

From: Lois Laczko May 6, 2011 2:41:39 PM
Subject: Economic Development Commission Minutes 03/10/2011 ADOPTED
To: SimsburyCT_EconMin
Cc:

ADOPTED

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MARCH 10, 2011 MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING

1 CALL TO ORDER

Mark Deming, Chairman, called the regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission to order at 7:30 a.m. in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. Other commission members present at this meeting were Kevin Crimmins, Louis George, and Chuck Minor. Also in attendance was Hiram Peck, Director of Planning, and other interested parties.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of February 10, 2011

Commissioner George made a motion to approve the February 10, 2011 minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Minor and passed unanimously.

3. REPORTS: SMSP, FVVA

Sarah Nielsen, Executive Director, Main Street Partnership, said that the East Coast Greenway Trails Council meeting, as well as their board meeting, will be held in Simsbury on April 29th, 30th, and May 1st. This is the first time the meetings will be held in a small town (50,000 people and under). The meetings will start on the 29th with a ride from Yale to Simsbury with a reception at the Simsbury Historical Society followed by some speeches. There will be a trails council meeting (opened to the public) from 9:00 to 5:00 at Eno Memorial Hall on April 30th, and on Sunday, May 1st there will be a closed board meeting of the East Coast Greenway from 9:00 to 3:00. Ms. Nielsen said that they anticipate having 100 to 200 riders come up thru Simsbury to celebrate that we are the first bicycle friendly community in the State of Connecticut. She also mentioned that the April 29th welcome and speeches will be held at the Simsbury Historical Society beginning around 5:30 p.m. Chairman Deming asked if there were any events scheduled for Sunday. Ms. Nielsen said there are

events happening on Sunday, but they are closed to the public. Ms. Nielsen said that they are working to do publicity for this event with the Town and also Steve Mitchell.

Ms. Nielsen said that they are gearing up for the Talcott Mountain Musical Festival and also the Manhattan Project, which is coming in on June 12th. She said regarding the venue of the Talcott Mountain Musical Festival, this is year three of a five year contract. They are taking care of the vending, and also are doing lodging packages.

Ms. Nielsen spoke of the Tariffville Village Association, saying that they have put themselves on the map again for being a national destination for the White Water Kayaking Competitions. There will be four events at the Tariffville Gorge this year. The first event is scheduled in April, and the last event runs on August 7th. She said that she has booked lodging specials at the Simsbury Inn and 1820 House. Also, they have in the past distributed restaurant and shopping specials to the athletics, their families and the volunteers. Ms. Nielsen said that they are also considering doing some special promotions this year to try to make it into more of a bigger destination. As this is not a handicap accessible location, and there is also a limited amount of space for standing on the bank, a suggestion that had been made was for a big screen television somewhere (possibly at The Mill buildings) where people could watch in comfort. The site would be handicap accessible and would have more room for people to watch the events.

Ms. Nielsen also spoke of the Business Capital Expo. The Planning Committee met and has decided to refine the format a little. This event will now be held sometime in September, and the new theme is "What is the New Normal". She said that there is a lot of business uncertainty right now, at both the Federal and State levels, and this will be the new normal moving forward. Businesses can access where they are at this time, and get the tools and expertise needed. For some businesses it is just getting stuff they need to keep their doors open right now, while for others it may be moving into growth. This year there will be a one night Expo presentation followed by targeted free webinars and seminars at the Simsbury Public Library. They will be teaching businesses how to use different social media products (i.e. twitter, facebook, etc.), and there will be ongoing support to the businesses. A date for this September event should be set at the Planning Committee's March meeting.

Chairman Deming said as Nancy Haase is no longer an Economic Development Commission or Simsbury Main Street Partnership member, EDC will be looking for a liaison to the Simsbury Main Street Partnership. Ms Nielsen said that Main Street Partnership meets on the second Wednesday of every month at 7:30 a.m. at the Simsbury Bank Executive Offices.

Nancy Anstey said that she did a presentation in front of the Board of Selectmen in February on what the FVVA is doing between now and December. She gave each Commission member a handout explaining that it is out of date, but proceeded to go over any changes. Ms. Anstey said that the weekend of the East Coast Greenway is also the date

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of the Barn Tour and they will be lunching at the Simsbury Historical Society (April 30th), but this will not conflict with the scheduled East Coast Greenway presentation. She said that also on May 1st is the Trails Council 2nd Annual Trail Cleanup Day and that there will be people on the trail doing cleanup.

Ms. Anstey said that they are going to get involved with Governor Malloy's budget with regards to Tourism. She said that this evening at the Crown Plaza is their Regional Tourism Committee Meeting and their Lobbyist is scheduled to be there.

Ms. Anstey said that an item not on the list is Trails in Motion. This is scheduled for the first Saturday in June and will be held on Iron Horse Boulevard. This event is currently in the planning stages.

4. STATUS OF THE TOWN CENTER CODE; FEE IN LIEU OF PROPOSAL

Hiram Peck, Director of Planning, said that the Town Center Code is going to public hearing on Monday, March 21st. If there are any questions about the Town Center Code, let him know. A copy of the code is online. As it is 100 pages, and some in color, few copies have been actually printed. There will be some at the public hearing. The latest version of the code is dated February 18, 2011, and that is the one that is online. The public hearing will be held in the auditorium at Eno Memorial Hall on Monday, March 21st, beginning at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Peck said that there have not been many questions from folks, but there have been lots of discussions with the Commission about the administration and using the consent agenda. He thinks that this will turn out very well and is hopeful that the Town Center Code will go forward. A question was asked if the consent agenda would be used all the time for Zoning or for just when there is a Center Code. Mr. Peck said that at this time it will only be used only for the Center Code. He would like to see it adapted to the rest of the regulations. As they continue to finish up the revisions of the rest of the regulations this year he would like to see if the Zoning Commission would have interest in

moving it to that as well.

