

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (BIDA) MEETING

June 11, 2025

A monthly meeting of the BIDA was scheduled for Wednesday, June 11, 2025, 9:00 a.m., Room 208, City Hall, 229 Main Street, Nashua, NH.

Members present:

Jason Haviland – Chair
Lydia Foley – Vice Chair
Dick Cane
Carl Andrade
John Ziemba
Derek Gagnon

Staff members present:

Liz Hannum, Econ. Dev. Director

Members of the public present:

Peter Schaeffer

Charette and PlanNH events:

Mr. Haviland said that he thought the plans overwhelmed the room, there was a lot there, and there wasn't a lot of City representatives, and there wasn't many property owners, but the good news is that some of the big ones were there. He felt that there were guarded responses all around, it was hard to get anyone to say a lot, and some of the Alderman expressed their views clearly, concisely and genuinely. He said that the property owners were a lot more guarded. He said that it was a good session, and the output generated was good.

Ms. Hannum said that Steve Bonnette made it pretty clear that he didn't really want to much, he wants to preserve his property, and keep it commercial, not residential, so he sort of set the stage for what ended up being the final report, so we didn't get a lot of change in that area, because they wanted to be respectful of him, and what he sought as vision for his property.

Ms. Foley said that some of the body language was "arms crossed." She said that both property owners were sort of closed off, waiting to respond. She said that there was a good presentation from City staff, and some Alderman,. She said that she found it interesting when someone asked to hear from the property owners, and everyone looked at Angelina and Steve, they're the two main property owners, and they were somewhat hesitant, as if to say that they don't want change, and don't really want this collective evolution.

Ms. Hannum said that Angelina's father, Tony Spilios, got up and asked if it is common practice not to talk to the property owners before you do all of this, and Angelina did say that she's been involved a little. She said that Spilios is very protective of their sites.

Mr. Haviland said that to be fair, Spilios did propose public amenities on his private land. He said that they were ideas to generate thought and to vision what might happen, not proposal for what we are going to do.

Ms. Hannum said that the presenters, at the end, some of them were more sensitive to the property owners than others. She said that after the leaders procession, there were two community input

sessions, there was pretty good attendance there, and some good feedback from some of the business owners came, and there were some community members from Clocktower, people invested in this space, and some people from the Downtown Association came, so it was a good mix.

Ms. Hannum said that on Saturday, they spent most of the day planning, and talking about constraints. She pointed out the NIMCO site, and signed an MDA (Master Developer Agreement) last night, it will be 250 units with 300 parking spaces. She showed on a drawing where the normal entrance would be, and they recommended a roundabout right at the parking lot at Clocktower, so that it becomes a more connected area. She pointed out an area for pedestrian access down by the Police Training facility, a small pedestrian bridge to connect into Mine Falls. She said that they split up into two groups, and they indicated one building would be split into two buildings, and create a link, this is the Bagshaw building, and save the two Bonnette buildings, it would have a grid pattern.

Ms. Hannum said that for the Spilios property, there is a nonprofit that works with kids, they play soccer out on the hardtop, and looked at making it actual fields for them that could be open to the public. She said that they're also looking at a couple boat launch options, and pointed out the current boat launch location that the City currently leases from the Spilios's. She mentioned that they've talked about creating a permanent easement for the City. She said that Angelina wants to be involved.

Mr. Haviland said that the Spilios building isn't fully rented, and the biggest use in the building is their use, the laundry service.

Ms. Foley said that their tenants are very happy there, and it's a beautiful building, well-kept and well-maintained.

Ms. Hannum said that the only thing they don't use is their parking lot, they are severely overparked, so the 100 cars there are well within their needs, but they have not wanted to do anything with this area yet. She said that Spilios is open to having a discussion about events here, and even extending the Riverwalk, but they are concerned with liability with having lots of people running through there. She said if we can help mitigate those issues, they would be more amenable to ideas.

Ms. Hannum said that they made the assumption that NIMCO and Bagshaw would be broken into four buildings instead of two, so that they can make some pedestrian street-level activity there, and instead of going in and circling around and making it a wavy connection, they'd try to make it more of a grid, and it would look like a community green area.

Mr. Haviland asked if Bagshaw is currently under contract.

