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

Regular Meeting / September 9, 2025
Minutes

Attendance: Edward Clark, Mary Markowski, Israel Mac, *Chris Ettori, Larry Cupoli, Stephanie Romeo

Also attending: Sean Adkins**,** Ed Bove, Mary and Wayne Crockett, Ana Araguas, Laurel Rice, Eric Petersen and Barbara Spaulding

Absent: Lori Arner

I. Edward called the meeting to order at 8:01 am.

II. Additions/Deletions – Edward suggested moving the BIAP recipients in attendance after the warrant.

III. Larry moved to approve the minutes of August 26, 2025. Mary seconded. Motion was approved 5-0.

*Chris arrived

IV. Public Comment – None.

V. Warrant – Israel moved to direct the Chair to sign the warrant for 800 expenses totaling $35,412.36 and recommend payment to the Board of Finance for 100 expenses totaling $6,289.00. Chris seconded. Motion was approved 6-0.

VI. New Business – BIAP Update for Pies the Limit, Ana's Empanadas and Kismet Kitchen.

Mary Crockett, owner of Pies the Limit, discussed the reasons for closing the bakery before the 3-year loan term ended. She talked about her husband's recent diagnosis and the fact that she is his full-time care provider. She has no plans to reopen the bakery any time in the near future. Mary asked if she had other obligations. Mary the lease and other loan obligations.

Ana Araguas, owner of Ana's Empanadas, discussed the reasons for closing her business before the 3-year loan term ended. She discussed how she had to close the business due to damage and dust from the upstairs tenant's construction, as well as significant disruptions and having a dumpster in front of her window. Ana mentioned that as early as last Friday there was flooding in her space due to the showers from the upstairs tenants. Mary asked about other obligations. Ana said she also has other obligations and needs time to pay back the BIAP loan.

Laurel Rice, owner of Kismet Kitchen, discussed the reasons for closing her restaurant. She said due to life choices she has been unable to stay in business and asked for partial loan forgiveness given she met many of the milestones in the agreement. Laurel brought a partial payment, but the Board told her to hold onto it until a formal decision is made. Mary asked about other financial obligations and whether she owned the property. Laurel said she leased the property and borrowed funds from other sources.

The Board opted to hold an executive session at the end of the meeting so as not to discuss contract negotiations in public.

VII. Grant and Outreach Update – Barbara provided the following grant and outreach updates.

Hospital Heights aka Mahoney Grove Apartments - The progress report for the period ended March 31, 2025, was approved on Aug. 26 after modifications were made by the subgrantee including contractor, Section 3, relocation and BABA information. As soon as the beneficiary information has been collected, this grant will begin closeout procedures. The report for the monitoring review that was conducted in July is still pending.

Rutland Housing Initiative 120 Maple Street – The June 30 progress report has been approved. The request for an amendment to extend the grant end date was approved for 12/31/2025. All the units have been rented and when the beneficiary information is collected the remaining close-out procedures will begin.

Housing Planning Grant – Chris Louras has reached out to ask for a meeting with the RRA to discuss the homeless issues and he and Megan are finalizing their report. The next progress report is due Oct. 15 at which time the third requisition will be filed.

HTRC/NWWVT Merger Planning Grant – Barbara met with Mary Cohen last month and has been following up with the remaining special conditions so that a requisition can be processed.

East Creek Commons – The City received an extension until November 1 to meet the award conditions. A list of conditions still to be met has been forwarded to Mary Cohen and Dan Caputo.

BRIC – Local Hazard Mitigation Plan – The final requisition has been submitted, and funds are expected to be received soon. The next quarterly report is due on Oct. 15. The plan is being reviewed by Emergency Management per Chief Lovett.

Outreach – Checks were presented to both Treviso for the $10,000 BIAP loan and the $5,000 BIAP grant to Olympic Pizza. Photos were posted to the RRA Facebook page.

On Sept. 2, the Aldermen approved forgiveness of the $10,000 BIAP Loan for Beth Towb LLC dba Horizons Early Learning Center and the Mayor signed the letter releasing the debt. The Aldermen commented on how this BIAP was a shining example of how the BIAP is successful.

Barbara continues to reach out to BIAP recipients who are late submitting their annual reports. As she collects the reports, she will put them on the RRA agenda.

Barbara met with Nicole Powell on Sept. 5 to discuss a BIAP application for Rustic Magnolia, a florist shop slated to go into Taylor Square in October. An application is expected for the Sept. 23 meeting.