Mr. Peck said that this would be a good tool to move the average stuff through.

Mr. Peck said that he gave a presentation to the Connecticut Bar Association Planning and Zoning Section recently in New Haven. There were about 40 Land Use Attorneys at this presentation and were all very interested in what the town is doing. He said that so far they have talked to groups that have comprised of about 45 towns in the State of Connecticut, and are scheduled into October to continue this presentation.

Mr. Peck said that the EDC's support at the public hearing would be great.

Mr. Peck also discussed the Fee In Lieu Of regulation. He said that the Planning Commission approved this modification in their Subdivision Regulations at a public hearing. A couple of minor changes have to be made to it so another public hearing has to be scheduled. One change has to do with setting an effective date, and the other is an on-going discussion on when the fees should be paid. The date for this Planning Commission public hearing is April 12th. Chairman Deming asked what the Town will be allowed to do with the fees. Mr. Peck said that this is based on a State Statute that allows the purchase of open space. He said that many communities have used it for maintenance of open space, which is a real problem in Simsbury. There are a lot of little pieces of open space here and there that are not adequately maintained. In some cases, people living next to town open space have been taking them over and made them into their lawns. Mr. Peck said that the town needs ways to get those things straightened out. Chairman Deming asked if there are other towns in this State where the use of this money has a wider choice (not just for open space maintenance), but still used for public good. Mr. Peck said that the statute is pretty clear in that it has to be related to open space, whether it is the acquisition or maintenance of open space.

5. DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE REVISIONS TO THE TAX ABATEMENT PROGRAM

Mr. Peck discussed possible revisions to the Tax Abatement Program. The program has been around for awhile and been used just a little bit. The program needs to be updated a little. The Business Development Committee felt that there were some vagaries in the way the program is put together that needs to be clarified. The Board of Selectmen would like to discuss this at their next meeting. He is hoping that before the Board of Selectmen make any specific changes to the program that they listen to the input from the Economic Development Commission and the Business Development Committee.

Mr. Peck said that one of the things that is always an issue is the submission deadlines. People submit the paperwork for the program at all

different times. He would like to create some predictability in the program for the town as well. He suggested that there should be an application deadline for a particular year. Budgets (Department) are typically due back to the Finance Director by the middle of January. He thought that a recommendation that any

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application for tax abatement needs to be in the Town's hand by either the middle of November or by December 1st. That would give the Business Development Committee a month to meet to decide whether they are going forward with that or not. This will also give the Board of Finance, Board of Selectmen, and the rest of the Town Board's some opportunity to fit that into the budgeting process.

A discussion followed on whether a tax abatement should be applied for before a project is started or after the project is complete. Three scenarios were mentioned: 1) they apply and receive access to the funds ahead of time, 2) they apply and then, if it is approved they may know in advance that it is approved for a subsequent year; and 3) they build the project, then come in and apply for the tax abatement. The three were discussed.

6. OLD BUSINESS: REAL ESTATE EXCHANGE; FINANCIAL MODELING; EDC WEBSITE UPDATE

Chairman Deming said that the Real Estate Exchange is changing their format. They are no longer doing booths, but instead are doing virtual booths. They will be running a continual slide show, which for the price of four slides (\$100), 8 slides (\$200), or 12 slides (\$300) you can promote your business. This runs continually through a loop. The event will be at the Society Room on April 27th . The question is do we want to participate. The Town would have to take the various things that are being done in town and put it into a creative slide format. You can also purchase space in their booklet. The inside front cover costs \$400, inside back cover for \$300, or a back cover for \$500. There was not much enthusiasm for the digital booth.

Ms. Nielsen said that Main Street Partnership does two Discover Simsbury sections with the Hartford Courant. The first one is coming up in June. This hits everyone who has a subscription to the Courant, but they also do a 2,000 over-run. She suggested that they concentrate on some sort of a

development story.

A suggestion was made to hold a Developers Day sometime in May or June with possibly a breakfast, followed by a presentation, and a walking tour downtown. Ms. Nielsen said that EDC should speak with Mike Goman who is still involved in the development world, and also contact Wayne Cobleigh (a Simsbury resident) who works with GZA Environmental, but he is also Chairman of the ICSE Alliance Program. Most of the large developers and Land Use Attorneys sit on those types of committees. She also suggested that they offer people a variety of things for after the breakfast and presentation. Some people may only be interested in specific packets, so a list of all available properties should be available. There may be people who will want to take a walking tour downtown, but there may some people who will want to see specific sites. The flexibility has to be allowed to let the developers determine what they want. There should be several options available. The goal is to get Developers and Brokers to come to the Developers Day.

Chairman Deming said that the EDC website has been upgraded and suggested that everyone look at it.

Chairman Deming suggested that the financial modeling item be placed onto a future agenda. It was suggested that the Board of Finance be at the meeting when this is placed on the agenda.

7. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Crimmins discussed the possibility of the Town hiring a full time Economic Development person on town staff, and whether EDC should make a recommendation on it. He said that this item could be placed on their agenda so they could discuss what the role of that person would be, and how this should be moved forward. Commissioner Crimmins feels that they do not have the resources on this board to do the things that need to be done. An example is now having Main Street Partnership assisting with the proposed Developers Day.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Minor moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 a.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner George.

Mark Deming, Chairman

