also influence the outcome of any grant application.
- The Town should consider any other grant opportunities which might be available.

Whether the Town should take title to the property?

- Because of the expense of site remediation and the availability of other properties for economic use, private interest in this site will likely to be remote without a “clean” determination by the DEEP.
- State grant funds to support cleanup are linked to Town ownership.
- Assuming that the price tag for environmental cleanup is within the range discussed at prior meetings and a “clean” site is a high priority, Town ownership is inevitable as a first step toward eventual reuse.

Mr. Potrikus volunteered to produce a “Gant-like” chart which describes the timing of planned events. **It was agreed the next meeting will be October 1, 2015 at 7:00 pm in Town Hall.**

Approval of Minutes:

September 2, 2015 Meeting Minutes:

Mr. Williams made a motion, seconded by Mr. Potrikus, to approve the September 2, 2015 Meeting Minutes with the following amendments:

Under, “Discussion with Attorney Adam Cohen” section:

1. Fifth paragraph, first sentence in place of existing sentence: Change “Mr. Ness asked if you can attach a lien to the property when cleaning it up to recover funds expended, should redemption occur by the current owner within the six month redemption period.”
2. Seventh paragraph: Change “Chairman Pelligrini” to “Chairman Keeney”.
3. Eighth paragraph: Insert in third sentence after “Trail networks and stewardship”, the words – “(policing and maintenance)”.
4. Ninth paragraph: After second sentence, insert “Furthermore, discussion included whether a public meeting should be held prior to the final report being submitted to the Board of Selectmen.”

Motion approved with Chairman Keeney, Mr. Williams, Mr. Potrikus and Mr. Ness in support.
Motion passed.

Adjournment:

Mr. Williams made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 pm, seconded by Mr. Ness. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Keeney, Recording

Minutes are not official until accepted at a subsequent meeting.