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Cc:

ADOPTED

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MINUTES
January 14, 2010
REGULAR MEETING

1. Call To Order

Chairman Deming called the regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission to order at 7:35 AM in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. Commission members Kevin Crimmins, Lou George, Derek Peterson, Alan Needham, and Nancy Haase were present.

2. Approval of Minutes of December 10, 2009

Commissioner Haase made a motion to approve the December 10, 2009 minutes as written. Commissioner George seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

3. Review of Metro Hartford Alliance Presentation: Lou George

Commissioner George stated that Metro Hartford Alliance made a presentation to various Towns, which he attended. MHA went over what they can provide to municipalities, including site finders, websites, etc. They also asked for input from the Towns that were represented. He stated that MHA also talked about their regional approach.

Commissioner George stated that Simsbury was a member of Metro Hartford Alliance in the past. They have helped with many great programs and seminars in Town. From his prospective, he feels that Simsbury needs to maintain their membership with MHA. Simsbury needs to be connected to the greater region through MHA, although he is unsure if there is funding in the budget for this.

Chairman Deming stated that it will be up to the Board of Selectmen if they keep Metro Hartford Alliance as a line item in the budget.

Commissioner George stated that the cost is \$4,000 - 5,000 for a basic membership with MHA. The agreement several years ago was \$1,000 - \$1,200 per month for 12 months for the additional things that MHA provided for Simsbury.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that this is a case regarding priority. He stated that Metro Hartford Alliance was not in last year's budget and he does not expect it will be in this year's budget. If the Commission asks for funding for MHA, he stated that he would like to have wording around the request that it be considered relative to other priorities. He stated that he would not want MHA to be included and result in the exclusion of some other group.

Commissioner Haase questioned if there was a way to ask Metro Hartford Alliance regarding their accountability. She also questioned who would look into seeing if the Town gets the best return on their investment. Commissioner George stated that Metro Hartford Alliance has gone above and beyond their contracted obligations in the past.

4. Status of the PAD and Charrette

Mr. Peck stated that the draft PAD Regulation is currently in front of the Zoning Commission. They received the draft last August. There are several new members on that Commission since the draft was received. He stated that the Commission discussed the structure of the regulation and the purpose of it at their last meeting. Some members of the Commission wanted to have workshops in order to discuss the draft further. Mr. Peck stated that their next meeting will be held on February 1st, although he is trying to set up a special meeting for January 25th. He is hopeful that, at the end of this workshop, there will be enough clarity in order to move the regulation forward.

Mr. Peck stated that several people call every week that are looking to go forward with a particular project, but cannot because there is no regulation in place. The PAD Regulation needs to move forward. He stated that this regulation gives flexibility to the Commission not to go forward with any project, although it also gives the Commission plenty of latitude to go forward with good projects and coordinate those projects with other Land Use Commissions.

Commissioner Peterson asked if the draft PAD Regulation was in the same format as it was in August. He also questioned if members of the PAD Subcommittee should address the Zoning Commission at this upcoming workshop. Mr. Peck stated that the draft is the same. Also, he thought having PAD Subcommittee members address the Zoning Commission would be helpful.

Chairman Deming stated that he would like the Economic Development Commission to support having a PAD Regulation.

Commissioner George made a motion that a letter be drawn up from the Economic Development Commission to the Zoning Commission in support that they put the issue of the PAD Regulation on their agenda and move forward to having a public hearing. Commissioner Crimmins seconded the motion.

Commissioner George stated that he attended a meeting of the Government Affairs Committee. They are taking a proactive approach to encourage that the PAD Regulation move forward. They are hoping that the Economic Development Commission does the same thing. He stated that the Government Affairs Committee wants the PAD Regulation to not only get on the agenda, but to get passed. Commissioner George stated that there are several mixed-use projects that developers want to start. He stated that things need to move forward. If a letter is sent, he feels that it should lay out what is at stake and that the Zoning Commission needs to approve the Regulation.

Commissioner Peterson questioned if other Land Use Commissions and Boards want to pass the PAD Regulation. He suggested that a member from each Board speak at an upcoming Zoning meeting to make this known.

The Commission members discussed the importance and the need for a mixed use regulation in Simsbury. Several members gave examples of developers who are waiting for this regulation.

The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Peck stated that a Zoning Commission meeting will be set up with the Chamber and other Land Use Commissions in order to let them know what the business people in the community are saying and to have discussions regarding this issue. This meeting will be held in February. Commissioner George encouraged the Economic Development Commission members to attend.

Mr. Peck stated that, regarding the Charrette consultant, they will be back in Simsbury with the draft regulation soon. Main Street Partnership got additional funding to get Code Studio back to Town several more times. He stated that he is hopeful that they can get this to public hearing in February and hopefully adopted in March.

Mr. Peck stated that the Drake Hill Mall is moving forward with some aspects of the Charrette plan already. This is a key site in the Town Center.

Commissioner George stated that The Hartford has recently moved over 1,000 employees back to their offices in Simsbury.

