

CITY OF LACONIA WEIRS TIF ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, May 21, 2025 – 2:00 PM

City Hall – Conference Room 200B

5/21/2025 Minutes

1. Called to Order

Robert Ames called the meeting to order at 2:05pm.

2. Roll Call

In attendance in person were Robert Ames (Chairperson), Russell Poirier, Ryan Cardella, John Paula, and Councilor Tony Felch. In attendance remotely, by Zoom, was Jonathan Thurston.

3. Staff in Attendance

Rob Mora, Director of Planning, and Grey Draper, Conservation Technician

4. Minutes

A motion to approve the October 24, 2024 minutes was made by Russ and seconded by Ryan. The minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

5. Weirs TIF Financials

Robert reviewed the Weirs TIF Financials with the board. A financial update was provided regarding the Weirs Tax Increment Financing (TIF) account. The current balance stands at \$127,000, with a projected ending balance of approximately \$146,000. The group discussed ongoing and anticipated payments related to the Weirs docks, as well as revenue projections, which are estimated to reach \$230,000 annually. These figures are expected to support future development initiatives in the area.

Robert expressed the current balance of \$127,000 being better than expected following the Weirs docks project. Rob and Ryan expect to surpass the projected annual end balance of \$146,000 because of all the ongoing and new projects happening up in and around the Weirs. Robert shared that, with the projected annual end balance being greater than expected, he wishes to use the money to accomplish projects on the board's Proposed Development Activities List as soon as possible.

6. Beach Restoration Project

This is the largest project, and the top priority, on the Proposed Development Activities List. Robert shared recent updates concerning the progress of the beach restoration project, beginning with Jonathan contacting Calvin Diessner at the NH DES late last fall.

Robert expressed consternation that the City, having paid a substantial amount to the Woods Hole Group earlier for engineering plans for this project, is now expected to pay another organization for a second project design and engineered plan set. Tony commented that the second design and engineered plan set can be paid for with Weirs TIF funds.

Robert commented that he had understood that the restoration plan provided by Woods Hole Group was not only to move and relocate the sand at Weirs Beach, but also to add new sand. The board discussed the need for dredging and expressed a preference for using indigenous sand to maintain the natural character of the beach before paying for new sand to be added.

There was a consensus among the members to proceed with the installation of baffles to support long-term sand retention efforts. Jonathan asked if the EPA or the NH DES offered bonds to match funds with federal or state dollars to help restore and rehab specified areas of land. Rob thought there might be grants available as well. Tony agreed to look into grant opportunities for the Weirs Beach restoration project.

7. Boardwalk Embankment Landscaping

Robert provided an update on efforts to address invasive plant species along the boardwalk embankment. Last fall, the Weirs Action Committee paid Tall Timbers to cut the section of the boardwalk embankment from the bathhouse to the stairs to the public docks. Robert shared that the Japanese Knotweed, an invasive species, that was cleared by Tall Timbers last fall, had already grown back, and ranges from 6-8 feet in height along the embankment. This spring, Tall Timbers is supposed to be returning to spray the embankment for the Japanese Knotweed. Invasives on the embankment also include Horsetail and Poison Ivy.

Robert shared that he met with Stephens Landscaping about landscaping the entire embankment. Stephens Landscaping quoted \$4,400 to conduct a comprehensive study to guide future landscaping work, with plans and designs for the embankment. Robert felt that this was a high quote for landscape and planting designs. Jonathan and Ryan shared that they have found Stephens Landscaping to be expensive and not cost effective when considering them for past landscaping projects of their own. Jonathan and Ryan suggested connecting with Chad from Boucher Landscaping for a second proposal as well.

Regarding the section of the boardwalk embankment that remains uncut, from the stairs to the Mount Washington train station offices, Robert shared that Stephens Landscaping recommended leaving the major trees of the embankment in place, and clearing all other vegetation out, without contacting the NH DES. Robert agreed that NH DES likely would not notice the cutting on that section of the embankment, and agreed with the recommendation that the board not provide prior notice to the NH DES.

Tony agreed that the board does not need NH DES approval to clear cut the embankment, but would need approval to spray pesticides on the shoreline. Jonathan suggested providing notice to the NH DES before spraying to show good faith and build a good relationship with them for future shoreline projects, such as the beach restoration. Robert confirmed that he will tell Tall Timbers to cut the embankment now, then provide notice to the NH DES prior to spraying the invasive species. Tall Timbers quoted \$3,500/day for cutting the embankment.

