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By Karen Wilber at 1:32 pm, Sep 22, 2022

**WHITE CLIFFS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES – June 23, 2022**

10:00 a.m. – Chairman’s Introduction to Remote Meeting

Chairman Helwig stated that pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the White Cliff Committee will be conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance by members of the public will be permitted.

Chairman Helwig confirmed that the following members and persons were remotely present and could be heard:

Committee Members

Todd Helwig, Committee Chairman - CPC Representative
Norm Corbin, Committee Vice Chair - Historical District Commission Liaison
Julianne Hirsh, Board of Selectmen Liaison
Tom Reardon, At-Large Member

Member Absent

Diana Nicklaus, At-Large Member

Town Staff

John Coderre, Town Administrator
Laurie Connors, Town Planner
Scott Charpentier, DPW Director
Shawn Thompson, Facilities Manager

1. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: December 18, 2020 and May 26, 2022

December 18, 2020 - Mr. Corbin moved to approve the meeting minutes for December 18, 2020 as amended; Ms. Hirsh seconded the motion. The roll call vote was taken as follows:

| | | | |
|--------|-------|---------|-------|
| Corbin | “aye” | Reardon | “aye” |
| Hirsh | “aye” | Helwig | “aye” |

May 26, 2022 – minutes for this meeting were unavailable and postponed to next meeting.

2. INTERVIEW AND SELECTION OF CONSULTANTS TO ASSIST WITH CREATING A REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS DOCUMENT AND MARKETING SERVICES

Mr. Coderre began by stating that at the last meeting, the Committee voted to approve a request to the Community Preservation Committee for the remaining FY22 administrative funds to be used to engage a consultant to help with the RFP process and to market the project to find a partner interested in working with the Town and to help bring the White Cliffs back to use. The CPC met on June 6, 2022 and unanimously voted to approve the

request for the remaining funds. In anticipation of the funding approval Mr. Corbin did much of the research and reached out to potential consultants. Together they came up with a short list of 3 consultants, based on their familiarity with the Town and/or with the White Cliffs. Mr. Coderre explained the process. Each consultant will have 30 minutes for their presentation and for questions. After all 3 have been interviewed, the members will deliberate and take a formal vote. Mr. Coderre listed the consultants schedule as follows:

10:15 a.m. - Eric Busch with Peregrine Group. Peregrine Group worked with DBVW as a subcontractor for the White Cliffs Feasibility and Reuse Study.

10:45 a.m. - Luke Mitchell, with VHB. VHB is the firm that has done a lot of work with the Town. Most recently, they helped the Town complete its Master Plan.

11:15 a.m. - Brett Pelletier with Kirk & Company. Kirk & Company was hired by the Town many years ago, before the Town owned White Cliffs, to do a study to help market the facility in an attempt to see if there was interest in the building.

Mr. Coderre noted that copies of the 3 proposals were included in the meeting packet.

10:15 a.m. – Eric Busch, Peregrine Group

Mr. Busch gave a presentation about the firm, reviewed projects completed and current, and provided details of their proposal.

The Chairman asked for questions and comments:

- Mr. Helwig asked Mr. Busch how do you get from talking to you to getting a partner who is going to actually run this property. Mr. Busch replied that the path, to him, is more of an operator rather than developer.
- Mr. Corbin asked Mr. Busch if he could explain the role of an operator. Mr. Busch replied that an operator understands what can be done thru a business model, where as a developer looks at it from a physical aspect.
- Mr. Coderre asked if Mr. Busch could speak to his experience with filling the revenue gap. Mr. Busch replied with examples and stated that in this case, he believes that the historic tax credit component is significant because of state and federal funding. He would encourage that the project go thru Mass Development, which has a number of resources thru their One-stop program. It is possible that one could end up with seven or eight funding sources. The projects he mentioned in his presentation have all had some sort of gap funding sources.
- Mr. Reardon asked Mr. Bush if the operator would be hired by the Town or by the developer. Mr. Busch replied that the operator would be hired by the Town.
- Ms. Connors asked what tools would he use to market the property to the operators. Mr. Busch replied that he sent out a few anonymous emails to some folks in the industry to see who might be a good source to help generate excitement for the project. He also has several contacts that he reached out to for some names. He stated that the thought is to create a clear path to reach out to and see what the level of interest is.
- Mr Reardon asked if there was any additional documentation he would need from the Town to help him put this information together. He replied that there is sufficient information to start.

- Mr. Coderre asked about a timeline and how long it would take for the development of the RFP process, the assessment, and decision. Mr. Busch replied it would be approximately a three month process. First month is nimble, conversational, directional to help form the right path of market research, talking to potential targets and associations. Three months to get something out, and then the process will be stages of decision points.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Bush.

10:45 a.m. – Luke Mitchell, VHB

Mr. Mitchell gave a presentation on the company and provided details of the scope of services.

The Chairman asked for questions and comments.

