

Rhode Island Council on Postsecondary Education
Finance & Facilities Committee
July 26, 2024



**Meeting of the Council on Postsecondary Education
Finance and Facilities Committee
July 26, 2024
RI Nursing Education Center
Room 306
350 Eddy Street,
Providence, RI 02903
9:00 AM**

Meeting Minutes

Chair Dennis Duffy called the meeting to order at 9:18 AM and acknowledged that a quorum was present.

Finance & Facilities Committee members present:

Dennis Duffy, Chair, Finance & Facilities Committee
Thomas Izzo
Marcy Reyes

Council on Postsecondary Education members present:

David Caprio, Chair

Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC) staff present:

Shannon Gilkey, Commissioner
Zachary Saul, Chief Financial Officer
Megan Hamlin-Black, Director, Financial Strategy & Planning
Jackie Xiong, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner and Council Liaison

Tower Street Community Center Board of Director & Capital Campaign Committee members:

Nicholas C. Moore, Esq., President & Chair
Charles M. Royce
Dennis L. Algieri
Thomas J. Liguori Jr., Esq., Capital Campaign Committee

Other Attendees

Robert Stolzman, Esq., Adler, Pollock & Sheehan, P.C., External Legal Counsel for OPC

1. Acceptance of the Agenda

Chair Duffy called for a motion that the Finance & Facilities Committee accept the agenda for the meeting of July 26, 2024.

On a motion made by Thomas Izzo and seconded by Marcy Reyes, it was:

VOTED:	THAT	The Finance and Facilities Committee accept the agenda for the meeting of July 26, 2024.
	VOTE:	3 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Dennis Duffy, Thomas Izzo, and Marcy Reyes
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

2. Approval of the Minutes from the April 10, 2024, Meeting

Chair Duffy asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the April 10, 2024, meeting.

On a motion duly made by Thomas Izzo and seconded by Marcy Reyes, it was:

VOTED:	THAT	The Finance and Facilities Committee accept the minutes for the meeting of April 10, 2024.
	VOTE:	3 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Dennis Duffy, Thomas Izzo, and Marcy Reyes
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

3. Discussion Items

A. Discussion regarding the Westerly Higher Education and Industry Center.

Chair Duffy introduced the item and called upon OPC’s Chief Financial Officer, Zachary Saul, to give an overview of the Westerly Higher Education and Industry Center (Center). In 2016 the Center was announced. The Center was designed to bring together institutions of higher education, businesses, industry and community partners to provide high-quality education programs to meet the workforce demands and growth in this region of Rhode Island. The Center serves as the host facility for coordinating the efforts of the postsecondary institutions in providing education and workforce training that is responsive to the needs of students, employers, and State. Two of the main catalyst for the development of this education center was the need for employer-driven job training programs and improving access to education. First, General Dynamics Electric Boat (EB) committed to be an anchor tenant in center. They formed a partnership with the Community College of Rhode Island to develop curriculums for

training in the maritime trades. Second, the Center was designed to expand access to education by having a facility that can offer traditional credit-bearing courses, postsecondary certifications, or industry certifications to create career pathways. The key service providers are the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, University of Rhode Island, and Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training.

In December 2022, the Council on Postsecondary Education was briefed in executive session regarding the need for expansion of the Center and approved the lease in March 2023, for space at 116 High Street, Westerly, RI. At this time the Tower Street project was introduced as a potential permanent location, but the site feasibility was still being developed. OPC continued to monitor the planning stages of the development of the Tower Street Location.

In March 2023, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) confirmed the appropriation for Congressionally Directed Spending grant (B-23-CP-RI-1356) in the amount of \$1,500,000 to OPC for the Education Center Expansion.

Commissioner Gilkey added that the success of the Center is due to its model that started by identifying an employer and community needs, working from there to fulfill said needs. Commissioner Gilkey also noted that the education center builds revenue, which would not be possible without partnerships with Royce Family Fund, Electric Boat, and the Town of Westerly.

B. Discussion regarding the Tower Street Community Center Project located in Westerly, RI.

Chair Duffy introduced the item. Dennis Algieri thanked and acknowledged everyone for support and asked Nicholas Moore to provide a project overview. Mr. Moore explained the collaborative process between private, public, and nonprofit entities created the vision for the Tower Street Project. Mr. Algieri emphasized the public input on this project. The Royce Family Fund held public meetings with hundreds of individuals from diverse backgrounds and held meetings with nonprofits and other local entities to understand what services would be most beneficial.

The anchor tenants for the Tower Street Community Center will include Wood River Health, the Town of Westerly, and the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner. These committed partners will offer a range of services, including health care, dental services, mental health counseling, job training, childcare, indoor and outdoor recreational facilities, public broadband access, and social connectivity.

Chair Duffy asked about the timeline and \$35.8 million project budget. Mr. Liguori, stated that fundraising for the project has been challenging. They are seeking a combination of state, federal, and private funding for the project. Mr. Algieri explained that they are considering design revisions and completing the project in phases as an option to reduce the cost of the project based on the total funding that can be secured. They are in discussions with consultants to assist in developing these options.

Mr. Izzo asked if they have worked with other nonprofits in the area. Mr. Algieri explained that in Westerly there are a number of “safety net” nonprofits, but this proposed center will address needs not currently met. Mr. Royce explained that these conversations have been had with individuals, nonprofits, and other entities.

Ms. Reyes asked about the gap in constructing funding for the project and financial projections and sustainability of the project. Mr. Moore responded that as they consider refining their plans, they can provide additional information to the Committee.

Mr. Izzo requested confirmation that the \$1.5 million grant through HUD for the OPC would be used for prepaid rent and the commitment and release of these dollars would happen when the project was ready to move forward. Mr. Saul explained that under the grant award prepaid rent would be considered an allowable expense. Currently OPC and the Tower Street Community Center, Inc. are negotiating a Letter of Intent which could be used as a trigger to release the funds. Mr. Stolzman indicated that the final negotiated Letter of Intent would be presented to the Committee for consideration.

Chair Caprio stated to the Tower Street Board members that OPC can convene quickly if there is a need to provide updated financial information or changes to the scope and timeline of the project.

4. Executive Session

Executive Session was not convened during this meeting.

5. Adjourn

Chair Duffy asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

On a motion duly made by Thomas Izzo and seconded by Marcy Reyes, it was:

VOTED:	THAT	The Finance and Facilities Committee adjourn the meeting of Friday, July 26, 2024.
	VOTE:	3 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Dennis Duffy, Thomas Izzo, and Marcy Reyes
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 AM.