

From: Lois Laczko February 10, 2012 10:12:35 AM
Subject: Economic Development Commission Minutes 01/05/2012 ADOPTED
To: SimsburyCT_EconMin
Cc:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION – ADOPTED MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
JANUARY 5, 2012

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mark Deming, Chairman, called a special meeting of the Economic Development Commission to order on Thursday, January 5th, 2012 at 7:38 a.m. in the Main Meeting Room at the Town Offices. The following members were also present: Charles Minor, Louis George, Andrew Markowski, Derek Peterson, Kevin Crimmins and Timothy Ellsworth. Also in attendance were Ferg Jansen, liaison to the Planning Commission, Lisa Heavner, Board of Selectmen, Hiram Peck, Town Planner, Leslie Faraci, Commission Clerk and other interested parties.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - DECEMBER 8, 2011

Commissioner Crimmins made a motion to approve the minutes from December 8, 2011 as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Peterson and was passed unanimously.

III. REPORTS: SMSP & FVVA

SMSP: Jule Gutman, Board Member of Simsbury Main Street Partnership, started by giving a summary/overview of the money brought in by SMSP and some of the recognition the Town has received that had a direct link to SMSP. Ms. Gutman asked, and urged, the Commission to support the \$50,000 budget they were presenting. Commissioner Deming said that the \$50,000 is level with the previous year.

Anita Meilert, SMSP, stood and spoke on behalf of the presented budget, saying the \$50,000 is actually quite a small number for what they actually bring to the table. Ms. Meilert said there are countless donations to Town that result from SMSP's work. She also thanked the Commission for their support. When asked by Commissioner Deming about the return on investment for the \$50,000 to SMSP, Ms. Meilert said it was at least six to one (6:1) when taking into consideration donations, grants, etc.

Commissioner Deming said that FVVA had asked for the same \$4,000 amount from the EDC, which is the same amount as the previous year.

FVVA: Nancy Anstey, Farmington Valley Visitors Association, thanked the Commission for their support in the past. Ms. Anstey said that while they promote the eight (8) member towns, Simsbury, Avon and Farmington use the resource the most. Ms. Anstey gave an overview of the services provided by the FVVA and their upcoming events. She thanked the Commission for their support and said they are not asking for any additional money from last year. Ferg Jansen, one of the Founders of the program and past President, spoke on behalf of the FVVA urging the Commission to continue their support. Commissioner Markowski asked about how much the other member towns pay in comparison to Simsbury. Ms. Anstey said it was based on a formula and that Simsbury, Avon and Farmington all pay the same \$4,000 amount and the other towns are at a lower fee.

IV. BUDGET DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE VOTE

Commissioner Deming reviewed the budget make-up thus far:

- \$920 - Part-time employee
- \$50,000 - Simsbury Main Street Partnership
- \$4,000 Farmington Valley Visitors Association
- \$3,200 - Advertising/Event Support/Marketing (NEW)
- \$750 - Conferences Allocation (NEW)

At this point, Hiram Peck, Town Planner, addressed the Commission saying that the working relationship with SMSP and FVVA were strong and that he thinks the bang for your buck is significant with both organizations. Mr. Peck continued by saying the EDC could be more effective and visible and he will give his thoughts on how they can take the next step. Mr. Peck said that Marlborough, MA conducted a marketing study, which was an extremely attractive tool to prospective developers looking at the Town. The study would expose "gaps" in the Town, and identify what type of development is currently needed. Mr. Peck said he would recommend adding a line item, covering this type of study, into their budget for the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen to consider. Mr. Peck then said, for \$50,000, he thinks they can get someone with national prominence and expertise, to conduct this study. Mr. Peck said Middletown, CT has transformed their Main Street in the last ten (10) years and said the town had improved their relationship with Wesleyan College, from which they had previously separated themselves. Mr. Peck said that there is an opportunity to partner with local educational institutions (Westminster, Ethel Walker, etc.) in turn, increasing traffic to local restaurants, shops and lodging. Mr. Peck said he thinks now is the time to do the study, while we are on the upswing of development in Town. It was discussed how this \$50,000 should be proposed, and Mr. Peck suggested it be added as a line item within the EDC budget.

Mr. Peck referenced a full page article published in a recent NEREJ, about Simsbury, which cost \$600, and caused a last minute scramble in order to get the money approved. He said that the \$3,200 for advertising/event

support/marketing is not a big number and will be money well spent.

Commissioner Peterson asked about the possibility of spreading out the \$50,000 across some other land use Boards in order to get it pushed through more easily. Mr. Peck said it is not appropriate to put that money in the budgets of Regulatory Land Use Commissions.

