

FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Standing Committee on Finance met on *Monday, May 2nd, 2022 at 7:00 PM* in the *Council Chambers, Brockton City Hall, 45 School Street*, with Councilor Lally presiding, to consider the following:

Public Hearing:

1. Ordered: That the common necessity and convenience of the inhabitants of the City of Brockton require the laying out and acceptance of **ASPEN STREET**, extending from Keswick Road, northerly, to Rodwell Street, a distance of about 1,088 feet, more or less, and for that purpose it is necessary to take an easement for **Highway Purposes** and lay out as a public street or way of said City of Brockton, said easement passing by or over lands of those persons shown on "EXHIBIT A", attached hereto and parties unknown. Said layout of said street, being 50.00 feet in width, is shown more particularly on a plan entitled "BUTLER PARK, Revision of Lots at Brockton, Brockton, Mass., Scale 1" = 40', January 30, 1959", drawn by Bradford Saivetz C.E., Quincy, Mass., and recorded at Plymouth County Registry of Deeds in Plan Book 11, Page 719.

The land taken is more fully described as follows: All the land within the limits of a private way known as **Aspen Street**, supposed to belong to parties unknown, being a strip of land 50.00 feet in width, extending from Keswick Road, northerly, to Rodwell Street, a distance of about 1,088 feet, more or less, as shown on the herein described plan, to which reference is hereby made for a more particular description. And we have considered and estimated the damages sustained by all persons who have not waived damages in their several estates as follows: NO AWARDS.

Ordered: That the common necessity and convenience of the inhabitants of the City of Brockton require the laying out and acceptance of **RODWELL STREET**, extending from Aspen Street, northeasterly, to Keswick Road, a distance of about 300 feet, more or less, and for that purpose it is necessary to take an easement for **Highway Purposes** and lay out as a public street or way of said City of Brockton, said easement passing by or over lands of those persons shown on "EXHIBIT A", attached hereto and parties unknown. Said layout of said street, being 50.00 feet in width, is shown more particularly on a plan entitled "BUTLER PARK, Revision of Lots at Brockton, Brockton, Mass., Scale 1" = 40', January 30, 1959", drawn by Bradford Saivetz, C.E., Quincy, Mass., and recorded at Plymouth County Registry of Deeds in Plan Book 11, Page 719.

The land taken is more fully described as follows: All the land within the limits of a private way known as **Rodwell Street**, supposed to belong to parties unknown, being a strip of land 50.00 feet in width, extending from Aspen Street, northeasterly, to Keswick Road, a distance of about 300 feet, more or less, as shown on the herein described plan, to which reference is hereby made for a more particular description. And we have considered and

estimated the damages sustained by all persons who have not waived damages in their several estates as follows: NO AWARDS.

Ordered: That the common necessity and convenience of the inhabitants of the City of Brockton require the laying out and acceptance of **VICTORY STREET**, extending from Aspen Street, westerly, to Bourne Street Street, a distance of about 450 feet, more or less, and for that purpose it is necessary to take an easement for **Highway Purposes** and lay out as a public street or way of said City of Brockton, said easement passing by or over lands of those persons shown on "EXHIBIT A", attached hereto and parties unknown. Said layout of said street, being 42.00 feet in width, is shown more particularly on a plan entitled "BUTLER PARK, Revision of Lots at Brockton, Brockton, Mass., Scale 1" = 40', January 30, 1959", drawn by Bradford Saivetz, C.E., Quincy, Mass., and recorded at Plymouth County Registry of Deeds in Plan Book 11, Page 719.

The land taken is more fully described as follows: All the land within the limits of a private way known as **Victory Street**, supposed to belong to parties unknown, being a strip of land 42.00 feet in width, extending from Aspen Street, westerly, to Bourne Street, a distance of about 450 feet, more or less, as shown on the herein described plan, to which reference is hereby made for a more particular description. And we have considered and estimated the damages sustained by all persons who have not waived damages in their several estates as follows: NO AWARDS.

Invited: Patrick Hill, DPW Commissioner

*The City of Brockton is requiring the laying out and acceptance of Aspen Street, Rodwell Street and Victory Street as a public way.

