

**Holyoke Redevelopment Authority
Meeting Minutes – Wednesday October 26, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.**

**Conference room 403 or Virtual Zoom:
Meeting ID: 820 1045 2084**

Members Present:

Thomas Creed, Chair
Carl Eger, Vice Chair
John Whelihan, Treasurer
Daphne Board, Member

Staff Present:

Aaron Vega, Executive Director
John Dyjach, Assistant Director
Marie Brazeau, Head Clerk
Jennifer Keitt, Development Specialist

Others Present: David Blood (Damavera, LLC), Mauro Brito (Damavera, LLC)

1. Call to order:

Thomas Creed called the meeting to order at 6:03pm and announced that the meeting is being recorded.

A roll call followed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Daphne Board	X (Virtual)	
Jorge Colon		X
Thomas Creed	X	
Carl Eger Jr.	X	
John Whelihan	X	

2. HRA Board Business

- a. **Meeting Minutes of September 21, 2022:** A motion to approve the minutes of September 21, 2022, was made by Carl Eger and seconded by Daphne Board:

A roll call followed:

John Whelihan	X
Carl Eger	X
Thomas Creed	X
Daphne Board	X

The motion passed unanimously.

3. **Center City Liquor License Program- Damavera, LLC/Fame Application:** Chairperson Thomas Creed thanked David Blood and Mauro Brito for attending and for their interest in the Liquor License Program. Mr. Blood and Mr. Brito presented on their plans to acquire the former Avalon space and starting a restaurant at the location. They previously ran the Famous Café located in Gateway City Arts and are ready to pursue a larger space with a more ambitious schedule and menu. This establishment will be primarily a restaurant with full-service dining, and they are seeking a liquor license as an additive to their service. They commended the Center City Liquor License Program for providing this opportunity to them and others. John Whelihan thanked them for their proposal and their interest and inquired if the slow process of acquiring a liquor license with the State would affect the timetable of the business being operational. Mr. Blood responded that they are prepared for slow growth with opening for lunch at first and expanding to brunch and dinner service with alcohol. Mr. Whelihan asked if they have a start date, Mr. Blood said they anticipate opening for lunch service by early December.

Aaron Vega stated that the applicants have already met with the Holyoke Licensing staff to initiate processes. Thomas Creed asked how many staff they plan to employ, Mr. Blood stated initially it will be an estimated staff of between 7-8 full-time employees and 4-5 part-time employees. Thomas Creed asked for confirmation that this will be primarily a restaurant rather than a bar, as this is a requirement of the program, the applicants confirmed yes, it is primarily dining. Chairperson Creed asked the length of the lease, Mr. Blood responded it is a five-year lease with a five-year option. Aaron Vega asked the Board to take under consideration paying the first-year fee in the amount of \$1,000 should the license be approved by the State and the Liquor License Board. John Dyjach added that the draft agreement before the Board is the standard agreement for this program as it has been approved in the past.

A motion was made by Carl Eger and seconded by John Whelihan to approve the Center City Liquor License Application from Damavera LLC, authorize the Chair to execute the agreement, and to pay the first license fee in the amount of \$1,000.

A roll call followed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Carl Eger	X	
Thomas Creed	X	
Daphne Board	X	
John Whelihan	X	

The motion passed unanimously.

4. **Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) – Introductions with Fellow Moforte:** The Chair thanked Kevin Moforte, the TDI Fellow for Holyoke, for his presence. Aaron Vega provided a brief background on the TDI program noting the partnership with gateway cities such as Holyoke and that Holyoke was granted a TDI fellow for a period of three years to focus on the High Street area. Mr. Moforte thanked the Board for their time and provided some background on himself and his work. He went on to explain the first few months of his fellowship have been focused on putting together a full work plan for his time as fellow. This process has involved gaining community input and collecting information on the properties in the designated TDI district. Mr. Moforte stressed that his work is made possible by the community partnerships that aid in creating and executing the work plan and put good use to the funds provided by MassDevelopment. These funds will be put to use by mid-December to bolster small businesses and assist residents of the area. Mr. Moforte extended an invite to anyone who would be interested in partnership meetings. John Whelihan thanked Mr. Moforte and explained one recurring conversation concerning High Street has been the traffic issues concerning speeding. This has led to debates over if High Street would benefit from being a one way. The streets recent paving addressed some of the concerns, but he went on to say traffic studies to make driving and walking safer may be an issue to prioritize. Mr. Whelihan also expressed his appreciation for the focus on using vacant buildings and helping businesses to return downtown. Daphne Board echoed all the grateful sentiments for the energy downtown and added that she would hope to continue receiving updates on the progress in future meetings possibly in December or January. Chairperson Creed agreed that updates would be appreciated and there is potential for collaborative efforts on their overlapping focus areas. Aaron Vega noted that Marie Brazeau has been working on updating the City Website for the office and the Boards under it to add more resources and information for the public, he said adding some information on the TDI on-goings could be a useful resource.

