



# Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

## Economic Development Commission Regular Meeting Minutes - Approved

Wednesday, February 24, 2021 at 5:30pm  
Virtual Meeting Broadcast Live via SCTV

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Crowther at 5:33pm. Commission members Ron Jodice, Charmaine Seavy, Tom Earl, Lori Wagner, and Brooke Freeman were present. Ex officio member Bill Rice (Planning Commission) and Board of Selectmen liaison Jackie Battos were also present. Staff members in attendance included Maria Capriola, Town Manager, Melissa Appleby, Deputy Town Manager, Mike Glidden, Director of Planning and Community Development, and Andrew Sherman, Business and Career Center Coordinator.

Mr. Crowther made a motion to add “budget update” to the agenda. Mr. Jodice seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Budget Update**

Ms. Capriola said that she presented her proposed operating and capital budgets to the Board of Selectmen this past Monday evening. She noted that grand list growth was approximately 2.94%, which is very strong, and is a reflection of our development trends. She said that the proposed budget results in an increase to the mill rate of 0.17 mills, or approximately \$36 for the median valued home. Mr. Jodice asked where the new growth is coming from. Ms. Capriola pointed to Tobacco Valley Solar, Big Y, and CuraLeaf as drivers.

### **1) Business Recovery**

#### **a) Oral Report from Main Street Partnership**

Mr. Crowther gave a report in Ms. Nielsen’s absence. He said that Main Street is continuing to advocate on behalf of businesses, provide information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, COVID relief programs, etc. Main Street is also working on a “Say Yes to Local” campaign with the Chamber of Commerce.

#### **b) Oral Report from Chamber of Commerce**

Mr. Crowther gave a report in Ms. Hilyard’s absence. The Scholar Sip fundraiser on February 16 was successful, and additional information on the scholarship program is on the Chamber website. On February 26 at 8:00am, there will be a development update from Mike Glidden. Ms. Hilyard relayed that there is a benefits plan program being offered to members. She also noted that new member growth has been strong.

#### **c) Oral Report from Business Resource Librarian**

Mr. Sherman reported that the Library is still partially open, with curbside service still popular. He said that there has been a lot of activity with the job seekers group, and many people have secured jobs.

**d) Other**

None

**2) 2020-2021 Work Plan Updates**

**a) Marketing**

Ms. Freeman said that the final marketing contract was sent to the town attorney for review. Ms. Capriola reported that there was just one minor edit recommended from the attorney. The work will commence upon contract execution.

**b) Co-working Spaces/Supporting Entrepreneurs**

There was no update.

**c) Business Outreach**

Mr. Crowther reported that he has obtained contact information for Hoffman Auto, and we will be setting up a visit with that business. He noted that he is still seeking contact information for MicroSemi. Mr. Fitzgerald in the Town Manager's Office will be putting together the yearly schedule of visits. Mr. Crowther also said that he will work with Ms. Nielsen and Ms. Hilyard on the list of "tier 2" businesses to visit.

Ms. Wagner reported that she will be working on a best practices review of economic development commission work in comparable communities. She said that by July, we should be ready to review the research and decide what to bring forward to the Board of Selectmen in the fall for the next work plan. Ms. Wagner requested assistance with this project; Mr. Jodice and Mr. Earl will assist. Ms. Freeman will pass along the previous research she conducted regarding other towns' websites.

Ms. Capriola said that Ms. Wagner will be assisting with the update to the Doing Business in Simsbury guide. Ms. Wagner said that the best practices review and the marketing project will help inform those revisions.

Ms. Capriola said that we will also be working on a welcome letter for new businesses, and that we can start to incorporate outreach from EDC members to new businesses.

**d) Other**

None

**3) Liaison Updates**

Mr. Crowther mentioned the February 4 community conversation on housing, and asked Mr. Rice if he would be willing to provide a presentation to the EDC regarding the Planning Commission's affordable housing plan. Mr. Rice said that he can do so at the March meeting. Mr. Earl asked whether the EDC can assist with this effort. Mr. Glidden said that the Zoning Commission is reviewing its regulations, specifically as it relates to potential barriers for affordable housing. Mr. Glidden said that they will make use of the research Mr. Earl has conducted on this topic to-date, and that he will connect with Mr. Earl separately on any further research.

**a) Zoning**

Mr. Jodice said that Zoning met just once since the last EDC meeting. He said that they are looking at permitted uses for industrial zones, and comparing to other towns.

**b) Design Review**

Ms. Wagner reported that there is some really nice work being done at Fiddler's Green where The Rioux is coming in. Mr. Glidden said that the Design Review Board meets next Monday, and that they will review a preliminary plan for the redevelopment on Iron Horse Boulevard.

**c) Sustainability**

Mr. Crowther said that the Sustainability Commission is targeting April 2022 to submit its recertification application.

**d) Development Projects**

Mr. Crowther said that with the car dealership development stalled due to complications with approvals in Canton, EDC will need another project to work on. Mr. Glidden said that the Iron Horse redevelopment would be a good project to connect to. He said that after next Monday's preliminary review, the project will move on to more formal approvals. Mr. Earl is assigned to this project and will connect with Mr. Glidden after next Monday's meeting.

**e) Other**

Mr. Jodice said that it seems like we should promote Simsbury and its value as a place to live during this current environment in which remote work is so prevalent. He said that for those who work remotely, the distance from Simsbury to the highway is no longer an issue.

**4) Minutes - November 18, 2020**

Mr. Jodice made a motion to approve the minutes for the January 27, 2021 meeting as presented. Mr. Earl seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

**Adjournment**

Mr. Jodice made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:12pm. Mr. Earl seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Melissa Appleby  
Deputy Town Manager