

**FREEPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**TUESDAY, January 26, 2016, 7:30 AM**  
**Freeport Community Services**  
**MINUTES**

**1. The meeting convened at 7:35**

**In attendance:** Jim Cassida, Wendy Caisse, Candice Rinaldi, Chip Gray, Adam Nappi, Peter Troast, Ed Bradley, Andrew Kull, Scott Gleeson

**Absent:** Zane Shatzer, Mark Malone, Betsy Ruff, Mary Davis, Peter Joseph

**Guests:** Fred Palmer, John Patterson

**2. Introductory comments**

Jim welcomed everyone following the holiday break from board meetings. He said that since there was a presentation on the agenda, he wanted to introduce Fred Palmer and John Patterson and take their item slightly out of order.

**3. Presentation from John Patterson and Fred Palmer, Field and Track Project**

Jim introduced John and Fred. John began by saying that they had been leading the effort to raise funds for the Tri-town Track and Field Project, but that his awareness of the need came about from mentoring and other involvement with students. The high school, built in 1961, has overused and outdated facilities. It is the only high school in class A and B that does not have a track. Fred said that the project anticipated a need for \$3.2 million. He described himself and John (and some others) as merely a funding mechanism for the project. So far, he said that they had raised or identified approximately \$2 million, which leaves \$1.2 million to be raised from "major gifts" and some other sources. He said that number included a million-dollar donor which would be announced later that day. He did not identify the donor. It also included \$600-800,000 from bond money that had been set-aside to re-do the existing grass field. John said that they hoped for an endorsement from the FEDC board for their efforts, some support in the discussion with the town council (at which they anticipated asking the council for an allocation), and also for some additional information and guidance on contacts for the remainder of their campaign. The high school renovations were due to be completed in September, which includes new drainage in the grass field this summer, so the project fundraising would need to be complete this summer or fall. Jim asked if they had considered phased development to better accommodate their timeframe, but John replied that phasing doesn't work for this project. Fred added that the timeline was also impacted by the potential for public votes (referendum) which might be necessary for some of the funding re-allocation they would be requesting. Jim asked Keith how funding/donation activities have been handled in the past by FEDC. Keith said that other than raising money for its own special projects (like Vision2025) FEDC did not engage in fundraising. Ed said that Keith had also been involved in supporting the FACA fundraising effort. David said that FEDC could play a role by providing connections to potential donors, and by encouraging the business community to listen to the ask. John and Fred agreed that this would be very helpful. Adam commented that retail is changing, and that investment in the core of Freeport is critical, and encouraged everyone to contribute. The board talked about how this new facility could be an attraction and driver for customers to Freeport. Ed moved that FEDC officially endorse the fundraising effort, and Adam seconded. The vote was unanimous of all those present and voting. Keith offered to meet with Fred and John, and share whatever contacts they needed, and could also make some calls to encourage potential donors to listen to their ask. Dave suggested that John and Fred contact athletic boosters, Freeport Soccer and Tritown baseball.

**4. Consent Agenda Items:**

**1. Approval of MINUTES of November 17, 2015 meeting**

**2. Acceptance of FINANCIAL STATEMENT for the period ending December 31, 2015**

Adam moved the entire consent agenda. David seconded. The vote was unanimous of all those present and voting.

**5. Economic Development Report (Written Report)**

Keith asked the board if there were questions regarding the written report. There were none. Keith added that he had recently looked at the retail sales numbers, and was concerned at the lack of growth. The board members

engaged in a discussion about the changing retail landscape, and how Freeport is positioned as an experiential retail location, not just an outlet/discount shopping area. Keith mentioned that hospitality/restaurant business continues to grow despite the rest of retail being somewhat flat. Chip offered a perspective from the hospitality side, and Wendy spoke about the restaurant business. Keith said that retail businesses were seeking smaller and smaller spaces, but there remained a number of vacancies which were 5000 square feet, or more which seemed like could never be filled. He also mentioned that a number of smaller, non-national businesses closed just after the holiday season, and wondered if Freeport businesses were really prepared for the changes in retail. He said that he had spoken about this matter with Stephanie at the chamber, and knew that she was concerned about it, as well. There could be an opportunity to collaborate.

Ed spoke about the clam flat leasing issue. The issue implicates economic development because of its impact on commercial fishing. Freeport could become the first town to implement municipal leasing of clam flats, which only recently became state law. Chip Gray asked for more detail, and Ed spoke about the issue including how it impacts riparian property owners, and how it changes the situation for existing commercial fishermen. Ed asked whether or not FEDC should endorse municipal leasing as a good business plan. The board asked Keith to gather more information and put the issue on the agenda for the February meeting.

#### **6. Review of Draft Budget for FY2017**

Keith presented a draft budget for FY2017. He said that although they would not need to adopt the new budget for some time, he needed to explore the topic with the board early, because he would have to prepare a memo for the upcoming council workshop which included our request for funds for FY2017. The board said that the amount requested seemed sufficient for now, but welcomed a more thorough discussion about our budget and priorities in the coming months.

#### **7. Discussion and Preparation for FEDC/Town Council Workshop (March 8)**

Keith confirmed that FEDC's workshop with the council would take place on March 8. He encouraged as many board members as possible to attend. In the meantime, he asked the board for some feedback on the presentation for that evening, and for the memo which he needed to draft for the council. What is the message for the past year, and what do we want to focus on in our discussion? Ed asked whether there would be opposition, and Keith said that last year, there was no opposition to FEDC's funding request during the budget meetings, and that the discussion with the council was very cordial and casual. In fact, some of the councilors had very complementary things to say about the work FEDC had done. There were a few suggestions for improvement, and one councilor held on to his opposition to funding FEDC, but other than that, the conversation went very well. Ed suggested talking about how FEDC's work has focused on quality of life strategies, like the schools and the arts center development project. Wendy agreed, and encouraged Keith to add the board's endorsement of the track fundraising effort as evidence of that. She also suggested presenting the council with a bullet point list of projects that FEDC assisted, and other ways that Keith spent his time. She also recommending focusing on Vision2025 as our look to the future, and showing our progress in implementing it.

#### **8. The meeting adjourned at 9:15.**