5. **Property/ Project Updates and Next Steps:**

- a. **Dwight Street Community Garden/ Neighbor to Neighbor:** Chairperson Creed noted the disposition agreement before the Board and asked staff for an update. Jennifer Keitt said the agreement is not yet in its final form as they are still waiting on a response from Neighbor to Neighbor counsel. However, if their counsel has no changes then the agreement can be signed as it stands. Chairperson Creed thanked staff for the update and stated this can hopefully be finalized before the end of November when the current agreement expires.

- b. **216 Appleton (Appleton Mills Apartments/ Winn Development):** The Chair announced that the Board is still waiting for the ground lease agreement and negotiations are still in progress. Staff will be in communication with Winn to urge them to have the agreement ready for discussion at the November Board meeting. Aaron Vega explained a large contribution to the stalling of the agreement was the canal wall easement and the concern over damaging the wall during construction. HG&E provided all the information about the wall to Winn and the information concerning the property line. This issue being resolved should allow the agreement to be moved along. The Board discussed the urgency of the agreement being approved so that work on the property can begin in the spring.
 - c. **South Holyoke Homes- Holyoke Housing Authority:** The Chair discussed the success of Phase I with plans still on track to begin leasing the property in the first quarter of 2023. The Board is hoping for an update from the Housing Authority in November for the Annual Meeting to discuss Phase I. Discussion of Phase II and III will be planned for a later meeting. There are currently no updates on Phase II as they are still looking for ways to resolve their financing issues and lack of bids for the project. John Dyjach said the current owner of the potential site for Phase III has been in contact with staff and is receptive to selling and there will most likely be an update for the Board in November.
 - d. **37 Appleton/ American Environmental:** The Chair asked staff for an update on activity at 37 Appleton. Aaron Vega said American Environmental had approached staff with plans to build a temporary structure to house trucks which is small enough they will not need a full site plan review. They are also going to be building a larger structure for truck maintenance and repairs for the facility. As of right now the gas station is on hold, the smaller building will be completed over the winter and the larger building will be constructed over the spring.
 - e. **123 Pine/ CAN Properties:** The Chair looked at the property and saw it has been secured and lighting has been installed but no external work has been started, though permits have been pulled. John Dyjach stated work has begun on the interior of the space and progress will speed up over the next six months. CAN Properties has also put in a bid on a neighboring property for a large development which is before the City Council at this time. The Board expressed concerns of the project being slow going and a possible lack of capacity to maintain both projects at the same time.
6. **Other Business:** Aaron Vega provided an update on a recent visit to the Computing Center concerning the freight farms. A towing company has been found who will be willing to move the freight farms as soon as the trench and electrical is completed. HCC will be working on covering the graffiti on the freights with a wrap. Aaron Vega then updated the board that OneHolyoke CDC has asked for an extension to their lease agreement as their plans for moving the tiny home have been stalled. City Council did not pass the amendment to allow accessory dwelling units but will be revisiting the topic in December. OneHolyoke is hoping that if this change to the zoning ordinance passes then they may be able to move the home to a more desirable location. They have offered to maintain the parcel over the fall and winter as part of the extension. The original agreement expires in November. Thomas Creed noted that should the Board wish to grant the extension it would need to be approved this meeting for the extension to be in place before the original agreement expires. He also noted that they should add the stipulation that should the Race Street project begin moving forward that the tiny home would have to be moved within a period of thirty days.

A motion was made by Carl Eger to extend the One Holyoke agreement into April with the outlined stipulations and allow the Chair to execute the agreement and was seconded by John Whelihan.

A roll call followed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Daphne Board	X	
Thomas Creed	X	
Carl Eger	X	
John Whelihan	X	

The motion passed unanimously.

7. **Executive Meeting (if necessary):** No business necessitated executive session.

8. **Adjournment.** Having no other business, Carl Eger motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by John Whelihan.

A roll call followed:

Daphne Board X

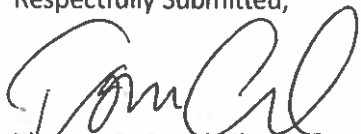
Thomas Creed X

Carl Eger X

John Whelihan X

The meeting adjourned at 7:07PM

Respectfully Submitted,



Thomas R. Creed, Chairperson