



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

Economic Development Commission Regular Meeting Minutes - Approved

Wednesday, January 23, 2019 at 5:30pm
Simsbury Public Library, Program Room 2 – 725 Hopmeadow Street

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Crowther at 5:30pm. Commission members Peter Van Loon, Carrie Meckel, Ron Jodice, and Brooke Freeman (by phone) were present. Ex officio member Jackie Battos (Zoning Commission) was also present. Staff members in attendance included Town Manager Maria Capriola, Deputy Town Manager Melissa Appleby, Director of Planning and Community Development Mike Glidden, and Sarah Nielsen (Main Street Partnership). Guest in attendance included Lisa Gray, Executive Director for the Chamber of Commerce, and other interested parties.

1) Guest Speaker: Sarah Nielsen, Executive Director, Simsbury Main Street Partnership

Ms. Nielsen gave a presentation on the Simsbury Main Street Partnership (MSP), which is a non-profit organization that works with the Town and other community partners on economic development. The presentation included: a history on the organization; the role of MSP in advocacy and outreach; branding and marketing efforts; and partnerships with the Library, Simsbury Public Schools, and other Town departments on events and grant funding opportunities. She described the “main street” model, which is a comprehensive approach to economic development, focusing on cultural and historic tourism, the built environment, supporting existing businesses, and preserving historic resources.

Mr. Crowther encouraged commission members to attend future MSP meetings. He shared his observation that economic development is the responsibility of multiple parties. The EDC will be working on solidifying its role as it works through the work plan. Commission members discussed the need to prioritize support for existing businesses

2) EDC Work Plan

a) Update from work streams/teams

- *Business incentives* – Mr. Van Loon noted that business incentives seem to be tied specifically to physical space or location. The commission discussed the idea of expanding the concept of incentives to include grants and other types of assistance. Mr. Van Loon indicated that this work team will need to work collaboratively with the others to ensure that the incentives being pursued are consistent with the needs of the business community.

Ms. Meckel discussed the needs assessment survey that she developed. This is a tool to help identify obstacles and challenges faced by the business community. The commission discussed how this tool could be used at a small business roundtable; Ms. Meckel will work to scale down and refine the draft survey.

- *Strategic vision* – The work team will be reviewing past studies to identify any recommendations that have not yet been implemented.
- *Business recruitment, retention, and outreach* – Mr. Crowther presented a list of discussion questions to further refine the action plan for this work team. Discussion ensued regarding how to identify the right types of businesses to target. Staff noted that there is often a difference between the property owner and the business owner. The group decided to expand its focus beyond the top real estate taxpayers list; staff will develop a list of the top personal property taxpayers, and Mr. Van Loon will develop a list of high tech manufacturing firms.

In order to expand its outreach, the group also decided to pursue a small business roundtable. This will be a facilitated session used to identify issues of importance to small and mid-sized businesses.

- *Support entrepreneurs/marketing* – Ms. Nielsen said that MSP will be making a funding request in the upcoming budget cycle to update the branding materials. This work team will play a key role in this process, including engaging stakeholders and developing materials.

3) Housekeeping Items

a) Potential Topics/Guest Speakers

Mr. Van Loon noted that once the work teams get further into their work, the commission can identify specific speakers that would be helpful to hear from. Ms. Meckel said that it would be helpful to hear from state agencies, specifically in regards to business incentives.

Ms. Gray invited the commission to the Chamber of Commerce's legislative breakfast on February 22 at 8:00am at the Simsbury Housing Authority; Senator Kevin Witkos and Representative John Hampton will be in attendance.

Ms. Capriola noted that the next two speakers will be Sarah Loudenslager, Business Resource Center Coordinator at the Simsbury Public Library (February meeting) and Lisa Gray, Executive Director for the Chamber of Commerce (March).

b) Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Committee

No update.

c) Reports/Updates to and from EDC, Planning, Zoning, and Board of Selectmen Liaisons

Commission members shared general observations on the board and commission meetings that they have attended.

4) Minutes

a) December 27, 2018

Mr. Van Loon made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Meckel seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Adjournment

Mr. Van Loon made a motion to adjourn at 7:30pm. Ms. Meckel seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Appleby
Deputy Town Manager