Commissioner George made a motion to send a letter to The Hartford thanking them for being committed to Simsbury. Commissioner Haase seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

5. FVVA Annual Report, Projects and Budget

Ms. Anstey thanked the Economic Development Commission for their past support.

Ms. Anstey stated that they were founded in 1994; Simsbury was a founding member. Farmington Valley Visitors Association does not have any state or federal funding unless they receive grants. They get their funding from Towns. Tourism funds in the state have diminished over the past several years.

Ms. Anstey distributed packets to the Commissioner members. In 2009, 59,000 visitor guides have gone out and there are 7,000-9,000 hits per months on their web site. Most importantly, the efforts that directly benefit Simsbury are: their guide; monthly newsletter and calendar; restaurant guide; historic sites committee, which has monthly meetings; lodging committee; collaborations with the chamber; and the Farmington Valley Film Commission. She stated that their newest partnership is with Dream Ride, which is an event where they organize a huge motorcycle and car ride; the event is at the Farmington Club. Ms. Anstey is creating tours throughout the Farmington Valley for this event. She stated that they are always looking for new ways to promote the Valley.

Ms. Anstey stated that new membership is also another important aspect for the Farmington Valley Visitors Association.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that the Dream Ride event is a great event that brings people of all ages into the Valley. Ms. Anstey stated that they are looking for people to come to the Valley a day or two prior to the event. FVVA will be providing packets and coupon books for people to use while they are here or to take home.

Commissioner Peterson questioned what people are looking for that come into the Farmington Valley Visitors Association office. Ms. Anstey stated that they are looking for places to shop, such as boutiques; they are looking for restaurant and also what they can do for excitement including outside events. Some people also come in looking for information regarding the Towns in the Valley and information on their school systems.

Ms. Anstey stated that since 1994, Town dues have never been raised. She has asked Simsbury for 4,000 each year. Last year, the Economic Development Commission supported the Farmington Valley Visitors Association with \$3,800.

Several business owners in the audience spoke regarding keep the FVVA guide handy in the car to visit places spur of the moment. The owner of the Farmington Miniature Golf stated that the guide is so helpful for families looking for something to do. It also has an antique map and some information regarding rails to trails. He stated that many guides are taken from his business throughout the season. The Manager of the Simsbury Inn stated that the FVVA guide helps them during this tough economic time.

Chairman Deming thanked Ms. Anstey for her presentation.

6. SMSP Annual Report, Projects, Discussion and Budget

Ms. Nielsen distributed a packet to the Commission members. She introduced several Main Street Partnership Board members to the Commission.

Ms. Nielsen stated that Main Street is a statewide program as well as a nationwide program. Managing downtowns is the reason developers and residents find them more attractive. This is a comprehensive program that deals with so many different things, which is why it is important to have a Main Street program in Simsbury.

Ms. Nielsen stated that they have a great relationship with The Hartford. They had a business reception there regarding Connecticut's economy. They invited many business owners to this event; it was very well attended. She stated that they have also done a great deal with Eno Memorial Hall, including working on redesigning each room, room by room, to keep Eno vibrant. They have also done the branding of Simsbury; the push of this year has been to get their Heritage Tourism website, Shop Simsbury up and running, which they have done.

Ms. Nielsen stated that they tackled a new program this year, which was a partnership with area PTOs in order to bring fundraising back to Simsbury. She stated that they started on an education campaign, which has been very successful. Latimer Lane School has brought all of their fundraising back to Simsbury; other schools have also joined them. She stated that they also did the culinary arts program again this year; this is the second year that they have been doing this. Students learn how a banquet facility functions. Ms. Neilson stated that they also had their first annual Taste of Simsbury this year. She stated that this event sold out prior to the opening.

Regarding the Charrette, Ms. Nielsen stated that Main Street has been moving this forward, all the way to implementation of the recommendations. The Charrette is an important focus on the center of Town. The consultants did a great job with respect to the Charrette; this can be used to position Simsbury. Other Towns are now looking to Simsbury as a model. She stated that Main Street has worked closely with the Charrette consultants as well as Mr. Peck. The Charrette is important in order for Simsbury to move forward and to grow the Grand List and to helping the local businesses.

Ms. Nielsen stated that Main Street Partnership has a new partnership between the Small Business Development Center and Main Street. She stated that SBDC brings resources and advocacy with networks across the State. She stated that Main Street is also on the SBDC website.

Regarding Main Street's plans for the future, Ms. Nielsen stated that they have taken over the Farmers Market. The Farmers Market gets about 1,000 people on a good Thursday. She stated that they are working to get them special events, more marketing and more people.

Ms. Nielsen stated that there will be an exciting announcement from Main Street Partnership in February; it is very big. She stated that they will need the support from the Economic Development Commission as well as all community organizations. She stated that the reach from this announcement will be national.