*Commissioner Hill states that the city has no issues accepting these streets. They are three of many streets to be made public in the coming months.

*Council President Lally states that this is a priority issue in his ward as these people are paying the same taxes, fees, and bills but aren't able to get their street paved because it has been private.

Having considered the same, motion by Councilor Farwell to report FAVORABLE, 2nd by Councilor Thompson. Motion carried by a hand vote.

Public Hearing Closed

2. Appointment: Appointment of City of Brockton Retired Police Officer Andrew Cesarini of 320 West Street Brockton, MA 02301 as a Special Police Officer.

Invited: Andrew Cesarini

Having considered the same, motion by Councilor Asack to report FAVORABLE, 2nd by Councilor Nicastro. Motion carried by a hand vote.

3. Ordered: That the City Council authorizes the acceptance and expenditure of the total grant funds in the amount of \$226,000.

From: Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development- MassWorks Grant

To: Department of Planning and Economic Development- MassWorks Grant Fund
(These grant funds will be used to improve circulation in downtown Brockton.)

Invited: Rob May, Director of Planning and Economic Development
Troy Clarkson, Chief Financial Officer

*CFO Clarkson states that Mr. May will be absent from this meeting, but that he is happy to represent him. He goes on to say that this grant award would accept a MassWorks grant to allow the Planning Department in conjunction with the DPW to prepare construction drawings for the reconstruction of Franklin Street with new municipal utilities, sidewalks and streetscape.

*Councilor Farwell notes that this will be an important part of downtown development.

Having considered the same, motion by Councilor Farwell to report FAVORABLE, 2nd by Councilor Thompson. Motion carried by a hand vote.

4. Ordered: That the City Council authorizes the acceptance and expenditure of the total grant funds in the amount of \$250,000.

From: Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development- FY22 Mass Housing Choice Grant

To: Department of Planning and Economic Development- FY22 Mass Housing Choice Grant Fund

(These grant funds will be used for infrastructure and roadway improvements on Thatcher Street.)

Invited: Rob May, Director of Planning and Economic Development
Troy Clarkson, Chief Financial Officer

*CFO Clarkson states that this is a grant from the Commonwealth. He states that it will allow the city to make public infrastructure improvements that will support the proposed redevelopment of the convent on Thatcher Street. He goes on to say that the DPW will oversee the actual work, while the Planning Department will oversee the grant funds as they are spent and allocated amongst the project.

Having considered the same, motion by Councilor Asack to report FAVORABLE, 2nd by Councilor Nicastro. Motion carried by a hand vote.

5. Resolve: WHEREAS, A ‘Downtown Urban Renewal Plan’ was adopted by the City Council in 2016, and,
WHEREAS, The plan included specific initiatives to be undertaken and a projected budget required for the success of the plan, and,

WHEREAS, There are amendments to the plan and those changes are now part of the goals and objectives for redevelopment in the center of the city, and,

WHEREAS, It is important to have periodic reviews of the progress, planning, and implementation of the Urban Renewal Plan;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

The executive director of the Brockton Redevelopment Authority and the chair of the redevelopment authority board appear before a committee of the Brockton City Council to discuss progress on the original urban renewal plan and the modifications adopted, as part of the continuing city initiatives.

Invited: Robert Jenkins, Executive Director, BRA

Philip Griffin, Chairman

Rob May, Director of Planning and Economic Development

*Chairman Griffin states that they wanted to update the council as to what is going on regarding downtown urban renewal.

*Mr. Jenkins states that after the Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan was adopted in 2016, the BRA is supposed to speak in front of council on request or at least to give an update on the progress on the development and progress already happening in the city.

*Mr. Jenkins states that they've held three public hearings so far with the Citizens Advisory Committee. He goes on to say that the Finance Committee will be holding a public hearing regarding this as well as they are required to do so with any amendments provided to the order. The amendment will include properties not included in 2016 amongst other things.

*Councilor Thompson asks Mr. Jenkins to explain what the Urban Renewal district is and how this benefits the city. Mr. Jenkins states that the boundaries of the district go from Pleasant Street to West Elm, part of Crescent Street to Commercial, all the way to Warren Avenue. This plan will increase the density in housing, offer special programs like the 40R, and establish two opportunity zones in the downtown district. Mr. Jenkins states that the city is going to benefit as it begins to go through a renaissance where there is a lot of interest in development.

