



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

Economic Development Work Group

Wednesday, May 30, 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 Nielsen, Dave Balboni, Gus Jasminski, Bruce Elliott, Melissa Brett, Larry Kiel, Steve Antonio, Bob Sawyer

The meeting was called to order at 7:33am.

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. He noted that the meeting was intended to be informal and to collect ideas as the Board of Selectmen develops the economic development commission ordinance.

Mr. Jasminski said that it is important to identify specific objectives, such as number of jobs, or increased tax revenue. He noted that the Town has never had a formal plan for economic development, or a program to market to potential new businesses.

Ms. Nielsen said that one obstacle is sewer. Mr. Jasminski agreed, noting that the regulations are opaque. Mr. Jasminski said that the Town is reactionary; instead of proactively identifying what we are looking for, we just say “yes” or “no” to development on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Elliott said that we need a unified sense of direction, and that all stakeholders should be on the same page regarding our challenges and objectives. Mr. Balboni said that we need to anticipate changes in trends, such as technology, and be willing to accept those changes.

Ms. Brett said that we should not forget about existing businesses, which can act as cheerleaders that encourage and educate new businesses. She expressed her belief that the new economic development commission drive the vision for economic development, and that it not be added as another step in the approval process. Mr. Wellman agreed, stating that he envisions the economic development commission functioning at a strategic level.

Mr. Wellman asked how the Board of Selectmen and economic development commission can best support existing businesses. Ms. Nielsen and Ms. Brett discussed parking issues

downtown, the challenges of one-way streets, restrictive sign regulations, and the challenges presented by weekend events.

Mr. Kiel said that Board of Selectmen should drive the vision, and the economic development commission should be strategic about bringing in new business. Mr. Antonio said that the image of Simsbury is the local merchant, and that the new commission should help bring the community together through tourism and events.

Mr. Sawyer said that there are opportunities to collaborate with the Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC).

The group discussed the need to increase the use of administrative approvals so that applicants do not need to go to the Planning and Zoning Commissions for minor things, such as signage.

2) Discussion on Economic Development Commission Ordinance

Ms. Capriola said that based on the feedback received thus far, staff will draft the ordinance in such a way that it will be higher level. She said that it will include details on the appointing authority, the number of members, and terms. In order to be responsive to the changing needs of the community, the specific types of membership slots will be determined by the Board of Selectmen. Other specific parameters, such as frequency of meetings, will also be determined by the Board of Selectmen. Staff will come up with sample language to include in the ordinance regarding the basic roles, responsibilities, and mission of the commission.

The group discussed the role of the Tourism Committee, and how it may function as a subset of the new economic development commission or continue as its own stand-alone Town committee.

3) Minutes of May 14, 2018

The minutes of May 14, 2018 were approved as presented by consensus.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:56am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Appleby
Deputy Town Manager