



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

Economic Development Commission **Regular Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, October 26, 2022 at 5:30pm
Held Virtually via Zoom

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Bob Crowther at 5:35pm. Commission members Ron Jodice, Brooke Freeman, and Charmaine Seavy were present. Ex officio member Heather Goetz (Board of Selectmen) was also present. Staff members in attendance included: Maria Capriola, Town Manager; and Melissa Appleby, Deputy Town Manager. Also in attendance was Sarah Nielsen, Executive Director of the Simsbury Main Street Partnership.

1) Housekeeping Items

a) Selection of Chair for November 2022 – October 2023

Mr. Crowther was appointed chair by consensus.

b) Selection of Vice Chair for November 2022 – October 2023

Mr. Earl was appointed vice chair by consensus.

c) Liaison/Committee Appointments for November 2022 – October 2023

i. Zoning

Mr. Jodice will continue to serve as liaison.

ii. Design Review

Mr. Crowther will continue to serve as liaison.

iii. Sustainability Sub-Committee Representative

Mr. Crowther will continue to serve as liaison.

iv. DEI Council

Mr. Earl will continue to serve as liaison.

v. Development Projects

Mr. Earl will continue to serve as liaison.

vi. Business Development Incentive Committee

Mr. Earl will continue to serve as liaison.

d) 2023 Regular Meeting Schedule

Mr. Crowther said that 2022 was the first year that the EDC met every other month; after some discussion, the group agreed to continue with this format. The 2023 meeting schedule was adopted as presented by consensus.

e) EDC Vacancy

Ms. Capriola said that we need to check with the Town Clerk to find out if we have received any applications. She noted that the current vacancy is to complete an existing term.

f) Minutes of August 24, 2022

Mr. Jodice made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Freeman seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

2) EDC 2021-2022 Annual Report

Mr. Crowther walked through the draft report and sought feedback from the committee. Mr. Jodice talked about the role of EDC in Simsbury as compared to how other towns operate. There was brief discussion on each topic area in the report; no major edits were suggested.

Ms. Capriola noted that the report is usually presented at a Board of Selectmen meeting at the end of October or early November. Mr. Crowther is scheduled to present at the November 14 Board of Selectmen meeting.

3) EDC 2022-2023 Work Plan Ideas

Ms. Capriola walked through the draft work plan, noting that the ideas were generated from the group. New items include: serving as a resource for the Simsbury Historical Society; updating the town's tourism map; creating marketing "themes"; and exploring the idea of a hospitality task force.

In regards to the marketing themes, which will focus on specific areas such as family-friendly and events, Ms. Nielsen asked if Ms. Seavy and Ms. Freeman would assist. Both members confirmed that they would continue to work on this project.

In regards to the tourism map, Mr. Crowther said that we had spoken to Morgan Hilyard about this idea and that funding would be required. Ms. Capriola noted that we receive a large volume of requests for this item. Ms. Seavy offered to assist with this project.

Mr. Crowther said that we had also spoken with Ms. Hilyard about the concept of a hospitality task force. Ms. Capriola said that there was interest in getting this off the ground in early 2020, and then the pandemic stalled the effort. Ms. Nielsen said that Main Street has a hospitality group, which is sometimes merged with the realtor group. It is used as a focus group, a brain trust, and assists with specific functions. Ms. Capriola said that the new concept would be focused on cross-marketing for events, and coordinating among stakeholders for packages and other services that would benefit a cross-section of businesses. She said that we can call the group by a different name if a group already exists as the hospitality task force.

4) Mr. Crowther said that the website updates will be ongoing. Mr. Jodice asked if there will be a focus on what the business needs may be in regards to website resources, especially for those businesses contemplating a move to Simsbury. Ms. Appleby said that the focus so far

has been to simply audit and update the existing resources, and that this idea can be explored as we move deeper into the project.

5) Stakeholder and Liaison Updates

a) Main Street Partnership

Ms. Nielsen said that she is still working on the cell phone coverage issue in town, and that another community survey is forthcoming. She said the new apartments at the old Iron Horse Inn will be opening up the lease applications soon. She has also been working with the Tower Ridge disc golf course, and reported that they hosted an official ribbon cutting. Ms. Nielsen also said that she is working with Planning and Public Works on signage for downtown.

Ms. Nielsen noted that shoplifting has been a major issue for local businesses, and that this problem is happening throughout the Farmington Valley. She said that the Police Department is working on this issue, and that we will need to advocate at the state level for the ability to enact more serious punishments for these crimes.

Ms. Nielsen also reported that she has been working closely with the International Skating Center, which will be home to the CT Whale this season. She also noted that Simsbury Celebrates will take place on November 26 this year.

b) Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Crowther relayed an update from Ms. Hilyard in her absence. The addition of new members as compared to prior years continues to increase. The big events this fall, Celebrate the Valley and Spooktacular, were very successful. The Chamber is currently promoting a “shop local” campaign, with raffle tickets available for a chance to win gift cards to local businesses.

c) Zoning

Mr. Jodice said that there will be a special meeting on the cannabis moratorium extension on November 2. He reported that the ADU legislation included a parking component, which the Zoning Commission opted out of. He said that Zoning is currently reviewing temporary sign matters.

d) Design Review

None

e) Sustainability

Mr. Crowther said that the Sustainable CT application submission was pushed off until spring 2023. He reported that the Clean Energy Task Force had a presence at the Spooktacular event, including some equipment. He also noted the ongoing discussion regarding the Latimer Lane renovation, and possible opportunities to include sustainable design. Ms. Goetz asked if there are incentives available for doing so. Discussion ensued regarding examples of what other towns have done.

f) DEI Council

In Mr. Earl's absence, Mr. Crowther reported that the housing sub-committee is still analyzing the affordable housing issue. He also noted that there is a panel on affordable and inclusive housing planned for November 9 at 6:30pm at the Library.

g) Development Projects

None

h) Historical Society Support

Mr. Crowther reported that Mr. Earl attended a meeting with the Historical Society last Saturday, and that he will continue to stay involved and be a resource for them. Mr. Jodice said that he met with Bob Moody and conducted a tour of the Historical Society's buildings to review their capital needs, specifically the status of the structures on the property. He said that they will need funding to tackle this issue.

i) Other

None

Adjournment

Ms. Seavy made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:30pm. Mr. Jodice seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Appleby
Deputy Town Manager