

Connecticut Municipal Redevelopment Authority (MRDA)

Board of Directors Meeting

Thursday, January 16, 2025

12:30pm – Virtual

Board Members Present: Chairperson Felix Reyes; Sara Amato; Gary Anderson; Jack Benjamin; Emma Cimino; Alexandra Daum; Laura Francis; Kiley Gosselin; Paul Hinsch*; Laoise King**; Brendan Mahoney; Lisa Morrissey***; Matt Pugliese; and Jessica Vonashek

Board Members Absent:: Vice Chairperson Seila Mosquera-Bruno; and Karen DuBois-Walton

*Paul Hinsch joined the meeting after items 2 and 5 were brought to a vote.

**Loise King left the meeting before items 5 and 6 were brought to a vote

***Lisa Morrissey joined the meeting after item 2 was brought to a vote

MRDA Staff Present: David Kooris

1. Meeting Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairperson Reyes called the meeting to order at 12:35 PM and, following roll call, acknowledged quorum.

2. Approval of Minutes from December 19, 2024 Meeting

The motion to approve the minutes was made by Jack Benjamin and second by Laura Francis. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously with Loise King and Brendan Mahoney abstaining.

3. Public Comment

A member of the public commented that they were having a difficult time finding meeting minutes and biographies of board members without an MRDA website. He also made some disparaging remarks about the Executive Director. Chairperson Reyes asked Mr. Kooris to address the former in the Executive Director's report.

4. Executive Director Report

Mr. Kooris began by indicating that all meeting agendas and minutes are posted to the Connecticut State Agency Public Meeting Calendar and videos of most meetings are available on the CT-N website; transcripts are available for the two meetings for which videos are not posted. Chairperson Reyes committed to provide board members with the link to that site with future meeting materials so that it can be most easily shared by the Board if the public requests information from them.

Mr. Kooris continued with an operational update sharing the positive news that MRDA is now fully set up in the state CORE system for both finance and human resource; CRDA has been very helpful via the MOU adopted in November. Payroll was initiated at the very end of last calendar year. Additionally, the auditors will begin work helping with financial policy establishment in February and legal has started reviewing all policies and procedures. Any tweaks or additional policies required for adoption will be brought to the board when available. The communications team has initiated work with a focus on website development and collateral creation for the municipal and general audiences. Finally, an on-call insurance broker for the state is beginning to price policies for General Liability, Director's and Officers, Cybersecurity, and other needed coverage and this should be brought to the Board for approval in February.

On the topic of municipal interest, Mr. Kooris described the outreach that he has been conducting and the informal conversations to gauge cities and towns as potential partners. One of outside counsel's first tasks was the creation of a template opt-in resolution which was finalized very early this year and Mr. Kooris has since distributed that to the 21 municipalities who have thus far indicated strong interest.

Chairperson Reyes requested that MRDA create a summary document of our statute to translate elements into layperson terms to make things as accessible as possible.

5. Action to Establish Consultant On-Call Lists

Mr. Kooris thanked Gary Anderson, Jack Benjamin, Laura Francis, and Kiley Gosselin for their participation on the Screening Working Group (SWG) in a complex review of the Consultant RFQ submissions.

He reminded the Board the way in which this procurement process differed from the three the Board had previously conducted. This was a Request for Qualifications rather than for Proposals and include six distinct scopes of work. Consultant teams could submit qualifications for all, some, or just one of the scopes of work and the responses received did just that. He first summarized as a reminder the six scopes of work and how consultants from the on-call list created through this procurement might be used in the future. The six scopes of work are as follows:

1. Basemap and Existing Conditions – This work will be done for the entirety of the state's rail- and brt-system station areas for MRDA to develop a transit-oriented development baseline as well as in greater detail in member municipalities' districts.
2. Build-Out Analysis of Existing Zoning – This work will also be done at a more coarse level of detail for the entire transit system and then in finer detail in member municipalities' districts.
3. Build-Out Impact Analysis – This work is the analysis of the cumulative impacts of build-out and the proactive navigation of the build-out for development districts in

member municipalities through as much of the state regulatory approval process as is possible.