Regarding the Town's return on their investment, Ms. Nielsen stated that Main Street has more than a 6-1 return; not included in this number is job creation, jobs that have been saved, as well as other things. She stated that she is being very cautious with the numbers. The Town's contribution to Main Street this year was \$41,800. She stated that in-kind services were \$12,000, although a lot of things were not included in this figure, grants were \$29,997, fundraising and memberships were \$38,466, Eno Memorial Hall was \$22,350 and layman volunteer time last year was \$40,132. The total was \$184,745. She stated that the return on investment this year is more than \$4 for every \$1. Taking out the volunteer time, it would still be approximately \$3.5 for every \$1. Ms. Nielsen stated that this is why it is a good investment to support Simsbury Main Street Partnership.

Ms. Nielsen stated that they are requesting more money this year, although they are sensitive to the Town's budget. She stated that last year, they took a 5% decrease. This year they are asking for \$72,436. Although this is an increase, it is an important increase. The Town needs to set priorities. She feels that the budget has been decreasing like economic development is not a priority for Simsbury. This is an investment that needs to be important to the Town.

Chairman Deming stated that last year, the Economic Development Commission gave \$41,800 to Main Street Partnership. This year they are asking for an increase; he feels this increase is merited and extremely important.

Commissioner George stated that the PAD Regulation is a component to the Downtown. He questioned if Main Street will get behind this effort to support it. Ms. Nielsen stated that the Board has not taken an official vote on this issue. Several Board members that were seated in the public audience stated that they do support the PAD Regulation.

Commissioner George stated that he does not feel that Main Street has taken a strong enough position on the cultural development east of Iron Horse Boulevard regarding things that can bring people Downtown and put them on the streets. From an Economic Development Commission's prospective, he feels that this is a priority. He encouraged Main Street to taken a stronger position regarding this issue. Ms. Nielsen stated that they have been a huge proponent regarding cultural development. They will be handling the management and vending at the Meadows for the next five years. She stated that they have worked with the Fly-in and worked on the trail guide. Main Street has always put a focus on cultural, educational and recreational activities.

Chairman Deming asked if Main Street would be willing to encourage the Zoning Commission to move forward with the PAD Regulation. Ms. Mielert stated that they have advocated for mixed use, although Main Street has not taken a formal stand. She stated that this will be done as soon as possible.

Commissioner Needham stated that he feels funding for Main Street Partnership should be a priority.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that it would be helpful to the Commission if Main Street could indicate how the increase in dollars would be deployed, especially by comparison to how the money was used last year.

7. EDC Budget for 2010 - 11

Chairman Deming stated that last year the Economic Development Commission's budget was \$46,418; part-time was \$818; public agency support was \$45,600. The other line items that were in previous budgets were taken out last year. The EDC needed to go back to the Board of Selectmen if they needed funding for seminars, etc.

Chairman Deming stated that there may be a decrease in the budget from what they received last year. He questioned if the Commission should go ahead

and put in for \$72,436 for Main Street Partnership plus \$4,000 for FVVA and for clerical. He stated that they could also put in for Metro Hartford Alliance. He stated that these are things that this Commission wishes to support.

Commissioner Haase stated that the Economic Development Commission needs to think about how they will celebrate when the Charrette and PAD Regulations get passed.

Commissioner Peterson suggested that the EDC back off of the proposed numbers a little to show they are trying to work within the budget constraints. Commissioner George stated that the budget should include what this Commission thinks is important and leave it up to the Board of Selectmen to decide the bottom line.

Commissioner Haase stated that anything related economic development should fall under their budget so as to coordinate all of these efforts in any way they can. Chairman Deming suggested that the Commission put everything in the budget that pertains to the EDC and leave it up to the Board of Selectmen if there is something that needs to be taken out. If the Board of Selectmen needs to cut something, they will.

Commissioner George stated that, with the budget, a letter will be attached. He suggested that the cover letter should reflect that the Town should work with Metro Hartford Alliance to work on a plan to increase their relationship. Commissioner Crimmins stated that he would put higher priority on Main Street Partnership over Farmington Valley Visitors Association and FVVA over Metro Hartford Alliance. He feels that the local focus will have a much bigger payoff in 2010. Commissioner Haase stated that she would also put Main Street first and Metro Hartford Alliance second in terms of priority.

Commissioner Haase made a motion to approve the budget for \$77,000 with the recommendation that \$72,000 is allotted for Main Street Partnership; \$4,000 allotted for Farmington Valley Visitors Association; \$900 allotted for clerical; and \$8,400 allotted for Metro Hartford Alliance. She stated that the cover letter of the budget indicate priorities first to Main Street, second to Metro Hartford Alliance and third to Farmington Valley Visitors Association.

Commissioner George suggested that they pro-rate percentage wise instead of prioritizing first, second and third. He does not want anyone left out all together.

Mr. Peck stated that the detailed breakdown of the budgets is needed. If the Economic Development Commission puts the numbers in, when the budget

workshops happen, this Commission can come and let them know where the amounts should be allocated. The Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen will be holding these workshops.

Commissioner Haase amended her motion to a figure of \$85,300 as a recommendation for the 2010/2011 budget. Commissioner George seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

8. Old Business / New Business

There was none.

9. Adjournment

A motion was made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 a.m. The motion was seconded, which was unanimously approved.