**Cliftondale Revitalization Committee**

**Minutes: Wednesday, April 7, 2021**

**Zoom Meeting: Scheduled start time 7:00 PM**

The meeting began at 7:02 PM.

**Call to Order:**

Joe Vecchione gave a synopsis of why the team was comprised and reviewed the agenda.

**Roll Call:**

Roll call vote on attendance was taken. Attendees: Jeannie Bartolo, Debra Panetta, Corinne Riley, Allen Panico, Glen Davis, Peter Rossetti, Sue Palomba, Chris Riley, and Julie Mitchell. Absent: Tom Traverse

**Organization of Committee:**

Chris Riley – nominated Joe Vecchione., seconded by Debra Panetta, Vote: Unanimous

Jeannie Bartolo nominated Debra Panetta, Corrine Riley seconded, Vote: Unanimous.

**Purpose/Vision of Cliftondale Revitalization Committee:**

Joe discussed the various studies done of Cliftondale Square over the years. He does not want to rehash studies that were done in the past. He wants to open the doors where they can be open where the square is vastly different than it was in 2016. Joe asked people to think about short-term as well as long-term goals.

Joe talked with business owners and stakeholder where there is a feeling of discontent on what has or has not been going on. It seems like there is an effort every 10 years, but nothing has really been done to make the square better. Joe discussed the parking lot in the back of St. Margaret’s church, fences against property issues, and various vacant space potentials where property has been for sale.

With the various policies, capital improvement plans, and infrastructure issues impacting the square, how do we use the state for funding without impacting the Saugus taxpayer too much? Cliftondale Square was the hottest topic in the Master Plan. How do we collaborate with all the stakeholders moving forward? The Committee does not want to dismiss any idea without justifiable cause.

**Member Introductions:**

**Corrine Riley:**

Corrine is the Vice-Chair of the Board of Selectmen.

Corrine said that open communication with business owners is important. Owners would be a good start to see where they can go. St. Margaret’s parking lot has been discussed and the Archdiocese is not happy with anyone using this parking lot due to liability (e.g., someone falls). She mentioned how the Selectmen asked the Town Manager about purchasing the Saugus Bank. She questioned the North Shore Bank parking.

**Debra Panetta:**

Debra has been on the Board of Selectmen for almost 10 years and has been involved with Saugus committees & commissions for over 30 years. She is also on the Advisory Board of the Master Plan.

Debra saw some benefit in short-term goals, like bringing back the Farmer’s Market to Cliftondale Square and having a Founder’s Day celebration in the Square (not just in Saugus Center). She mentioned that the town has some all-alcoholic liquor licenses, which might be an incentive for a restaurant to come into the square. An all-alcoholic license is a significant asset to any business in Saugus.

Debra is concerned about parking, and she mentioned how dangerous it is driving through the square with parking on both sides. Debra is concerned about the business and stated that the buildings in the square are in disrepair. She stated that we need to work with the landowners if anything is going to be done with the buildings.

**Joe Vecchione:**

Joe is a TMM representing precinct 2.

Joe said that these efforts really rest on the private business owners. Joe met with Linda Reilly to talk about the St. Margaret’s parking lot along with other things. He would like to look into a zoning overlay in this area. We have antiquated zoning. We need to look into parking regulations, design, and infrastructure, use. In other words, what do we want to see, and do we not want to see?

We want a restaurant in the square. There are very few spaces in the square for a kitchen and dining. The square is not pedestrian friendly. He wants to involve the public and stakeholders and bring information back to the MAPC.

**Peter Rossetti:**

Peter is a TMM representing Precinct 2. He has been involved with the Town for over 50 years.

Peter recalls the CARD program which allowed for low interest funding. At one point, Peter and his Dad built his building. There were restrictions. There was a lack of proper zoning so many people did not take advantage of the program. There is very little incentive for landlords to make improvements in their buildings because they would have to abide by today’s standards (e.g., they need to bring things into ADA compliance). If you look at the square, there is sufficient parking if you look at the church parking lot. There were previous discussions on connecting the business/church parking. Grants were available for uniform store fronts in the past. You will need to raise the cinder block buildings if you want a restaurant. There is potential since we are on a bus line. Restaurant and shops could be located on the first floor, apartments above. Distinct advantage with Saugus Ridge, 1 mile down the street. It is more convenient than Northgate (in Revere). There are about 3,000 people living in Saugus Ridge. We need to get the necessary framework in place.

