



Westfield Redevelopment Authority

May 13, 2025

Municipal Building, 59 Court Street, Westfield, MA Room 315

8:00 am

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**Members Present:**

Chair Witalisz, Member Morin, Member Woodson, Member Parks (via Zoom)

**Staff Present:**

Peter J. Miller Jr. (Executive Director)

Christine Fedora (Office Manager)

**Call to Order:**

Chair Witalisz called the meeting of the Westfield Redevelopment Authority (WRA) to order at 8:00 AM. The members listed above were in attendance.

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1.) Roll Call

Chair Witalisz asked for a roll call:

- Member Woodson - Present
- Member Parks - Present (via Zoom)
- Chair Witalisz- Present
- Member Morin - Present

Also Present:

- Ann Lenini - Domus- Executive Director
- Jeff Bag - BSC Group
- Jeff Basser - BSC Group
- Ben Murphy - Project Manager - Mass Development

## **2.) Approval of Minutes – March 4, 2025**

Member Woodson MOTIONED, seconded by Member Morin to approve the minutes of the March 4, 2024, meeting as submitted.

All in favor.

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## **3.) Reports of Committees**

### **a. WRA Financial Summary**

Executive Director Miller reported that financials have not changed. The city has paid the matching portion to Mass Development for the study. As of FY 25, the balance stands at \$55,926.52.

Chair Witalisz asked if there are any outstanding bills. Mr. Miller confirmed there are none. It is anticipated that a slum and blight report will be required, a consultant will likely be hired at an estimated cost of \$8,000 - \$10,000.00.

The Mayor has approved a FY26 budget of \$15,000.00, pending final approval by the City Council.

## **4.) Report of the Executive Director**

Mr. Miller stated that there were no major updates. The plaza continues to move forward. As the Off-Street Parking Manager, a maintenance contract for the lawn is being established. Revenues from food truck fees (approximately \$6,000 - \$8,000) will help cover those costs.

## **5.) Presentation Relative to Westfield Riverfront District Real Estate Technical Services Grant with Mass Development and BSC Group, Project Consultant.**

Jeff Bag, BSC Group

Jeff Basser, BSC Group

Jeff Bag of BSC Group and Heather Gould were present at the March meeting to receive the WRA thoughts regarding the plan and what they would like the plan to address. Following the meeting, BCS developed a conceptual plan, which Mr. Bag reviewed with members to gather input before proceeding. The goal is to complete the project by June 30; a draft plan will be presented on June 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Goal:**

The goal of the plan is to evaluate the neighborhood for potential redevelopment under an Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP). The area is viable for such a plan. The city has long focused on this area, with the core objective being connectivity between downtown and the riverfront and to promote economic revitalization.

**Emphasized areas:**

- ✓ Increasing access to riverfront rail trail
- ✓ Additional and diverse housing types
- ✓ Elm Street frontage-sidewalk buildings
- ✓ Additional parking for bike trail users

**Existing conditions:**

Examples of projects and building types were reviewed as a reference guide. Conceptual plans were discussed and are subject to review on June 10.

Mr. Bag briefly reviewed the aerial report. Further research will include additional data such as building ages and assessed values.

**Starting at the north side of the area A:**

**360 Elm street:** - Museum type operation, plans for building upgrades. City may provide parking. Slated to remain.

**C:** - Two side-by-side underutilized buildings, first floor residential; discussion on how they interact.

**D - Emery Street** - Right of way provides access to the rear.

**E & F** - Duplexes in rear.

**G** - City owned property in the rear.

**H** - Vacant building along street front; trying to identify barriers to reuse.

**I** - Sanford Apartments - 21 units affordable housing.

**J:** Park area, Kohls Court, provides outdoor space along the street frontage.

**K & L:** Housing Authority properties; shown as staying. Unknown condition but important along street frontage.

**M:** St Rocco's.

**N:** Pasquale's & single- family home back.

**O:** Gas Station – Orange and Elm Streets.

There is a lot of potential for future development.

