

TOWN OF SIMSBURY - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
“SUBJECT TO APPROVAL”
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - JUNE 8, 2017

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CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the Economic Development Commission was called to order at 7:32 a.m. in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices, 933 Hopmeadow Street. Present were: Chair Kristen Barnett, Vice Chair David Moore and Commissioners Thomas Frank, Maura Fitzgerald, David Balboni and Evelyn Golden. Thomas Cooke, Director of Administrative Services, James Rabbitt, Director of Planning and Community Development and Sarah Nielsen, Executive Director of the Simsbury Main Street Partnership, were also in attendance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairwoman Barnett moved to approve the Minutes from the May 11, 2017 Meeting. Mr. Frank seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

UPDATE FROM THE FIRST SELECTWOMAN’S OFFICE - THOMAS COOKE

The Town has selected a search firm, Municipal Resources, for the recruitment process for a Town Manager. The Economic Development Commission will be invited to participate in this process. The cost for this will be \$28,000.00.

The Town budget referendum is June 13, 2017. There is an increase in expenses of approximately \$28,000.00. Cuts were made as a result of the State budget crisis. The Town continues to wait for final numbers from the State. There will likely be a decrease in funding. The Board of Finance has a \$2.5 million contingency built into the budget for protection. The Mill Rate will increase to about forty mills. Chairwoman Barnett commented that the revaluation will be complete by the end of this year. Mr. Balboni inquired whether the School budget will require any layoffs. There are no layoffs at this time.

The Silverman Group site plan application has been approved.

The town held an open meeting for residents to talk to town staff about Deepwater Wind solar project on June 7, 2017. There was good feedback from the public regarding what specific questions still need to be answered. It is not clear at this time what the tax impact will be. About three hundred people attended the meeting and good questions were asked. On June 22, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. there will be another meeting at the High School at which a presentation will be made by the developer. It was noted that this is a State project over which Simsbury has no control. The Connecticut Siting Council will determine whether or not the project moves forward. Those with party status can appeal the process.

There was a bear attack on June 7, 2017. The person is fine and the bear was euthanized.

DISCUSSION OF COMMISSIONER FRANK’S DRAFT ENTITLED: “POSSIBLE STRATEGIES FOR RENEWED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SIMSBURY”

Addressing his first and second points in the Draft, Mr. Frank noted he is quite concerned that adequate dedicated resources be put in place for economic development activity and that an Economic Development Strategic Plan be developed. He feels that the Town needs a consultant to develop a strategic plan. Based on his experience in this area and his belief that this is so important for the community, he said he would be willing to provide this service pro bono.

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Chairwoman Barnett clarified that there is no money available for this. Discussion followed including getting input from the public, what this means for the EDC and who will lead this. Input from the Town, staff, residents, boards and commissions will all be a part of this. It was agreed that a facilitator is what is needed.

Commissioner Frank made a motion to ask the Board of Selectmen to have this subject put on their agenda and to present to them a proposal regarding the development of a strategic plan at that time. Vice-Chair Moore seconded the motion. Commissioner Balboni abstained due to concern that the Commission should wait until the formal government is in place before working on this further. The motion passed.

It was decided that comments from each commissioner should be submitted to Mr. Cooke. A subcommittee will be formed to discuss and prepare a presentation to be made to the Board of Selectmen. Chairwoman Barnett requested that comments be submitted to Mr. Cooke by June 22, 2017. The new subcommittee will meet on June 29, 2017.

Mr. Frank noted that there is significant information online regarding economic development in medium to small towns and that economic success models should be studied. CERC resources are available and Mr. Cooke was asked to invite a CERC representative to an upcoming EDC meeting. Chairwoman Barnett suggested conducting a survey to determine what Simsbury residents, businesses, business groups and others believe is needed to spur economic development. Commissioner Frank further went over the remaining points in the Draft. He noted the importance of staying with the timetable outlined and completing the task. He asked the Commission to consider finishing the timetable and to have the Project Director come to the August 10, 2017 meeting to present a draft report for discussion.

Vice-Chair Moore moved to approve the Draft as presented with three corrections, (CREC changed to CERC, NECD changed to NEDC and adding Town Manager to point 6). Mr. Frank seconded the motion and it passed with Mr. Balboni abstaining.

Chairwoman Barnett proposed an amendment to the motion to eliminate “Retirement Facilities” from the “Target Sectors” suggested in the October 2013 Fairweather Consulting Report in the Draft because it is not a recommendation from Fairweather, but a suggestion from the Commission. Commissioner Fitzgerald seconded that amendment to the motion. The motion passed with one abstention from Mr. Balboni.

Mr. Rabbitt noted that the Town has already approved two retirement facility projects, one at Powder Forest and the other as part of the Silverman Group project.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Frank moved to adjourn. Vice-Chair Moore seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Haberlin
Commission Clerk