*Mr. Jenkins states that MassDevelopment has invested close to \$20 million dollars in downtown Brockton just on studies and direct financing of developments.

*Councilor Thompson asks about the identification process within the district and what exactly it means. He goes on to ask what tools are available after a property is identified. Mr. Jenkins states that in most cases they've identified property that the city owned and transferred to the Brockton Redevelopment Authority. Mr. Jenkins states that the incentives are that there is a plan, and a strategy to increase density in housing and commercial development. He goes on to state that what puts Brockton at an advantage versus other gateway cities is that there is a working plan. The key for Brockton is the

amount of vacant buildings that can be redeveloped. There are developers coming in looking to invest in the city.

*Mr. Jenkins states that there is a need for another parking garage or two given the developments making their way to the city and the traffic that will come with them. The garages will come in the next amendment as they were not part of the original plan.

*In this plan, a lot of the abandoned buildings are being converted into market rate housing and commercial development on their ground level floors. Numerous addresses are in the works, while an extensive list of properties is to be developed in the future.

*Mr. Jenkins states that Legion Parkway downtown is the city's main business district. There is a lot of commercial buildings and retail along this road, therefore the BRA feels that they cannot have vacant properties like there are now that aren't doing anything.

*He goes on to say that there are approximately 467 market rate housing units that are currently under construction that will more than likely be completed in the next nine to twelve months.

*Mr. Jenkins states that there are approximately 434 units in the pipeline that have been identified waiting for approval from the council when the amendment is in front of them.

*As far as critical path, the BRA Citizens Advisory Committee held their last public hearing on April 15th, the BRA Board had a special meeting to approve the amendment on April 20th, an update and progress report is being presented to the Finance Committee on May 2nd, the Planning Department is looking to hold a special meeting on May 10th or 17th, and in the near future, the City Council is required by law to hold a public hearing on the amendment itself prior to approval. After the amendment is approved by the City Council, it needs to be submitted to the state's Department of Housing and Community Development and the Mass Department of Environmental Protection. Both departments have 30 days to approve it.

*Mr. Jenkins states that this is a twenty-year plan that began in 2016. The original goal was to develop 1,000 units in the twenty years, we are currently halfway to the goal in year six.

*Mr. Jenkins prepared a PowerPoint that he intended to connect to the monitors and share with the councilors and the people watching at home. Due to technical difficulties, this did not happen. He states that he will send it to the councilors and also post it on the BRA website for anyone who would like to look at it.

*Councilor Asack thanks the BRA for all of their hard work and dedication and thanks all of the investors who have decided to invest into the City of Brockton.

*Councilor Thompson refers to the requirement for more parking garages in the downtown area. He states that there may be some expectation that those who come into the city to live in the new developments will have ample opportunity for public transportation and may not have to own a car. The MBTA station and BAT station isn't located too far from the downtown area. While he recognizes that this may be the

expectation, but also knows that most people living in Brockton need a car to get around. He states that there must be a comprehensive parking plan in the works.

*Councilor Thompson states that after these properties are identified for development, the next step is to understand who owns the property. If it is city property, the BRA can acquire the property with the approval of the council via transfer, then develop it. For the properties that are currently occupied by private owners, the BRA will reach out to them and let them know that their property has been identified as a property that requires more development. The BRA would either encourage them and give them the know-how and contacts for them to further develop it themselves, or if they need more assistance, the BRA could put them in touch with an interested developer. Last, and certainly least, if a property is identified through the URP, it is subject to a taking. This allows the city to use eminent domain to take a property if so needed. This is a last resort, and something that the city does not want to do.

*Councilor Farwell states that this is going to be a revolving plan with amendments periodically coming through council. The \$98 million-dollar public safety facility throws a whole new complexion on what is going on downtown and shows that the city is willing to put its money into development as well as private developers which is reassuring to them.

*Councilor Farwell goes on to say that adding parking garages downtown are a great revenue source. Due to the increase in cars coming to the downtown area, he states that the city needs to make sure that whatever traffic plan being put in place for the new public safety facility needs to reflect that. Fire and Police runs will be coming out of this facility, and he wants to be sure the response times aren't delayed.

