

Hoped-for new home for Montague TV jeopardized

Member's possible resignation would leave board without quorum

By CHRIS CURTIS
Recorder Staff

TURNERS FALLS — The body responsible for the fate of the former Cumberland Farms building hit a snag Wednesday with one member's announced intention to withdraw from the process, which might leave the board unable to act.

The Montague Economic Development and Industrial Corp. controls the decaying structure at the corner of Avenue A and Second Street, and has agreed to sell it to

Montague Community Cable Inc. as space for Montague Community Television and other local nonprofits.

The EDIC met Wednesday to continue work on the purchase and sale agreement.

Member Roy Rosenblatt said at the meeting that he is considering resigning.

"I feel too personally in conflict to continue," Rosenblatt said, alluding to an unspecified conflict of interest involving friends and family and discomfort with the sale.

The absence of a single member leaves the board,

which numbers four of a possible seven, without a quorum to meet or vote.

"I'm willing to stay in meetings so you have a quorum to continue discussions, I'm not sure whether I'm willing to sign anything," Rosenblatt said.

"Is that 100 percent?" asked member Nathaniel Donovan.

"Pretty close," Rosenblatt said.

Members and Town Planner Walter Ramsey discussed what this would mean for the board's ability to transfer the property, but there was no clear resolution.

The possibility of recruiting a replacement for Rosenblatt, who replaced former chairman Andrew Killeen after he moved out of town this spring, was discussed with members saying that it takes time and any new member would be dropped into the middle of the process.

Ramsey said after the meeting it would take more research to determine what the absence of Rosenblatt's signature would mean for the sale.

The town took the Cumberland Farms property through eminent domain in 1985 and it was attached to what became the Great Falls Discovery Center project, coming under control of the state Division of Conservation and Recreation.

DCR did not use the property and it has been little used since, managed by the EDIC at the town level but in ownership limbo.

The state recently agreed to relinquish the title under an agreement carrying aesthetic and other restrictions on the use of the property, and the EDIC accepted MCCI's proposal to transform the building into the Grand Trunk Media and Cultural Center, primarily workspace for MCTV with space for the Montague Business Association and Turners Falls RiverCulture.

The EDIC is a quasi-independent town body appointed by the selectmen and charged

with promoting local economic development projects, and is not bound by the same restrictions in transferring property as a town.

The MCCI originally proposed using the property in exchange for extensive work needed to clean out mold and repair the roof as ordered by the building inspector, work the EDIC did not have the money to perform.

Town meeting in May approved spending \$32,000 on the building, money officials said was needed as a safety net for the building in case the deal fell through.

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