

FINAL

**CITY OF LEBANON
ECONOMIC VITALITY EXCHANGE COMMITTEE (EVEC)
Minutes. Wednesday, August 22, 2018
West Meeting Room - City Hall
4:00 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Clifton Below (City Council), Jeff Goodrich, Karen Liot Hill (City Council), Dana Key, Kevin Purcell, Rob Taylor

MEMBER ABSENT: Chip Brown, Dan Nash, Jay Simms, Steve Whitman,

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Shaun Mulholland, Director of Planning and Zoning David Brooks, Shelley Hadfield-Consultant to the City of Lebanon

I. CALL TO ORDER

City Manager Shaun Mulholland called the meeting to order at 4:10 PM

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

June 27, 2018

Karen Liot Hill MOVED to approve the minutes of the June 27, 2018 Economic Vitality Exchange Committee. Seconded by Dana Key.

**The MOTION passed 5-0-1. Goodrich abstained because he wasn't present at the meeting.*

July 25, 2018

Amendment: Page 1, change Scho to Soho in the Members Absent section.

Karen Liot Hill MOVED to approve the minutes of the July 25, 2018 Economic Vitality Exchange Committee with corrections. Seconded by Rob Taylor.

**The MOTION passed 6-0.*

III. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- **Discuss downtown tunnel alternatives and provide recommendation to the City Council.**

City Manager Mulholland began the discussion. He stated the City Council has narrowed down 6 tunnel alternatives to 3 options to be considered. The Council is asking four different committees for feedback, the Economic Vitality Exchange Committee, Planning Board, Arts and Culture Task Force and the Pedestrian & Bicyclist Advisory Committee. He is hoping the

Council will make their decision regarding which option to move forward with at the September 19th meeting.

City Manager Mulholland began with the background. The Visioning Process was conducted in 2014 and published in 2016. The City Manager discussed the key concepts of the downtown Visioning Plan. One of the key components is connectivity; addressing the tunnel and enabling the ability of pedestrians and bike riders to get across Hanover Street. The tunnel will be one of the last parts of the Rail Trail connecting Lebanon and West Lebanon. He showed the map of the areas of the city that will be connected and served by the 3 options regarding the tunnel to enhance connectivity and walkways within Lebanon.

Option 1 is a complete deck replacement and fixing the tunnel in the footprint as it exists today. This would cost about \$2.2-\$2.3 million.

Option 2 includes a glassed-in or open-air opening by the restaurant to let sunlight into the tunnel. Staff recognize that open areas bring the risk of weather, rain, snow and ice that would have to be addressed ongoing. Option 2 is about the same cost, \$2.2 million. The footprint of the tunnel would remain the same as it is today.

Option 4-A would close the tunnel and fill it in. This presumably would impact the replacement of the bridge over Hanover Street that is planned by the Department of Transportation (DOT). The DOT might fill it in, construct a retaining wall and close the bridge. This also conceptualizes taking part of the area above the mall, remove that level and create some additional parking underneath.

This option also proposes the development of the Greenway Riverwalk that will go over the river underneath Hanover Street Bridge. There are some issues that would need to be addressed including propane tanks and utilities that would have to be moved. The exact number of parking places that would be available under this plan isn't clear. The effect on the two nearby buildings is unknown. The cost is estimated at \$1 million to close the tunnel and another \$2.5 million to build the Riverwalk, but that cost could be closer to \$4 million based on construction and impacts to other buildings.

Clifton Below added comments about changing the footprint of the current Shoetorium building and using other City property to develop parking and another level of construction. He discussed the possibility of a public and private partnership that would invest in the development of upscale housing with parking spaces. This could generate tax revenue to help cover the costs related to Option 4-A. The City would still contribute about \$2 million, similar to the other two options. It was stated that an initial conversation with one private developer was started but did not go anywhere. City Manager Mulholland said it's important to move forward with an option because the deterioration of the current tunnel is a concern.

Some of the concerns that Staff have with the Riverwalk pertain to ice, snow and the lack of sunshine. It will likely be difficult to keep the walk clear. Concrete, wood and metal would have problems with freezing temperatures. It also has the potential to be in the hundred-year flood

plain. It may have environmental permitting issues. Head room for construction machinery could be an issue. The option does not preclude the development of the lower parking lots.

Clifton Below stated the walkway could be constructed above the flood plain. He also confirmed there would be adequate headroom for people to walk at that location of the walkway.

Karen Liot Hill discussed the Council's desire to create a development of the Shoetorium building. They were not excited about having a parking canyon where once there was a mall courtyard. It could accommodate parking that is below a structure. There is a need for additional parking, especially with the potential development of the Shoetorium building.

Staff are still concerned about the additional \$2 million expense of Option 4-A and that the money could be used to address other projects of the Visioning process that they would like to focus on. Option 1 and Option 2 allow the focus on connectivity and don't preclude developing the Riverwalk sometime in the future.