*Councilor Farwell reiterates the idea that any city owned building that the BRA wants to acquire still needs to be voted on by the City Council, to which Mr. Jenkins tells him that that is correct.

*Councilor Farwell states that given the current state of the economy, he isn't completely sure what is "affordable housing" and "market rate housing" in terms of a dollar figure. His concern is that \$1,800 or \$1,600 for a studio apartment is still too much. He's not sure that there are that many people who can afford that after factoring in every other expense in life. He asks that when Mr. Jenkins comes back in front of council that he gives the latest on what "market rate" actually is. Mr. Jenkins tells him that he will be able to get those figures for him.

*Councilor Farwell notes that zoning changes and anything else that happens in the downtown needs to be voted on by the council, especially the Councilors At-Large. He asks to be in the loop about everything going on so he, and the other Councilors At-Large can better serve their constituents.

*Councilor Minichiello states that there is a new executive director at Brockton Community Access who is looking for more things about the city to air on their channel.

He tells Mr. Jenkins that this may be a good opportunity to showcase what is going on downtown.

*Councilor Rodrigues states that the South Coast Rail is coming through Brockton in the near future. This rail will further connect Brockton to areas like New Bedford and Fall River. This will make the city more valuable as we move forward.

*Councilor Rodrigues asks what prevents the city from building vertically opposed to horizontally, to which Mr. Jenkins tells him that it is a zoning issue. A building in the city cannot be taller than 65 feet. To go above 65 feet, a zoning change is required. Mr. Jenkins goes on to say that once a building is higher than 65 feet, it requires different materials to build with. Steel is very expensive as of right now, and some people aren't willing to pay the extra in material costs. People are incentivized to develop in Brockton, and he's not sure how to overcome the market in terms of materials. Mr. Jenkins states that it is a process and there has to be an incentive to make people want to build steel construction.

*Councilor Rodrigues asks if there is any way that the BRA can recommend or push developers into building something that resembles a building that you would find in a typical downtown area. He goes on to say that if the current zoning restriction is 65 feet tall, it would be nice to build up to at least 65 feet. Mr. Jenkins tells him that 65 feet isn't as tall as most may think. He goes on to say that there are so many steps in terms of making this happen, and zoning is the first.

*Councilor Rodrigues asks where two-way traffic is in the conversation as of now when it comes to downtown renewal. He states that it is in the works for part Warren Avenue for the Public Safety Facility. He goes on to say that it is more complicated than people realize because of the accessory streets and the signal lights.

*Mr. Jenkins states that when it comes to downtown renewal, the conversation starts and ends in the boundaries referred to previously.

*Councilor Rodrigues states that there is nothing wrong with controlled chaotic traffic in the downtown area, especially in terms of commercial and retail properties. When people are sitting at lights, it allows them to window shop. Because of this, it will bring more people into the downtown area to spend money.

*Councilor Nicastro states that one of Brockton's biggest challenges is that because the city is so close to Boston, developers are charged the same money for materials that they would be charged in Boston in terms of construction and personnel. She goes on to say that the city can't get Boston rates in terms of rent, however, which is a real issue when trying to balance things out. Mr. Jenkins agrees with her.

*Councilor Asack refers to the prices of rent, and makes it a point to reiterate the idea that Brockton has no vacancies. She goes on to say that all of the new developments are already rented. Knowing that there are no vacancies, it proves that people can afford the units.

*Mr. Jenkins states that Brockton is being gentrified. He says that it is not the same gentrification like in the 60's and 70's, but it is still gentrification nonetheless. He goes on to say that people of color are moving from Boston into Brockton.

*Mr. Jenkins states that the one issue Brockton is facing currently is depressed commercial rents. There are a lot of commercial vacancies, and the city needs to offer incentives for people to want to rent commercial lots. In order to have a viable, sustainable downtown, there has to be commercial development.

Having considered the same, motion by Councilor Asack to report FAVORABLE, 2nd by Councilor Farwell. Motion carried by a hand vote.

Adjourned: 8:05PM