Mary asked if there are any new grants pending. Barbara said she is working with DPW on three recently awarded grants, the NBRC grant, and two VTrans grant applications are pending. Sean added that there will be an application to the SRL, State's Revolving Loan.

VIII. Executive Director Update – Sean distributed copies of an economic development incentives program, L.I.F.T. Rutland, Local Incentives & Financing to Thrive. He said the program is the umbrella for all the incentives, funding and benefits under the purview of the RRA. In particular he proposed relacing the City's Business Incentive Assistance Program (BIAP) with a new FaceLIFT program which would be available to qualifying commercial, industrial and mixed-use development located within the City of Rutland. These grants would be a reimbursement of 50% up to $10K of eligible projects that assist in continuous structural and visual improvement within the City. Sean added that it would be difficult to defraud this revision of the program. There was also discussion of reasons the HFCU BIAP was not being utilized including the interest rate set by the bank. Sean would also like to see a reduction in the interest rates for both the SBD RLF and the Market-rate RLF. Chris proposed a split of the proposed new BIAP program to include $5,000 reimbursable grants to new businesses and $10,000 reimbursable grants for property owners for structural improvements that stay with the building. Mary agreed to get away from loans and added that CEDRR has a business loan program. Eric asked if there would be a pre-approval process. Sean said he has created an application for the new program. Chris asked that more details be added to the proposal for the purpose of both the $5,000 new business grant and the $10,000 structural improvement grant. Sean pointed out the list of eligible and ineligible projects for the $10,000 grants. Chris moved to recommend to the Aldermen approval of the proposed FaceLift program as presented by Sean to include the $5,000 reimbursable new business grant and $10,000 reimbursable structural improvement grant. Israel seconded. Motion was approved 6-0.

IX. TIF Update – Sean said he and Ed Bove will be meeting with the public to educate them on the TIF in addition to several articles that have been published and distributing the yard signs. Ed mentioned that “leave behinds” have also been distributed. Sean has been working on the public notice. Ed said that the polls are open at City Hall to vote ahead of Oct. 7. Mary is concerned about questions she has been asked regarding how the $3.9 million bond will affect tax bills. Sean noted that the education tax would be paid, and the city would benefit from future tax revenue. There was discussion regarding the cost to taxpayers if the bond vote fails. Israel suggested that the Board submit an “outcome neutral” Letter to the Editor on the merits of the TIF Bond and the consequences if it is not successful, to be signed by each of the Board members. Larry said he is concerned about getting people out to vote and Mary suggested that the City Website be updated with the bond vote information. Stephanie suggested that Hal of the Downtown Rutland Partnership add the bond vote to their social media.

X. BOA Update – Larry said he did not have an update from the Aldermen.

XI. Old Business – BIAP application Bin Force One

Chris moved to recommend to the Aldermen approval of a $5,000 BIAP Grant for Bin Force One. Stephanie seconded. There was some debate on whether or not the business was portable and how it contributed to the BIAP program’s intention. Motion was approved 6-0.

XII. New Business – Annual reports Avanti and The Grateful Vermonter
Barbara had forwarded the first annual BIAP reports and receipts from Avanti and The Grateful Vermonter to the Board. Chris moved to receive and file both reports. Larry seconded. Motion was approved 6-0.

Treasurer’s Reports 6/30/2025 and 7/31/2025 – Mary discussed the June 30, 2025, report and noted on the balance sheet there is a due to balance of $43K. This will be resolved with a transfer from the RRA account to the City. The June 30, 2025, fund balance was $47K due to not having an ED. Once all the necessary A/Ps are recorded there should be a balance of $35,000 to start FY26. For the July report she said there isn’t much to report other than the RRA budgeted a shortfall of $5,600 for FY26.

XIII. Executive Session – Chris moved to go into Executive Session under 1 VSA §313 that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the RRA/City at a substantial disadvantage in the discussion of contracts. Larry seconded. Motion was approved 6-0.

Chris moved to go into Executive Session at 9:14 am and invited both Sean and Barbara to stay. Stephanie seconded. Motion was approved 6-0.

Larry moved to go out of Executive Session at 9:34 am. Chris seconded. Motion was approved 6-0. No formal action was taken.

XIV. Adjourn – Larry moved to adjourn. Chris seconded. Motion was approved 6-0. The meeting ended at 9:35 am. The next meeting will be held on September 23 at 8 am.

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

____
Mary A. Markowski, Secretary