



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

Economic Development Work Group

Monday, May 14, 2018

7:30 a.m.

Main Meeting Room, Town Hall, 933 Hopmeadow Street

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Members Present: Cheryl Cook, Eric Wellman

Staff Present: Maria Capriola, Melissa Appleby, Mike Glidden

Guests Present: Sarah Nielson, Dave Balboni, Tom Frank, Joe Buda, Dominique Avery, Alice Sawyer, Anita Mielert, Mike Long, Charlie Haldeman, and other interested parties.

The meeting was called to order at 7:32am.

1) Public Audience

Mr. Wellman thanked the group for attending the meeting to share their feedback on the framing of the new economic development commission, and noted that the intent of this meeting was to collect feedback from members of volunteer boards and commissions. Ms. Cook added that no specific parameters have been developed yet, and that this work group is looking to solicit as much input as possible.

Mr. Frank expressed his opinion that there should be no requirements regarding political affiliation for the membership of the new commission. He noted that importance of the interface between economic development and zoning, and said that it would be beneficial to have zoning expertise on the economic development commission.

Ms. Avery said that the commission should function as a task force that serves the Board of Selectmen. She believes four-year terms are too long for the membership of this commission. She also expressed her opinion that the individuals on the commission should have a high level of expertise, including in areas such as marketing.

Ms. Sawyer said that the terms should not exactly mirror those of the Board of Selectmen, because this would cause breaks in the flow of their work. She suggested two-year terms with an option to extend.

Ms. Mielert spoke about the Economic Development Strategic Plan from 1995. She noted that the new commission should not be regulatory, and developers should not be required to go before the commission. She said that the ordinance should not be too specific, and that the Board of Selectmen should have flexibility in this area. She expressed her opinion that two meetings per month is too much to ask of a volunteer commission. She said that the responsibility of the commission should be to advise the Board of Selectmen and support the Town Manager. Ms. Mielert identified some actions taken in the past that were not effective,

including the hiring of a part-time economic development coordinator, hiring a consultant, working with the Metro Hartford Alliance, and large-scale funding for the commission members to attend trade shows. She identified some actions taken in the past that were effective, including working with the Main Street Partnership, focusing on tourism, and taking care of existing businesses to promote growth from within. Ms. Mielert also expressed her belief that the Town needs to develop a definition of “economic development” in order to measure results.

Mr. Buda said that the commission should have key metrics, so that the expected outcomes are clearly identified. He noted that tourism should be included in those metrics, and expressed his support for having the Tourism Committee work with the new economic development commission in some way.

Mr. Long noted that tourism and economic development are separate but related. He said that tourism is a part of economic development, but that it focuses on quality of life.

Mr. Haldeman said that it is important to consider the economic development commission’s connection to the Open Space Committee, as well as to the boards that have regulatory authority.

Mr. Frank said that the ordinance should have specific language regarding both support for existing businesses as well as attracting new business.

The group discussed keeping the ordinance simple to allow for flexibility in anticipation of changing goals over time.

2) Discussion on Economic Development Commission Ordinance

Ms. Capriola said that the process for developing an ordinance has very specific, prescribed steps. She noted that the charter language is broad, and simply states that the Board of Selectmen create an ordinance that determines the membership, terms, duties and responsibilities of the economic development commission.

The group briefly discussed the state statute which governs municipal economic development commissions. Title 7, Chapter 97, Section 7-136 of the CT General Statutes states that municipal ordinances should specify the number of members, whether they are elected or appointed, and the terms.

3) Minutes of April 17, 2018

The minutes of April 17, 2018 were approved as presented by consensus.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:27am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Appleby
Deputy Town Manager