- Mr. Coderre asked if Mr. Mitchell could give some examples of projects that VHB has done which most align with this project and how they turned out. Mr. Mitchell replied they worked on one of the State Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) properties called the Allen House in Pittsfield. It is one of the most challenging properties in their inventory, vacant for 30 years. Mr. Mitchell said that it is similar to the White Cliffs in that there are many challenges with the site, with deferred maintenance issues, and with utilities.
- Mr. Charpentier asked Mr. Mitchell if VHB is a “House Doctor” for DCAM. Mr. Mitchell replied yes. A “House Doctor” refers to an as needed consultant.
- Mr. Helwig stated that the written proposal references identifying 5 developers, not operators. How do you get from 5 to 1. Mr. Mitchell asked what type of business are you looking to have here? Mr. Helwig replied that after much analysis, it looks likely to be hospitality with event space. Mr. Mitchell replied that we may want to see if we can get input from hotel operators.
- Mr. Corbin stated that Mr. Mitchell mentioned local developers. He said he would prefer to cast a wider search, including outside of New England.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Mitchell.

11:15 a.m. – Brett Pelletier, Kirk & Company

Mr. Pelletier gave a presentation on the background and qualifications of Kirk & Company, and then he reviewed the details of their proposal.

Questions from the Committee and Staff:

- Ms. Connors asked what tools will they use to market a property like this? Mr. Pelletier replied that for the most part, the people you want to respond are not actively looking at Northborough. You just need to get into their circles. This is more of a relationship exercise, which is his strength.
- Mr. Helwig stated that most of Kirk & Company’s projects are big and this is a small project. Will that be a problem? Mr. Pelletier replied that a smaller project presents smaller challenges, specifically, there will be a smaller pool of potential candidates.
- Mr. Coderre asked for a timeline. Mr. Pelletier replied that one year is not an unreasonable expectation.

- Mr. Coderre asked where would potential funding sources come from? Mr. Pelletier replied that it depends on what the outcome is. Some examples are historic tax credits, regional banks, insurance companies, pension funds, low income housing tax credit and housing credits in general.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Pelletier.

Mr. Helwig asked Mr. Coderre if there were rules for the deliberation process. Mr. Coderre replied that generally the best approach is to go around and ask people what their thoughts are and move towards a general consensus. Mr. Coderre stated that all three of these consultants are experienced and know the Town and any one of them would do a great job on this project.

Mr. Helwig asked for input from members and staff.

Ms. Hirsh thought that Mr. Pelletier from Kirk & Company was the most agreeable to working with the Committee and added that his presentation was the clearest. She has no second choice.

Mr. Corbin agrees with Mr. Coderre in that we are fortunate to have three good choices. The two that have worked with us in the past have a huge advantage because they know the building. Mr. Corbin's first choice is Kirk & Company and his second is Peregrine Group.

Mr. Reardon thought VHB had the strongest outline. He was very impressed with both Mr. Busch's and Mr. Pelletier's presentations. They both seemed to be vetted in this historic readapting project and they both know the building. Mr. Reardon's first choice is Kirk & Company and his second is Peregrine Group, but he would like to see them adopt VHB's outline of services.

Ms. Connors agrees that Kirk & Company is her first choice. She added that she spent a little bit of time online and it looks like Kirk & Company has quite a bit of experience working with historic reuse and she would expect that they would bring that expertise to this building. Peregrine Group is her second choice.

Mr. Coderre also agrees with the top two choices being Peregrine Group and Kirk & Company. He added that we have had great experience with VHB, but the thing that stood out is the marketing component. Both consultants would do a great job. He would be happy to go with Kirk & Company or Peregrine Group.

Mr. Charpentier stated that he had Peregrine Group and Kirk & Company even. Mr. Busch has the institutional knowledge of the property. His first choice is Peregrine Group and second choice is Kirk & Company.

Mr. Thompson stated that he also liked Mr. Busch's presentation and that he preferred the operator first, then developer. His first choice is Peregrine Group and his second is Kirk & Company.

Mr. Helwig agreed with Mr. Charpentier and Mr. Thompson for the same reasons. The focus on the operator and the cost delta.

Ms. Hirsh moved the Committee to vote to authorize the Town Administrator to enter into a contract with Kirk & Company to develop the RFP for White Cliffs. Mr. Reardon seconded the motion. The roll call vote was taken as follows:

| | | | |
|--------|-------|---------|-------|
| Hirsh | “aye” | Reardon | “aye” |
| Corbin | “aye” | Helwig | “aye” |

3. NEXT MEETING

Mr. Coderre said that we will circle back and meet after the contract has been executed and he can confirm the consultant’s availability for the next meeting. Mr. Corbin asked if the Committee could meet in the next 3 weeks to discuss some other issues, not necessarily having to do with the discussion with the consultant. They agreed to meet on July 20th at 2 p.m.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Hirsh said that she had a conversation with the charitable foundation at Smith & Wesson about the White Cliffs property. She asked if this was something she could pursue. The Committee thought this was a good idea.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Hirsh moved the Committee vote to adjourn the meeting at 12:00 p.m.; Mr. Corbin seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

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|--------|-------|---------|-------|
| Hirsh | “aye” | Reardon | “aye” |
| Corbin | “aye” | Helwig | “aye” |

Respectfully Submitted,

Lynda LePoer
Executive Assistant

Documents used during meeting:

1. June 23, 2022 Meeting Agenda
2. Meeting Minutes from December 18, 2020
3. Proposals submitted by Peregrine Group, Kirk & Company and VHB