**Sue Palomba:**

Sue is a TMM representing Precinct 1. Sue worked in Cliftondale Square for 15 years at Century 21. There are no signs or lights where people are trying to cross the street. North Shore bank has parking in back. Sue knows a lot of older people that are looking for a place to live, so perhaps we put in senior living at Cliftondale. She would like to see either a safety light or some signage on Lincoln Avenue, before the post office. She would also like to see the Farmer’s Market move back to Cliftondale Square.

**General Discussion**

(There was a general discussion about the Farmer’s Market by the team. It used to be on Jackson Street but was moved to Essex Street, at Anna Parker. The Committee thought it would be a good idea to bring it back to Cliftondale. There was no Farmer’s Market in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic.

**Chris Riley:**

Chris is a TMM representing Precinct 2. Chris stated that most of the buildings in Cliftondale were build 100 years ago. Buildings would need to be handicapped accessible. The big draws used to be churches, post office (increasingly irrelevant), and even banks (where two closed in the past year). Cliftondale was built for a different time. Even the old 5 and 10 store has bee subdivided. Hoffman’s was subdivided. He would prefer not going on Route 1 on a Saturday to get something he needs. There is a parking lot in the Square that has three pieces of contiguous land. The bank parking lot would be a nice place for a Farmer’s market. Selling Christmas Trees and having food trucks in the Square is something we should pursue. The landowners are really the decision makers. We need to engage land and building owners, and we should explore incentives.

**Allen Panico:**

Allen is a TMM representing Precinct 6. Allan would like to see more mom-and-pop shops. Appreciation Day used to be held at the beginning of the summer in Cliftondale, and they did away with that. He would like to see the Square cleaned-up as well as share some local updates.

**Glen Davis:**

Glen is a TMM representing Precinct 4. Glen feels that there were lots of good suggestions in the studies. He agreed that parking is an issue. Maybe we could incentivize the church to use their parking lot – like installing a parking meter, and the money goes back to the church. He suggested having parking on just one side. Trying to get a fire truck through is dangerous. We need input by stakeholders and businessowners.

**Julie Mitchell:**

Julie is a TMM representing Precinct 5.

Julie stated that is difficult for businesses to change with current zoning. It is the businesses that we should be reaching out to.

**Jeanie Bartolo:**

Jeannie is a TMM representing Precinct 6.

Jeannie is pleased that we are getting a new Christmas tree in Cliftondale. She appreciates that Stefano’s does the landscaping. She would like to look into additional plantings, including cement planters. There are a ton of things to make the town more aesthetically pleasing. You need something to make people stop and look around.

**New Business**

Joe said interacting with the business owners is paramount to our success. How are we going to address these issues? Lincoln Ave. has lots of traffic and Cliftondale is congested. The Town is working on a parking and egress study that Joe will follow-up on with the Town Manager. Safety is a huge issue. Joe is attending a three-day conference on Revitalization America, which will have business owners and many planned professionals across the board. He will bring back what he learns to the next meeting.

Joe discussed the success story of Melrose, and how in 1984, they had issues similar to what we have in Cliftondale Square.

The team had a general discussion on next steps and how to reach out to contact/businessowners in the Square. Everyone agreed that their input was very important. Debra discussed how at the Master Plan Forum residents were in favor of mixed use in the Square. Cliftondale was one of the major talking points during the Economic Development portion of the forum.

Joe suggested a walk-thru the Square on a warm night with the team. He suggested having a stakeholder meeting with business and property owners. Then he suggested a public forum to discuss options. There was a general discussion on what our deliverable would be as a team and our end-goal. This would need to be collaborated with the Town’s Master Plan.

Debra suggested conducting a survey monkey. The team agreed that it was a good idea to get some feedback from residents. Joe was going to consolidate some questions for the team to review. Corrine suggested having two meetings, one for the businessowners (renters) and another for the property owners. Renters are saying that they want to “do things,” but the owners will not let them. Joe discussed how some property owners live outside the area. Chris agreed with the next set of meetings. He felt it was important to get the Planning and Economic team to attend our meetings. Joe said that he had some good conversations with Mr. Mello and Mr. Riley, and he would love for them to be involved in whatever capacity that they have the bandwidth for. He will reach out to Mr. Mello and Mr. Riley.

**Citizen Comment:**

NONE

**Next Meeting:**

The next meeting is schedule on April 26th at 7:00 PM ---- via ZOOM.

We will have a walk thru of Cliftondale Square sometime in late May.

**Adjourn:**

Debra made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Joe.

Motion to adjourn: Vote: Unanimous.

Meeting ended at 8:21 PM

Respectfully submitted: Debra Panetta, Secretary