NY Forward – Capital Region - Athens

Subject	MINUTES LPC Meeting #5	Date	Monday, October 20, 2025
Place	Volunteer Firehouse 39 Third St.	Time	6:00-8:00pm

Distribution

Local Planning Committee
Amy Serrago, Mayor (co-chair)
James Hannahs (co-chair)
Tim Albright
Todd Bernard
Stephan Bradicich
Sarah Grinberg
Mike Lee
Jim Martino
Paul Petramale
Carol Pfister
Merrill Roth
Andrea Smallwood
Jeff Strockbine

State Team
Matthew Smith, DOS
Gina DaBiere-Gibbs, DOS
Mary Elise Rees, ESD

Consultant Team
Ian Nicholson, Buro Happold
Dan D'Oca, Interboro

Public
~26 individuals

Meeting Summary:

Please see 'AT_LPC Meeting 5_Slides_record" for the presentation shared during the meeting which parallels the discussion summarized below.

Action items are called out in ***bold-italic highlight***

Welcome and Agenda

Matt (DOS) welcomes the group to the fourth NY Forward LPC meeting. He briefly overviews the meeting agenda and reminds the room that these meetings are open to the public, but not intended to be public interactive workshops.

He then briefly overviews the meeting agenda.

Opening Remarks

Mayor Serrago (LPC Co-Chair) thanks everyone for their engagement and participation so far. Encourages calm and productive dialogue.

Code of Conduct

Matt (DOS) reads the Code of Conduct preamble, and reviews key points from the Code of Conduct that LPC members are expected to abide by. Recusals on file are reviewed and LPC is invited to note any further necessary recusals.

Updates: Planning Process & Engagement

Ian (BH) review of what's been done so far and what is on the horizon (see slides).

Dan (Interboro) provides synopsis of engagement done throughout the process (see slides).

Submitted Projects

Ian (BH) presents updates and changes provided for each of the submitted projects in turn, with discussion among the LPC for each. Note that in the "challenges" section of each project, budget and timeline is not generally noted, unless there is a particularly unusual amount of risk – some level of budget and timeline risk is an unavoidable characteristic of all capital projects. See slides for information presented. Summarized below are project-specific comments and discussions made by the LPC throughout the meeting:

A. Create a Riverfront Access Hub

- Concern that this investment would only support additional programming for a short boating season. Discussion supporting the assertion that the park is used year-round, not just for boaters, and that the boardwalk improvements in particular are a necessary accessibility and safety upgrade for all users.

B. Implement Complete Streets for 2nd St.

- Confirmed that extent of project is Water St to Warren St – do not feel that there are good opportunities to cut costs, which are primarily driven by cost of concrete/sidewalk work.

C. Improve the Waterfront Intersection

- Discussed the design as represented in the rendering, and reiterated that the renderings are purely illustrative – if awarded, the Village would have to take this project through a standard design process with public input and contracted design team.
- ***Agreed to remove the complete streets on Water Street scope, and focus on the intersection transformation. This reduces the budget by $506k.***

D. Develop a Retreat on Water Street

- Multiple LPC members defended the merits of this project and addressed some aspects of the public concerns that were received throughout this process.
- Observed that initial Sponsor request was $1m, which they then reduced to $880k, and then finally down to $550k, which reflects specifically items that add to visitor comfort and amenity.
- **LPC confirms (by a 13-0 vote) that this project should remain in the slate.**

E. Revive the Athens Cultural Center

- Discussed the question of whether the main entrance would be on the alley or on 2nd St – reiterated that this is a design detail that is being determined thru a separate process and does not really affect NYF decision-making.

F. [previously removed]

G. Renovate the Mixed-Use Opera House

- No specific comments noted.

