RUTLAND REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
CITY OF RUTLAND
1 Strongs Avenue
RUTLAND, VERMONT 05701
(802) 775-2910

Regular Meeting / August 26, 2025
Minutes

Attendance: Edward Clark, Mary Markowski, Israel Mac, Chris Ettori, Lori Arner and Stephanie Romeo

Also attending: Sean Adkins**,** Ed Bove, Mayor Doenges Hal Issente, Connor Balestra and Barbara Spaulding

Absent: Larry Cupoli

I. Edward called the meeting to order at 8 am.

II. Additions/Deletions – Edward suggested moving the BIAP applicant earlier in the meeting and adding the final annual report from Horizon's Early Learning Center. Mary asked if the Executive Director update would include ratifying the $5,500 expense request. Sean said it will.

III. Chris moved to approve the minutes of August 12, 2025. Lori seconded. Edward asked that his comment on page 2 under VIII. Executive Director Update, paragraph 2, be changed to "Edward said this should be included in the bid documents." Motion was approved 6-0.

IV. Public Comment – None.

V. Warrant – Israel moved to direct the Chair to sign the warrant for 800 expenses totaling $1,072.10 and recommend payment to the Board of Finance for 100 expenses totaling $118.50. Stephanie seconded. Motion was approved 6-0.

VI. New Business – BIAP Application Bin Force One. Barbara introduced the application saying that Connor Balestra is requesting a $5,000 BIAP Grant for his new business, Bin Force One LLC, to help with marketing efforts. The application meets the criteria of the grant with $143,176 of personal investment. Connor discussed how he came to start the business and that it is the first eco-friendly trash bin cleaning service in Vermont. He described the services and associated costs which include pressure washing and graffiti removal. Chris asked about marketing. Connor said he is currently using word of mouth and Facebook, but that he would like to hire a dedicated person in the industry to help him market the business. Mary asked whether the residential service is viable. Connor believes it will be considering he is EPA certified and uses no chemicals. Lori said the external cleaning seems to be a big part of the business and asked why it wasn't included more in the application. Connor said he is considering starting a second LLC, Pressure Force

One, for that aspect of the business. Edward explained that the application will be tabled for two weeks.

VII. DRP Update – Streetscape Contract. Hal requested the RRA Board's approval to contract with the DPW for the streetscape work previously being done by the Rec Dept. He explained that any bidders for the contract would have to schedule clean up with DPW and that this would be much easier. Mary asked about the contract amount. Hal said it would be the $11,000 set aside in the DRP FY26 budget. The consensus of the Board was that it made sense that the DRP contract with DPW for the streetscape services.

Thrift District Sign Request – Hal received a request from Jamie Watkins of Bougie on a Budget for signage on upper Merchants Row highlighting the area as a thrift district. Hal agreed that promoting the cluster of thrift businesses on upper Merchants Row would promote the area as a destination. He therefore proposed adding small, colorful banners to the poles as the easiest solution. Hal mentioned that updating the downtown wayfinding signs is a bigger lift, but that the DRP is considering an update with a QR code that links to the DRP website where an updated list would be available. This would be a more sustainable way to keep signage updated. He has created a physical map of the downtown as well that will be provided to all of the downtown merchants during construction of the hotel.

Barbara praised Hal and Alex for all their hard work during the Downtown Street Party and Sidewalk Sales this past Saturday. She said they were putting out a lot of fires and did a great job. Hal discussed the success of the event having come back after a hiatus since 2019 and said they learned a lot in preparation for how events will look different during the upcoming construction.

VIII. Executive Director Update – Sean asked for $5,500 from the Business Development assigned fund balance to use as a donation to thank CEDRR. Chris asked if Board approval was necessary to allocate funds from that line item. Mary said yes. Chris moved to allocate $5,500 from the business development fund balance as a general donation to CEDRR for their support. Lori seconded. Motion was approved 6-0.

Sean said he made a presentation on Land Banking for Montpelier on Monday. He also has Barbara compiling a list of every business in Rutland City which will be used to unveil the BRE program at the end of September. He is also working on rebranding the RLFs and the BIAP. The public hearing on the TIF Bond language was held Monday night and the Aldermen approved the ballot language. There was some discussion on whether the hearing was successful considering only two members of the public were present. Ed Bove said the hearing was one of many public meetings that have been held to discuss the TIF. He added that handouts will be provided at the Whoopie Pie Festival on Sept. 13. Sean said there are bond vote lawn signs in the office for anyone who wants one.

Mary asked about the discussion of Blighted Properties at the C&ED meeting on August 7. Sean said it was discussion of penalties or increased taxes for owners of blighted properties.

IX. TIF Update – Addressed in Executive Director's update.

X. BOA Update – None.

XI. Old Business – Update on Pies the Limit Bakery. Barbara reported that the bakery has closed as of August 15.

BIAP Annual Reports – Nail'd It, AAI, Taco Fresco and Loose Loona. Barbara asked for a motion to receive and file the second annual reports for Nail'd It, AAI, Taco Fresco and Loose Loona. Mary so moved. Chris seconded. Motion was approved 6-0.

Horizons Early Learning Center Final Report – Barbara said Horizons was given an extension to complete the remaining milestones in the loan agreement that were delayed due to construction issues that were out of the Center's control. She provided the Board with copies of the final BIAP report dated 8/25/25 which states that all of the milestones have been met, the facility is up and running and at full capacity. Chris moved to accept the final report and recommend to the Board of Aldermen forgiveness of the BIAP loan. Lori seconded. Motion was approved 6-0.

XII. New Business – Discussion of defaulted BIAP Loans. Barbara prepared an updated list of all of the BIAP recipients from 2017-2025, both the $10,000 loans and the $5,000 grants, with the four BIAP loans in default highlighted. She discussed each of the business owners' situations: The Pies the Limit, Ana's Empanadas, Kismet Kitchen and Euphoric Hair Experience. The loan document allows the City to grant extensions of the loan end date or early forgiveness when certain conditions have been met. The BIAP update is still in the Community & Economic Development Committee and Barbara is looking for guidance on how to proceed. Edward suggested that each of the four business owners make their request in person to the RRA Board and the Board agreed. Mary suggested setting a time limit and the two RRA meetings in September were recommended. Barbara will follow up with these business owners.

Recruitment – The Mayor suggested that the RRA conduct another media blitz to fill the two vacant seats on the RRA Board and consider a business owner now that the Legislature made the change to the Board makeup, as well as, focus on someone in the economic development arena. Mary suggested asking CEDRR for assistance. Hal offered to share the message with his Board and Downtown property owners.

XIII. Adjourn – All items on the agenda were addressed. The meeting ended at 8:55 am. The next meeting will be held on September 9 at 8 am. Lori said she is unavailable on the 23rd, but could remotely attend on the 9th if needed for a quorum.

These minutes were approved this ____ day of ____________________, 2025.

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Mary A. Markowski, Secretary