Ms. Hannum said that they closed. She said it's in the Mixed Use Zone.

Mr. Haviland said that any of these renderings are fine, if they want to make it commercial or residential that is permitted.

Mr. Cane said that the plan doesn't address parking.

Ms. Hannum indicated that they kept our parking lot a parking lot. She said that they added a little canal walk along the river, and reestablished this connection, there's already a path there, but it was closed, but they'd reestablish it as an actual walkway. She said that they agreed that it was one property, not two buildings. She said that NIMCO wants to do this, but the way that the City's RFP works, they can't change what they've proposed a lot, and if they want to change it to something like this, it would have to go out to RFP again. She said that any change would have to go back to the Aldermen, but it may not have to go all the way back to RFP, they need to talk to Corporation Counsel about it. She said that this concept is much better for the community, and better connectivity, and better for access, especially if anything ever happens in this building, but they're not going to take the risk of going back to RFP, they'll do what they propose. She said if it's too much of a material change, we would have to go out to RFP no matter what, whether the Aldermen like it or not. She said that the legal department would decide if it is a major change.

Ms. Hannum said that ICON studied this space, a feasibility study for NIMCO, and they ruled out something like this, and Tim Cummings thought that the width wasn't sufficient.

Mr. Cane said that you'd have to go back to the developer and see how serious they are. He said that they'd lose some density because of the connector, that was building area before, and the deal may only make sense if they reduce the price, but they have to be a willing participant before you go any further, if they're not, you're just wasting your time.

Ms. Hannum said that the City is full-steam ahead on a one building NIMCO idea, so this would not work at all, they'd still have to come in from the front. She said that they'd want to do a lot of landscaping along the Broad Street Parkway, and make the "thumb" into more of an event-type space, perhaps making a stage. She mentioned the Tuscan Village site, where there is an amphitheater type of area, with an outside bar, that is the thought process here.

Mr. Cane said that this is all floodplain, you won't build structures here. He said that good seasonal-type space, like a farmers market, would be great.

Ms. Hannum showed a plan, and identified the main entrance, the roundabout, and it still shows two buildings, so it is cutting out most of the buildings that are Bonnette's. She pointed out the Bagshaw property, and it becomes the connector, and NIMCO and half of Bagshaw become a building, a residential building, and another residential/commercial building, and the front side of Bonnette's building stays, and they lopped off the back half of the building, and added additions, they basically cut the middle out of the building. She said that they made an addition onto our area, and she pointed out the Police Training Facility, in which they added on to the building, and indicated it for a transitional housing facility, it could be actual housing or a center where the non-profits could get together and have it be a one-stop shop, it could be a variety of things, with

services. She said that it is the City's hope that the non-profits work together better, they don't really know what each other does.

Ms. Foley said that numbers-wise, it's less expensive to house people than to have all the emergency services.

Ms. Hannum said that the City has tried to do this in other places, and put out an RFP to see if any property owners would be willing to let the City use their property, and got no responses.

Mr. Haviland said that on the walking tour, everyone saw all the homeless out there, so that may inspire them to create an unhoused population services, and they stuck another building there, so that is now two ideas, they proposed a boat launch as well, and is not sure if it's just for kayaks.

Ms. Hannum said that one involved more parking. She said that there are bushes and trees there, it might be a garage, but it is parking. She said that that an interesting idea was to do an ice luge trail, like an ice-skating trail, and during the summer it could be a walking trail.

Ms. Hannum said that they're talking about creating some small alleyways, as shown on the drawings, pedestrian style alleys. She said it would involve lopping off the top of one building, keeping the historic structure, and adding on top of it to create a multi-story, changing some of the properties that are there, but also keeping the historic pieces of them. She said that they loved the building windows, and adding big structures to the front side or back side, this is number 3. She pointed out the Bonnette building that goes perpendicular, and it shows where they cut the mill out.