H. [previously removed]
I. [previously removed]
J. [previously removed, incorporated into Project G]
K. [previously removed]
L. [previously removed]
M. [previously removed]

N. Revive 6&8 South Franklin Street

- Some discussion about the complications arising from the project consisting of 2 small structures, one of which is a single-unit residential building. This project is only eligible because the 2 structures are packaged together.
- Confirmed that either of the 2 structures would be eligible to apply for a Small Projects Fund grant, should the SPF be awarded funding.
- **LPC confirms (by a 10-3 vote) that this project should be removed from the slate.**

O. [previously removed]
P. [previously removed]
Q. [previously removed]

R. Upgrade Stewart House ~~and River Garden~~

- Some discussion about whether the reduced scope represents deferred maintenance or a truly transformative project.
- Observed that LPC asked Sponsor to bring down their NYF ask coming out of the previous meeting, so it may not be fair to subsequently penalize them for making the proposed project more modest.
- Also observed that Sponsor has already had a transformative effect on the property thru prior work, and the NYF funding would be an interim phase between that and additional future work.

S. Improve the Tenth House Healing Center

- Some discussion about whether this might not be more appropriate for the Small Project Fund.
- Opinion offered that the return on investment for this project is very high – allowing the business to expand their hours would directly increase visitation to the Village, driving business to nearby establishments as well.
- Observed that the cost of the work is driven by replacing a large historic storefront
- **LPC confirms (by a 11-2 vote) that this project should remain in the slate.**

T. Redevelop the Trinity Church Building

- No specific comments noted.

U. [previously removed]
V. [previously removed]

<u>Small Projects</u>

Ian (BH) presents an overview of the demonstration of interest in a Small Project Fund, which includes letters submitted by property owners as well as standalone projects that could be eligible for the SPF if not eventually awarded direct funding.

Extensive discussion among LPC about submitting a $600k SPF versus a standard $300k SPF. Some concern noted that an "over-sized" SPF may be more likely to get cut by the State entirely than a smaller one would be. Concern also raised by co-chair that the County would be much more comfortable managing and allocating $300k worth of transformative projects, rather than double that. Point raised that if a $300k SPF is funded and it turns out to be over-subscribed, it could be expanded at a future date by re-allocating any relinquished dollars from unsuccessful projects; and also that SPF project sponsors could also avail themselves of other funding sources such as Restore NY and/or NY Main Streets that fund similar types of projects.

LPC confirms (by a 10-3 vote) that a $300k SPF shall be proposed as part of the slate.

<u>LPC Q&A</u>

Most discussion is noted in the projects rundown above.

Question was asked about Sponsor financial capacity and whether that was a concern. Answer that this concern would only apply to Project E since the Sponsor had not nailed down their matching sources yet (since the only owned the property as of September), and potentially Project N whose Sponsor was unsure of his ability to provide the full funds prior to reimbursement – while clarifying that at this stage of the process, we mostly only look to the Sponsor's ability to provide the permanent match, not necessarily their pre-reimbursement capacity.

Prior to Public Comment, the LPC had declined to make any cuts beyond the reduction in Project C, which would have resulted in a $8.25m slate. Matt (DOS) confirms that this would be acceptable, but that the LPC should just confirm that they are happy with all projects included in the slate.

Public Comment

Multiple public comments encouraging the LPC to narrow down the slate of projects as much as they can – failure to do so would be to leave all the decisions with the State. One Sponsor in the audience made the point that the smaller the slate, the more confidence they could have in future funding.

Discussion about clawback provisions for instances where projects fail or change hands.

Final Vote on Slate of Projects

Entering the meeting, the slate of projects totaled $8.75m – so the LPC was asked to make cuts necessary to get under the $8m threshold outlined in State guidance.

After the public comment period, the LPC stepped thru each project, giving every member a chance to "nominate" that project for further discussion. Projects A, D, N, R, and S were all nominated and discussed in more detail (incorporated into notes in above section).

The approved final slate came in at $7.5m through the following actions:

- Removing Water St complete streets scope from **Project C**: $506k
- Removing **Project N** from the slate: $440k
- Reducing the **Small Project Fund** to the standard $300k: $300k

Next steps

Consultant team will follow up with project sponsors for needed information and work to finalize the project profiles that will go into the Strategic Investment Plan to be submitted to the State by end of the year.

Consultant team will distribute ballots to the LPC to formalize the decision on the final slate.

There will not be a sixth LPC meeting.

END OF SUMMARY