City Manager Mulholland showed pictures of other tunnels from projects in other cities. They included good lighting and artwork on the walls. He stated that research has shown that murals on the walls reduce damage and vandalism. The Arts and Culture Task Force has several ideas for treatment of the tunnel walls. Lebanon is also proposing video cameras that can be monitored by the Police Department and will be apparent to the public. He expressed concern about the long-term maintenance of the addition of glass to the tunnel. Marking the walkways and tunnel with directions was thought to be important for people to find their way. Karen Liot Hill suggested a specific brand or logo for the Greenway to maintain the continuity of the way and add clear markings through the tunnel and parking lot to channel people toward safer places to walk.

City Manager Mulholland stated that none of the committees have recommended one specific option. He asked EVEC to provide comment on the pros and cons of the three options and make a recommendation if they were so inclined.

Clifton Below and Karen Liot Hill discussed in more detail the aspects of the proposed Riverwalk. One proposal was a suspended walkway to stay above the hundred-year flood level. Alternative materials such as skid resistant metal decking that allowed the rain, snow and ice conditions to pass through the deck were mentioned. They described the proposed pathway and how it would connect to the existing walking patterns in the city and suggested the possibility of alternative plans that are less comprehensive to reduce costs.

Kevin Purcell said repairing the tunnel is likely a good idea. There are potential problems and incidents because it is a long, enclosed area but maybe those can be minimized with lighting and art work. The glass looks nice, but he noted the complications and costs of maintaining the glass. He mentioned there are environmental issues related to treatments weather conditions on a walkway over the river. They discussed the extreme long-term costs with maintaining anything that is built over the river; and noted that the river is peaceful sometimes and angry at other times of the year. There are additional considerations about public safety that should be considered about the Riverwalk.

Maintaining the tunnel for flood resilience, by keeping it open, is likely more beneficial for the parking lot and the City by helping to reduce the amount of water during a flood. Plugging the tunnel is almost as expensive as refurbishing it. Perhaps a hybrid of the proposals can be considered for time and expense.

The Committee was in support of Option 1 and Option 2. The possibilities could include some glass and open air and the option for stairs to get up to the mall. They were also in favor of keeping the tunnel open for future flexibility. The Riverwalk would still be an option for the future.

Jeff Goodrich moved to keep the tunnel open, to maintain and repair it, to optimize flexibility with respect to the future Visioning Process and to address flood resiliency needs in the short term and long term. Seconded by Rob Taylor.

**** Vote on the MOTION passed 4-0-2. Clifton Below and Karen Liot Hill abstained.***

The Committee further discussed that the bulk of the money will be spent on concrete and steel and recognized there would be additional expense for some of these enhancements. They felt it is important that these improvements please the public, are aesthetically appealing, safe, peaceful and provide adequate seating. It's the little things that will make it a value to the public.

➤ **Discussion of TIF Advisory Board implementation.**

City Manager Mulholland discussed that the new TIF Advisory Board was going to be created. The hearing for the creation of the Board will be October 3, 2018. He said he requested that an ex-officio member be added from the Chamber of Commerce. He stated they are going to need volunteers to be appointed to the Board. The meetings will be once a month. The committee questioned if a member must live or own property in the TIF district. The response was four members must own or occupy property within or adjacent to the district; two will not own or occupy property within or adjacent to the district and there will be one City Council representative. All must be Lebanon residents. There will be two ex-officios to the Board. David Brooks described the work of the TIF, which would be advising the Council and District Administrator, on the construction, operation and maintenance of the District. The Board will weigh in on 79-E Applications within the district.

➤ **Discussion of implementation of the Downtown Visioning Process as it relates to re-development and public infrastructure. Chapters 5 and 6 of the Visioning Plan.**

○ **What are the next steps?**

City Manager Mulholland said after the sewer project and the tunnel project decisions are made it will be time to move forward on the elements of the Visioning Process. Chapter 5 and 6 are well laid out for the new work. It's time to get the planning done so the city is in a position to move forward when the money is available.

○ **Who should the participants be?**

It isn't clear in the plan which board or committee will be leading this work. In terms of staff, David Brooks and Shelley Hadfield will be leading this work out of the Planning Department. The TIF Advisory Board will have a piece of it, EVEC will have a piece of it, and both will need to make recommendations to the Council.

o What should the timeline be?

In 2019 the city will be working on some of the capital improvement items. The timeline needs to be determined and will encompass multiple years. The West Lebanon Visioning will be coming up next year and the City will want to be able to act on that plan and get some projects done in West Lebanon.

IV. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Karen Liot Hill asked about adding the High-tech Council that was on the agenda earlier this summer to next month's agenda. Kevin Purcell stated they are continuing to work on it. Several members are working on assignees. There won't be a public event.

V. NEXT MEETING DATE

➤ Wednesday, September 26, 2018

VI. OTHER BUSINESS: None

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Kevin Purcell moved for adjournment. Seconded by Jeff Goodrich.

****The motion passed unanimously, 6-0***

The meeting was adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Billings
Recording Secretary