4. Fiscal Analysis – If necessary, this work will analyze the fiscal impact of potential development to help member municipalities better understand municipal budget outcomes of housing growth
5. Zoning Regulations – If necessary, this work is the drafting of zoning regulations with those municipalities who have joined MRDA but need technical support to enact Housing Growth Zones.
6. Financial Assistance Application Analysis – This work for MRDA is the financial analysis and assessment of applications to MRDA for project funding support.

Mr. Kooris then described the on-call lists recommended by the SWG for Board approval. The matrix presented to the board (attached below) indicates for each scope of work whether the firm is ineligible – due to lack of submission of qualification or those deemed by the SWG to not be as robust as those submitted by other firms, included, or prioritized. Firms can be drawn upon for work within scopes of work for which they are included. To manage expectations given the number of firms included, some are marked with priority to indicate that their qualifications were determined to be of the highest quality by the SWG and they will likely be reached out to first for work within that scope.

The SWG erred on the side of inclusivity and flexibility to provide the maximum number of qualified firms on the on-call list for each scope so that MRDA and its member municipalities could select firms from the list best suited to local conditions, without conflict, with capacity, and/or continuing on prior work performed as desired.

SWG members Anderson and Gosselin reiterated the points above on behalf of the SWG and amplified the points that the SWG wanted to create maximum flexibility going forward and that, while members of the SWG had experience with many of the firms included, some are less experienced in CT but bring a wealth of knowledge and precedent from nearby states.

The motion to approve the on-call consultant list was made by Sara Amato and seconded by Jessica Vonashek. The motion was approved unanimously without further discussion.

Action to Approve FY2025 Budget

Mr. Kooris presented the draft budget and described the format that the Board would see on a monthly basis going forward including the budget, a year-to-date (YTD) projected/accrual amount for each line item through the end of the prior month, and a YTD cash expenditure for each line item. The financial report will also include bank balance at month end reconciled with the YTD cash accounting. The budget is attached.

Mr. Kooris described the sole revenue source of the state appropriation and the way in which that will be invoiced quarterly from DECD; and stated that two quarters had been invoiced and right before the end of the prior month, two quarters of funding had been received.

On the expense side, Mr. Kooris went through the various personnel, consultant, and operations expenses. For personnel, the budgeted amount represents approximately 11 months of the Executive Director's salary and associated payroll tax and benefit costs. The YTD column included those expenses for the five months from August through December and the cash column indicates that no funds had been expended through calendar year end. For consultants, the budget includes estimated expenditures for the coming months for legal, communications, audit, accounting, IT, and insurance. By the end of December, no expenses had been incurred and no cash disbursed. For operations, the budget includes estimated expenditures for rent, utilities, subscriptions, supplies, travel and conferences/training. Mr. Kooris explained that through the end of the December, the expenses incurred against these budget lines were for PO Box (rent), cell phone and domain name (utilities), mileage reimbursement to meetings (travel), and attendance at the Southern New England American Planning Association conference (conferences/training). For each of the consultant and operations lines, Mr. Kooris explained the assumptions that went into the estimates presented here. Though none of the cash for those expenditures has yet been disbursed. The bank balance is \$300,000 which is the totality of the two quarters of appropriations transferred to MRDA by DECD on December 23, 2024.

Chairperson Reyes asked about the budget amendment process and Mr. Kooris indicated that on a quarterly basis, any line items projected to be in deficit will need to be adjusted by action of the Board by shifting funds from lines projected to be in surplus. Chairperson Reyes then asked about what does or does not need to come back to the Board once the budget is set. Mr. Kooris explained that, putting aside procurement and the thresholds and approval processes associated with that, for procured services and budgeted expenses, the Executive Director can authorize any expenditure up to \$5,000 and a second approval from a member of the Board's Executive Committee is required for procured and budgeted expenditures above that amount.

A request was made by Mr. Mahoney to add a column projecting each line out to the end of the fiscal year in addition to the accrued YTD column on future reports.

The motion to approve the FY2025 budget was made by Laura Francis and seconded by Paul Hinsch. The motion was approved unanimously without further discussion.

6. Old & New Business

No old or new business were raised.

7. Adjournment

The motion to adjourn was made by Gary Anderson and seconded by Emma Cimino.
The Board adjourned at 1:26 PM.