

Community and Economic Development Committee Report

September 27, 2022 + October 11, 2022

Committee members present: Alderman Talbott (chair), Alderman Franco (vice-chair), Alderman Ettori, Alderwoman Davis, Alderman Whitcomb

Others present: President Doenges, Alderwoman Tadio, Alderman DePoy, Mayor Allaire, Treasurer Markowski, Commissioner Rotondo, Planning & Zoning Administrator Strniste, Brennan Duffy and Ed Clark (Rutland Redevelopment Authority), Dayton Crites (DuBois & King), Tiffany Saltis and Brian Budrow (Downtown Rutland Partnership), Lyle Jepson (Chamber and Economic Development Rutland Region), Devon Neary and Ethan Pepin (Rutland Regional Planning Commission), Eric Mallette (Paramount Theatre), Mary Cohen (Housing Trust of Rutland County), Gordon Dritschilo (Rutland Herald), Kevin Kiefaber

The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm.

The first item on the agenda was a presentation of the scoping study for the redesign of Center St completed by DuBois & King. Consultant Dayton Crites began by emphasizing that the steering committee went through four community engagement meetings to make sure the needs of community members and business owners needs were met by the new design. His presentation went over the information gathering undertaken during the year-long study process. He explained the importance of crafting designs that balanced the need for a pedestrian-centric street, business accessibility and flexibility, and making Center Street a destination. Of the three designs presented to the public, the two-way design was the least popular, and the one-way was the most popular. The one-way design would make it a curbless street, which allows the entire street to be a pedestrian zone when the bollards are raised. This is the design endorsed by the completed scoping study. Committee members expressed their desire to take some time to review the lengthy study before taking any action.

Dayton Crites emphasized that projects like this offer municipalities a good economic return, as new, private investment wants to be near revitalized downtown areas. Lyle Jepson pointed to the positive economic impact that the recent infrastructure improvements in Brandon have made. There was brief discussion of the role this project could play in a TIF district. The item will remain in committee.

The second item on the agenda was the partially-completed housing study of the former College of St Joseph campus in light of news that there is a potential buyer for the main campus. Mary Cohen outlined three options: 1) stop the study, having spent just under \$12,000 of the \$30,000; 2) continue with the study as planned; 3) shift the remaining dollars to focus on the west campus. Cohen recommend focusing on the west campus, and indicated that there is possibility of putting the west campus under site control, which was not possible with the main campus. Alderman

Whitcomb advocated for pausing until we have more information on the potential buyer. Other committee members concurred.

The meeting adjourned at 6:23pm.

October 11, 2022

Committee members present: Alderman Talbott (chair), Alderman Franco (vice-chair), Alderman Ettori, Alderwoman Davis, Alderman Whitcomb

Others present: President Doenges (via phone), Alderman Barbagallo, Mayor Allaire, Brennan Duffy (Rutland Redevelopment Authority), Tiffany Saltis and Brian Budrow (Downtown Rutland Partnership), Mary Cohen (Housing Trust of Rutland County), Gordon Dritschilo (Rutland Herald), John McCann

The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm.

The first item on the agenda was a continued discussion of the Center Street scoping study presented at the committee's most recent meeting. Per the recommendation made in the study, the committee put forth a motion to endorse the one-way design plan. The study recommended this design concept based on strong public feedback supporting significant change, the polarizing nature of a pedestrian-only plan, as well as the expensive and risky nature of a pedestrian-only plan. The curbless one-way design will support Center St's continued hosting of festivals, concerts, and gatherings, easily converting to a pedestrian plaza. Snow maintenance is well accommodated by this design, as is business access and emergency vehicle access. The motion passed 5-0.

Step two of the study calls for coordination with planned utility upgrades and replacements to offer both efficiency and potentially additional funding streams. This will require an engineering study of infrastructure beneath the street, and will likely require the Department of Public Works to hire an outside engineering consultant. The committee noted that \$500,000 has already been requested for Center St from the former-ARPA funds, and that the request currently sits with the Finance Committee. Discussion of funding for the engineering study and other elements of the Center St redesign will continue at the next meeting of the Finance Committee.

The next item on the agenda was discussion of continuing the housing study for the former College of St Joseph campus, with a focus on the west campus. Mary Cohen stated that buyer Casella Waste will be closing on their purchase of the main campus in the next few weeks, and that she plans to meet with them to discuss a shared vision for the campus and to share what the study has gathered thus far.

Alderman Etti expressed that he does not support using the remaining funds allocated for the study, as the west campus project will be a housing development and not a community space. Mary Cohen countered that it's not yet clear what the best use of the west campus will be. President Doenges emphasized that the completed study will be a valuable marketing piece for potential investors in the west campus property. No motion was needed.

The meeting adjourned at 5:56pm.