Commissioner George said he would request, from the Board of Selectmen, more advance notice of the EDC Budget Workshop in order to have adequate preparation. Ms. Heavner said they are now approving those dates and she will bring it up to First Selectmen Glassman. The budget process was further discussed by the Commission members and Mr. Peck, with everyone agreeing that transparency is extremely important. Ms. Heavner then said the budget workshops were proposed to be February 15 - early March.

Commissioner Crimmins said the marketing study Mr. Peck spoke of is extremely encouraging, as he has been discouraged with the zero-budget they are given, minimizing the impact they can make. He said it could be a fantastic step forward for the Town, letting us know exactly where the economic opportunities are, based on factual information. Commissioner Crimmins also said that the EDC knows this budget process is coming and they should prepare further in advance in order to avoid the scrambling.

Commissioner Markowski asked Mr. Peck about the expected useful life of a study like this be. Mr. Peck said it depends how active the economy is, but it will be used as long as it is effective and accurate. It was also discussed how it can be a document that is always evolving and changing as outside factors change. It was also discussed that the maintenance of this document is not that expensive. Mr. Peck said that conducting this type of study sends a message to prospective developers that Simsbury is invested in smart/successful development. Mr. Peck said he wants people to know that this study would not apply to Town Center alone, but that it will consider the whole town. Mr. Crimmins said the information gathered will have value for a long time. Commissioner Ellsworth said he thinks this study could allow the EDC to be proactive instead of reactive.

Commissioner George said he would like to support a line-item for the membership fee for Metro Hartford Alliance, saying they could also be a driver for getting the word out to developers regarding events like Simsbury Showcase. Commissioner George said they can assist in bringing developers from out of State that we may not otherwise reach. Commissioner George also said he has supported efforts to develop Iron Horse Boulevard as a recreational, natural destination point, bringing people to Simsbury Town Center. Commissioner Deming spoke about that topic briefly as well. Commissioner George mentioned utilizing grants and local universities, as a resource, to move forward with this long-term plan. This potential plan was

discussed further by Commission members and Mr. Peck. Commissioner George said while this Iron Horse recreation area idea may not be a budgetary item now, it should be put on the Agenda to try and move it forward.

With regards to the previously discussed marketing study, Commissioner Ellsworth said this could help allow the EDC to think strategically and long-term and not simply continue with short-term thinking. He said he would love to see the EDC champion a comprehensive 5-7-10 year strategic plan.

The potential membership of Metro Hartford Alliance was discussed and Commissioner Crimmins said he does not see a positive return on investment and therefor, would not support the addition of that line item. Commissioner Minor also expressed his opinion that he did not see the value of the membership and would not support adding it to the proposed budget. Commissioner Deming said he too thinks it is difficult to see the value. Commissioner George talked about the value of MHA and the benefits of membership. Commissioner Crimmins said, while he agrees we need to participate on a regional level, it is not a good use of money at this point.

Commissioner Deming held a vote regarding the addition of the Metro Hartford Alliance membership fee to the proposed EDC Budget. The motion failed by an outcome of 1-6. One (1) in favor (Commissioner George) and six (6) in opposition (Commissioner Minor, Commissioner Markowski, and Commissioner Ellsworth, Commissioner Peterson, Commissioner Deming and Commissioner Crimmins).

Commissioner Crimmins made a motion to pass the proposed EDC Budget as follows:

- \$920 - Part-time employee
- \$50,000 - Simsbury Main Street Partnership
- \$4,000 - Farmington Valley Visitors Association
- \$3,200 - Advertising/Event Support/Marketing (NEW)
- \$750 - Conferences Allocation (NEW)
- \$50,000 - Marketing Study (NEW)
- \$108,870 - TOTAL BUDGET PROPOSAL

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ellsworth and was passed unanimously.

V. NEW BUSINESS/ OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Peck discussed the Infrastructure Rebate Program, saying he is going to recommend the Board of Selectmen refund the program.

Commissioner George made a motion that the EDC officially support the refunding of the Infrastructure Rebate Program. The motion was seconded by

Commissioner Crimmins and was unanimously passed.

Mr. Peck then publicly thanked Ferg Jansen for the work he has done putting up the banners up above the roadways, and let everyone know how much of his own time he has put into that.

Commissioner Deming also mentioned the Canton EDC and spoke about working with them going forward. The Charter Revision Commission was discussed and the upcoming meeting. It was discussed that the EDC should have a collective stance on these significant issues and then present them as a Commission. Commissioner Crimmins said it is important and should not be taken lightly. The members decided the EDC should discuss this at the next meeting and then bring the collective thoughts to the CRC.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner George made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 a.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Crimmins and was unanimously passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Deming, Chairman