



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

Economic Development Commission **Regular Meeting** **Minutes - DRAFT**

Wednesday, March 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 Peter Van Loon were present. Ex officio member Bill Rice (Planning Commission) was also present. Staff members in attendance included Maria Capriola, Town Manager, Melissa Appleby, Deputy Town Manager, and Mike Glidden, Director of Planning and Community Development.

1) Affordable Housing Plan Presentation: Bill Rice

Mr. Rice reviewed a presentation entitled "Simsbury Affordable Housing Program." He said the Planning Commission completed the plan in March 2021. This is required by state statute, and is to be updated at least every five years. Mr. Rice reviewed the definition of "affordable housing," indicating that the units need to be deed restricted, the individual needs to be receiving government assistance through USDA or CFHA, or receiving assistance through Section 8 or similar programs.

Mr. Rice said that 4.47% of Simsbury's housing stock currently falls under the definition of affordable. The goal is 10%; Simsbury would need 481 more affordable units to reach this percentage. The Planning Commission is recommending that we increase our affordable housing stock by 1% over the next five years; this would require an increase of 90 affordable units.

Mr. Rice reviewed the definition of "affordable housing" as it pertains to home price. A home is "affordable" if the cost of ownership is less than 30% of the gross income of a household earning 80% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI).

Mr. Rice discussed the action items for reaching our goals, including: educating prospective buyers on federal and state financing programs available to citizens; inclusionary zoning regulations; and CDBG/Small Cities funding for housing rehabilitation. Discussion ensued regarding the CDBG/Small Cities program and how it may be leveraged.

Mr. Rice said that the Planning Commission believes this plan is a good start, and that there may be additional techniques that may be employed to increase affordable housing. He said that the Commission thinks the Town should consider putting together an advisory committee on this topic to explore other ways to increase affordable housing in Simsbury.

The group briefly discussed the proposed state legislation regarding affordable housing that will impact local zoning. Mr. Glidden indicated that the Zoning Commission sent a letter in opposition to this bill.

Mr. Crowther said that the new marketing materials should reflect and emphasize the diversity of housing options in Simsbury.

2) 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 working on the marketing campaign, and is in the process of setting up two focus groups – one for realtors and one for hospitality. Ms. Nielsen has received permission to use professional photos. She indicated that Ms. Capriola provided the consultant with the most up-to-date surveys and other pertinent information from the Town.

b) Oral Report from Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Crowther said that the presentation given by Mr. Glidden at the Chamber event at the end of February was very well received. He indicated that the Chamber's Government Affairs Committee expressed interest in receiving regular development updates. Mr. Crowther also said that he is working with Ms. Appleby and Ms. Hilyard on incorporating business roundtable meetings into the Government Affairs structure.

c) Oral Report from Business Resource Librarian

None

d) Other

None

3) Fiscal Year 2021/2022 Budget Update

a) Top Taxpayers Update

Ms. Capriola shared the list of top 25 taxpayers as of February 2021. She reminded the group about the strong grand list growth from the past two years as discussed at the last meeting, indicating that the last two years saw the highest level of growth in the last 20 years outside of revaluation years. She said that the list of top taxpayers has changed in recent years, and that several of the businesses on the list are new. She noted that this new development has offset the loss of The Hartford. Ms. Capriola said that we will add these new businesses to the list of annual outreach visits.

4) 2020-2021 Work Plan Updates

a) Marketing

Ms. Seavy said the work has begun and the focus groups are starting. She will be participating in those meetings.

b) Co-working Spaces/Supporting Entrepreneurs

There was no update. Mr. Crowther, Mr. Van Loon and Mr. Jodice will plan to meet on this topic in the next couple of weeks.

c) Business Outreach

Mr. Crowther said that there was no additional update other than what was reported on under items 1b and 3.

d) Other
None

5) Liaison Updates

a) Zoning

Mr. Jodice said that Zoning's letter in opposition to the proposed state bill was already discussed earlier in the meeting. He noted that consideration should be given to the quality of our housing stock in connection with all of the discussion around affordable housing.

b) Design Review

Ms. Wagner reported that there will be two structures installed at the Ensign building for shaded parking with solar panels.

c) Sustainability

Mr. Crowther said that the Sustainability Commission will be combining with the Clean Energy Task Force in an effort to consolidate efforts.

d) Development Projects

Mr. Crowther said that the electric car dealership development continues to be stalled due to complications with approvals in Canton. The Iron Horse redevelopment project is proceeding, and Mr. Earl is assigned to this project.

e) Other

Ms. Capriola said that the Town Manager's Office is working on a guide for new residents, which will be shared with the EDC for review and input

6) Minutes – February 24, 2021

Mr. Jodice made a motion to approve the minutes for the February 24, 2021 meeting as presented. Mr. Crowther seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Mr. Jodice made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:40pm. Mr. Van Loon seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Appleby
Deputy Town Manager