

**Jefferson County Industrial Development Agency  
Building and Grounds Ad hoc Committee Meeting Minutes  
December 18, 2024**

**Present:** John Condino, Rob Aiken, Lisa L’Huillier

**Absent:** Greg Gardner, David Converse

**Also Present:** Marshall Weir, Jay Matteson, Lyle Eaton, Robin Stephenson, Peggy Sampson, Paul Warneck, Dawn Robinson, Alex Morgia  
Zoom: William Johnson

- I. Call to Order:** Chair Condino called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance**
- III. Other/Unfinished Business**
  - 1. Corporate Park Signage** – Mr. Weir said that Alex Morgia is here and is interested in discussing corporate park signage. He said that Mr. Morgia owns a building in our Jefferson County Corporate Park, and he is interested in putting a sign on the back of the building facing Interstate 81 to advertise another one of his properties. He said that he sent Mr. Morgia the covenants because this is a covenant and potential zoning issue with the Town of Watertown. He said they discussed it and have different opinions on what would be allowable. Mr. Aiken asked what building Mr. Morgia owns. Mr. Warneck said it is the McGrann Paper building.  
  
Mr. Morgia said he sent Mr. Weir a mock-up showing a photoshop of ‘sacketshotels.com’ on the back of the building above the tree line. He said that in doing research on advertising on billboards on the south side of Watertown, he thought it was worth bringing a general inquiry to the IDA because some of those billboards run \$3,000 to \$4,000 per month. He said the property value is \$150,000 per \$1,000 in revenue per month is the ballpark. He said if you put proper billboards up, you’d be looking at potentially four of them and it will be a million dollars in property value increase which increases the tax roll. He said that regardless if the IDA wants to do something like that or change the zoning/covenants to allow that, he thinks something more discrete on the building would be nice.  
  
Mr. Morgia said that from his perspective as one of the six property owners in the park on the highway side, signage isn’t facing any residential areas nor out of the realm of the norm since Watertown has quite a few lit billboards. He said from his end, it’s a valuable part of the building that is going underutilized because of the high visibility going southbound on Interstate 81. He indicated that he just picked up the Barracks Inn in Sackets Harbor to use as a wedding venue and has had soldiers stay for a few weeks at the government rate during the off-season which was huge for his other hotel and also big for the restaurants in Sackets. He said from his end catching those eyes on the southbound is valuable and he doesn’t think it really costs anything from an aesthetic perspective and can be done in a pretty clean way and thinks it is

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worth considering opening up some of the covenants to allow some level of advertising or offsite business signage in the park. He believes it will create value for businesses and the community at-large without any major side effects. He indicated that he could draw up something more formal for the next meeting, so the committee has something to consider. Mr. Condino asked if he had any discussion with the Town Planning Board. Mr. Morgia said not yet. Mr. Weir said the Town has its own zoning and they are different than ours so we would need this to fall under both (their zoning and our covenants).

Mr. Weir read the following section of the covenants:

*Outdoor signs are subject to a permanent easement restricting signs and displays intended or used to advertise along Route 81. Signs will be limited to the identification of the occupants premises and will be of pleasing design and construction.*

Mr. Weir said this is a situation where we have an owner of a building in the corporate park looking to advertise one of his other properties. He said discussion for the committee would be the ‘identification of the occupants premises’, and he wondered if that means the business within the park. He asked if this is something we need to tighten up in the covenants. He said if we were to say the spirit of this is to advertise the business that is in the corporate park or is it where the committee would be inclined to look at it more at face value of ‘identification of the occupants premises’, that being a premise of where is it – is that a value that is there in owning the park that if you have another property. He doesn’t think this would allow building owners to sell the back of the building for advertising. He said it is something worth looking at and he agrees with Mr. Morgia that it does add value. HE said if there is value, how would that play out? He used North American Tapes as an example – he would like there to be a large North American Tapes advertisement on the back of their building showing that they are the world’s second-largest producer of adhesive tape and located in Jefferson County – he looks at that as a value. He said that whether or not that could extend to Mr. Morgia advertising the hotel on the back of his building is another question, but said it is for the committee to decide. Mr. Morgia said he was thinking of North American Tapes as a company that may not find as much value themselves in advertising and they would get more out of being able to advertise or sell the rights to advertise on the highway. Mr. Morgia thinks there is value and would rather use the building to advertise than pay to use billboards. He said that he would rather invest in and spend the money on the sign once and have it sit there indefinitely and not have to pay monthly. He said he appreciates the consideration either way.

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Mr. Aiken asked Mr. Morgia if ‘sacketshotels.com’ is just a link to his hotel or other hotels. Mr. Morgia said both hotels in Sackets had very wordy names and they are in the process of acquiring the Marina Inn, so it was a way of shortening and branding consistently across the two properties.

Mr. Condino suggested formalizing the request. He said that the committee will have to talk internally about the covenants, and we could work with the Town. Mr. Warneck said the covenants allow the board to make changes. He said historically we had a proposal years ago to allow billboards that was met with great opposition by the other tenants along Interstate 81. Mr. Warneck was looking at the zoning law and indicated that they don’t allow a lot of square footage for signage on buildings. He asked if the sign would have lights. Mr. Morgia said it would have lights facing it.