The 2013 plan did not include the southern section; the new plan includes St. Roccas, Pasquale's and the gas station. There are about three acres that form a cap in the street frontage between downtown and the riverfront – an important focus area.

An Urban Renewal Plan evaluation requires the city look at adjacent areas. The western edge forms a natural boundary; south of Orange Street is adjacent to the study area and could be examined in a future slum and blight study, depending on the WRA's ability to expand. The east side of Elm Street also offers some form of exploration.

A south-to-north view shows a building frontage interrupted by the gas station, which could be used for infill development -possibility a mixed 2-3 story building promoting pedestrian access to the riverfront.

#### **General Elm Street Area:**

- Gas and Electric and Lampson Square show potential based on recent financial investments and revitalization.
- Elm Street Plaza provides an example of how key design elements can be integrated.

#### **Predevelopment Examples (From other communities)**

Predevelopment

Slides were shown of potential development from surrounding communities. Such as townhouses, with or without garages and different levels of affordability.

#### **Discussion:**

Chair Witalisz asked what would draw the people to occupy the new housing. What is the focal point? In need of housing, what is the draw to occupy spaces?

Mr. Brag responded the demand for housing itself would attract developers and residents. Chair Witalisz stressed that other neighborhoods should also benefit; this should be a citywide opportunity.

Mr. Bassar reviewed the 3 different concept plans.

Mr. Basser reviewed three concept plans. Each includes access via a right-of-way.

#### Concept A

- Public Parking for Riverfront Area and 360 Elm St.
- Townhouses (19 Units)
- 3 story residential (first floor underground parking)
  - 9600 sq.ft. footprint (28,800 GFA) = 26 units
  - 7200 sq. ft. footprint (21,600 FFA) = 20 units
  - 6600 sq.ft. footprint (13,200 GFA) - 12 units
- 1 story commercial, 2 story residential
  - 7200 sq.ft. commercial
  - 14400 (GFA) = 13 units

#### Concept B

- Public Parking for Riverfront Area and 360 Elm St
- 2 story residential x 3
  - 6600 sq.ft. footprint (13,200 GFA) = 12 units
  - 36 units total
- Three new buildings at Elm & Orange Street
  - Building 1 - 11,000 sq.ft. footprint
    - 11,000 sq.ft. commercial
    - 20 units
  - Building 2 - 5625 commercial
  - Building 3 - 6600 sq. ft. commercial
    - 6600 sq. ft commercial
    - 12 units

#### Concept 3

- Public Parking for Riverfront Area and 360 Elm St
- Larger 3 story residential x 2
  - 12,100 sq. ft footprint (36,300 GFA) - 30 units
  - 60 units total
- Larger building at corner of Elm and Orange
  - 15,500 sq. ft. footprint (46,500 GFA) = 42 units

Ann Lenini asked if they are planning any play areas for children and if there would be a police presence. Mr. Bassler replied there is a green area, and there is a possibility of a police presence.

Chair Witalisz asked if there was any discussion regarding underground parking? Mr. Bassler replied there was a discussion, but the cost of the underground is more expensive and there may be potential contamination.

Bill Parks asked about the traffic flow. Mr. Bassler replied traffic planners looked at the plan, and noted Orange Street could be used as access to help with the traffic.

Councilor Kane asked who decides what will be developed. Mr. Miller explained that an URP sets guidelines for developers but allows for some flexibility.

Chair Witalisz stated these are conceptual possibilities. The City must determine its needs and find a developer to invest. She emphasized this phase is critical to the WRA.

Mr. Miller described it as a "filtration" -identifying what's wanted, feasible, and aligned with community goals. He clarified that townhouses are considered multifamily housing.

Mr. Brag stated this is a precursor, the WRA will decide if they want to move forward with a formal URP. There is no formal action at this time, just a discussion of options.

Mr. Bassler used the gas station site as example. The WRA could be a facilitator in the development of the gas station by being a sort of partner by applying for grants for testing and cleaning up the site.

Next meeting scheduled for June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Meeting adjourned at 8:49.

APPROVED