Jonathan asked if there was a reason why Parks & Rec or Public Works has not cut and sprayed the embankment. Robert said that he was unsure why either department has not kept up with the embankment, but that the Weirs Action Committee decided to move forward with hiring an outside contractor for cutting and landscaping after seeing the embankment neglected by the City for a considerable number of years, even decades.

Jonathan suggested that if the embankment is supposed to be upkeep by a City department, it should be determined by whom, since there may be existing money budgeted for embankment upkeep. Rob will reach out to Nate Guerette at Public Works to learn more. Tony understood that the City's budget was the main reason the work cannot be done in-house. Tony believes that the maintenance and public works departments are facing a bandwidth issue when it comes to trying to keep up with all of the projects they are assigned, since neither has been fully staffed in recent years.

Ryan suggested cutting cost, maintenance, and project difficulty, by installing rip rap stone after the embankment is cut. The rip rap could be in addition to some plantings, or entirely in its stead. Rob suggested putting together a Request For Proposal (RFP) to get quotes and see the landscaping options for the embankment. The Planning Dept. will begin working on an RFP.

8. Boardwalk Bandstand Pavilion Proposal

Robert shared a small visual and explained that he would like to see the new bandstand pavilion to be constructed with a 10 ft opening height, and without the traditional center post, only the four supporting outer posts. This would give maximum visibility of the band playing underneath.

There was discussion about the substantial weight of the bandstand and it requiring additional support. Robert believes that the bandstand and its supports will have to be custom built to fit to the measurements of the boardwalk. Robert said that he measured the boardwalk supporting beams, and found them to be roughly 12 ft apart. However, the specific width measurement between the two beams that would support the four outer posts of the pavilion measured out at 25' 2" from beam to beam. This would require a custom design on the part of vendor selling the bandstand pavilion kit, as the standard 14' x 24' size would not fit. Robert shared that he received a quote from the vendor for an engineer-stamped custom design for the bandstand at \$3,500. The quote for the custom bandstand itself, which included delivery and installation, was approximately \$60,000.

There was discussion around potential funding sources, including the use of Weirs TIF funds, Weirs Action Committee funds, and private donations, to support the project. Tony suggested that the Weirs TIF pay for the bulk of the project, with WAC paying only for ancillary items, such as a lighting system to be added to the bandstand after the conclusion of the construction. Ryan suggested requesting that proposals include a roof style and paint color to match the train station's. The board agreed. The Planning Dept. will begin work on an RFP for the project.

9. Joint TIF Meeting

Rob explained that there has been interest in a joint meeting between Weirs TIF and Downtown TIF to align planning efforts and discuss opportunities for collaboration on future projects. The board agrees that mid-July would be an ideal time to meet. The Planning Dept will schedule a meeting for the two boards to meet.

10. TIF Wish List Review

Robert reviewed the current Weirs TIF wish list with the board, acknowledging that the Weirs docks can be closed off the list as a completed project. Items were discussed in detail based on project readiness, community impact, and available funding. Robert proposed moving the jetty/gazebo project up on the priority list from the 10th to the 4th position, while leaving the order of the other proposed development activities in their current position. The board agreed. Please see attached revised list.

11. Next Meetings

Rob requested that future Weirs TIF meetings be scheduled on a more consistent basis. Robert suggested that mid-September and mid-May were optimal times to meet. Rob requested that the meetings take place on Wednesdays at 2pm. Based on the above, the next two meetings are tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, September 17, 2025; and May 13, 2026. These dates will be confirmed a few weeks to a month in advance.

12. Adjournment

Robert adjourned the meeting at 3:21 PM.

Weirs TIF District
Proposed Development Activities
(in order of priority)

As of May 21, 2025

1. Endicott Rock Park/Weirs public beach sand replenishment/restoration.
2. Remove unplanned trees and wild growth on the embankment between the Boardwalk and the Lake and install appropriate, low-height, low-maintenance plantings. Manage future growth so views are not obstructed.
3. Public bandstand on, or adjoining, the boardwalk.
4. Lighthouse and/or gazebo at the end of an extended breakwater jetty along the Weirs Channel.
5. Extend/widen boardwalk in the area between the Mt. Washington building and the stairs to the public docks to accommodate events/activities.
6. ADA public restroom on, or adjoining, the boardwalk.
7. Public boat ramp in District.
8. Construction of sidewalks throughout the District.
9. Bike path along proposed WOW Trail corridor and elsewhere in the District.
10. Wayfinding signs with City design where useful in District.
11. Public Wi-Fi.
12. Webcams including areas of the public beach, boardwalk and public docks.