Ms. Hannum said that there is a business center there, but they're only there one day a week, and the rest is 32,000 square feet, it's where DHHS was, and it's fully renovated and really nice, but Bonnette does not want to break that space up, he wants to rent it out to one tenant, perhaps that is why it is still vacant. She said that a maker-space came up as a potential use, perhaps this is the public side of Make-It Labs, and they can have more of their larger equipment than their current location, there's lots of different ideas, a business incubator, and is working on separately trying to increase capacity for child care, and is looking into putting a childcare incubator program in there, too, so there are a lot of different ideas for the building, but keeping a large portion of it, but lopping off the middle piece of the building. She pointed out how they had a grocery store idea, but it's probably in a place where no one can get to easily.

Mr. Haviland pointed out that the orange color on the drawing was the service area, and the green was the actual transitional housing.

Ms. Hannum said that a lot of the ideas here were for a social service building with transitional housing, and a little courtyard area.

Ms. Hannum said that in scenario two, it was essentially getting rid of almost all of the building, but it would have a boat launch, an incubator grocery store, and part of the parcel would be an art

block and an outdoor patio looking out on the river, and if all the buildings were taken out it would be a health care, gym, the existing services in Bonnette's buildings, with underground parking. She said that number 5 is a canal walk, number 6 is a parking garage, number 7 is a dog park, number 8 a playground/event area, number 9 would be a mixed use. She said a museum would be a building on the other side of Pine Street, the maker space is the old Picker Building.

Ms. Hannum said that they created this scenario, and showed a picture of Malden MA, where the City Hall is in the middle of a large residential building. She said that they would have a pedestrian bridge over Veterans Memorial Parkway, and want the public garage to have façade treatments so it wouldn't look like a parking garage, those were some other ideas. She said that the City has been designated as a Housing Champion recently, so the City is eligible for grants.

Mr. Haviland said that BIDA has to decide what we might want to do with our parcel, and if there's anything that we might partner with, it makes sense, otherwise, do we want to forge ahead with two buildings, still forge ahead with housing going in.

Ms. Hannum said that we can certainly have a conversation with Mr. Bonnette, but this is a public lot, and we'd have to put out public notice.

Mr. Haviland said that until we get a little more, we're stuck, and need to know if any of these charette ideas will happen. He said that hopefully folks are inspired from what they saw, it's all in play for discussion.

Ald. Sullivan said that he was thinking of the name of this committee, the BIDA, and it seems like nothing is happening, and wondered if it would be more productive if we threw ideas and brought some of the business owners into the discussion, and let's develop this area. He said that there were two days' worth of good ideas, but where does it go, besides in a file cabinet, and does BIDA take on different purpose.

Mr. Haviland said that the big thing for BIDA is to go from the "tail" to the whole enchilada. He said that BIDA is going to try to master develop this whole thing. He said that the temperature check on Mr. Bonnette is low, and envisions it happening exactly how it did at Riverfront Landing, it's almost the exact same thing, we have stuff on either side and Mr. Bonnette right in the middle. He said that BIDA could take a more aggressive, or comprehensive view of that property.

Ms. Foley asked if the thought is more of a collaborative approach with the property owners that are there, maybe we help Mr. Bonnette find a tenant, or maybe if we're bringing in new businesses to that area, full is better than empty, and it's going to be a few years before the NIMCO Bagshaw situation is where people are moving in.

Ms. Hannum said that she visited all the people that were available here yesterday, not everyone was there, but every single person brought up the homeless issue, so we are going to start losing people here, losing tenants, so does the City or BIDA help figure this out first, so that we can keep what we got, and build that up.

Ald. Sullivan said that there is a lot of power around this table in a lot of different areas, and in five years, it could be stated that this committee helped start the conversation to get this area redeveloped, and move this forward, there's so much potential here.

Mr. Haviland said that BIDA has way more power than the committee is using. He said that the committee could raise funds, buy out Mr. Bonnette, and redevelop it.

Ms. Hannum said that in one of the scenarios, the transitional housing piece could be something we do, whether it's transitional housing or something else, there are all sorts of ways to break this up, we've been looking at these two properties as one, and do we have to continue looking at it as one thing.

Mr. Haviland said that there's a couple members missing today, let's think about what we saw, and get a readout next time of another property owner temperature check, and talk about what role BIDA may take on, and how aggressive we'll be.

Next meeting: July 9th, 2025.

ADJOURNED at 9:57 am.

Submitted by: Mr. Falk, Deputy Planning Manager
CF - Taped Hearing