Mr. Aiken asked if it will be a sign that is attached to the building. Mr. Morgia said yes and indicated that it will be bolted to the building. Mr. Condino asked how big it will be. Mr. Morgia said approximately 10 feet tall and about two-thirds of the width of the building. He said the goal is to have it legible from the highway.

Mr. Weir said there has been discussion about cleaning up the space between the highway and the buildings because of shrubbery. He said it is tricky to determine who would be responsible for the clean-up and noted that there is a DOT right of way nearby.

Mr. Morgia left the meeting.

Mr. Warneck said there was a Corporate Park committee created years ago and wondered if it was rolled into the Building and Grounds committee. He said if not, it should be next year. Mr. Weir agreed.

Mr. Weir said that when he sent Mr. Morgia’s request to the committee, their initial reaction was that it violates the spirit of the covenants, which was also Attorney Miller’s immediate response.

Mr. Warneck thinks it will be classified as a billboard under the Town’s zoning and noted that we did not allow billboards in the past along Interstate 81.

Mr. Condino said the best way to approach this is a formal submission for the committee and Attorney Miller to look at as well as our covenants and the Town zoning. Mr. Warneck doesn’t think our covenants are an issue because the board can override them. Mr. Warneck said he would prefer a billboard rather than on the building because it will look tacky if it is not advertising what’s in the building since our goal is to advertise the park. He said that if we want to have off-premises then we

should talk about billboards and that's his personal opinion. He said it will cost a lot more money but if we could have a masterplan for two or three billboards.

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Ms. L'Huillier said if billboards will be allowed, it will have to be decided if digital billboards will be allowed. Mr. Warneck thinks a billboard will be less obnoxious to him as long as the other tenants and the Town are okay with it.

Other –

Mr. Condino mentioned that the Convalt sign is still at the Business Complex. Mr. Weir said it will be removed since the LDA expired and it can be marketed now.

**IV. Discuss:**

- 1. Business Complex Infrastructure Project** – Mr. Weir said the water and sewer line project could be done this week. He said it has been a good project and has gone smoothly. He said they have gone through a couple of rock saws and noted that there haven't been any issues as far as he can tell. He said that we are hoping to receive a final invoice within the next few weeks.

Mr. Warneck asked if our contract required 'as built'. Mr. Condino believes it did. He said they will be important because they changed, and we didn't build it exactly according to the plans for the water and sewer lines. Mr. Warneck said especially since we redesigned the park. Mr. Condino asked Mr. Weir to schedule another project meeting to specifically talk about it.

Mr. Condino said we have started doing an inventory of the property. He said that Mr. Weir was tasked with getting the power study that was completed by National Grid. He said that Jerry Haenlin's response to Mr. Weir basically told the whole story, and he outlined procedures and what needs to be followed. He said that he was surprised that the cost of the study was \$150,000 which Hari Achuthan paid for. He said apparently there was an NDA signed between Hari and National Grid. He thought since we were Hari's partner in the project, we should have been involved to understand it since power was the big issue out there. Mr. Weir said that Jerry can't necessarily give us the results to the power study because it's Hari's power study. He said that Jerry said how things have changed over the last two years – on cost and power availability and indicated that we would have to do a new study. Mr. Weir said that he has requested it from Hari but has not received a response. Mr. Weir said the good news is that we can get power there. Mr. Condino said there was a 4MW cap during the study because of distribution issues. He said since then they are building new transmission within the County which could change the cap. He said that a new study is not going to be inexpensive, and it needs to be specific because it is different if it is intended for one single user (flat rate price) rather than multiple users (time and expense price). He said he always wondered why it wasn't one of the first things done at the beginning of the project because you can't put a building up if you don't have power for it. He said that now we are better informed what we need

to do procedurally and what the expense will likely be and know what some of the limitations are.

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He said that we need to follow up on National Grid's shovel-ready program. Mr. Weir said it is an opportunity to get grant funding through National Grid. Mr. Weir believes that Hari received the grant for the study and his cost was approximately \$50,000.

Mr. Warneck said one of the first things we need to do while modifying the park is get some ballpark figures to see if we can sustain it and as if there will be enough power to create a mini-industrial park and what would we have to pay. Mr. Condino said that is part of the shovel-ready program that we want to investigate is to see what we can do to be better prepared as we market this property.

**Executive Session**

At 9:11 a.m., a motion was made by Mr. Aiken to enter into executive session to discuss real property, seconded by Ms. L'Huillier. All in favor. Committee Members, Board Members, and Staff remained.

At 9:46 a.m., Ms. L'Huillier motioned to leave the executive session, seconded by Mr. Aiken. All in favor. No action was taken.

- V. Adjournment:** With no further business before the committee, Ms. L'Huillier made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Aiken. The meeting was adjourned at 9:51 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Peggy Sampson*