



Westfield Redevelopment Authority Meeting

9-9-25

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

8:00 am

Members Present: Chair Witalisz, Member Morin, Member Woodson

Members Absent: Member Parks

Staff Present: Peter J, Miller, Jr. (Executive Director) Christine Fedora (Office Manager)

Chair Witalisz called the meeting of the Westfield Redevelopment Authority to order at 8:00 A.M. The members listed above were in attendance.

1.) Roll Call Vote:

Chair Witalisz asked for a roll call:

- Chair Witalisz – Present
- Member Morin – Present
- Member Woodson – Present
- Member Parks – Absent

Also Present:

Jeff Bag – BSC Group

Benn Murphy -Project Manager – Mass Development

Carol Martin

2.) Approve minutes of August 20, 2025 Meeting.

Member Woodson MOTIONED, to postpone approval of minutes until the next meeting.

3.) Reports of Committees

a) WRA Financial Summary

Mr. Miller stated there have been no changes to the financials. He will be heading to the Council in October with a request for funding.

4.) Report of Executive Director

Mr. Miller stated he had a few things to report. He informed members there are zero vacancies from Noble Street to Elm Street. Chair Witalisz added “Activity breeds activity.”

Mr. Miller also updated members on the plaza and parking issues. The Off-Street Parking Commission is looking into a pay by app for the current parking meters, he would like to provide more modern service to the area and is currently investigating it. It is under the Off-Street Parking Commission.

The Mayor is working with property owners on making improvements to the drainage alley ways that are in disrepair.

5.) Discussion & Vote to Accept FINAL REPORT OF BSC Group on Westfield South Riverfront Area Plan

Mr. Bag stated the Final Report has been submitted to the Board. Heather Gould and himself came last month and presented the report.

Mr. Bag reviewed changes incorporated into the plan, noting nothing of substance has changed.

Mr. Bag reviewed the changes that were made to the report:

- Final formatting has been completed.
- The rearranging the order of the goals was incorporated.
- The cover photo has been updated and can change again.
- He summarized some changes in the data.
- Pages 22, 23
- He further noted there were some variabilities in the housing units and they could not account for the variability. Mr. Miller thought it maybe related to the 2020 census; the boundaries were changed, as well as the COVID, he felt it still is an anomaly.
- Page 24. Housing Block poverty level has been converted to individuals.
- Appendixes have been scaled down.
- PowerPoint presentations have been included.

Chair Witalisz stated the report has been extraordinary since the beginning. She felt that going out to the public will be critical, this will be a lengthy process and managing expectations of prefacing a 20-year mark.

Member Woodson felt his is a comprehensive document and allows the W.R.A. to move forward. He mentioned the photoshop tag mark on the side. Mr. Bag stated it would be removed, he also mentioned he spoke to Heather Gould regarding his comments on the terms that were used in the report. Ms. Gould felt these terms are necessary in the report; they are the terms the E.O.H.L.C. looks for.

Member Morin felt this is a blueprint of what could possibly happen, something to keep eyes open. feels it will be tough. It opened his eyes to see the potential of what could be.

Mr. Miller felt this should be discussed before taking a vote. He believed the Authority should carefully consider who to speak with first—neighbors, policymakers, the Mayor, or the City Council. Is this an endeavor they truly believe is worth undertaking? He felt this was the first question that needed to be answered.

He emphasized that transparency and setting expectations are important, as this would be a long-term and expensive undertaking. It would involve significant staff time, major costs, and potentially six-figure planning expenses. The Authority would also need to weigh whether to pursue property acquisition through willing sellers or eminent domain.

Mr. Miller added that they should think about how to present this initiative. This is not only a blueprint for government but also a guide for what the private sector could accomplish on its

own—a catalyst for improvements in the area. The URP would focus on addressing slum and blight conditions and creating a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). A market study might also be necessary to determine whether the private sector could achieve a return on investment, demonstrating ways to be profitable without relying on the City.

Chair Witalisz stated the WRA has received extensive input from professionals on possible uses. The committee now needs to decide how to proceed with that information — whether to adopt the recommendations, keep them for internal review, forward them to City Council, or release them to the press. Determining next steps is critical, including how to set and manage expectations for the mayor, current councilors, and the community. Carol Martin emphasized the importance of considering street-level sentiment and the feasibility of visible riverfront improvements.

Carol Martin complimented the Authority and the firm on taking a remarkable first step toward achieving their goals. She said that she and her board understand this will be a long road and not a “magic wand” solution. It requires taking a hard look at one of the most inviting and loveliest parts of the community. She noted that generating enthusiasm is difficult, especially when working through different administrations, but emphasized that the goal is worth pursuing. People on the other side of the river have already done a lot of work on their own, and now it is time to step up. She expressed that she is more than happy to help move the project forward. She added that she would like to see a couple of tweaks but sees tremendous potential to reinvigorate one of the community’s historic areas. Although the road may be rocky, she believes the path is well-defined and clear.

Mr. Miller stated that one of the key phrases that Mass Development uses is Transformational Development, for not just this section but the entirety of this corridor.

Carol Martin felt that in conjunction with the bridge project, there are many places that are underutilized. She expressed her enthusiasm that the Authority has refocused on the area. She also felt that more focus needs to be put on commercial opportunities.

Mr. Miller stated the goal for this meeting is to accept the report. Once it is accepted, he will bill out to the funder and then he will be able to pay BSC. He further noted he would prepare for the October and November meetings he would put together the critical path, timeline, he would be thinking about what needs to be completed first and the timeline, some things will happen simultaneously, his hope is to have a course of actions for the next 6 months.

Chair Witalisz felt it made sense to move forward.

Member Woodson MOTIONED, seconded by Member Morin to move forward.
All in favor.

Chair Witalisz stated for members of the public it does not mean they are going full force and shovel ready at this more, this will be a challenge, these are conceptual documents. At the next meeting steps will be discussed. She asked members to think about what they feel the next steps should be.
New business? None
Old business? None
Motion to adjourn at 8:37. All in favor.